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Department of Defense Strategic Evaluation  
The Ministry of Defense Advisor (MoDA) Program  
Public Summary

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OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

Title 10, U.S.C., Section 383, as amended, requires the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to maintain a monitoring and evaluation program for “conducting centralized independent and rigorous evaluations of significant security cooperation initiatives to examine their relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.” In furtherance of this requirement, the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Partnerships (ODASD(GP)) contracted the RAND Corporation to conduct a strategic evaluation on the Ministry of Defense Advisor (MoDA) program.

This specific study focuses on Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) efforts conducted under Title 10, U.S.C. Section 332(a) (resident MoDA program). Notably, section 332(a) efforts may coincide with other ICB programs, such as section 332(b) (non-resident advising) and similar advising under Title 22 programs. Although these other programs may complement section 332(a) efforts, they are not within the scope of this evaluation. However, from a methodological standpoint, the existence of these parallel programs may also confound analysis since countries that host 332(a) efforts may concurrently receive 332(b) or Title 22 support. These factors limit our ability to fully attribute discrete changes or effects to 332(a) program efforts, especially in functional areas where ICB programs may overlap.

## Objectives and Scope

This study focused on regional MoDA efforts to: a) assess the design, development, targeting, execution, and suitability of 332(a) programs; b) identify emerging best practices and lessons for improving ICB effectiveness, and c) provide actionable recommendations for program improvements, including on workforce development. The evaluation not only considers how well these efforts achieve their program-specific goals but also the degree to which these ICB programs contribute to broader U.S. strategic objectives and the support of regional deterrence and stability.

To define evaluation outcomes, this report drew heavily on Joint Publication 3-20, “Security Cooperation,” which defines ICB and links these efforts to broader strategic-level Security Cooperation (SC) goals. The Joint doctrine definition of ICB is a “set of SC activities that support partner efforts to establish or improve enduring policies and processes at the strategic and operational levels to plan, develop, fund, acquire, man, employ, and sustain capabilities of mutual benefit to respond to shared challenges.”

## Methods and Challenges

This evaluation was conducted by a multidisciplinary research team from RAND, which included ICB practitioners, methodologists trained in Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation (AM&E), as well as experts with deep regional and country knowledge. The analysis drew on a variety of sources, including:

- Significant SC initiatives, memoranda of understanding establishing MoDA programs, official briefings, and program design documents and planning materials;
- Budget analysis drawing on sections 332(a), 332(b), and broader Title 10 funding data;
- Event after action reports, monthly MoDA reports, end-of-tour reports; and
- Stakeholder interviews with U.S. and partner officials and MoDA officials or program beneficiaries.

This approach is particularly valuable due to the diverse nature of program implementation across the area of study. Examining both concluded and ongoing programs provides a comprehensive understanding of long-term impacts and emerging lessons learned amidst evolving conditions. This report leverages both summative and formative evaluation methods to offer insights into program effectiveness and adaptability within a dynamic context.

MoDAs' personal assessments were a key limitation to this report. Although this report drew from a variety of sources and different interview subjects, capturing program-specific details often depends on the accounts of individual MoDA representatives in the field. Compared to some other SC programs (e.g., Section 333 train and equip efforts) that depend on broad a mix of individuals across different offices and organizations to plan, resource, and execute, MoDA efforts tend to be more siloed and operate on a smaller scale. Given such differences, planners and country team officials may not always have full visibility on some MoDA efforts, which constrains the number of officials and sources that can be leveraged to trace programmatic efforts and changes over time.

## Conclusions

- ***Balancing Partner and U.S. Priorities in Program Design and Development.*** MoDA programs are more likely to receive support from the partner when tied to functional areas that the partner prioritizes, but these areas may not always map perfectly to U.S. priorities, creating potential tensions in program design.

- ***Adaptive Management and Targeting Program Efforts.*** Local context in the partner country and host organization/agency can play an outsized impact on a MoDA's potential effectiveness, making the initial decision where to target an intervention critically important but not irrevocable, so long as programs are flexible and can adjust over time, which may require terminating programs that fail to yield results.
- ***Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Challenges in a Dynamic Environment.*** Given the dynamic contexts in which MoDAs are often situated, these programs tend to evolve over time and, in some cases, may even replace whole lines of effort, shift priorities, or establish new objectives, which require MoDAs to remain flexible on the ground but can complicate AM&E efforts.
- ***Relevant Training and Preparation for Assignments.*** Although MoDAs complete general training courses before deploying, their preparation and initial documentation rarely covers the most relevant information for their mission, including U.S. Government or NATO country plans.
- ***Challenges to Workforce Recruitment and Development.*** Recruiting and developing MoDAs requires program managers take a flexible approach that is sensitive not only to the assignment but also to the backgrounds and interpersonal skills of MoDA candidates, as there is no one size fits all solution for MoDA assignments and contexts.
- ***Resourcing and Sustainment Challenges.*** Because MoDAs rely heavily on personal relationships formed via advising, major gaps or discontinuities in assignments are likely more detrimental to outcomes than some other forms of SC that may be more based on institutional relationships and transactional dynamics.

## Recommendations

- ***Improving Program Design and AM&E.*** The MoDA program could benefit from improved program design by conducting tailored partner needs assessments, establishing baselines, and developing metrics to measure and evaluate the impact of MoDAs on U.S. strategic objectives. New MoDA efforts should begin with a mission analysis that provides a clear problem statement, establishes key partner assumptions, identifies programmatic constraints, and defines objective measures of performance and effectiveness. Additionally, multi-year efforts should be regularly re-evaluated to ensure they remain aligned to initial planning objectives and relevant to changing partner needs and/or shifting operational conditions.
- ***Revising MoDA Training and Turnover.*** Future MoDA pre-deployment training curriculum could ensure modules include "soft" skills in addition to subject matter expertise and incorporate an overview of country-specific policy related to U.S. SC and ICB activities. Along with this training, the MoDA program should formalize the turnover process between outgoing and incoming MoDAs to increase continuity of effort and minimize disruption between assignments.

- ***Reforming the Hiring and Recruitment Process.*** The hiring and recruitment process for MoDAs may also benefit from a review with an eye towards recruiting candidates that best match assignment requirements and process improvements to minimize gaps between MoDAs and increase continuity.
- ***Terminating MoDA Programs.*** The MoDA programs should consider specifying at the outset what conditions and results would lead to program termination.