GAO

Report to the Ranking Member, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

February 2008

COMBATING TERRORISM

State Department's Antiterrorism Program Needs Improved Guidance and More Systematic Assessments of Outcomes

GAO

Accountability ★ Integrity ★ Reliability

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State Department's Antiterrorism Program Needs Improved Guidance and More Systematic Assessments of Outcomes

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of State's (State) Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program's objectives are to provide partner nations with counterterrorism training and equipment, improve bilateral ties, and increase respect for human rights. State's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT) provides policy guidance and its Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Antiterrorism Assistance, (DS/T/ATA) manages program operations. GAO assessed (1) State's guidance for determining ATA priorities, (2) how State coordinates ATA with other counterterrorism programs, (3) the extent State established ATA program goals and measures, and (4) State's reporting on U.S. international counterterrorism assistance. To address these objectives, GAO reviewed State documents and met with cognizant officials in Washington, D.C., and four ATA program partner nations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO suggests that Congress reconsider the requirement that State prepare an annual report on U.S. counterterrorism assistance. GAO also recommends that State review its ATA program guidance, its use of needs assessments, and measures for assessing the ATA program. State generally agreed with our recommendations regarding the ATA program, and supported the matter we suggest for congressional consideration.

What GAO Found

S/CT provides minimal guidance to help prioritize ATA program recipients, and S/CT and DS/T/ATA do not systematically align ATA assistance with U.S. assessments of foreign partner counterterrorism needs. S/CT provides policy guidance to DS/T/ATA through quarterly meetings and a tiered list of priority countries, but the list does not provide guidance on country counterterrorism-related program goals, objectives, or training priorities. S/CT and DS/T/ATA also did not consistently use country-specific needs assessments and program reviews to plan assistance.

S/CT has established mechanisms to coordinate the ATA program with other U.S. international efforts to combat terrorism. S/CT holds interagency meetings with representatives from the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, and Treasury and other agencies as well as ambassador-level regional strategic coordinating meetings. GAO did not find any significant duplication or overlap among the various U.S. international counterterrorism efforts.

State has made progress in establishing goals and intended outcomes for the ATA program, but S/CT and DS/T/ATA do not systematically assess the outcomes and, as a result, cannot determine the effectiveness of program assistance. For example, although sustainability is a principal focus, S/CT and DS/T/ATA have not set clear measures of sustainability or integrated sustainability into program planning.

State reporting on U.S. counterterrorism assistance abroad has been incomplete and inaccurate. S/CT has not provided a congressionally mandated annual report to Congress on U.S. government-wide assistance related to combating international terrorism since 1996. After 1996, S/CT has only submitted to Congress annual reports on the ATA program. However, these reports contained inaccurate program information, such as the number of students trained and courses offered. Additionally, the reports lacked comprehensive information on the results of program assistance that would be useful to Congress.

Training Exercise at ATA Facility in Colombia

Source: GAO.

United States Government Accountability Office

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Abbreviations

ATA	Antiterrorism Assistance
DS/T/ATA	Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Antiterrorism Assistance
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act of 1993
S/CT	Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism
State	Department of State

February 29, 2008

The Honorable Christopher Shays
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Shays:

Combating terrorism has become the nation's top national security goal
and the highest strategic objective at U.S. embassies worldwide. The U.S.
Department of State (State) is the lead federal agency responsible for
coordinating and supervising U.S. international counterterrorism efforts,
and directly supports the objectives set forth in the U.S. government's
National Strategy for Combating Terrorism Abroad. This mission involves
collaborating with various other U.S. government agencies working
overseas, such as the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and
Justice, as well as with foreign partners and allies facing terrorist threats.

State's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) has assumed an increasingly
important role in U.S. counterterrorism efforts, and is a key mechanism in
State's efforts to help foreign nations improve their ability to combat
terrorism. Funding for ATA has increased over fourfold in recent years—
from $38 million in fiscal year 2001 to $175 million in fiscal year 2007.
ATA's legislatively mandated [1] objectives are to (1) enhance the
antiterrorism skills of friendly countries by providing counterterrorism
training and equipment; (2) improve bilateral ties with partner nations by
offering assistance; and (3) increase respect for human rights by sharing
modern, humane and effective antiterrorism techniques with foreign civil
authorities. Within State, the Office of the Coordinator for
Counterterrorism (S/CT) and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of
Antiterrorism Assistance (DS/T/ATA)[2] oversee and manage ATA. Specific
roles and responsibilities for S/CT and DS/T/ATA are described in a 1991

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[1] 22 U.S.C. §§ 2349aa, 2349aa-1.

[2] ATA is part of a training directorate within Diplomatic Security comprised of the Office of
Antiterrorism Assistance, the Office of Training and Performance Support, and the Office
of Mobile Security Training.

internal policy guidance memorandum and summarized in State's Foreign Affairs Manual. As outlined in these documents, S/CT is responsible for providing written policy guidance, including suggested regional and country training priorities, for ATA. DS/T/ATA is responsible for implementing and managing program operations, including developing annual, country-specific plans that designate the type of assistance to be provided, consistent with country program goals and objectives.

In response to your request, we reviewed State's implementation, coordination, assessment, and reporting on ATA. Specifically, we assessed (1) State's guidance for determining country recipients and types of program assistance to provide; (2) how State coordinates ATA with other U.S. government counterterrorism programs; (3) the extent to which State establishes clear ATA goals, and measures sustainability of program outcomes; and (4) State's reporting on U.S. international counterterrorism assistance.

To address these objectives, we reviewed and analyzed State planning, funding, and reporting documents concerning ATA. Our work focused primarily on the time period from fiscal year 2001 to fiscal year 2007, although we included more recent data where available and appropriate. We interviewed officials from S/CT and DS/T/ATA, including ATA program managers responsible for each of the six in-country programs—Afghanistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines—and visited four of the six in-country programs.[3] In these countries, we reviewed country-specific program documents, and interviewed ATA in-country program managers, course instructors, and other contractors; U.S embassy officials responsible for managing counterterrorism assistance and activities; and partner nation government officials. We also observed various types of ATA training and equipment that were provided to partner nation security units. We found funding and program data DS/T/ATA provided to us, with the exception of certain program data provided in DS/T/ATA annual reports to Congress, sufficiently reliable for our purposes. We conducted this performance audit from November 2006 through January 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable

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[3]The four countries we visited comprised about 55 percent of total ATA funding for training and training-related activities in fiscal year 2006, and about 43 percent of funding in fiscal year 2007.

basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. (See app. I for a more complete description of our scope and methodology.)

Results in Brief

In implementing ATA, S/CT provides minimal guidance to help prioritize which countries receive program assistance, and S/CT and DS/T/ATA do not systematically align types of program assistance with U.S. assessments of foreign partner counterterrorism needs.

- S/CT provides policy guidance to DS/T/ATA through quarterly meetings in the form of a tiered list of priority countries. However, this list does not provide guidance on country counterterrorism-related program goals, objectives, or training priorities that DS/T/ATA could use to implement a country-specific counterterrorism program and ensure that assistance provided is consistent with U.S. policy objectives. In addition, other factors influence which countries receive program assistance, such as an increase in the U.S. government's diplomatic or political interest in a country that, in some cases, may not have been on the tiered list.

- S/CT and DS/T/ATA did not consistently use country-specific needs assessments and program reviews to plan what types of assistance to provide to partner nations. In five of the countries receiving the largest amounts of program assistance since fiscal year 2002, we found that program managers did not use the assessments as the basis for developing ATA country-specific plans. According to State policy documents, the assessments are to guide ATA resource decisions and form the basis of country-specific assistance plans. However, the assessments included broad-ranging recommendations for counterterrorism assistance, but they generally did not prioritize assistance to be provided.

S/CT has established mechanisms to coordinate ATA with other U.S. international efforts to combat terrorism. S/CT holds biweekly interagency meetings with representatives from the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Treasury, and other agencies as well as ambassador-level regional strategic coordinating meetings in order to help coordinate all U.S. government international counterterrorism training assistance and avoid duplication of efforts. Based on our review of program documents and interviews and meetings with counterterrorism officials in the four countries we visited, we did not find any significant duplication or overlap among the various U.S. international counterterrorism efforts.

State has made progress in establishing goals and intended outcomes for ATA, but S/CT and DS/T/ATA do not systematically assess the outcomes of program assistance. Since fiscal year 2006, State planning documents list sustainability—that is, enabling partner nations to achieve advanced and sustainable counterterrorism capabilities—as a key intended program outcome. State officials confirmed that sustainability is the principal focus of program assistance in all participant countries. However, S/CT and DS/T/ATA have not set clear measures of sustainability, and have not integrated sustainability into program planning. As a result, S/CT and DS/T/ATA cannot determine the effectiveness of program assistance or assess the extent to which ATA is meeting its longer-term, congressionally mandated objectives; specifically:

- Cognizant S/CT and DS/T/ATA officials were not aware that a key 2007 State-level planning document[4] included numerical targets and past results regarding the number of countries that had attained an advanced level of sustainable counterterrorism capability, and program officials also were unaware of any existing measures of sustainability.

- DS/T/ATA asserts that the needs assessments and program reviews are the primary means of measuring program results. Although the assessments and program reviews aim to evaluate overall partner nation counterterrorism capabilities across a broad range of areas, the process does not explicitly provide a means for evaluating sustainability or measuring the specific outcomes of program assistance.

- DS/T/ATA program managers we interviewed had disparate views on the definition of sustainability, and had not received guidance on how to measure sustainability within the context of their respective country assistance programs. As a result, the country assistance plans we reviewed did not consistently address sustainability or establish annual objectives, measures, and program activities for achieving that outcome.

State reporting on U.S. counterterrorism assistance abroad has been incomplete and inaccurate. Specifically, S/CT has not provided a congressionally mandated report to Congress on U.S. government-wide assistance related to combating international terrorism since 1996.[5] After

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[4]Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, *Joint Performance Summary, Fiscal Year 2007* (Washington, D.C., 2008).

[5]22 U.S.C. § 2349aa-7 (requiring the Secretary of State to report annually on the amount and nature of all assistance provided by the U.S. government related to international terrorism).

1996, S/CT has only submitted to Congress annual reports prepared by DS/T/ATA on the program. Moreover, we found that the ATA annual reports we analyzed contained inaccuracies regarding basic program information, such as the number of students trained and courses offered. Additionally, the ATA annual reports lacked comprehensive information on the results of program assistance that would be useful to Congress in evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

Given changes in the overall scope and nature of U.S. international counterterrorism assistance and the fact that State has not submitted the mandated report on such matters since 1996, we include a matter for congressional consideration regarding the legislative requirement for State's reporting on U.S. counterterrorism assistance. Additionally, to ensure that ATA, as a key element of State's broader international counterterrorism efforts, is focused on improving partner nations' counterterrorism capabilities and aligned with overall U.S. counterterrorism policy goals, we recommend that the Secretary of State improve internal program guidance. We make other recommendations to help S/CT and DS/T/ATA more effectively link assistance needs to resource allocations and better assess program outcomes.

State provided us comments on a draft of this report. (See app. III.) Overall, State agreed with our principal findings and recommendations regarding the ATA program, and outlined a number of actions to address these matters. State also supported the matter we suggest for congressional consideration.

Background

Congress authorized State's ATA program in 1983 through the Foreign Assistance Act.[6] According to the legislation, and as noted above, the purpose of ATA is "(1) to enhance the antiterrorism skills of friendly countries by providing training and equipment to deter and counter terrorism; (2) to strengthen the bilateral ties of the United States with friendly governments by offering concrete assistance in this area of great mutual concern; and (3) to increase respect for human rights by sharing with foreign civil authorities modern, humane, and effective antiterrorism techniques."

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[6]Pub. L. No. 87-195, Pt. II, §571, as added by Pub. L. No. 98-151, §101(b)(2), 97 Stat. 972 (1983) (codified at 22 U.S.C. § 2349a).

ATA Program Assistance

ATA offers a wide range of counterterrorism assistance to partner nations, but most assistance consists of (1) training courses on tactical and strategic counterterrorism issues and (2) grants of counterterrorism equipment, such as small arms, bomb detection equipment, vehicles, and computers. DS/T/ATA also provides specialized consultations to partner nations on specific counterterrorism issues on an as-needed basis.[7] ATA curricula and training focus on enhancing critical counterterrorism capabilities, which cover issues such as crisis management and response, cyberterrorism, dignitary protection, bomb detection, airport security, border control, kidnap intervention and hostage negotiation and rescue, response to incidents involving weapons of mass destruction, countering terrorist finance, and interdiction of terrorist organizations. According to DS/T/ATA, all of its courses emphasize law enforcement under the rule of law and sound human rights practices.

DS/T/ATA provides training primarily through contract employees and interagency agreements with other U.S. law enforcement agencies. DS/T/ATA selects, oversees, and evaluates all contracted instructors. According to DS/T/ATA, most instructors are retired law enforcement or military personnel who have expertise specific to the ATA curricula.

DS/T/ATA provides training both onsite in the partner nation and at facilities in the United States, depending on the nature of the course and the availability of special equipment and necessary facilities. However, in fiscal year 2007, DS/T/ATA delivered nearly 90 percent of all training overseas due, in part, to the lack of domestic facilities in the United States during a transition in contracting for U.S.-based facilities.[8] ATA has provided increasingly more assistance overseas over the past several years. An S/CT official noted that the trend reflects a recognition that training is generally more effectively delivered in the partner nation.

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[7]For example, DS/T/ATA trainers conducted a critical infrastructure evaluation and provided training for the Bahamian government in preparation for the 2006 Cricket World Cup.

[8]Between fiscal years 2000 and 2006, DS/T/ATA provided most U.S.-based training through cooperative agreements for facilities and instructional services. Pursuant to State's Office of Inspector General concerns about the cost and lack of DS/T/ATA direct control of program management under the agreements, DS/T/ATA discontinued the cooperative agreements at the end of fiscal year 2006. State has issued a request for proposals to procure similar services, but the contract has not yet been awarded.

DS/T/ATA has provided most overseas assistance by sending instructors to the partner nation to conduct a specific course. The partner nation and the U.S. embassy provide support in designating a facility or training site and assisting DS/T/ATA headquarters staff with other logistical issues.[9] DS/T/ATA has established an in-country training presence through bilateral arrangements with six priority partner nations: Afghanistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines. These countries were the largest recipients of program assistance from fiscal year 2002 through fiscal year 2007. In general, these programs included permanent training facilities such as classrooms, computer labs, and shooting and demolition ranges, which DS/T/ATA used to provide training on an ongoing basis. Each of the in-country programs has a permanently posted in-country ATA program manager, along with other ATA staff at the U.S. post in the host nation—in some cases, in-country staff included trainers and course instructors. (See fig. 1.)

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[9]Diplomatic Security's Regional Security Officers are directly responsible for overseeing the ATA program in each partner nation that receives assistance.

Figure 1: Training Exercise at ATA Facility in Colombia

Source: GAO.

ATA Program Funding

ATA is State's largest counterterrorism program, and receives appropriations under the Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs account. Fiscal year 2002 appropriations for ATA increased to about $158 million— over six times the level of funding appropriated in fiscal year 2000. Appropriations for the program have fluctuated since fiscal year 2002, and increased to over $175 million in fiscal year 2007, including supplemental appropriations. (See fig. 2.)

Figure 2: Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs Appropriations for Antiterrorism Efforts, Fiscal Years 2000 to 2008

Dollars in thousands

Fiscal year

☐ Other Antiterrorism Programs

▨ Antiterrorism Assistance Program
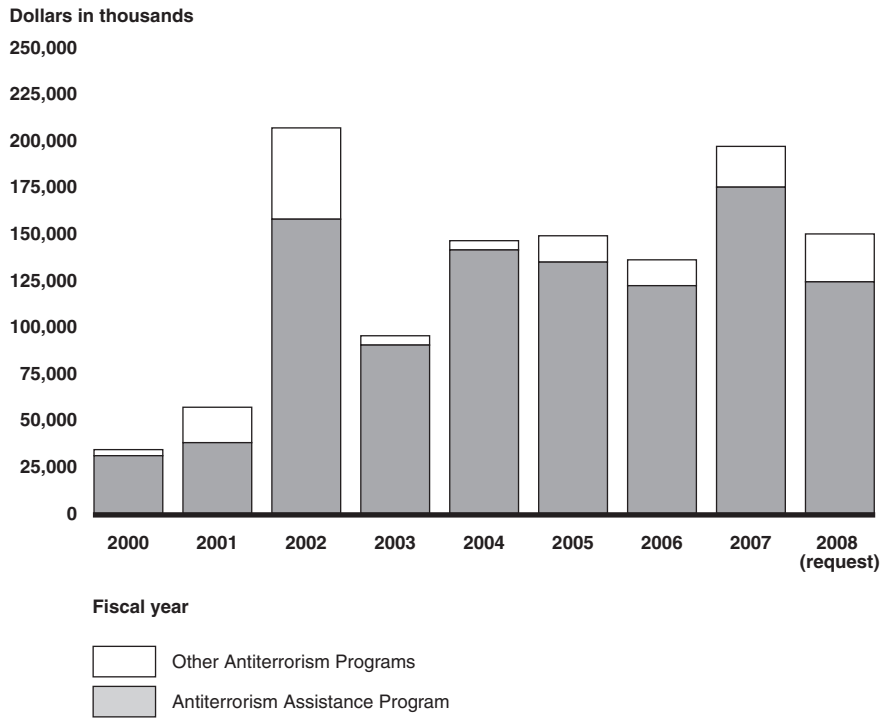
Source: Congressional Budget Justifications for Foreign Operations, fiscal years 2002 through 2008.

Notes: Includes regular, emergency response fund, and supplemental appropriations for ATA in fiscal years 2002 to 2005, as well as a $50 million supplemental appropriation in fiscal year 2007.

Other antiterrorism programs include the Terrorist Interdiction Program, Counterterrorism Engagement with Allies, and Counterterrorism Financing, among other programs.

From fiscal years 2002 to 2007, program assistance for the top 10 recipients of ATA allocations ranged from about $11 million to about $78 million. The top 10 recipients represented about 57 percent of ATA funding allocated for training and training-related activities over the 6-year period. ATA funding for the other 89 partner nations that received assistance during this period ranged from $9,000 to about $10.7 million. (See app. II for additional information on ATA funding for specific partner nations.)

ATA Program Management

The Coordinator for Counterterrorism, the head of S/CT, is statutorily[10] charged with the overall supervision (including policy oversight of resources) and coordination of the U.S. government's counterterrorism activities. The broadly mandated[11] role of the Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security, the head of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, includes implementing security programs to protect diplomatic personnel and advise chiefs of mission on security matters. Specific roles and responsibilities for S/CT and DS/T/ATA regarding ATA are described in a 1991 internal policy guidance memorandum, the Omnibus Diplomatic Security Act of 1986,[12] and incorporated into State's Foreign Affairs Manual.[13] Table 1 provides a summary of key responsibilities described in the guidance.

Table 1: Roles and Responsibilities for S/CT and DS/T/ATA in Managing ATA

S/CT	DS/T/ATA
Provide written policy guidance, including regional, country, and training priorities, and general guidance on the fiscal parameters of the program.	Develop country-specific training proposals for new host nation participants, including type of assistance to be provided, location of training, budget, and other relevant factors, consistent with S/CT policy guidance and the results of an initial assessment of host nation counterterrorism needs.
Lead delegation of U.S. government counterterrorism experts to assess needs, and establish policy goals and training objectives with partner nations in consultation with DS/T/ATA.	Develop annual training plan for each currently participating host nation that specifies types of assistance and short-term objectives, consistent with S/CT policy guidance.
Evaluate the extent to which ATA programs are furthering overall U.S. government counterterrorism goals.	Develop all training curricula, identify and select instructors, and coordinate all training logistics.
	Evaluate training effectiveness and progress toward training program objectives.

Source: GAO summary of State policy guidance.

As shown in table 1, S/CT is responsible for leading the initial assessment of a partner nation's counterterrorism needs, and DS/T/ATA is responsible for developing annual, country-specific plans. Under current program

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[10]22 U.S.C. § 2651a.

[11]State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security in its current form is an outgrowth of the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986 (Pub. L. No. 99-399, §§ 104-105).

[12]Pub. L. No. 99-399, §§ 104-105.

[13]The general responsibilities for S/CT and DS/T/ATA regarding the ATA program are described in the *2007 U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual, Volume 1– Organization and Functions*, 1 FAM 022.5 and 1 FAM 262.3-1.

operations, DS/T/ATA conducts an initial assessment of a new participant nation's counterterrorism capabilities, and conducts subsequent assessments—referred to as program reviews— every 2 to 3 years thereafter. In general, the needs assessments include input from the embassy teams, but the assessments themselves are conducted by technical experts contracted by DS/T/ATA. According to DS/T/ATA, the purpose of the needs assessment and program review process is to determine the forms of assistance for a partner nation to detect, deter, deny, and defeat terrorism; and to evaluate program effectiveness.

State's Implementation of ATA Lacks Guidance and Use of Country Needs Assessments

ATA lacks guidance beyond a tiered list of priority countries and assistance is not systematically aligned with counterterrorism needs. S/CT provides minimal policy guidance to help determine ATA priorities and ensure that assistance provided supports broader U.S. policy goals. In addition, S/CT and DS/T/ATA did not systematically use country-specific needs assessments and program reviews to plan what types of assistance to provide partner nations in accordance with State policy guidance. The assessments we reviewed had weaknesses and inconsistencies.

S/CT Provides a Tiered Country List, but Little Additional Policy Guidance

In accordance with the 1991 State policy guidance memorandum, S/CT prepares a tiered list of countries to help prioritize and determine where to provide ATA assistance. However, S/CT provides little additional guidance to DS/T/ATA regarding program priorities and how to allocate program funding. Additionally, other factors besides those reflected in the tiered list influence which countries receive assistance.

According to State officials, S/CT places countries on the tiered list in one of four priority categories based on criteria that address several factors, including country-specific threats and the level and depth of diplomatic and political engagement in a country. State officials indicated that other factors also may be considered in determining whether and where a country is placed on the list, such as the presence of a U.S. military base or a planned international sporting or cultural event with U.S. participation. Since 2006, S/CT has reviewed and discussed the tiered list—including changes, additions, or deletions—with DS/T/ATA during quarterly meetings. DS/T/ATA officials stated that DS/T/ATA was able to provide more substantial input and suggestions for the latest version of the tiered list because S/CT provided a draft list to DS/T/ATA for comment for the first time prior to the August 2007 meeting. As of August 2007, over 70 countries were on the list, with 12 to 24 countries in each of the four

categories. However, countries were not ranked or prioritized within each category.

In addition to the quarterly meetings, S/CT told us that they had established a series of regional roundtable discussions in 2006 between S/CT regional subject experts and DS/T/ATA counterparts. According to the S/CT official, the roundtables are intended as a means of identifying priority countries and their counterterrorism needs for purposes of developing budget requests.

S/CT provides little guidance to DS/T/ATA beyond the tiered list, although the 1991 State policy guidance memorandum states that S/CT's written policy guidance for the program should include suggested country training priorities. State's Office of Inspector General previously reported that earlier versions of S/CT's tiered list included additional guidance, such as the rationale for support, and suggested areas for training. However, S/CT began providing increasingly abbreviated guidance as its responsibilities beyond ATA grew after September 11, 2001.[14] While S/CT provides some additional guidance to DS/T/ATA during quarterly meetings and on other occasions, DS/T/ATA officials in headquarters and the field stated they received little or no guidance from S/CT beyond the tiered list. Officials responsible for the ATA in-country program in Colombia stated they had minimal interaction with S/CT. As a result, neither S/CT nor DS/T/ATA can ensure that program assistance provided to specific countries supports broader U.S. antiterrorism policy goals.

Other factors beyond S/CT's tiered list of countries, such as unforeseen events or new governmental initiatives, also influence which countries receive program assistance. We found that 10 countries on the tiered list did not receive ATA assistance in fiscal year 2007, while 13 countries not on the tiered list received approximately $3.2 million. S/CT and DS/T/ATA officials stated that assistance does not always align with the tiered list because U.S. foreign policy objectives sometimes cause State, in consultation with the President's National Security Council, to provide assistance to a non-tiered-list country.

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[14]See United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, Office of Inspector General, *Report of Inspection: Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism*, Report Number ISP-I-06-25A (March 2006).

S/CT and DS/T/ATA Do Not Systematically Align Program Assistance with Counterterrorism Needs

According to the 1991 State policy guidance memorandum and DS/T/ATA standard operations procedures, ATA country-specific needs assessments and program reviews are intended to guide program management and planning. However, S/CT and DS/T/ATA did not systematically use the assessments to determine what types of assistance to provide to partner nations or develop ATA country-specific plans. In addition, the assessments we reviewed had several weaknesses and inconsistencies. Although the 1991 State policy memorandum states that S/CT should lead the assessment efforts, a senior S/CT official stated that S/CT lacks the capacity to do so. As a result, DS/T/ATA has led interagency assessment teams in recent years, but the assessments and recommendations for types of assistance to be provided may not fully reflect S/CT policy guidance concerning overall U.S. counterterrorism priorities.

DS/T/ATA Does Not Consistently Use Country Needs Assessments

DS/T/ATA officials responsible for five of the top six recipients of ATA support—Colombia, Kenya, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines[15]—did not consistently use ATA country needs assessments and program reviews in making program decisions or to create annual country assistance plans. DS/T/ATA officials responsible for the in-country programs in four of these countries had not seen the latest assessments for their respective countries. While some officials responsible for three of these five in-country programs stated they had reviewed at least one of the assessments conducted for their countries since 2000, the officials said that the assessments were either not useful or that they were used for informational purposes only.

- The Regional Security Officer, Deputy Regional Security Officer, and DS/T/ATA Program Manager for Kenya had not seen any of the assessments that had been conducted for the country since 2000. Although the in-country program manager for Kenya was familiar with the assessments from her work in a previous position with DS/T/ATA, she stated that in general, the assessments were not very useful for determining what type of assistance to provide. She said that the initial

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[15]Each of these five countries receive a range of ATA training and other assistance through an in-country presence. The sixth in-country program, Afghanistan, also received significant program assistance during this period. According to DS/T/ATA officials, the scope of the in-country program in Afghanistan is more narrowly defined than other ATA programs; it focuses principally on training and monitoring a Presidential Protective Service.

needs assessment for Kenya failed to adequately consider local needs and capacity.

- The Regional Security Officer and Assistant Regional Security Officer for Indonesia stated they had not seen the latest assessment for the country. The DS/T/ATA program manager for Indonesia said that he recalled using one of the assessments as a "frame of reference" in making program and resource decisions. The in-country program manager also recalled seeing one of the assessments, but stated that he did not find the assessment useful given the changing terrorist landscape; therefore, he did not share it with his staff.

- The DS/T/ATA Program Manager for Pakistan stated that decisions on the types of assistance to provide in Pakistan were based primarily on the knowledge and experience of in-country staff regarding partner nation needs, rather than the needs assessments or program reviews. He added that he did not find the assessments useful, as the issues identified in the latest (2004) assessment for the country were already outdated.

Needs Assessments Generally Lacked Prioritized Recommendations and Were Inconsistent

We reviewed 12 of the 21 ATA country-specific needs assessments and program reviews[16] that, according to ATA annual reports, DS/T/ATA conducted between 2000 and 2007 for five of the six in-country programs.[17] The assessments and reviews generally included a range of recommendations for counterterrorism assistance, but did not prioritize assistance to be provided or include specific timeframes for implementation. Consequently, the assessments do not consistently provide a basis for targeting program assistance to the areas of a partner nation's greatest counterterrorism assistance need. Only two of the assessments—a 2000 needs assessment for Indonesia and a 2003 assessment for Kenya— prioritized the recommendations, although a 2004 assessment for Pakistan and a 2005 assessment for the Philippines listed one or two recommendations as priority ATA efforts. In addition, the information included in the assessments was not consistent and varied in linking recommendations to capabilities. Of the 12 assessments we reviewed:

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[16]DS/T/ATA was unable to provide nine assessments that were reportedly conducted for four of these countries between 2002 and 2007. According to DS/T/ATA officials, they were either unable to locate these assessments, written reports on the assessment visits were not completed, or the annual reports stating that they had been completed were inaccurate.

[17]The ATA in-country program in Afghanistan was not included in this analysis because the scope of the program is narrowly focused on presidential protection training.

- Nine included narrative on a range of counterterrorism capabilities, such as border security and explosives detection, but the number of capabilities assessed ranged from 5 to 25. The 2001 needs assessment for Colombia included narrative on the government's antikidnapping capability and equipment needs, but did not assess any counterterrorism capabilities. The 2002 assessment for Indonesia provided narrative on ATA assistance provided, but did not include an assessment of any counterterrorism capabilities.

- Only four of the assessments that assessed more than one capability linked recommendations provided to the relevant capabilities. Most of the recommendations in the assessments we reviewed were for ATA assistance, although some recommended host government actions to improve counterterrorism capability, or other U.S. government assistance.

- Six included capability ratings, but the types of ratings used varied. A 2003 assessment for Colombia rated eight capabilities, rating them 1 through 5 with definitions for each rating level; the 2004 assessment for Colombia rated 24 capabilities, rating them as poor, low, fair, or good, without any definitions.

- Two used a format that DS/T/ATA began implementing in 2001. The assessments following the new format generally included consistent types of information and clearly linked recommendations provided to an assessment of 25 counterterrorism capabilities. However, they did not prioritize recommendations or include specific timeframes for implementing the recommendations.

Country Assistance Plans Were Not Used or Were Not Linked to Needs Assessments

Although the 1991 State policy memorandum states that DS/T/ATA should create annual country assistance plans that specify training objectives and assistance to be provided based upon the needs assessments and program reviews, we found that S/CT and DS/T/ATA did not systematically use the assessments to create annual plans for the five in-country programs. DS/T/ATA officials we interviewed regarding the five in-country programs stated that in lieu of relying on the assessments or country assistance plans, program and resource decisions were primarily made by DS/T/ATA officials in the field based on their knowledge and experience regarding partner nation needs. Some DS/T/ATA officials said they did not find the country assistance plans useful. The program manager for Pakistan stated that he used the country assistance plan as a guide, but found that it did not respond to changing needs in the country. The ATA program manager for Kenya said that he had not seen a country assistance plan for that country.

We requested ATA country assistance plans conducted during fiscal years 2000-2006 for the five in-country programs included in our review, but S/CT and DS/T/ATA only provided three plans completed for three of the five countries. Specifically, S/CT and DS/T/ATA provided a 2006 ATA country assistance plan for Colombia, a 2007 plan for Pakistan, and a plan covering fiscal years 2006-2008 for the Philippines. DS/T/ATA officials stated that they were able to locate only draft and informal planning documents for Indonesia and Kenya, and that S/CT and DS/T/ATA did not develop plans for any programs prior to 2006.

Of the three ATA country assistance plans DS/T/ATA provided, we found that the plans did not link planned activities to recommendations provided in the needs assessments and program reviews. The current plan for the Philippines included a brief reference to a 2005 needs assessment, but the plan did not identify which recommendations from the 2005 assessment were intended to be addressed by current or planned efforts. The plan for Pakistan did not mention any of the assessments conducted for that country.

S/CT Has Established Various Mechanisms to Coordinate Program Assistance

As a part of its responsibility, S/CT has established mechanisms to coordinate the ATA program with other U.S. government international counterterrorism training assistance and to help avoid duplication of efforts. S/CT chairs biweekly interagency working group meetings of the Counterterrorism Security Group's Training Assistance Subgroup to provide a forum for high-level information sharing and discussion among U.S. agencies implementing international counterterrorism efforts.[18] The Training Assistance Subgroup includes representatives from the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Homeland Security, Treasury, and other agencies. S/CT also established the Regional Strategic Initiative in 2006 to coordinate regional counterterrorism efforts and strategy. S/CT described the Regional Strategic Initiative as a series of regionally based, interagency meetings hosted by U.S. embassies to identify key regional counterterrorism issues and develop a strategic approach to addressing them, among other goals. A senior S/CT official stated that meetings have generated new regional training priorities for ATA. As of November 2007, Regional Strategic Initiative meetings have been held for the East Africa,

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[18]The Counterterrorism Security Group is chaired by the National Security Council and is intended to serve as a means for U.S. agencies to share information and coordinate the response to terrorist threats against U.S. interests domestically and abroad.

Eastern Mediterranean, Iraq and Neighbors, Latin America, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Trans-Sahara, and Western Mediterranean regions.[19]

Based on our review of program documents, interviews, and meetings with officials in the four countries we visited, we did not find any significant duplication or overlap among U.S. agencies' country-specific training programs aimed at combating terrorism. Officials we met with in each of these countries noted that they participated in various embassy working group meetings, such as Counterterrorism Working Group and Law Enforcement Working Group meetings, during which relevant agencies shared information regarding operations and activities at post. DS/T/ATA officials also coordinated ATA with other counterterrorism efforts through daily informal communication among cognizant officials in the countries we visited.

State Has Made Progress in Establishing ATA Goals, but S/CT and DS/T/ATA Do Not Assess Sustainability

In response to concerns that ATA lacked elements of adequate strategic planning and performance measurement, State recently took action to define goals and measures related to the program's mandated objectives. S/CT and DS/T/ATA, however, do not systematically assess sustainability—that is, the extent to which assistance has enabled partner nations to achieve and sustain advanced counterterrorism capabilities. S/CT and DS/T/ATA lack clear measures and processes for assessing sustainability, and program managers do not consistently include sustainability in ATA planning.

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[19]A recent Congressional Research Service report noted that while interagency coordination on U.S. government efforts to strengthen weak and failing states appears to be increasing, analysts and U.S. officials have raised concerns about a lack of a strategic approach to related U.S. programs and policies. See CRS Report for Congress, *Weak and Failing States: Evolving Security Threats and U.S. Policy,* Order Code RL34253 (Nov.15, 2007).

State Has Recently Established ATA Goals and Measures, and Emphasizes Sustaining Partner Nations' Counterterrorism Capabilities

State did not have measurable performance goals and outcomes related to the mandated objectives for ATA prior to fiscal year 2003, but has recently made some progress to address the deficiency. State's Office of Inspector General recommended in 2001, 2005, and 2006 reports that S/CT and DS/T/ATA take steps to establish measurable long-term goals and evaluations of program performance. Similarly, State responded to issues raised in a 2003 Office of Management and Budget assessment[20] of ATA by developing specific goals and measures for each of the program's mandated objectives.

Since fiscal year 2006, State planning documents, including department and bureau-level performance plans, have listed enabling partner nations to achieve advanced and sustainable counterterrorism capabilities as a key program outcome. S/CT and DS/T/ATA officials further confirmed that sustainability is the principal intended outcome and focus of program assistance. In support of these efforts, DS/T/ATA appointed a Sustainment Manager in November 2006. The Sustainment Manager's broadly defined responsibilities include coordinating with other DS/T/ATA divisions to develop recommendations and plans to assist partner nations in developing sustainable counterterrorism capabilities.

S/CT and DS/T/ATA Do Not Assess Sustainability of Capabilities

Despite progress towards establishing goals and intended outcomes, State has not developed clear measures and a process for assessing sustainability and has not integrated the concept into program planning. The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993[21] (GPRA) requires agencies in charge of U.S. government programs and activities to identify goals and report on the degree to which goals are met. S/CT and DS/T/ATA officials noted the difficulty in developing direct quantitative measures of ATA outcomes related to partner nations' counterterrorism capabilities. However, GPRA and best practices cited by the Office of Management and Budget, us, and others provide flexible guidelines for agency and program managers to develop adequate measures of program effectiveness. Our past work also has stressed the importance of establishing program goals, objectives, priorities, milestones, and measures to use in monitoring

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[20]Office of Management and Budget conducted the review using the Program Assessment Rating Tool. These reviews examine specific program purpose and design; performance measurement, evaluations, and strategic planning; program management; and program results.

[21]Pub. L. No. 103-62, 107 Stat. 285, 287-88 (1993).

performance and assessing outcomes as critical elements of program management and effective resource allocation.[22]

We found that the measure for ATA's principal intended program outcome of sustainability is not clear. In its fiscal year 2007 Joint Performance Summary, State reported results and future year targets for the number of countries that had achieved an advanced, sustainable level of counterterrorism capability. According to the document, partner nations that achieve a sustainable level of counterterrorism would graduate from the program and no longer receive program assistance. However, program officials in S/CT and DS/T/ATA directly responsible for overseeing ATA were not aware that the Joint Performance Summary listed numerical targets and past results for the number of partner nations that had achieved sustainability, and could not provide an explanation of how State assessed the results. DS/T/ATA's Sustainment Manager also could not explain how State established and assessed the numerical targets in the reports. The Sustainment Manager further noted that, to his knowledge, S/CT and DS/T/ATA had not yet developed systematic measures of sustainability.

DS/T/ATA's current mechanism for evaluating partner nation capabilities does not include guidance or specific measures to assess sustainability. According to program guidance and DS/T/ATA officials, needs assessments and program reviews are intended to establish a baseline of a partner nation's counterterrorism capabilities and quantify progress through subsequent reviews. DS/T/ATA officials also asserted that the process is intended to measure the results of program assistance. However, the process does not explicitly address sustainability, and provides no specific information or instruction regarding how reviewers are to assess sustainability. Moreover, the process focuses on assessing a partner nation's overall counterterrorism capabilities, but does not specifically measure the results of program assistance. The assessment and review process also does not provide S/CT and DS/T/ATA a means for determining whether a partner nation's capabilities changed because of program assistance, the country's own efforts, or through assistance provided by other U.S. agencies or third countries. The head of DS/T/ATA's Assessment, Review, and Evaluations Unit told us that he had

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[22]GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Law Enforcement Agencies Lack Directives to Assist Foreign Nations to Identify, Disrupt, and Prosecute Terrorists*, GAO-07-697 (Washington, D.C.: June 25, 2007).

not received guidance to assess progress toward sustainability, and had only limited interaction with the Sustainment Manager on integrating sustainability into the assessment and review process.

DS/T/ATA has not systematically integrated sustainability into country-specific assistance plans, and we found a lack of consensus among program officials about how to address the issue. In-country program managers, embassy officials, instructors, and partner nation officials we interviewed held disparate views on how to define sustainability across all ATA participant countries, and many were not aware that sustainability was the intended outcome for the program. Several program officials stated that graduating a country and withdrawing or significantly reducing program assistance could result in a rapid decline in the partner nation's counterterrorism capabilities, and could undermine achieving other program objectives, such as improving bilateral relations. Further, although State has listed sustainability in State-level planning documents since 2006, S/CT and DS/T/ATA have not issued guidance on incorporating sustainability into country-specific planning, and none of the country assistance plans we reviewed consistently addressed the outcome. As a result, the plans did not include measurable annual objectives or planned activities targeted at enabling the partner nation to achieve sustainability. For example, Colombia's assistance plan listed transferring responsibility for the antikidnapping training to the Colombian government and described planned activities to achieve that goal. However, the plan did not include measurable objectives to determine whether activities achieve intended results. Although the plan for the Philippines stated that the country program goal for fiscal year 2007 was to "maximize sustainment," it did not include measures of sustainability or describe how planned activities would contribute to the intended outcome.

State Reporting on U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance Abroad Has Been Incomplete and Inaccurate

Since 1996, State has not complied with a congressional mandate[23] to report to Congress on U.S. international counterterrorism assistance. Additionally, State's annual reports on ATA have contained inaccurate data regarding basic program information, do not provide systematic assessments of program results, and lack other information necessary to evaluate program effectiveness.

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[23]22 U.S.C. § 2349aa-7.

S/CT Has Not Prepared a Mandated Report

The Foreign Assistance Act requires the Secretary of State to report annually on the amount and nature of all assistance provided by the U.S. government related to international terrorism.[24] Since 1996, State has submitted ATA annual reports rather than the report required by the statute.

The legislation that authorized ATA in 1983[25] required annual presentations to Congress of aggregate information on all countries that received program assistance. In 1985, Congress added a new, broader reporting obligation, requiring the Secretary of State to report on all assistance related to international terrorism provided by the U.S. government during the preceding fiscal year.[26] Although the original ATA-specific 1983 reporting provision was repealed in 1996,[27] the requirement for the broader report remains.

S/CT is responsible for preparing the reports on U.S. international counterterrorism assistance. The S/CT official directly responsible for ATA told us that he only recently became aware of the reporting requirement and noted confusion within State over what the statute required. He also asserted that the ATA annual report, which is prepared by DS/T/ATA, and State's annual "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report[28] were sufficiently responsive to congressional needs. He further noted that, in his view, it would be extremely difficult for State to compile and report on all U.S. government terrorism assistance activities, especially given the significant growth of agencies' programs since 2001. Officials in State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs indicated that, to their knowledge, they had never received an inquiry from congressional staff about the missing reports. DS/T/ATA officials told us DS/T/ATA has continued to produce the ATA annual report to Congress even after the reporting requirement was removed in 1996. However, State has not issued DS/T/ATA's annual report to Congress on ATA for fiscal year 2006 that was planned for release in 2007. DS/T/ATA officials noted that they did, however, complete and circulate the final report within State.

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[24] 22 U.S.C. § 2349aa-7.

[25] Pub. L. No. 98-151, § 101(b)(2), 97 Stat. 972 (1983).

[26] Pub. L. No. 99-83, Title V, § 502, 99 Stat. 220 (codified at 22 U.S.C. § 2349aa-7).

[27] Pub. L. No. 104-164, Title I, § 121(c), 110 Stat. 1428 (1996).

[28] S/CT prepares this annual report, which is required by a separate statute (22 U.S.C. § 2656f(a)). The report primarily describes international terrorist activity.

ATA Annual Reports Contain Inaccuracies

Recent ATA annual reports have contained inaccurate data relating to basic program information on numbers of students trained and courses offered. For example, DS/T/ATA reported inaccurate data on program operations in ATA's two top-funded partner nations—Afghanistan and Pakistan.

- *Afghanistan.* ATA annual reports for fiscal years 2002 to 2005 contain narrative passages describing various ATA training and training-related assistance activities for the Afghan in-country ATA program. According to these reports, 15 students were trained as part of a single training event over the 4-year period. DS/T/ATA subsequently provided us data for fiscal year 2005 training activity in Afghanistan, which corrected the participation total in that year from 15 participants in 1 training event to 1,516 participants in 12 training events. DS/T/ATA officials acknowledged the report disparities.

- *Pakistan.* According to the fiscal year 2005 ATA annual report, ATA delivered 17 courses to 335 participants in Pakistan that year. Supporting tables in the same report listed 13 courses provided to 283 participants. Further, a summary report provided to us from the DS/T/ATA internal database produced a third set of numbers describing 13 courses provided to 250 course participants during fiscal year 2005. DS/T/ATA officials acknowledged this inconsistency, but they were unable to identify which set of figures was correct.

DS/T/ATA officials noted that similar inaccuracies could be presumed for prior years and for other partner nations. Significantly, the officials indicated that inaccuracies and omissions in reports of the training participants and events were due to a lack of internal policies and procedures for recording and reporting program data. In the absence of documented policies and procedures, staff developed various individual processes for collecting the information that resulted in flawed data reporting. Additionally, DS/T/ATA officials told us that its inadequate information management system and a lack of consistent data collection procedures also contributed to inaccurate reporting.

ATA Annual Reports Lack Performance and Other Useful Program Information

DS/T/ATA's annual reports to Congress on ATA from fiscal year 1997 to 2005 did not contain systematic assessments of program results. Further, the reports did not consistently include information on key aspects of the program, such as program activities, spending, and management initiatives that would be helpful to Congress and State in evaluating ATA.

GPRA, Office of Management and Budget guidance,[29] and our previous work provide a basis and rationale for the types of information that are useful in assessing program performance. According to this guidance, key elements of program reporting include clearly defined objectives and goals, comparisons of actual and projected performance that include at least 4 years of annual data, explanations and plans for addressing unmet goals, and reliable information on the program's activities and financial activity.

We reviewed ATA annual reports for fiscal years 1997 through 2005, and found that the reports varied widely in terms of content, scope, and format. Moreover, the annual reports did not contain systematic assessments of program performance or consistent information on program activity, such as number and type of courses delivered, types of equipment provided, and budget activity associated with program operations. In general, the reports contained varying levels of detail on program activity, and provided only anecdotal examples of program successes, from a variety of sources, including U.S. embassy officials, ATA instructors, and partner nation officials. DS/T/ATA program officials charged with compiling the annual reports for the past 3 fiscal years noted that DS/T/ATA does not have guidance on the scope, content, or format for the reports.

Conclusions

Although ATA plays a central role in State's broader effort to fight international terrorism, deficiencies in how the program is guided, managed, implemented, and assessed could limit the program's effectiveness. Specifically, minimal guidance from S/CT makes it difficult to determine the extent to which program assistance directly supports broader U.S. counterterrorism policy goals. Additionally, deficiencies with DS/T/ATA's needs assessments and program reviews may limit their utility as a tool for planning assistance and prioritizing among several partner nations' counterterrorism needs. As a result, the assessments and reviews are not systematically linked to resource allocation decisions, which may limit the program's ability to improve partner nation's counterterrorism capabilities.

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[29]See, for example, Office of Management and Budget, Circular A-136, Financial Reporting Requirements, July 24, 2006.

Although State has made some progress in attempting to evaluate and quantitatively measure program performance, ATA still lacks a clearly defined, systematic assessment and reporting of outcomes, which makes it difficult to determine the overall effectiveness of the program. This deficiency, along with State's noncompliance with mandated reporting requirements, has resulted in Congress having limited and incomplete information on U.S. international counterterrorism assistance and ATA efforts. Such information is necessary to determine the most effective types of assistance the U.S. government can provide to partner nations in support of the U.S. national security goal of countering terrorism abroad.

Matter for Congressional Consideration

Congress should reconsider the requirement that the Secretary of State provide an annual report on the nature and amount of U.S. government counterterrorism assistance provided abroad given the broad changes in the scope and nature of U.S. counterterrorism assistance abroad, in conjunction with the fact that the report has not been submitted since 1996.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We recommend that the Secretary of State take the following four actions:

1. Revisit and revise internal guidance (the 1991 State policy memorandum and Foreign Affairs Manual, in particular) to ensure that the roles and responsibilities for S/CT and DS/T/ATA are still relevant and better enable State to determine which countries should receive assistance and what type, and allocate limited ATA resources.

2. Ensure that needs assessments and program reviews are both useful and linked to ATA resource decisions and development of country-specific assistance plans.

3. Establish clearer measures of sustainability, and refocus the process for assessing the sustainability of partner nations' counterterrorism capabilities. The revised evaluation process should include not only an overall assessment of partner nation counterterrorism capabilities, but also provide guidance for assessing the specific outcomes of ATA.

4. Comply with the congressional mandate to report to Congress on U.S. international counterterrorism assistance.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

State provided us oral and written comments (see app. III) on a draft of this report. State also provided technical comments which we have incorporated throughout the report, as appropriate.
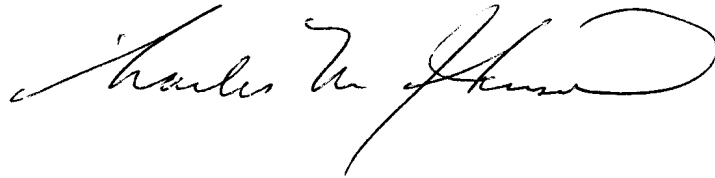
Overall, State agreed with our principal findings and recommendations to improve its ATA program guidance, the needs assessment and program review process, and its assessments of ATA program outcomes. State noted that the report highlights the difficulties in assessing the benefits of developing and improving long-term antiterrorism and law enforcement relationships with foreign governments. State also outlined a number of ongoing and planned initiatives to address our recommendations. Some of these initiatives were underway during the course of our review and we refer to them in the report. We will follow up with State to ensure that these initiatives have been completed, as planned.

However, although State supported the matter we suggest for congressional consideration, it did not specifically address our recommendation that it comply with the congressional mandate to report on U.S. counterterrorism assistance.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of the report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days after the report date. At that time, we will send copies of the report to interested congressional committees and to the Secretary of State. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr. (202) 512-7331, e-mail johnsoncm@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Other GAO contact and staff acknowledgments are listed in appendix IV.

Sincerely yours,

Charles Michael Johnson, Jr.
Acting Director, International Affairs and Trade

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To assess State's guidance for determining country recipients, aligning program assistance with partner nation needs, and coordinating Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) with other U.S. government counterterrorism programs, we

- Interviewed cognizant officials from the Office of Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT) and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Antiterrorism Assistance (DS/T/ATA) in Washington, D.C., including senior officials responsible for overseeing and managing ATA and ATA program managers responsible for each of the six in-country programs: Afghanistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

- Reviewed and analyzed State planning, funding, and reporting documents concerning ATA, including relevant reports from State's Office of Inspector General on the management and implementation of ATA; S/CT's fiscal year 2007 tiered lists of priority countries for ATA assistance and S/CT criteria for establishing the tier list; DS/T/ATA budget information for fiscal years 2000 to 2008; a 1991 State policy memorandum delineating S/CT's and DS/T/ATA's roles and responsibilities for ATA; relevant sections of State's Foreign Affairs Manual summarizing roles and responsibilities for ATA; DS/T/ATA internal policy and procedure documents, including DS/T/ATA's Assessment, Review and Evaluations Unit's most current (2004) standard operations procedures; State documents and U.S. embassy cables regarding the Regional Strategic Initiative; and DS/T/ATA's Annual Reports to Congress on the ATA for fiscal years 1997 to 2005.

- Reviewed and analyzed available country-specific program documents for five of the in-country programs—Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines[1]—including country-specific needs assessments conducted for each of these partner nations; country assistance plans; data on the number of ATA courses provided and personnel trained in these countries; and memoranda of intent between the U.S. government and host country governments regarding ATA in these countries for fiscal years 2000 to 2007. These five countries were among the largest six recipients of program assistance for fiscal years 2002 to 2007 and each country received a range of ATA training and other assistance during the

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[1]A sixth in-country program, Afghanistan, also received significant ATA funding during the time period we reviewed, but assistance was more narrowly focused on training and monitoring a Presidential Protective Service. GAO is conducting ongoing work focused on U.S. government training and equipping of Afghanistan National Security Forces that is expected to be released in spring 2008.

period we reviewed. DS/T/ATA was unable to provide four of the needs assessments that, according to annual reports, were conducted for two of these countries in that time, and was only able to provide three ATA country assistance plans that were completed for three of the five countries for fiscal years 2006 to 2008.

- Conducted fieldwork between July and September 2007 in four countries where ATA provides a range of assistance through an in-country presence: Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, and the Philippines. These four programs represented about 55 percent of ATA allocations for training and training-related activities in fiscal year 2006, and about 43 percent of funding in fiscal year 2007. As this was not a generalizeable sample, our observations in these four countries may not be representative of all programs. In these countries, we interviewed ATA in-country program managers, course instructors, and other contractors; U.S. embassy officials responsible for managing counterterrorism assistance and activities; and partner nation government officials. We also observed various types of ATA training and examined equipment that was provided to partner nation security units. Additionally, to assess the extent to which State establishes clear ATA goals and measures sustainability of program outcomes, and State's reporting on U.S. international counterterrorism assistance, we

- Interviewed cognizant officials from S/CT and DS/T/ATA in Washington, D.C., including senior officials responsible for overseeing and managing ATA and ATA program managers responsible for each of the six in-country programs: Afghanistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines. Additionally, we interviewed cognizant officials in DS/T/ATA's Assessment, Review, and Evaluations Unit, Training Curriculum Division, Training Delivery Division, and Training Management Division, including the Sustainment Manager.

- Reviewed and analyzed State strategic planning and performance reporting documents related to ATA for fiscal years 2001 to 2007, including State budget justifications, State Performance Plans; State Performance Summaries; Bureau Performance Plans; Mission Performance Plans for Afghanistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines; and DS/T/ATA annual reports to Congress on ATA as noted above. We also reviewed Office of Management and Budget's fiscal year 2003 review of ATA and relevant State Office of Inspector General reports relating to performance measurement issues for ATA. Additionally, we reviewed all available S/CT and DS/T/ATA guidance related to assessing program performance, including internal standard operating procedure documents and course evaluation instruments, as well as ATA authorizing legislation and related revisions. To further assess State's reporting on international

counterterrorism assistance, we reviewed DS/T/ATA's annual reports on ATA for consistency and accuracy. As noted earlier, we found some errors with these reports, and have concerns about the data on training and nontraining activities. Although we describe the errors, we did not use these data in our analyses. To assess the reliability of the data on funding to recipient countries, we interviewed ATA officials and performed some cross-checks with other sources. We determined the data on funding were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

As shown in table 2, program assistance for the top 10 recipients of ATA funding from fiscal years 2002 to 2007 ranged from about $11 million to about $78 million. The top 10 funding recipients received about 57 percent of ATA funding allocated for training and training related activities over the 6-year-period. ATA has established an in-country presence in each of the top six partner nations, including in-country program staff and permanent training facilities such as classrooms, computer labs, and shooting and demolition ranges. Afghanistan received the most funding over the six-year-period. According to DS/T/ATA officials, the scope of the in-country program in Afghanistan is more narrowly defined than other ATA programs; it focuses principally on training and monitoring a Presidential Protective Service.

Table 2: Top Recipients of ATA Allocations, Fiscal Years 2002 to 2007

(Dollars in thousands)

Country	Fiscal year						Total ATA Allocations, FY 2002- 2007	Percentage of Total ATA Allocations, FY 2002-2007
	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**		
Afghanistan	14,903	21,487	7,778	6,182	10,649	17, 149	78,148	14.4
Colombia	3,578	33,279	4,507	3,788	6,083	3,394	54,629	10.1
Pakistan	1,010	10,517	8,782	6,934	10,151	6,988	44,382	8.2
Indonesia	978	9,088	8,489	5,446	8,533	7,625	40,079	7.4
Kenya	711	10,622	2083	3,287	2,326	2,909	21,938	4.0
Philippines	2,375	1,939	3,644	1,968	4,020	3,672	17,618	3.3
Jordan	1,473	1,105	2,475	846	1,335	7,981	15,215	2.8
Greece	3,591	4,375	4,408	133	0	0	12,507	2.3
India	1,447	2,350	602	3,595	2,466	730	11,190	2.1
Uzbekistan	1,305	2,207	3,400	4,471	0	0	11,083	2.0
Total ATA allocations to all countries and regions, fiscal years 2002-2007							**542,886**	
Percentage of total ATA allocations to top recipients, fiscal years 2002-2007								**56.6**

Source: GAO analysis of DS/T/ATA budget data on allocations for training and training-related activities.

Note: Italicized, bolded countries have an in-country ATA program.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of State

United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary for Resource Management
and Chief Financial Officer*

Washington, D.C. 20520

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

FEB 19 2008

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

     We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "COMBATING TERRORISM: State Department's Antiterrorism Program Needs Improved Guidance and More Systematic Assessments of Outcomes," GAO Job Code 320457.

     The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

     If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Greg Olmstead, Special Assistant, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, at (571) 226-9632.

Sincerely,

Sid Kaplan (Acting)

cc: GAO – Matthew Helm
       DS – Greg Starr
       State/OIG – Mark Duda

Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report

**COMBATING TERRORISM: State Department's Antiterrorism Program
Needs Improved Guidance and More Systematic Assessments of Outcomes**
(GAO-08-336, GAO Code 320457)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft report entitled
COMBATING TERRORISM: State Department's Antiterrorism Program Needs
Improved Guidance and More Systematic Assessments of Outcomes. The
Department of State has long been a strong supporter of efforts to improve the
Antiterrorism Assistance to nations partnered with the U.S. in the fight against
terrorism and welcomes the GAO report on this subject. The report provides
timely information on several aspects of the ongoing effort to systematize the
documentation of Antiterrorism Assistance. This review highlights the difficulties
in attempting to reduce to numeric metrics the benefits of foreign assistance in
developing and improving long-term antiterrorism and law enforcement
relationships with foreign governments.

The Department of State acknowledges the main findings and conclusions of
the GAO report. We believe that GAO's assessment of Antiterrorism Assistance is
fair. As the report notes, efforts to quantify the results of Antiterrorism Assistance
to foreign governments and to assess the "sustainability" of their antiterrorism
programs are quite difficult. The Department of State agrees fully with the need to
determine quantifiable metrics and is working in this direction. In fact, efforts to
re-write standard operating procedures for the ATA Needs Assessment and
Program Review process, as well as accurately define metrics of success are
currently under way.

The GAO notes concerns over the process of coordination between the
Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT) and DS/T/ATA. S/CT
works closely with DS/T/ATA to ensure that the annual budget submission will
accomplish U.S. counterterrorism priorities. The recently established Foreign Aid
budgeting process forges coordination between S/CT and DS/T/ATA through
"round table" discussions and reviews of proposed budgets on a country-by-
country basis. The resulting document is then cleared through the Department,
OMB, and submitted to Congress. Any funding reallocations require
Congressional Notification. While the S/CT "tiered list" of countries approved for
antiterrorism support is used as one tool for prioritizing antiterrorism support,
Congressional and national security concerns over terrorism identified during each
year do re-direct funding for Antiterrorism Assistance causing unexpected,

although necessary, deviations from the "tiered list". S/CT and DS/T/ATA participate in the Technical Assistance Sub-Group meetings to ensure that counterterrorism policy guidance is coordinated into effective operational programs within the interagency community. Additionally, during meetings between the Ambassadors of each Regional Strategic Initiative grouping, requests for refinement in delivery of Antiterrorism Assistance are received in order to provide guidance and adjustments to assistance. The Department of State welcomes the GAO's recommendation to revise internal guidance on the roles and responsibilities for S/CT and DS/T/ATA in order to ensure the documentation is current. The Department will review all applicable documentation to determine where relationships may be updated in order to facilitate the delivery of Antiterrorism Assistance.

The GAO also makes several observations regarding efforts to systematically align program assistance with counterterrorism needs. The Department of State considers the need to align limited resources with national security and foreign policy objectives to be essential. The dramatic growth of the important Antiterrorism Assistance program over the past five years has stressed the original framework for aligning assistance resources. DS/T/ATA is in the process of revising standard operating procedures for both its Assessment, Review, Evaluation (ARE) Unit and Training Management Division. The resulting revisions integrate and streamline the process of identifying capability limitations of partner nations and developing assistance plans to address those requirements. Additionally, S/CT is working closely with the Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance to clarify the revised roles and responsibilities within the Department for setting goals, objectives, and funding requirements for bilateral, regional, and global antiterrorism programs.

The Department of State notes the GAO's conclusion that "sustainability" of partner nation capabilities has not been clearly defined. During the past year, the Office of Antiterrorism Assistance has appointed a "Sustainment Coordinator" and is working on a methodology to quantify levels of achievement of foreign governments in the area of fighting terrorism, which can be applied internationally and against the differing capacities of each country. DS/T/ATA is planning to realign the "Sustainment Coordinator" with the ARE assessments unit in order to be able to provide objective capability ratings during an initial country assessment and each successive country report. The reference of "sustainability" will be further evaluated to consider whether a more easily definable and measurable metric exists for determining the long-term results of Antiterrorism Assistance.

The GAO also assessed the Department's reporting on U.S. counterterrorism assistance raising "a matter for congressional consideration regarding the legislative requirement for State's reporting on U.S. counterterrorism assistance." The Department encourages Congress to consider the requirement that the Secretary of State provide an annual report on the nature and amount of all U.S. government counterterrorism assistance, considering the wide scope of this task. Further consideration is requested as part of the detailed annual consultations now conducted by the Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance in compliance with the Section 653(a) process for confirmation of the final allocations of foreign assistance funds under each fiscal year's appropriation.

As the GAO report indicates, Antiterrorism Assistance "is a key U.S. effort to help foreign partner nations combat terrorism." Implementation of improved assessment and review processes will help increase confidence in the results of this assistance in fighting terrorism and improving cooperation with partner nation law enforcement agencies. A well coordinated and effective program for increasing international antiterrorism capabilities, and cooperation with the U.S. in this effort, has long been a priority for the U.S. Government. In this respect, the Department of State has a continuing responsibility to evaluate carefully the effectiveness of assistance to fulfill this objective. Implementing changes will require the Department to thoroughly evaluate the possible need to define new metrics for the success of Antiterrorism Assistance which can be quantified against all 77 ATA partner nations. That said, we are strongly committed to sustaining the progress against international terrorism obtained through this program and accurately reporting such results.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

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