

UNCLASSIFIED

Department of Defense Strategic Evaluation
Security Cooperation in the Sahel 2013-2018
Public Summary

The Department of Defense (DoD) sponsors strategic evaluations of Security Cooperation programs and activities pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 383 and DoD Instruction (DoDI) 5132.14, “Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation (AM&E) Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise.”

The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Partnerships (ODASD(GP)) and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) commissioned Vysnova Partners, Inc., to conduct a strategic evaluation of security cooperation in the Sahel from 2013-2018.

This summary, developed by ODASD(GP), provides unclassified primary findings, conclusions, and recommendations derived from the evaluation report.

Vysnova Partners designed the evaluation to answer three key questions related to DoD-funded security cooperation programs and activities focused on border security in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Niger that took place between Fiscal Years 2013 - 2018:

1. How and to what extent have U.S.-led border security cooperation initiatives impacted U.S. bilateral and multilateral relations in the region?
2. What have been the outcomes of U.S. efforts to improve allied partner nations’ border security capabilities and capacities?
3. What are the fundamental changes to the security environment in the region that could attribute to the U.S.-led security cooperation efforts?

Evaluation Scope and Methodology: This evaluation focused on security cooperation activities from 2013 - 2018 in four countries across the U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) area of responsibility (AOR): Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Niger.

The evaluation team identified five authorities under which border security cooperation programming in these four countries took place in the evaluation timeframe. In total, the U.S. obligated \$260.4 million in military aid under these authorities to the four focus countries over a 5-year period. The evaluation team identified 29 such programs implemented in the FY 2013 - 2018 timeframe that contributed, at least in part, to border security in Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger. Mali was only covered in an oblique fashion in this evaluation because DoD did not work closely with Mali after the *coup d’état* there.

The evaluation team performed the evaluation using a mixed-methods approach including desk research, quantitative and qualitative data collection, and semi structured key informant interviews. Vysnova Partners conducted 93 semi-structured key stakeholder interviews with respondents from DoD, the Department of State (DOS), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), USAFRICOM, and Partner Nation military forces. The evaluation team conducted a desk review of over 4,000 DoD documents and external reports on security cooperation. Additionally, due to a lack of security cooperation AM&E data, the evaluation

UNCLASSIFIED

Department of Defense Strategic Evaluation
Security Cooperation in the Sahel 2013-2018
Public Summary

team constructed a new DoD security cooperation programming data model in the four focus countries.

The evaluation team encountered limitations during the evaluation period. There were only limited AM&E systems and processes for collecting data on security cooperation programming in the Sahel during the FY 2013-2018 timeframe. At the time, these systems tracked the implementation and some outputs (but not outcomes) of security cooperation programming as part of Section 1206 program assessments.

Key Findings during the evaluation period:

- DoD security cooperation programming had a positive impact on bilateral and multilateral relationships in the region.
- U.S. access (in terms of physical access, relationship access, and informational access) increased in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Niger due to U.S. security cooperation investments.
- U.S. and partner nation interests were aligned on countering-Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) but were not aligned on Counter Narcotics (CN) issues.
- The United States was the partner of choice in the Sahel.
- DoD's border security cooperation programs successfully expanded, duplicated, or generated new counter-VEO military capabilities for Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso.
- The Chadian and Nigerien forces that were trained and equipped by the United States were the most capable military forces in the region and were relied upon for maneuver and cross-border military forces in the region; however, other elements of these nations' military forces remained static along national borders.
- The partner nation militaries were stronger at the tactical level and weaker at the institutional level. Clear objectives, standard operating procedures, doctrine, and planning processes were notably limited in the focus countries.
- Security cooperation programming helped build necessary partner nation military capabilities, but these capabilities were insufficient in fundamentally changing the security environment; neither of the two relevant USAFRICOM lines of effort were achieved during the evaluation period.
- The time lag between program design, implementation, and completion was significant.
- Security cooperation programs and activities alone cannot improve the security environment. Economic, social, environmental, and governance factors can greatly affect a partner nation's security environment.
- By providing necessary inputs to meet an increasing demand for economic and security support from partner nations, China and Russia increased their respective levels of influence in the Sahel between FYs 2013 - 2018.

UNCLASSIFIED

Department of Defense Strategic Evaluation
Security Cooperation in the Sahel 2013-2018
Public Summary

Conclusions:

- **Despite building necessary capabilities in partner nation military forces, these capabilities alone were insufficient for fundamentally changing the security environment.** The security environment in the Sahel remains unstable, and DoD programming alone is insufficient to change it. Other United States agencies like DOS and USAID are key partners in longer-term efforts to improve the security situation in Sahel. Underlying issues such as social, economic, and governance challenges continue to contribute to the proliferation of VEOs in the region.
- **The time it takes to design and completely implement a DoD security cooperation program limits the impact that DoD security cooperation funding in any given year can have on the security environment.**
Given the timelines required to develop, implement, and complete a DoD security cooperation program, small year-to-year security cooperation programs are unlikely to lead to notable changes in the security environment. When VEO-led violence in a partner nation – and there was a gap in partner nation military capabilities – this gap could exist for several years despite planned and funded security cooperation programming.
- **The U.S. presence, combined with U.S. security cooperation investments, has limited the extent to which its peer competitors Russia and China can exert influence in the Sahel.** The four countries under study are among the youngest, poorest, and least developed in the world, and as a result, their financial and security demands are high. Given the extent of their need, partner nations in the Sahel prefer having multiple partners in security cooperation. The United States, however, continued to meet the largest portion of these countries' security cooperation needs during the relevant timeframe, despite Russian attempts to make inroads in this sector. U.S. security cooperation support served to limit the extent to which Russian security cooperation inputs were necessary. China was unable to make significant inroads in the security cooperation sector, but has expanded its economic ties to Sahelian countries.

Recommendations: The evaluation team constructed the following recommendations to inform future DoD decision making on security cooperation as a tool for the Sahel, on the basis of their findings with respect to activities from 2013-2018 in the region.

- OUSD(P) and USAFRICOM should continue to refine and expand existing AM&E systems and processes to ensure that AM&E reporting is completed in its entirety for all security cooperation programs. AM&E systems should include baseline and partner nation unit needs assessments, measures, and indicators for both the outputs and outcomes of security cooperation programming, including indicators that tie

UNCLASSIFIED

Department of Defense Strategic Evaluation
Security Cooperation in the Sahel 2013-2018
Public Summary

programming to high-level strategy. These measures could develop comprehensive results frameworks and theories of changes.

- USAFRICOM should maintain regular security cooperation programs on a year-to-year basis in each of the partner nations under study, modeled on security cooperation programs in Chad and Niger, in order to expand U.S. physical, relationship, and informational access as a way to maintain positive bilateral relations with these countries.
- USAFRICOM, DSCA, and DoD should continue to provide common full spectrum security cooperation packages to partner nations to maintain the United States' status as security cooperation partner of choice as well as to continue improving multilateral cooperation.
- USAFRICOM and DOS should coordinate their programming for all countries in the Sahel to ensure that they continue to build capable and interoperable partner nation military units that can respond to evolving violent extreme organization threats.
- DSCA and USAFRICOM should build more adaptive and flexible systems as well as better knowledge management systems to ensure tracking of the implementation of security cooperation programs and are meeting their designed objections in addition to fitting the needs of partner nation forces.
- USAFRICOM should increase institutional capacity building activities with partner nations that focus on developing intelligence collection systems, human resources, and doctrinal development.
- DSCA, DOS, and USAFRICOM should collaborate to identify options for shortening the life cycle of security cooperation programs from design to implementation.
- OUSD(P), USAFRICOM, and the Office of Defense Cooperation Chiefs should develop better coordination systems and data collection practices for aligning their respective efforts in the Sahel with those of other U.S. Government actors to address underlying socioeconomic factors driving insecurity in the countries, as well as mitigate the influence of Russia and China.

Evaluation Results: In accordance with DoDI 5132.14, "Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise," the Department is considering recommendations and lessons learned from this evaluation to make adjustments to policy, programs, and resource allocation decisions, including the following:

- *Contributions to the security cooperation Performance Management Framework:* OUSD(P) and USAFRICOM will continue refining and expanding existing AM&E systems and processes to ensure that AM&E reporting is completed in its entirety for all security cooperation programs and that AM&E systems include baseline and partner nation unit needs assessments, measures, and indicators for both outputs and outcomes of security cooperation programming, including indicators, which tie programming to high-level strategy. These measures will be intended to develop comprehensive results frameworks and theories of change.