A More Strategic U.S. Approach to Police Reform in Africa

Authors
Richard Downie
Jennifer G. Cooke

April 2011
A More Strategic U.S. Approach to Police Reform in Africa

Authors
Richard Downie
Jennifer G. Cooke

April 2011
About CSIS

In an era of ever-changing global opportunities and challenges, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) provides strategic insights and practical policy solutions to decisionmakers. CSIS conducts research and analysis and develops policy initiatives that look into the future and anticipate change.

Founded by David M. Abshire and Admiral Arleigh Burke at the height of the Cold War, CSIS was dedicated to the simple but urgent goal of finding ways for America to survive as a nation and prosper as a people. Since 1962, CSIS has grown to become one of the world’s preeminent public policy institutions.

Today, CSIS is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, DC. More than 220 full-time staff and a large network of affiliated scholars focus their expertise on defense and security; on the world’s regions and the unique challenges inherent to them; and on the issues that know no boundary in an increasingly connected world.

Former U.S. senator Sam Nunn became chairman of the CSIS Board of Trustees in 1999, and John J. Hamre has led CSIS as its president and chief executive officer since 2000.

CSIS does not take specific policy positions; accordingly, all views expressed herein should be understood to be solely those of the author(s).

© 2011 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. All rights reserved.

Cover photo credit: Glenna Gordon (http://www.glennagordon.com/).

ISBN: 978-0-89206-630-8
Executive Summary

U.S. strategic stakes in Africa have expanded in the last 15 years, with growing awareness among policymakers and the American public that developments in Africa can have direct and significant impact on U.S. economic, political, and security interests. The last decade has seen strong bipartisan support for initiatives that seek to accelerate African development, institution building, and security sector capacities. Within that period, however, few policymakers have chosen to emphasize the vital role that Africa’s police can play in delivering—or undermining—this agenda. Overseas police support is a component of both Security Sector Reform and democratic institution building, yet the U.S. security agenda has largely focused on bolstering militaries while democracy strengthening efforts have tended to favor nonsecurity institutions. Civilian policing has tended to fall through the cracks.

There are ongoing efforts within the administration to address this problem, but U.S. efforts are hampered by scarce resources and a lack of coherent leadership and vision. Congress has failed to grasp the fact that supporting police reform in Africa not only promotes democratic development and protects human rights on the continent itself, it also advances U.S. security interests. Transforming African police forces—to make them more effective, accountable, responsive to public needs, and embedded in a broader justice sector framework—is a hugely complex and difficult task, and one that often is stymied by an absence of political will for reform within the partner country. But as the nature of security threats in Africa changes so too must U.S. approaches in supporting effective, accountable responses. A first step must be to elevate the issue of police reform in policy discourse and begin to build a more strategic, coherent vision for long-term, sustainable reform.

CSIS convened a working group of experts from the U.S. government, Congress, universities, and the nonprofit sector to discuss the challenge of police reform in Africa and come up with recommendations for the U.S. administration to tackle it more effectively. These include:

- Assign clear leadership for police reform within the U.S. government.

1 Richard Downie is a fellow and deputy director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C. Jennifer G. Cooke is director of the CSIS Africa Program.
Articulate a strategic vision that explains in a compelling way to the American people why police reform in Africa is a job worth undertaking.

Make a stronger case to Congress that a more robust, flexible, and long-term financial commitment to police support helps achieve U.S. policy objectives in Africa.

Improve mechanisms for coordinating and planning police development work across the U.S. administration and capitalize on the comparative advantages of different U.S. agencies.

Provide incentives for host countries to genuinely engage in reform of their police and build constituencies of support for positive change.

Apply the lessons learned from previous attempts at police reform and focus more clearly on achieving concrete results rather than meeting arbitrary numerical targets.

Introduction

In March 2010, the CSIS Africa Program launched a series of working group discussions to highlight the issue of police reform in sub-Saharan Africa and to build recommendations for how the United States might better support efforts to build capable, accountable police forces on the continent. Discussions brought together experts on policing from the U.S. administration, Congress, academia, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations. Participants included senior officials from the Department of State’s Bureau of African Affairs, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The Department of Justice (DOJ) was represented by officials from the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) and the Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT). The Department of Defense (DOD) was represented by officials from the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), among others. Many of the private organizations contracted to implement police reform projects on behalf of the U.S. government were also involved. Working group sessions were complemented by a broad range of one-on-one interviews with U.S., European, and African experts on justice and Security Sector Reform.

The discussion series used as its point of departure four realities:

- First, many of Africa’s current and emerging security challenges are more appropriately addressed in the first instance by competent and professional police forces than by military forces. Because their interface with the public is far wider than that of the military, effective police forces can play a critical role in public safety, civilian protection, and conflict prevention;
- Second, accountable policing institutions, linked to functional judicial systems and responsive to the needs of the citizenry, are critical elements not only of effective security responses and conflict prevention but also of development, democratic consolidation, and institution building in Africa;
- Third, policing and police reform, as a component of broader Security Sector Reform, have been neglected and under-resourced both by African national governments and by the
broader international community. In U.S. engagement, the advent of the U.S. Africa Command, without commensurate attention to policing, may reinforce the tendency of the U.S. government and its counterparts in Africa to emphasize military rather than policing solutions to the continent’s security problems;

- Fourth, despite a growing body of analysis and expertise on how best to approach police reform in developing and post-conflict states, U.S. efforts have remained disjointed, underfunded, lacking in strategic focus, and often dismissed as either too politically sensitive and complicated or as “important but too difficult.”

**The Opportunity**

These realities are not new, but they are worth reiterating in the context of two broad trends that over time should be leveraged to prompt greater attention, advocacy, and resources to the issue of democratic police reform in Africa.

First, U.S. strategic stakes in Africa have expanded in the last 15 years, with growing awareness among policymakers and the American public that developments in Africa can have direct and significant impact on U.S. economic, political, and security interests. Major U.S. investments in Africa over the last decade—through the George W. Bush administration’s President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Barack Obama administration’s Feed the Future initiative; through the Millennium Challenge Corporation; and through the stand-up of the U.S. Africa Command—reflect bipartisan affirmation that human security and well-being, governance and economic development, and capable, accountable security partners in Africa matter to the United States.

At the same time, there has been growing appreciation of how underdevelopment, poor governance, and domestic security challenges in Africa reinforce each other and affect regional and global security. Piracy off the coast of Somalia disrupts commercial shipping and has directly struck at U.S. citizens; “narco-states” in West Africa have emerged to service Latin American drug cartels that continue to traffic drugs and violence into the United States; kidnappings in the oil-rich Niger Delta have affected U.S. companies and caused spikes in global energy prices; depredations against civilians in Darfur and unparalleled levels of sexual violence in Eastern Congo have appalled the U.S. public and compelled domestic groups to new forms of activism; postelection violence in Kenya has threatened an important and long-standing U.S. partner (see box 1); the expansion of al Qaeda–affiliated criminal networks in the Sahel is feared as a rising threat to U.S. citizens and facilities. These and other developments have brought home to U.S. policymakers and a growing segment of the American public the consequences for U.S. interests that African deficits in governance, development, and security can have.

The second trend is increasing recognition among leaders in defense, development, and foreign policy, of the link between development and sustainable security, not only as it applies to Africa but also in the wider global context. This has prompted major new thinking on how to revamp a U.S. foreign assistance construct that was developed for a very different global environment in which traditional, state-centric security concerns were the predominant preoccupation of U.S. foreign
policy. The last several years have seen an array of analyses and initiatives that seek to build new, more integrated approaches to foreign assistance, most with the common theme of drawing on capacities from across U.S. civilian and military agencies, and embedding security engagement in a broader, integrated framework of diplomacy, development, and governance. The State Department’s first Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), released in December 2010, is the most prominent of these, stressing the need to bolster U.S. civilian capacities in foreign assistance, strengthen interagency collaboration, and bridge the traditional gaps between security, diplomacy, and development approaches. Whether and how the vision laid out in the QDDR will be implemented remains uncertain, but the document is testament to the growing pressures and impetus for reform.

These two factors combined present an opportunity to elevate the issue of police reform within the multiple strands of U.S. engagement in Africa: in diplomatic discourse, in democracy and governance programming, in security and justice sector reform efforts, in civilian protection programming, in efforts to curb sexual violence; and in countering transnational threats such as piracy, narcotics trafficking, and the expansion of terrorist networks.

The Obstacles

This is not to say that a dramatic shift in congressional support or a major restructuring of foreign assistance is imminent. Beyond the current domestic fiscal environment and a new U.S. Congress pre-occupied by pressing domestic challenges, the obstacles to building a coherent, effective, balanced, and more robust U.S. approach toward police reform in Africa, and elsewhere, are many.

Still at play in Congress and in parts of the administration is a residual aversion to engaging in police reform, a legacy of the now-defunct USAID Office of Public Safety programs that trained hundreds of police forces in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, many of whom were implicated in widespread incidents of torture, murder, and “disappearances.” In response to these egregious human rights violations, Congress in 1975 banned the provision of U.S. training or assistance to foreign police with an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act, known as Section 660. Today, the majority of police training is done through waivers to Section 660, and while exceptions are fairly routine, the need for legal workarounds tends to disperse and complicate funding streams and make long-term, coordinated programming far more difficult. This has led to a patchwork of programming across multiple organizations (see appendix) and different agencies acting at cross purposes or competing for the limited funds available.

Related to this general aversion and the dispersion of efforts are multiple interpretations of what is meant by police reform. Police reform is often associated with the “train-and-equip” component and “capacity-building” aspect of security engagement that has predominated in traditional U.S.

---

approaches (and to some extent in current efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan). Much less visible or understood are the requirements to embed training within a broader framework of institution building, justice sector transformation, democratic oversight, public safety and community relevance, as well as Security Sector Reform.

These differences of interpretation play into competing visions of what U.S. priorities should be in engaging with African security forces: whether efforts should focus on immediate operational objectives—interdicting transnational threats, restoring basic security in post-conflict settings—or on building long-term, accountable institutions that can at once serve the interests of African citizenries and confront the transnational threats that matter most to the United States. The persistent debate over whether police reform efforts should have a national security focus or a developmental/justice focus has led to barriers between the two camps, and no coherent push to make reform more of a priority. The end result has been a lack of leadership and accountability within the U.S. government to make the case for and drive a comprehensive policy and programming strategy that integrates Security Sector Reform, justice sector reform, and democratic development approaches.

A corollary effect of the U.S. history in police engagement has been a serious degradation of expertise in U.S. civilian agencies. The U.S. military has taken on a large responsibility for police training (particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan), less a result of Department of Defense empire-building than a reflection of the lack of personnel available in civilian agencies to do the job. Since USAID got out of the business of training foreign police in 1974, institutional experience has degraded to such an extent that the agency now has just one police adviser on its books. This situation is replicated to a lesser degree across the other main civilian agencies involved in foreign police support. Successful police reform efforts require personnel with a combination of talents that few possess: police experience or institutional expertise, management skills, an understanding of development work and democratic institution building, and regional or country expertise. Compounding the problem is the decentralized nature of the police and criminal justice system in the United States, which does not easily lend itself to supporting police efforts abroad. Scarce resources are the reality in most police districts, and local police departments are loath to release officers for international duties. The dearth of expertise within government has led the U.S. government to rely on contractors to implement the bulk of its police support programs overseas. Most are retired police personnel, who may have extensive experience in domestic policing but little expertise in local/regional circumstances or development dynamics.

As important as U.S. domestic constraints are the tremendous challenges of the task itself. Among the biggest challenges has been the lack of political will among African governments to invest in an institution focused principally on public service and safety, rather than “national” or regime security. On the one hand, police in Africa have suffered chronic underfunding and neglect, and on the other they have often been politicized to become an instrument of regime protection and control rather than public service and safety. Lack of funding, attention, and oversight mechanisms have meant that police forces in many African countries are riddled with corruption, deeply distrusted by the public, and even if well-intentioned, unable to effectively manage the most basic policing tasks (see box 1).
Police institutions are ultimately only as good as the broader justice sector in which they are embedded, and in many African states justice sector reform remains a monumental and largely unaddressed challenge. Indeed, the shortcomings of the justice sector are symptomatic of a wider structural problem in African societies. The inability of governments to collect sufficient tax revenue means that they struggle to establish functioning civil services that deliver public services. If governments cannot pay their civil servants, police included, these employees are unlikely to perform to an adequate standard.

Furthermore, with some exceptions, most African states have shown little political will to take on the highly complex and politically sensitive task of police and justice sector reform, and there have been few incentives to do so. External pressures have focused far more on military competence and professionalism, and while domestic African civil society organizations will often decry human rights abuses by the police, few have brought together the technical capacity and understanding, the organizational will, and the power of advocacy to build constituencies for police reform or to constructively engage in debates on institutional solutions.

Box 1. Police Brutality in Kenya

When violence erupted following Kenya’s disputed presidential election in December 2007, the police not only failed to protect the public, they were often the perpetrators of the violence themselves. At least 1,100 people were killed in a wave of attacks and more than 400,000 people fled their homes. An independent commission was set up to examine what had happened, led by a judge, Philip Waki. It found that approximately one-third of those who were killed died at the hands of Kenya’s security forces, led by the police. A UN investigator, Philip Alston, found that officers were ordered to execute suspects instead of arresting them and were in some cases given financial rewards for the killings they committed. He unearthed evidence of a “systematic, widespread and well-planned strategy” to kill about 500 members of the Mungiki, a criminal organization and quasi-political group with links to Kenya’s largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu.

The Waki commission recommended sweeping reforms of the police and the creation of a special tribunal for Kenya, independent of the judiciary. The police commissioner, Major Gen. Hussein Ali, was replaced in September 2009, but the Kenyan government failed to set up a special tribunal. This failure triggered an investigation by the International Criminal Court into alleged crimes against humanity committed during the postelection period. In December 2010, Ali was named as one of six suspects.

The task of reforming Kenya’s police has a long way to go, despite the changes at the top of the ranks. A culture of impunity allows officers to act without accountability, and Kenya’s politicians continue to interfere with the police. In January 2011, Kenya’s leading newspaper, The Daily Nation, published photographs showing what it said was the execution by undercover officers of three men in a busy Nairobi street. Witnesses said the suspects had surrendered but were forced to the ground and shot dead.
Recommendations

In the course of the CSIS series, a number of recommendations emerged on how best to capitalize on current opportunities and begin to address the many obstacles to tackling police reform in Africa. Among the key recommendations to the U.S. administration are the following.

- **Establish empowered leadership and accountability within the U.S. administration for police reform efforts by nominating a “lead” agency within the U.S. government.** At present, there is no empowered champion within the U.S. government to make a sustained and compelling case for comprehensive police reform efforts; no office fully equipped to harness and maximize the capacities of U.S. government agencies to support a comprehensive and balanced approach; and no office ultimately accountable for the totality of U.S. efforts in supporting police reform.

There is no perfect institutional “home” for police reform efforts, particularly if they are approached in a holistic way to include wider criminal justice sector reform and institution building, all within a broad mandate of human rights protection. Indeed, the location is a source of controversy and rivalry between different departments. Several departments stake valid claims for leadership rights.

Suggestions for a bureaucratic home have included the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance within USAID. This makes sense on a theoretical level, given the need to view police reform as a subsection of institution building and development work, albeit development with a national security remit. However, USAID, despite stating its willingness to take on the task, has neither the staff nor the resources to do so at present.

Others argue that police development should be placed within the Department of Justice, perhaps within a newly established international police reform department. Again, senior leaders within DOJ have expressed their desire to take on this responsibility. Their case is strengthened by the fact that DOJ is home to ICITAP, a specialist program of policing experts experienced in developing overseas law enforcement institutions. However, the problem at DOJ is the same as the one at USAID: lack of resources. ICITAP is not even a line item in the DOJ budget, receiving its funding from a range of other government departments.

Another alternative would be to give the job of planning and coordination of police reform to the White House. The National Security Council could be tasked with taking the lead role on security and justice sector reform. But this option also has its drawbacks. Without funding or executive power, such an office might be hard-pressed to force consistent collaboration and coordination.

Ultimately, the most logical solution at present is at the State Department, specifically within the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. There are practical reasons for this. INL is already the lead agency for the United States’ police training programs. It distributes the bulk of the funds allocated to police training and support. It also sets the policy goals that other agencies engaged in police reform efforts are obliged to follow. It shares some of the problems of the other agencies: a shortage of manpower and expertise, meaning that many of its
programs are implemented by contactors. It has also tended to have a narrow geographic focus, with the bulk of its funding historically going to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Colombia.

This is slowly changing, however. An internal reorganization has created a new Office of Africa and the Middle East (INL/AME) within the bureau, to reflect the growing importance of Africa in its work. Furthermore, the QDDR had placed some momentum behind the idea of INL taking on a more explicit leadership role. It calls for INL’s mandate to be strengthened so that it can “serve as the locus for civilian security and justice sector reform efforts” and move “beyond traditional police training activities to expanded efforts on justice and rule of law.” The QDDR recommends that these added responsibilities be matched by more resources so that INL is able to do a better job of managing and monitoring its policing programs and can reduce its dependence on contactors.

It is important to get across the message that police reform efforts should be linked to broader institutional reforms covering the whole criminal justice sector. The QDDR recommendation to reorganize the set of departments working on these issues within the Department of State adds structure to the concept. A new under secretary for civilian security, democracy, and human rights will oversee a number of departments including INL; the Bureau of Democracy, Rights, and Labor; the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; and a new Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization. Linking INL’s work so closely to democracy and human rights and civilian protection sends an important message about the objectives of police reform.

To reinforce the message, INL’s broader role should be reflected in a change of name. INL’s name is an anachronism, a throwback to the days when its core remit was to tackle the twin threats of “drugs and thugs” on an international level. While it retains this important responsibility, INL does much more besides. The Department for International Law Enforcement and Justice Sector Development would be more appropriate.

In many ways, the question of which department or agency is the correct “home” for police reform efforts is an unsatisfying debate. There is no perfect answer, mainly because the scope of police and criminal justice sector reform is so wide, incorporating experts with a range of skills, housed in agencies across the U.S. government. However, the fact that there are no easy solutions does not detract from the idea that for the sake of coordination, focus, and the need to make a strong statement of U.S. priorities, “someone” should nominally be placed in charge of the overall effort, serving as a visible champion for greater investments.

- **Articulate a strategic vision that reframes what is meant by police reform in Africa.** The administration must make the case to the American people that supporting the development of professional and accountable police organizations in Africa is a job worth undertaking—one that spans U.S. interests in promoting development, in strengthening democratic institutions, and in building effective, accountable security partners in Africa and beyond (see box 2). The

---

administration—through senior White House leadership, the secretary of state, regional bureaus at the Department of State, and U.S. missions abroad—needs to provide a clear and consistent vision of what is meant by police reform.

“Police reform” is too often understood and implemented as an element (and often a subsidiary one) of Security Sector Reform, with a strong emphasis on the “train-and-equip” and capacity-building components. Moreover, such capacity building is most often targeted at strengthening law enforcement capabilities in areas that serve short-term U.S. interests in counternarcotics, counterterrorism, or immediate post-conflict stabilization. These objectives cannot and should not be abandoned, but they must be embedded in a much broader approach that meets the priority objectives of partner countries and responds to the needs of citizenries for whom public safety, conflict prevention, accountability, and democratic institutionalization are paramount. Capacity building alone is not reform. It is an important complement to broader institutional

---

Box 2. Building a Police Service from Scratch in South Sudan

South Sudan represents the biggest state building challenge in the world today. A vast, undeveloped and volatile territory, it will in July 2011 become the world’s newest nation. The task of establishing basic security is urgent. South Sudan is sharply divided along ethnic, regional, and religious lines. It is home to multiple armed groups and faces external threats from its northern neighbor, with which it fought a 39-year-long civil war. Border controls are nonexistent, and the region is heavily armed. At least 2,500 people were thought to have died in inter-ethnic and intra-tribal clashes in 2009 alone. An armed uprising led by a former general in the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), George Athor, has rumbled on since April 2010, killing hundreds of people. For many southerners, security continues to be provided by their communities rather than by the nascent state.

Security Sector Reform in South Sudan following the end of the civil war in 2005 has tended to focus on reforming the SPLA. The formation of the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) got off to a slow start. The majority of recruits were illiterate and unfit for service. As a result, soldiers have often been called on to deal with day-to-day security matters. Given their lack of experience in civilian law enforcement, their interventions have often been heavy-handed.

More recently, the United States and its international partners have been trying to close the gap between South Sudan’s military and civilian security capability. Within the U.S. government, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs has taken the lead role. Training has been stepped up with the aim of recruiting 30,000 officers. Associated efforts are being made to develop police doctrine, draw up emergency planning procedures, and build up South Sudan’s justice and corrections systems.

There is a long way to go and recent allegations of abuses at police training centers have highlighted the difficulties of getting large quantities of police graduates through school while preserving high-quality training. But overall, the efforts of the international community are starting to bear fruit. The SSPS played an important role in providing security during the January 2011 southern referendum on secession from the north, helping to ensure that the vote took place without any major outbreaks of violence.
reform efforts, but done in a vacuum, it can at best have short-term, unsustainable impact and at worst create negative blowback for both the United States and for partner country populations.

A consistent and comprehensive strategic vision for police reform does not imply a uniform approach. The concept and mechanisms of policing have evolved in very different ways across Africa. Likewise the political and security environments in which policing takes place encompass a broad continuum—from active conflict and state failure, to post-conflict stabilization, to authoritarian states, to nascent and consolidating democracies. Common elements of any effective approach will include strengthening political oversight mechanisms, building legislative knowledge and capacity on policing and justice issues, strengthening linkages with penal and judicial institutional reform, strengthening public engagement and oversight, and strengthening the institutional substructure of policing of which the police officer on the street is only the most visible element. Each country poses a different set of challenges for police and police reform and emphasis within U.S. approaches to partner countries should vary based on thorough assessment of political, social, and security circumstances.

- **Engage Congress.** Articulating a strategic vision on the importance, the objectives, and the way forward on police reform—and demonstrating some seriousness of purpose in following through—will be first steps in engaging a U.S. Congress that has been wary, uninterested, or frustrated by police reform efforts to date. Congress must see that the administration is taking the issue seriously as an aspect of conflict prevention, democratic institution building, civilian protection, as well as Security Sector Reform. The administration needs to educate, convince, and engage champions within Congress, since congressional support and informed oversight and input will be critical to a sustained long-term approach.

The ban on police training abroad, enforced by Section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act, is anachronistic in today’s global context and ultimately unhelpful. Although it is full of exceptions and no longer acts as a block to police support efforts, it has had the effect of dispersing programs across the government, leading to a profusion of ill-coordinated initiatives. Equally important, Section 660 sends out the wrong message about U.S. commitment to police development and reform abroad. A more engaged Congress could repeal and rewrite Section 660, turning it instead into a positive authorization that sets out a coherent framework for U.S. assistance in this area. At the same time, it should emphasize the need to protect civilians and safeguard against human rights abuses.

The administration should make the case to Congress for a more robust financial commitment to police development to reflect its increased importance in achieving U.S. objectives in Africa. In the current push to cut spending, it is unrealistic to expect a large influx of new funding, although even small increases, particularly in the African context, can have an important impact. The budget of the State Department’s INL has risen dramatically in recent years, hitting almost $1.7 billion in 2010, but the lion’s share of resources was earmarked to Afghanistan and Iraq.
Africa’s share of the budget in 2010 was a paltry $35.5 million. This modest sum has been largely directed at post-conflict policing priorities in Sudan and Liberia, counternarcotics engagement in West Africa, and regional capacity building in counterterrorism. Equally important is the need for smarter, more flexible funding. The paucity of funding for a larger police reform agenda has reinforced the tendency for short-term, stove-piped, one-off programming that ultimately has little lasting impact. Training should not be treated as an end in itself; it should be the last step in a program of police assistance that tackles structural reform of law enforcement institutions in a systematic, sustainable way.

Winning sustained support from Congress will require demonstrating a return on investment. While police reform is a complex and long-term endeavor, to win enduring congressional support, the administration will need to establish a more effective evaluation framework on impact of programming, moving away from quantitative to qualitative metrics. Congressional committees and budget managers should assist in this process by judging program outcomes less in terms of the numbers of African police recruits trained and the amount of equipment sold or donated. Greater emphasis should be given, for example, to the ability of police officers to deliver real improvements to their communities, levels of public engagement and constituencies for reform, and legislative education and activism on reform.

- Press for reliability and flexibility in funding. The amount of money directed toward police reform activities in Africa is in some ways less important than how the money is disbursed. Funding streams that are more accessible, at short notice, will allow program managers to respond more quickly to emerging crises and opportunities and make interventions at short notice. They will also facilitate coherent, coordinated planning across agencies, which otherwise find themselves scrambling willy-nilly to cobble together disparate funding streams that take little account of country priorities and gaps or comparative advantage among agencies.

In addressing post-conflict situations, Section 1207 funding has been a useful stopgap measure and has helped, admittedly in a small way, to address the mismatch in funds available to civilian agencies versus their military counterparts. Its replacement, the Complex Crises Fund, located in State/USAID, should be given adequate budgetary support. That means substantially more than the $50 million it has been allocated so far, half of what was available under Section 1207. More flexible, readily accessible funding like USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives account is required so civilian agencies can match the military’s capacity to respond quickly to emergencies. In addition, pooled funding accounts would allow different U.S. government agencies to work together more effectively in planning and implementing policing programs. One possibility, raised by the QDDR, is for a three-year pilot project to look at a pooled fund for “security and justice sector and stabilization assistance” jointly managed by the Department of State, USAID,

---

and the Department of Defense. This call has been partially taken up in the president’s 2012 budget request with the insertion of a Global Security Contingency Fund, which includes $50 million of State Department money and the potential of $450 million from DOD, subject to the approval of Congress. The money would be spent on crises which span both the civilian and military sectors. There must also be scope within the Foreign Assistance budget to help the majority of African countries that are not necessarily emerging from war but need assistance to strengthen weak institutions, including the police.

Police development, like most efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, is a long-term endeavor that should be matched by long-term, reliable investments. Program managers should be cut loose from the short-term budget cycle, which bedevils efforts to plan effectively, innovate, sequence interventions, and develop sustainable approaches and which too often cuts off successful programs in their prime. Even relatively modest funding flows can be used far more effectively if there is some certainty on the funding trajectory. Long-term engagement is equally important in building a sense of partnership and confidence within the recipient state, whether among political leadership and legislators, civil society organizations and communities, or with police institutions themselves.

- **Improve mechanisms for coordinated planning and implementation across U.S. agencies and with international partners.** In addition to the new coordinating mechanism, formal structures should be put in place within the U.S. government to institutionalize greater cooperation among the various agencies involved in police development work. Staff from INL, USAID, ICITAP, and AFRICOM should be embedded in each others’ organizations to encourage better communication and greater exchange of ideas and to overcome some of the common misunderstandings that currently sour their working relationships.

Better coordination means making better use of the expertise that is scattered across the U.S. government before turning to outside contractors to do the job. It means reaching out more effectively to state and local police to provide serving officers to participate in training and assistance programs overseas. And it means using the right agency for the right job. Currently, there are too many instances where operational law enforcement personnel from the likes of the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Drug Enforcement Agency are assigned to institutional development tasks to which they are less suited.

Coordination is an issue not just within the federal government but at the implementation level as well. The role of the U.S. mission becomes particularly important in coordinating security and justice sector reform in the host country, ensuring that programs are linked up and that those involved are working in concert together and communicating with each other.

The importance of coordination extends to interaction with other international donors. The United States is not the only country engaged in police reform efforts abroad. A wide range of

---

other bilateral donors are involved, as well as multilateral institutions like the United Nations and the European Union and specialist organizations such as Interpol. While there is some coordination of activities, it is rarely institutionalized. Active cooperation is less frequent. The United States should link up more effectively with its partners on security sector and justice reform, divide responsibilities in a way that reflects each participants’ comparative strengths, and set up better information-sharing mechanisms so that expertise can be pooled more efficiently.

- **Build incentives for reform in partner countries.** Among the most important things the United States can do to support democratic police reform in Africa is to strengthen internal drivers of reform. The U.S. government cannot build comprehensive programs of police and justice reform in every African state. But even in places where such programming is absent, it can signal the importance it attaches to the issue of police and justice reform in senior-level pronouncements, in diplomatic engagement and discourse, in communications with civil society groups and communities, and in interaction with African legislators, media channels, and regional organizations. This does not require new funding streams or authorizations but can do a great deal to embolden would-be reformers and identify opportunities for future engagement.

The United States should place greater emphasis on building constituencies for reform. This begins with elevating the issue in diplomatic engagement at senior levels and at U.S. embassies, where police reform is only rarely an issue of focus. USAID’s Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance should be tasked with, and empowered to take on, a more central and robust role in this arena. Such efforts go far beyond the nascent “community policing” efforts that the agency has begun to implement, which are limited to countries under democratic civilian control. The United States should consider how best to support more broad and transparent public conversation about rights, public safety, and police reform. In many African states, this is often a one-sided conversation confined to nongovernmental groups focused on human rights protection. These groups play a vital role in reform but often have a deeply adversarial relationship with the police. And while human rights is an essential piece of police reform, law enforcement effectiveness, national security strategy, institutional substructure, and adequate resourcing for police institutions are equally part of the equation. For this reason, the

---

6 Since 1975, USAID support for foreign law enforcement entities has been strictly limited by Section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. However, Section 564(a) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 2005 (the FOAA) recently expanded the authority first enacted in FY 2002 for “community-based police assistance.” On a worldwide basis, Section 564(a) now provides authority “to enhance the effectiveness and accountability of civilian police authority through training and technical assistance in human rights, the rule of law, strategic planning, and through assistance to foster civilian police roles that support democratic governance, including assistance for programs to prevent conflict, respond to disasters, address gender-based violence, and foster improved police relations with the communities they serve.” No assistance can be contemplated for civilian police forces that are not under control of democratic authorities or, in transition situations, for civilian police that are not demonstrably moving toward being under the control of democratic authorities.
U.S. government should support robust civic education initiatives at the same time that police development programs are being implemented. As policies, procedures, and training are developed within host country police departments, citizens must objectively understand what police "should be doing" when executing their duties.

Engaging a breadth of actors—legislators, universities, research institutes, the private sector, as well as the human rights community and police institutions—will ultimately strengthen constituencies for reform. Building understanding of the multiple challenges that police forces confront, the complexity of reform, and the struggle that every country (including the United States) has had in “getting it right” may generate a deeper sense of empathy for police and a more constructive debate around solutions. The United States should consider supporting partnerships among African research institutions, or with U.S. universities, to build indigenous technical expertise and research capacity on crime data collection and police and justice structures. Other useful areas of research would include mapping insecurity and nongovernment security actors, evaluating police reform programs, and assessing appropriate options for effective civilian oversight.

Applying Lessons Learned to Police Reform

The United States has been engaged in police reform overseas for a long time, from Panama, Somalia, and Haiti in the early 1990s to Iraq and Afghanistan more recently. The small number of professionals who have devoted their careers to thinking about the challenges of instituting capable and professional police have amassed a wealth of experience about what works and even more about what does not. Too often, the same mistakes are repeated because the U.S. government has generally done a poor job at compiling a documentary record of previous endeavors and failed to adopt a systematic approach to analyzing successes and failures. But the many dos and don’ts of police reform are not hard to spot. During the course of the CSIS series, a consensus emerged about some of the rules of thumb that should be applied to police support programs. None of these ideas is necessarily new or revolutionary but given the fairly long history of U.S. efforts to work with foreign police, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Instead, paying more attention to the shortcomings of past efforts can help to inform current and future approaches.

- **Adapt and experiment.** Police reform efforts will be in vain unless they are culturally relevant and reflect realities on the ground. Programs must be tailored to individual countries. While the principles of good policing can be imported, it is not possible to take a police system that works effectively in one place, transplant it into an alien environment, and expect it to work just as well in its new location. In recent years, it has become popular to prescribe the community policing model to countries almost as a default option. But it is not necessarily the best solution in many African countries, where public trust in the police is virtually nonexistent. At least in the short term, resources might be better directed toward helping the police build up basic levels of competence in the hope that public trust will follow later on.
In the same way that boiler plate approaches to police reform can be counterproductive, inflexible program implementation can also limit the chances of success. For this reason, it is important to empower program implementers so that they have the authority and confidence to adjust to changing realities, adapting programs as needs dictate. Programs that look good on paper in Washington do not necessarily work on the ground.

Finally, the United States could do a better job of listening to host countries' needs at the project assessment stage and making them active partners at all steps of the police reform process, from the program design through to implementation phases.

- **Get local buy-in.** Change cannot be effected from outside pressure alone; it is reliant on the cooperation, active participation, and leadership of people in the host country government and at all levels of the police organization. Many political leaders in Africa tend to regard the police as their own private security force and feel free to intervene directly in its management. They will not willingly give up this power without an incentive to do so. Program makers must acknowledge existing power structures and provide incentives to potential partners, giving people a reason to embrace reform. This might come in the form of diplomatic or economic support to governments. Other incentives will need to be aimed at the police themselves. Senior and mid-ranking police officials might be offered inducements such as training in the United States in return for assistance with reform efforts. At the beat cop level, improved pay and conditions are the most effective way of rooting out corruption. After all, police officers have families to support and if presented with no alternative they will resort to corrupt means to ensure they are provided for. The vast majority of police officers strive to behave professionally and will respond positively if they are given a reason to take pride in their job.

- **Get quality people.** One of the main challenges standing in the way of security and justice sector reform efforts is the public perception in many African countries that the police are corrupt, incompetent, and abusive. The process of overcoming public cynicism and distrust can only begin when the quality of police personnel is improved, both through internal reform and recruitment from outside. The police must be seen as an attractive career option for some of the best and brightest in society rather than as a repository for people who failed to make the grade in the military. Efforts must be devoted to ensuring that quality applicants are selected, which means setting robust recruitment standards and vetting procedures, ensuring that sufficient numbers of female officers are hired, and getting the ethnic balance right. It also means having well-run training academies with good curricula, run by competent managers. From the donor perspective, the quality of the training on offer is the important thing to analyze, rather than the number of recruits processed. Attracting quality personnel is one challenge; retaining them quite another. For this reason, attention must be given to setting up adequate pay structures and a fair promotions system that rewards on-the-job performance over issues such as ethnicity or personal connections. A process of internal reform will also be necessary to instill good working practices and professionalism among existing staff members and to weed out those who resist change.
Many foreign-assisted police reform efforts concentrate on improving frontline policing staff. After all, putting more police on the streets is a more eye-catching outcome for donors, giving project managers a clear deliverable they can offer to their superiors. Too often, the needs of “back office” police staff are neglected. A police institution cannot function without the support of managers, office workers, and budget planners. Establishing this support infrastructure is crucial: this includes the smooth running of such diverse functions as payroll, personnel, evaluation mechanisms, internal inspections, planning systems, and budgets. In addition, police must possess the basic equipment to do their jobs, including functioning offices that at least have stationary if not computers, places at the police station for the safe storage of evidence and firearms, and vehicles such as patrol cars, motorbikes, or bicycles so they are able to respond to emergency calls and travel to crime scenes.

Issues like the ones highlighted above demonstrate the fact that police reform is in essence an institution-building endeavor. Putting in place functioning systems and bureaucracies is just as important as getting quality staff.

- **Be clear about what police do and what they don’t do.** Faced with high crime rates and public demands for a clampdown on insecurity, some African governments are tempted to arm the police and turn them into a quasi-military force (see box 3). But police are not meant to fight wars or counterinsurgency campaigns. They should not be using heavy weapons, and ideally they should not be conducting joint patrols with the military. For a start, they are liable to get killed, given their limited training for this kind of work. Second, they will never build trust with the public if their activities are not ring-fenced from those of the military or turned into what William Rosenau calls “low-cost trigger pullers.”

- **The importance of police doctrine.** No institution can run smoothly without a set of standard operating procedures governing the way its employees are supposed to work and deal with the public. These include codes of ethics, use-of-force doctrine, and emergency planning guidelines. Good doctrine draws the boundaries within which police officers are expected to operate and lays out the standards they are expected to meet. Many African states lack basic use-of-force codes for police, which leave police officers without guidance and citizens with no clear recourse when abuses occur. This is an area in which the United States can usefully assist; programs carried out by ICITAP to develop civil disorder management plans and use-of-force policies in countries like Ghana and Tanzania are relatively low-investment interventions with potentially high-impact returns.

---

Box 3. Military-style Policing in Africa: Responding to Public Pressure to Get Tough on Crime

The end of the Apartheid regime prompted a comprehensive effort to restructure the South African Police, which had been associated with some of the worst abuses under the previous regime. The result was the South African Police Service (SAPS), created in 1994. The strong influence of international donors in this rebuilding process meant that an emphasis was placed on reorienting the police, turning it from a force into a service that provided community policing. However, this new approach was soon called into question when crime rates rocketed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The desire for the police to be publicly accountable became a secondary concern, drowned out by the public clamor for the police to “get tough” on crime.

During a meeting with police commissioners in late 2009, President Jacob Zuma said that in light of South Africa’s “abnormal crime problem” the police should be given additional powers to use lethal force. He said he considered the police to be a “force” rather than a “service.” 8 Accordingly, his minister of police began moves to amend the Criminal Procedure Act to enable police to shoot to kill, drastically reducing the list of proscriptions on officers opening fire in the line of duty. 9 A parallel effort got under way to bring back military-style ranks to the police. Proponents of the scheme said it would instill more discipline into the organization, but civil society groups claimed that the proposal was a diversion and that the SAPS was being turned into a paramilitary force akin to its predecessor.

U.S. programs have zigzagged back and forth to reflect South Africa’s change of focus. Recent collaborations have centered on paramilitary-style antiterrorism training. The U.S. embassy in Pretoria arranged for a group of Special Task Force commandos to visit the United States in September 2010 to undergo training in crisis response skills and terrorist incidents. 10 In March 2010, the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance Program trained SAPS officers in how to respond to attacks with weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). 11

- **Think beyond the state.** While institutional reform is central to efforts to improve the quality of policing in Africa, the United States should be sensitive to accusations of state building. It is important to appreciate that most policing in Africa is not done by the state. Bruce Baker of Coventry University estimates that as much as 80 percent of policing is done by a range of actors including “customary leaders, religious organizations, ethnic associations, community police forums, neighborhood organizations, local and international security companies, and local

---

entrepreneurs.” In the same way, many Africans prefer to resolve their disputes through traditional rather than statutory legal mechanisms. As a consequence, programs that fail to engage with nonstate actors and institutions will have a limited impact at best. A combination of approaches to police development that engage both at the state and nonstate level might be the best approach. This is easier said than done. The U.S. government is neither comfortable nor experienced in engaging with subnational structures. In addition, there are human rights concerns about the approaches taken by some nonstate organizations (although these concerns are equally applicable to some of the national police forces with which the United States has engaged). As a starting point, the U.S. government should work with local institutions to map nonstate policing activities and identify viable potential partners from among them.

Conclusion

The police are one of the least effective institutions in Africa. Their failure to perform has consequences not only for the safety of their own citizens but for those of the United States. Across the length of the security spectrum, from conflict-scarred countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia on one end to established, stable democracies like South Africa on the other, the police are regarded with suspicion by large sections of the general public. The prevailing Western image of the police officer as someone to turn to in times of need has been inverted in Africa, where police are often seen as a threat to be avoided. If Africa is to shed its image as a continent where rule of law is weak and security is patchy, reforming the police is a crucial place to start.

The United States recognizes the importance of strengthening African institutions, but too often the police have been low down the list of priorities—bypassed in security-focused efforts in favor of the military, and in governance-focused efforts in favor of less “menacing” institutions. In many ways, this is a reflection of the domestic difficulties of engaging effectively with police on a national level. The bureaucratic structure of the criminal justice system in the United States does not lend itself to effective collaboration with foreign police organizations. The police structure is decentralized, and there are few incentives in place to encourage police officers to volunteer their services abroad. Within the federal government, responsibility for police development is shared among multiple agencies, none of which possesses all the tools in terms of expertise, funding, and desire to do the job effectively. Within the State Department, INL has the funding and the desire but lacks the in-house expertise. At DOJ, ICITAP has the expertise and the desire but lacks the funding. Ironically, USAID lacks all three but arguably has the best institutional mindset to take on the job. The task of building effective police institutions is in essence a job of development, albeit one with potential implications for national security. It requires a long-term approach and sustainable funding, and it must be integrated into broader efforts to build up the criminal justice sector as a whole, including courts, prisons, and government ministries.

Faced with these bureaucratic challenges and the historic reluctance of U.S. taxpayers and their representatives in Congress to fund long-term civilian Security Sector Reform efforts, it would be tempting for the United States to reject the task of police reform as just too difficult. This would be a serious mistake. With better planning, a streamlined bureaucratic approach, and a clearer set of objectives, the United States can have a strong influence on building police organizations in Africa that are professional, accountable, and serve their people.

There are strong incentives for the United States to prioritize police development abroad and to do a better job of it than is currently being done. In a globalized world, weak security in faraway places has a tendency to have knock-on effects closer to home. The inability of the police to tackle terrorism and organized crime in Africa ultimately places Americans at risk. But above all, failure to act would be a huge disservice to the many millions of people across Africa whose development prospects are being held back by chronic instability, high crime levels, and the inability or in some cases unwillingness of their national police to do anything about it. Africa’s economic prospects are dependent to a large extent on the ability of its governments to provide an environment where people are able to go to work, gain skills and education, make money, and provide for their families. African security and African development are mutually reinforcing. The United States should recognize this link and redouble its efforts to help the police play their part in providing a safe environment where people can thrive.
Appendix. Overview of Major Police Support Efforts by the United States in Africa

Department of State

- Bureau of African Affairs/Office of Regional Security Affairs (AF/RSA). A functional office within the Africa Bureau, AF/RSA oversees State Department programs in Africa relating to Security Sector Reform in general, including police.

- Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). INL is the major coordinating, policymaking, and oversight agency within the State Department charged with tackling the global spread of drugs and crime. In pursuit of that objective, one of its core missions is to build up the capacity of criminal justice systems and law enforcement agencies overseas. INL is the focal point of the U.S. government’s police reform efforts because it decides which agencies are qualified to receive money granted by the Foreign Operations Appropriation Act and dispenses contracts to do the work. The mainstay of the INL budget is the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) account, which amounted to just under $1.7 billion in 2010, the vast majority of which was earmarked. Just over $35 million of INCLE funds were allocated to Africa in 2010. This modest sum was channeled toward disrupting the narcotics trade in West Africa and building up regional counterterrorism capacity, as well as a number of country-specific programs. The largest of these is in Sudan, which received $16 million of INCLE funding in 2010. INL manages programs to develop the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) and develop other criminal justice institutions. It also trains and equips police units in the United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). In Liberia, INL funds advisers to train and equip the national police, particularly its Emergency Response Unit, an armed special weapons and tactics (SWAT) unit within the main force. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, INL funds efforts to build a border patrol police force and train officers to investigate gender-based violence. INL also helps fund five International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEAs) worldwide, including one in Botswana. The ILEAs select mid-level police officers from across the continent for training in management skills and setting strategic

---

13 This list is by no means exhaustive. It does not, for example, include contributions made by the Departments of Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security and other agencies of the State Department; nor does it look below the federal level to include the various partnerships initiated by state and local police with counterpart forces in Africa. Its main purpose is to give a snapshot of the diverse number of actors and activities related to police reform overseas.

14 Interview with INL officials, January 2010.

priorities for fighting crime. The ILEA template is being expanded in Africa with the establishment of a new regional security training center in Ghana.

- **U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).** USAID has not played a significant role in police development since the 1970s, when concerns about human rights abuses committed by U.S.-trained security forces in Latin America and Vietnam led to a congressional prohibition on civilian agencies using federal funds to train foreign law enforcement agencies. However, if one considers police reform as a single element within the broader objective of justice sector development, USAID’s role assumes greater importance. The Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) oversees a range of programs, many of them through the Rule of Law Division within its Office of Democracy and Governance. These include strengthening the judicial system and training magistrates and judges in Liberia; promoting rule of law and tackling corruption in Nigeria; and a raft of Security Sector Reform and conflict prevention programs in Southern Sudan focused on promoting community engagement in the institutions of governance, including the security sector. The Office of Transition Initiatives is another important player, providing short-term assistance across a range of sectors to countries that are in crisis or emerging from conflict.

- **Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS).** S/CRS was designed to coordinate and lead U.S. government reconstruction efforts in post-conflict states, including institution building and strengthening. In reality, it has never been empowered to do this job, having been deprived of funds and attention. S/CRS manages the Civilian Response Corps (CRC), a group of volunteers drawn from nine U.S. agencies that can be sent to countries emerging from conflict at short notice to engage in reconstruction efforts. Many CRC staff have expertise in the area of rule of law, including police training, justice sector development, and managing corrections facilities. One of S/CRS’s largest operations is in Sudan, where it has been involved in conflict management and contingency planning, particularly in the run-up to the referendum on southern secession in January 2011. The QDDR proposes to elevate S/CRS by folding it into a new Bureau for Crisis and Stabilization Operations, a department that can “serve as the locus for policy and operational solutions for crisis, conflict, and instability.” It also proposes expanding the Civilian Response Corps and broadening the number of agencies that participate in its operations.

**Department of Justice (DOJ)**

- **International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP).** ICITAP is the only specialized agency within the U.S. government dedicated to training and developing police services overseas and building up the criminal justice sector in general. It has a staff of 431, 67 of

---

17 Ibid., p. 145.
them federal employees, and a budget of just under $70 million in 2010. Its work includes basic police training, boosting police capacity to conduct investigations, border policing, development of police doctrine, including civil disorder management and use-of-force policies, community policing, and the design of criminal records management systems. Its role is advisory only; it does not provide operational policing. ICITAP also runs programs to develop corrections facilities and train prison staff. In Africa, it runs programs in nine countries including South Africa, Kenya, Benin, and Zambia. ICITAP’s ambitions are limited by a lack of financial independence. Although housed within DOJ, ICITAP is not a line item on the DOJ budget. Its funding comes from a variety of sources including INL, USAID, DOD, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). It is also obliged to follow the policy goals set by INL.

- **Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training Program (OPDAT).** OPDAT supports judicial reform overseas by providing assistant U.S. attorneys (AUSAs) and criminal division attorneys as advisers to foreign governments. OPDAT currently has 51 such officials serving as resident legal advisers (RLAs) in 33 countries. OPDAT operates in only two countries in Africa: Kenya and Benin. Like ICITAP, OPDAT receives the bulk of its funding from INL and USAID.

- **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF).** Although their main focus is on current criminal investigations relating to the United States, DOJ’s operational law enforcement agencies play a small role in building capacity among foreign police forces. In Ghana, for example, DEA is setting up and training a vetted unit of police specializing in drug investigations. Like ICITAP, OPDAT receives the bulk of its funding from INL and USAID.

- **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF).** Although their main focus is on current criminal investigations relating to the United States, DOJ’s operational law enforcement agencies play a small role in building capacity among foreign police forces. In Ghana, for example, DEA is setting up and training a vetted unit of police specializing in drug investigations.

**Department of Defense (DOD)**

Although DOD is only involved tangentially in nonmilitary security sector development, it is an important provider of train-and-equip programs in Africa, some of which involve the police. It is also the major source of funding for Security Sector Reform in general:

- **The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program** is geared primarily for military personnel but provides for the training of nonmilitary personnel in counternarcotics.

- **Other counternarcotics funds** are made available to police in Africa by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), most of them under Section 1004 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 1991.

---

19 Ibid.
20 Interview with staff member at U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, August 2010.
21 Section 1004 allows DOD funds to be used to provide counternarcotics assistance and training for foreign security forces, including foreign police forces. In addition, Section 1033 of the National Defense Authorization
The U.S. Army supports the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU), an international training mission for gendarmes-type forces led by Italy.

The African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership (AMLEP) is a joint initiative between the U.S. Africa Command and the U.S. Coast Guard to develop coast-guard functions in West Africa by teaching local law enforcement officials how to conduct investigations into smuggling, illegal fishing, and other sea-based crimes.

Private Contractors

A shortage of personnel with policing expertise within the U.S. government means that private contractors play a significant part in implementing police support programs overseas. In Africa, State Department and other U.S. government programs are carried out by companies including PAE, MPRI, and DynCorp International. The use of private contractors has been a controversial issue, prompting concerns about public accountability and a debate about whether police training is a job best left to companies whose ultimate interest is their bottom line. However, those who criticize private contractors’ efforts out of hand ignore the fact that most contractors engaged in this work are highly experienced individuals, many of them with long careers in the federal government. The reality is that the government faces a huge shortfall of suitably qualified personnel in the area of Security Sector Reform and will therefore continue to rely on contractors for the foreseeable future until that gap is filled.

Act of 1998 allows the secretary of defense to provide equipment and support for designated countries in counternarcotics activities. In Africa, these countries are Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. In addition, Section 1022 of the National Defense Authorization Act allows for joint task force support for counternarcotics activities to be extended to law enforcement agencies conducting counter-terrorism activities.
A More Strategic U.S. Approach to Police Reform in Africa

Authors
Richard Downie
Jennifer G. Cooke

April 2011