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Jan 21, 2026**Public Summary**
Integrating Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response into Security CooperationDepartment of Defense
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

Title 10, U.S.C., Section 383, as amended, requires the U.S. Department of War (DoW) to maintain a program of monitoring and evaluation for “conducting centralized independent and rigorous evaluations of significant security cooperation (SC) initiatives to examine their relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.” The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Security Cooperation (ODASW(SC)) initiated a strategic evaluation of Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response (CHMR) in SC, including development of a framework for a CHMR Baseline Assessment of Allies and Partners (CBAP).

The CBAP addresses the ability, willingness, norms, and practices of allies and partners (A&Ps) to mitigate and respond to civilian harm. The CBAP is an integral part of SC planning by documenting CHMR capabilities and gaps of DoW SC A&P and providing engagement recommendations.

DoD Instruction (DoDI) 3000.17, “Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response,” ODASW(SC) leveraged the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) to conduct a strategic evaluation of CHMR in SC, including the development of a framework for a CBAP.

Research Question and Approach

The evaluation focused on one question: what is the framework for DoW to assess allies and partners’ (A&P) CHMR capabilities in support of SC programs?

To address this question, CNA adapted an existing framework, incorporating DoDI 3000.17 definitions. That framework was based on analysis of historical CHMR best practices and challenges, as well as U.S. Government (USG) strategic interests and objectives. Feedback on the initial draft noted that the CBAP should include the following assessment factors: A&P CHMR capabilities, practices, willingness, absorptive capacity, sustainability, and norms. CNA further revised the CBAP prototype in October 2023, and again, following additional feedback, in January 2024.

After a selection process, involving stakeholders across DoW, CNA piloted the prototype in two countries. The pilots included desk research and semi-structured discussions with the CCMDs, U.S. Embassies, and partner military personnel. CNA documented the collected data in a matrix and cross-compared key informant responses and external data.

CNA Findings

CNA’s evaluation determined four key factors for measuring A&P CHMR capabilities and gaps: willingness of military and government actors; military operation context and outcomes; institutional capabilities and operational practices; and SC considerations. Although the primary purpose of the CBAP is to inform SC planning, the CBAP is also intended to inform CCMD planning more broadly. The CBAP supports combatant commanders’ decision-making by summarizing the CHMR risks, mitigating and exacerbating factors, and recommended courses of action.

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CNA Recommendations

In conducting this evaluation, CNA developed the following recommendations for CBAP implementation:

- **CBAP implementers should have subject matter expertise in both SC assessments and CHMR.**
- **The CBAP framework is designed to accommodate all militaries, including the most sophisticated.** Implementers should generalize findings while taking care to acknowledge that unit-level findings may not reflect the experience of the overall military force.
- **Implementers should consider information from the past five years to answer assessment questions.** Implementers should leverage existing assessment, monitoring, and evaluation products, interagency documents, and open-source reports to answer many of the CBAP questions. To answer the more process-focused CBAP questions, implementers will likely need to conduct in-country visits or hold other conversations with A&P military personnel.
- **Direct engagement with A&P on CHMR should focus on continuous learning, adaptation, and improvement.** Every engagement provides a learning opportunity for both the United States and the ally or partner personnel. A&P have been generally receptive to an emphasis on potentially positive operational outcomes when practical steps to mitigate harm to civilians are taken.

Conclusion

Improving A&P CHMR capabilities has the long-term objective of A&P militaries effectively mitigating and responding to civilian harm while increasing their overall operational effectiveness. To achieve this objective, A&P militaries must continue to develop or refine doctrine, policies, processes and practices, and capabilities to strengthen CHMR and to adapt to changing military operational priorities.