

**Written Testimony of Dr. Reuben E. Brigety, II  
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
On the Military's Role in Development Assistance  
Submitted for the Record, July 29, 2008**

**Introduction**

Chairman Biden, Ranking Member Lugar, it is an honor to appear before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today to speak about the growing role of the American military in development assistance activities. In recent years, this issue has sparked considerable interest in the humanitarian, development and defense communities in the United States, as well as among our partner nations around the world.

I believe that there is an important role for our military to play as a provider of development assistance that is closely linked to clear and specific national security objectives. This can, and should, be done in a way that acknowledges humanitarian space, supports U.S. foreign policy objectives, and most importantly, improves the lives of beneficiaries. [

My testimony today is drawn, in part, from a recent Center for American Progress report I have written titled "Humanity as a Weapon of War," which I have submitted for the record. It is further informed by a year I spent as a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow and Special Assistant at the U.S. Agency for International Development from January 2007 to January 2008. During my stint at USAID, I travelled to the headquarters of four U.S. military Regional Combatant Commands and spent nearly a month in the observing civil-military projects in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya performed by the U.S. Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA).

This will proceed in four parts. First, I will provide some background information on the scope and nature of the military's involvement in development assistance. Second, I will offer analysis of this activity. Third, I submit a series of policy recommendations. Finally, I will conclude with some observations regarding the importance of development assistance to U.S. national security and the need for it to be supported.

**Background**

The increasing involvement of the U.S. armed forces in addressing the basic human needs of civilians abroad represents one of the most profound changes in U.S. strategic thought and practice in at least a generation. The Pentagon is recognizing that conventional "kinetic" military operations, which utilize armed force through direct action to kill or capture the enemy, have limited utility in countering the threats posed by militant extremism. Therefore, they are searching for—and finding—"non-kinetic" options other than the use of force to tackle the non-violent components of pressing security problems, both in and out of warzones.

This may seem like an appropriate approach to America's new security challenges in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but it is not without controversy. The increasing involvement of the U.S. military in civilian assistance activities has launched a contentious debate about the role of the military in global development, and the relevance of global development to American national security. Non-governmental organizations argue that the "militarization" of development assistance threatens to undermine the moral imperatives of poverty reduction, the neutral provision of emergency relief, and the security of civilian aid workers in the field. Non-military government agencies, most prominently the U.S. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development, have demonstrated a complex ambivalence about the subject. Even as their bureaucracies have changed to accommodate the military's growing role providing assistance, some rank-and-file staff at USAID have argued that the military's programs do not constitute "real development" work, while a vocal minority of foreign service officers in the State Department have protested their deployment to promote political reconciliation in active warzones as hazardous assignments inappropriate for professional diplomats.

Although the Pentagon is not of one mind on this issue, many Defense Department officials argue that these criticisms from NGOs and other parts of the government are overblown, and that these non-kinetic operations have the dual benefit of helping people in need while serving American interests. This is something that both the military, other government agencies and the NGO community should welcome.

The Pentagon has called on the State Department and the USAID to undertake more activities in direct support of American national security objectives, even as these agencies counter that their ability is constrained by years of chronic under funding

### ***The Role of the U.S. Military in Development Work***

The growing debate about the role of the military in development efforts points to two central questions: Should the United States view aiding civilians abroad as a critical element of its security? If so, what is the best way for the U.S. to perform development missions in support of its national security objectives?

The physical threats to the United States in the 21st century are of such complexity that they defy solution by force of arms alone. Neither the struggle to overcome drought triggered by climate change nor the defeat of predatory ideologies can be won by waging conventional wars. Addressing the basic needs of individuals in developing countries, and helping their governments be more responsive and effective, are critical strategic capabilities necessary for the United States to protect itself and its allies around the globe.

Helping civilians abroad to improve their lives strengthens American security in three important ways. First, it supports long-term stability by improving the economic prospects of developing countries, decreasing the likelihood of violent conflict fueled by economic hardship or extremist ideologies that can spread in such an environment. Second, it strengthens America's moral leadership in the world by increasing its reputation as a benevolent power, improving our ability to persuade other nations to

support our foreign policy objectives. Finally, it serves immediate security objectives by channeling assistance to groups of people abroad that may harbor threats to the United States—diversifying the approaches available to combat the enemies of the country and its interests.

Each of these assistance missions—promoting stability, serving morality, and enhancing security—is crucially important to the United States in this changing global environment. The strategic purpose of assistance is increasingly clear, yet the method of providing it matters as well.

Assistance that is offered by civilians as a means of fighting poverty is viewed differently than is aid provided by uniformed military units fighting against global terrorist networks. To those on the receiving end, traditional development assistance provided by civilian agencies is a manifestation of our collective interests, and of an American commitment to improve the lives of others. Assistance to civilians delivered by the U.S. military, however, may be seen as undertaken in pursuit of America’s national interests. The civilian-led method is largely in pursuit of a development objective, while the military-led method seeks a security aim. Though both of these methods serves at least one of the three principal missions of promoting stability, serving morality and enhancing security , the delivery of assistance must be pursued in a way that supports all three missions rather than privileging one over the other, even inadvertently.

Despite its traditional task of fighting and winning wars, the military has an important role to play as a development actor. Its focus on countering threats to the United States makes it well suited to performing development activities linked directly to security objectives, both in combat zones and in more permissive environments. Yet the security mission of development cannot be separated from efforts to fight poverty, with ancillary benefits for promoting stability and strengthening America’s moral leadership in the world.

The military’s involvement in activities to improve the lives of civilians around the world has grown dramatically over the last five years. It is attributable not to an increase in humanitarian need, substantial as it may be, but to recognition that such need poses a threat to American interests. This is true both in combat zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and in less hostile environments such as the Gulf of Guinea, where political instability threatens the free flow of oil shipments, and on Mindanao in the Philippines, where a long-active Islamic separatist movement challenged the authority of the central government and supported Al-Qaida.

## **Analysis**

For a detailed examination of the changes to military doctrine, organization, operations and funding that have resulted from this increase in development assistance, I would refer you to CAP’s report “Humanity as a Weapon of War.” It is sufficient here to note that the changes have been substantial and that, in many cases, they have proceeded without

significant public debate and analytical rigor to assess their efficacy, evaluate their costs and understand their broader implications.

It is important to ask two critical questions regarding military humanitarian assistance. First, is the threat analysis leading to this increased involvement correct? Second, if it is correct, what should be the relative balance of the involvement between military and civilian organizations in the development sphere?

The threat analysis underlying increased military humanitarian assistance has great merit. One of the principal lessons from 9/11, as supported by the 2002 National Security Strategy, is that the social ills endemic to weak and fragile states can pose substantial threats to the United States. Many of these problems, from poor governance to conflict over basic resources, are not amenable to solution through the force of arms alone. Therefore, “non-kinetic” means must be used to address them, and often chief amongst these are various forms of development assistance.

The U.S. has an interest in two types of development assistance: fundamental and instrumental. Fundamental development assistance aims to improve the lives of beneficiaries as an end in and of itself, with potentially collateral strategic benefits to the United States. Agricultural assistance, for example, to farmers in Malawi is an effort at poverty reduction to improve the livelihoods of beneficiaries. Though the U.S. has no vital national interests at stake in Malawi, effort to bolster sustainable development there has the additional benefit of promoting national and regional stability by improving economic conditions for the populace. Instrumental development assistance, on the other hand, sees aid to beneficiaries as a means to an end, where the actual goal is a security objective that is abetted through humanitarian action. Well-drilling operations by U.S. military units in northeastern Kenya may provide fresh water to remote communities, but the primary rationale for these activities is likely not the humanitarian need of the largely ethnic Somali population there. Rather, with chaos inside neighboring Somalia threatening the stability of the region and enabling the rise of extremism, using U.S. military assets to perform a humanitarian mission shows the face of American compassion to a skeptical population while also giving the military an eye on activity in the area.

The distinction between fundamental and instrumental assistance is particularly important to understand when considering the security environment in which the activities take place. Broadly speaking, we may consider two types: permissive and non-permissive environments. Permissive environments are those where there is not a current armed conflict and where the host government has given permission for U.S. humanitarian and development work. Non-permissive environments are those where there is an active armed conflict and/or where the host government cannot or will not give permission U.S. humanitarian activities. Considering the relative strengths inherent in military and civilian organizations, the chart below gives a rough approximation for determining when and how they should be involved in development assistance activities.

	<b>Permissive Environment</b>	<b>Non-Permissive Environment</b>
<b>Fundamental Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CIVILIAN LED</b></li> <li>• <b>MILITARY INVOLVEMENT BY EXCEPTION</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>MILITARY LED</b></li> <li>• <b>CIVILIAN INPUT REQUIRED FOR PROJECT DESIGN</b></li> </ul>
<b>Instrumental Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>MILITARY OR CIVILIAN LED</b></li> <li>• <b>CIVILIAN INPUT REQUIRED FOR PROJECT DESIGN</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>MILITARY LED</b></li> <li>• <b>CIVILIAN INPUT AS REQUESTED BY MILITARY</b></li> </ul>

Understanding how fundamental and instrumental development approaches should be balanced with one another, and what the relative roles of the military and civilian agencies should be in achieving them, is of critical importance. It is helpful to consider four broad criteria to make this assessment: determination of strategic objectives, comparative advantage of the provider, indicators of success and normative considerations.

Strategic determination. The principal difference between fundamental and instrumental assistance is the extent to which improving the lives of beneficiaries through development activity is an end itself or a means to an end. Furthermore, this distinction presumes that the ultimate objectives of instrumental assistance can be clearly defined.

Civilian development agencies, like USAID, have very different sources of strategic guidance than does the military. The National Security Strategy, as noted earlier, envisions a broad role for development assistance to strengthen failing states. Beyond that, however, there are few other documents or processes to help prioritize development objectives relative to other foreign policy priorities. The so-called “F” process was intended to do this, but falls short.

The military, however, has various levels of strategic guidance that personnel can use at headquarters and in the field to determine instrumental development objectives. The National Military Strategy, as well as Theater Security Cooperation plans developed by each Regional Combatant Command, can be very useful in this regard.

Broadly speaking, instrumental development activities should only be undertaken if they can be linked to clear strategic objectives in support of U.S. national security interests. Otherwise, U.S. development activities should be fundamental in nature.

Comparative Advantage. Civilian agencies and military units have different strengths to bring to development activities. USAID and its implementing partners have substantial experience to bring to bear on development projects. They often combine this with extensive local knowledge of the area where projects are performed, which is gleaned from a persistent presence in country. In the U.S. context, USAID has substantial legal authorities to engage in a wide variety of development activities, and can do so with relatively little expense compared to comparable activities performed by military assets (such as well drilling, humanitarian logistics, etc.). Finally, civilian development officials have a “humanitarian mindset” in which the first question they ask when addressing a development problem is “what is the humanitarian *need*?”

Though many observers often focus on the attributes such as logistical lift, money, personnel, organization as the most important comparative advantages held by the military, I argue that a “security mindset” is the most important unique advantage that it has. Whereas civilian development experts look at a situation and ask “what is the need,” military actors often ask the question “what is the *threat*?” It is this perspective that makes the military a plausible, if not preferable, purveyor of instrumental humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, the military has a unique comparative advantage in providing security for itself and other U.S. agencies in hostile environments. Thus, military units may be the only actors that can provide humanitarian or development assistance in situations of armed conflict.

Indicators of Success. Civilian development agencies are accustomed to applying measures of effectiveness to their projects. Some activities, such as providing emergency shelter or fighting acute malnutrition, are amenable to quantitative measures and therefore easier to identify as successes. Others, such as promoting democracy or mainstreaming gender considerations, are harder to quantify and rely on qualitative data for assessment. In both instances, however, fundamental development programs have a first-order task with regard to the assessment of their programs, where the only important metric is whether or not the lives of the beneficiaries have improved as a result of the projects completed.

Instrumental development activities have a second-order problem. That is, it is not enough to demonstrate that an instrumental development project has improved the lives of the intended beneficiaries to show that it has been successful. In addition, it must also be clear that improving the lives of the beneficiaries has advanced the strategic objectives for which the instrumental activity was planned and performed. It is easier to demonstrate the success of instrumental development projects in non-permissive environments than it is in permissive ones. Assuming that a main objective of development activities in non-permissive environments is to create stability and decrease violence, like providing basic jobs for disaffected Shia youth in Baghdad’s Sadr City in 2004, a key indicator of success would be the extent to which violent conflict is abated in the wake of development activities. In permissive environments where there is no armed conflict, measuring the success of instrumental activities is harder. It is hard to know, for example, if the vaccination of local livestock in Manda Bay, Kenya by U.S. military units actually

advances U.S. national interests. Without such proof, it is difficult to justify this sort of instrumental development activity, or to know which development projects *should* be performed to support American security objectives. This is probably the most challenging aspect of the military's involvement in instrumental development activities, and one for which Congress should demand accountability.

As of this date, there is no publicly available evidence that the military has a rigorous methodology for assessing the strategic effectiveness of their instrumental development activities. Nor is there is no clear rationale for military involvement in fundamental development activities in permissive environments. To the extent that it is engaged in instrumental activities in both permissive and non-permissive environments, it must develop methodologies to measure their effectiveness. This ensures both accountability for taxpayer dollars and, as important, the efficacy of the activities themselves.

Normative considerations. Ethical considerations regarding what constitutes an appropriate development actor are not merely matters of philosophical debate. They have real consequences on the ground, ranging from which local and international partners can be engaged in performing projects to the level of acceptance one can expect from the local community and the host nation.

Though some development and humanitarian NGOs have restrictions on the funding they will receive from national governments, civilian governmental agencies such as USAID, USDA and others are generally seen as legitimate development actors who can be cooperated with in the field. On the other had, there is widespread concern about the military serving as a development actor in non-emergency cases, in both permissive and non-permissive environments. As a matter of principle, many NGOs reject the instrumental considerations on which they perceive military humanitarian assistance to be based. Focused on the well-being of the beneficiaries, they argue that humanitarian assistance performed for strategic motives ceases to be humanitarian by definition. In addition to these philosophical concerns, many NGOs also fear that the military's involvement in the development sphere constricts humanitarian space and endangers civilian aid workers that may be perceived to be aiding and abetting military objectives.

Notwithstanding the significant reservations of the NGO community and other observers, I believe that the United States has an interest in the successful conduct of both fundamental and instrumental development assistance. As such, I also believe that the military can be an important development actor, particularly with regard to instrumental assistance. This requires a number steps to ensure that such activities are successful, that they account for the concerns of implementing partners, that they are acceptable to host nations and local beneficiaries, and that they are accountable to Congress and the American people.

### **Recommendations**

The U.S. government in general, and the U.S. military in particular, have rediscovered the imperative of development assistance as a means of advancing U.S. security interests in a post-9/11 world. Yet the manner in which these initiatives have been pursued lacks

the coherence necessary for them to be most effective. To execute a successful policy of sustainable security in which military humanitarian assistance plays a central role, six elements must be in place:

- A national consensus on development assistance
- Adoption of a National Development Strategy
- Cabinet-level development agency
- Support for both fundamental and instrumental assistance programs
- Dispersal of development personnel in critical positions in government and in the military
- Coherent and effective methodology for measuring the success of strategic humanitarian missions

### *National Development Consensus*

To sustain support for the level of development activities essential for America's interests, there must be a broad consensus among the American people regarding the importance of international development for America's security as well as its values. Just as the vast majority of Americans broadly accepts the value of defense spending in protecting America—even though they may have differences on specific policies and programs—so must there also be a general agreement on the value of development assistance. While certain aspects of the defense and foreign policy elite accept this proposition, it is not widely shared in military or congressional circles, nor is it accepted by most Americans.

Building this consensus will require a concerted effort by a variety of advocates to educate both policymakers and the American public. Some of this is already happening. Defense Secretary Gates has made several speeches on this subject, as have other senior military leaders, among them the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Michael Mullen. USAID senior leaders have given speeches on particular aspects of civil-military cooperation in the development arena, such as regarding AFRICOM.

Changing public perceptions of development's importance to our national security is a task that requires Presidential leadership. When the Commander-in-Chief makes an argument that helping others to be secure directly contributes to our own security, the nation will listen. Indeed, it was precisely this argument that helped President Truman push the Marshall Plan through Congress, and President Kennedy to push the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which created USAID. Raising this issue in the next State of the Union Address or making a presidential foreign policy speech would help introduce the concept of sustainable security to the American people and spark interest in the non-military instruments we need to strengthen this approach.

Presidential leadership must be followed by assertive public engagement on the part of civilian development agencies. No one can tell the story of America's global commitment to sustainable development and its contributions to our security better than the people who do the work every day. Yet their ability to do so is restricted by Section 501 of the

U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (Smith-Mundt Act), which functionally restricts the ability of USAID to use public dollars to tell its story inside the United States. This legislation should be amended or repealed so that USAID, just like the Department of Defense, can tell the American people about the value of its work and continue to build public support for it.

### ***National Development Strategy***

If development assistance is to be a central component of U.S. national security policy, then it must be guided by an overarching strategy linking it to other instruments of national power, and must be applicable to all U.S. government agencies involved in development assistance, including the military. This will provide a framework for setting priorities in development assistance, delineating responsibilities among agencies, linking assistance to other instruments of statecraft, and allocating resources appropriately.

A National Development Strategy should outline how the country's assets for development assistance will support the requirements outlined in the National Security Strategy, which is periodically produced by the White House. Modeled after the National Military Strategy, which provides broad guidance for the employment of the armed forces in support of national security objectives, the NDS should include the following elements:

- Overview of the global environment in which assistance takes place
- Explicit rationale for the role of development assistance in support of American foreign and national security policy
- Principles for effective fundamental and instrumental development assistance
- List of major development goals for the U.S. government
- Blueprint for an optimal development assistance bureaucracy, including responsibilities of relevant government agencies

As important as the final content of a NDS would be for U.S. foreign policy, the process of drafting it would yield useful benefits as well. The diversity of government agencies involved in delivering some aspect of development assistance means that a broad conversation including all of them would be required to draft a comprehensive strategy. Such a process would be invaluable for identifying and resolving tensions in U.S. development assistance.

The drafting of the NDS should also be led by the country's leading development agency, USAID, but ultimately issued by the White House in order to have the authority necessary to coordinate actions across government agencies.

### ***Cabinet Level Development Agency***

To ensure that development assistance is appropriately accounted for in our foreign policy, the United States should create a cabinet level development agency. This would strengthen the likelihood that we will have a strong and consistent advocate for the

resources, policies and personnel to support development activities that are vital for our national interests. Furthermore, it would be a more rational structuring of our government relative to those of our allies. Though the United States is the largest single donor of Official Development Assistance, we have no cabinet level agency to disperse those funds according to a clear development strategy.

### ***Support for Fundamental and Instrumental Development***

If the United States hopes to promote its interests in combating extremism and promoting stability through the use of development assistance, then it must take steps to protect, promote coordinate and both the instrumental development projects which the military performs and the fundamental development programs managed by its civilian agencies.

The first step is for the government to make clear to its own agencies, to other governments, and to partner organizations that both the fundamental and instrumental assistance activities in non-combat environments are important to America's interests. In large measure, this can be accomplished through the drafting and promulgation of a National Development Strategy that explicitly embraces a role for the military and for civilian agencies in providing development assistance.

Secondly, the division of labor between the military and civilian organizations should not simply be based on the duration of the project, but also on the principle of exception. Unless there is an explicit and near-term security objective that is the *primary* focus of a development project in a non-combat environment, then such an activity should generally be performed by civilian officials rather than military personnel. This will decrease the extent to which *all* U.S. development assistance—both fundamental and instrumental—could be skeptically viewed by beneficiaries and host nation governments. Furthermore, it is vital that the military's objectives in performing development projects be both explicit and transparent to all parties involved.

Finally, budgets must be protected in such a way that the fundamental development missions performed by civilian agencies are not harmed in the budget process relative to Defense Department budgeting and legal authorities for instrumental assistance. Joint select appropriations committees from the foreign affairs and armed services committees of both houses of Congress could have concurrent jurisdiction over development funding, to ensure that both fundamental and instrumental missions are adequately resourced and overseen.

### ***Dispersal of Development Expertise***

Development programs performed by U.S. civilian and military personnel must be coordinated at all levels of government—in the field, at regional headquarters and embassies, and in Washington. One of the negative consequences of decreased funding for USAID over most of the last twenty years has been the dramatic downsizing of its cadre of experienced development professionals capable of being deployed all over the world. Not only has this limited the number of people available to develop and direct purely civilian development projects. It has also constrained the availability of

development experts for details to the military and to important interagency assignments like service on the National Security Council staff.

As a result, many military development activities in the field (especially those outside of PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan) have not had the benefit of direct and real-time support from civilian development experts on the ground. Further, the relative absence or under representation of development experts at important policy and command centers has decreased the extent to which appropriate development concerns have been taken into account on important strategic issues.

There have been movements to rectify this. USAID is now sending Senior Development Advisors to each of the regional combatant command headquarters and more junior advisors to PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to CJTF-HOA on an ad hoc basis. Yet much more could be done. In Washington, there should be a Senior Director for Development Assistance at the National Security Council responsible for coordinating non-emergency development assistance worldwide.

In addition, USAID should send liaison officers to relevant bureaus in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Departments of State, Treasury, Agriculture, Commerce, Justice and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. In the field, USAID development officers should be assigned on a rotating basis to every deployable combat brigade in the U.S. Army and combat battalion in the U.S. Marine Corps to accompany them to the field and to instruct train personnel in development tasks during their routine training cycles.

### ***Methodology for Measuring Success***

Of all the challenges involved in military humanitarian assistance, measuring success is perhaps the most difficult as well as the most vital. Determining whether or not a given assistance activity achieved a tactical or strategic objective, rather than merely being correlated with its occurrence, can be a very tall order.

Nevertheless, it is essential to have a methodology to link conclusively development outputs with tactical or strategic outcomes. Otherwise it is not possible to determine with much analytical rigor which humanitarian activities that military forces or their civilian counterparts should undertake to support certain security objectives. Furthermore, demonstrating the utility of specific development activities for security interests may prove necessary for continued congressional funding support for those programs as they proliferate in scope and scale.

Despite its importance, there is no publicly available evidence that the Pentagon has a successful methodology for measuring the causal success of its strategic humanitarian activities. It is essential that it create one in partnership with its civilian development counterparts, and that the results be made public in the interests of transparency.

### **Conclusion**

The deprivations of grinding poverty, environmental degradation, and poor governance are not entirely new dilemmas to the international community. Neither are the challenges posed by hostile nations and violent groups. Yet in an increasingly interconnected world, the depth of human suffering in far away lands can metastasize into concrete threats to the security of American citizens here at home. This 21<sup>st</sup> century reality requires a new approach to American foreign policy, accompanied by the will to update outmoded processes and institutions to meet the challenge.

It is no longer enough for America to solely destroy its enemies to keep our country safe. We must also care for our friends, whether they be powerful states or impoverished people. This perspective, which is increasingly shared by defense and development professionals alike, is the rationale driving the military's increasing involvement in providing assistance to local populations around the world. It is not an activity that should be rejected out of hand or accepted uncritically. Rather, we must work to ensure that military humanitarian and development assistance is appropriately linked to broader U.S. foreign policy objectives, that it works in concert with other development priorities of the United States and our national partners, that it respects the concerns of the NGO community, and that it tangibly improves the lives of the beneficiaries it serves. This is a substantial challenge, but one that we must meet to serve our values, promote our interests, and support our friends around the world.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify before you today.