

Department of Defense Strategic Evaluation  
State Partnership Program

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

The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Partnerships and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) commissioned PBG Consulting, LLC, to evaluate the State Partnership Program’s (SPP) contribution to DoD strategic objectives.

**Background of the SPP:** The SPP has been building relationships for over 25 years and now includes 85 partnerships with 93 nations. The SPP links a unique component of the DoD—a state’s National Guard (NG)—with the military forces, security forces, and/or governmental disaster response or emergency response organizations of a partner nation (PN) in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship.

The SPP evolved from a 1991 U.S. European Command decision to establish a Joint Contact Team Program in the Baltic Region with Reserve component Soldiers and Airmen. A subsequent National Guard Bureau (NGB) proposal paired U.S. states with three nations and the SPP was established, since becoming a key SC program enabling relationships globally.

The mission of the SPP is to support the geographic Combatant Commanders (CCDRs) SC objectives by developing enduring relationships with PNs and carrying out activities to build partner capacity, improve interoperability, and enhance U.S. access and influence while increasing the readiness of U.S. and partner forces to meet emerging challenges. SC objectives link to the Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) country and regional plan, the Integrated Country Strategy of the U.S. Embassy, and the National Defense Strategy (NDS).

The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy oversees the SPP, which is managed and administered by the Chief of the NGB, executed by the GCCs to achieve CCDR and U.S. Chief of Mission (COM) objectives, and sourced by The Adjutants General (TAG) of each state. Codified in U.S. law, 10 U.S.C. §341, the NG interacts with military, security forces, and emergency/disaster response organizations of friendly PNs. The SPP’s unique strengths include its consistent recurring professional and institutional contacts and relationships with PNs.

**Nature and Purpose of the Evaluation:** The evaluation focused on the SPP’s outcomes and contributions and sought to determine how the Department can best leverage SPP resources across SC authorities to support DoD’s strategic objectives. In the course of evaluating the SPP’s performance and contributions to outcomes, the evaluation team identified factors affecting performance such as planning processes, objectives, adequacy and clarity of legal, regulatory, and policy guidance, and program management and execution factors. Through identifying these factors, this evaluation sought to support DoD in making informed decisions on SPP programming, planning processes, policy revisions, and funding allocations.

The evaluation will assist the SC community through the sharing of best practices in SPP planning. DoD seeks to optimize SPP’s contribution to strategic objectives and identify best practices to achieve return on investment. Through the findings of the strategic evaluation, SPP

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program managers, SPP Bilateral Affairs Officers (BAO), country teams, and GCCs will gain a better understanding of how to incorporate SPP activities into SC planning efforts to improve engagement with PNs and increase efficiency and effectiveness.

**Evaluation Questions:** The strategic evaluation addressed the following questions.

1. How has SPP contributed to DoD's strategic objectives, such as those articulated in the NDS and Combatant Command Campaign Plans (CCPs) over the five year period from 2014 to 2019?
2. To what extent has SPP contributed to objective achievement by pairing with other authorities (*e.g.*, Foreign security forces: authority to build capacity (10 U.S.C. §333), Humanitarian demining assistance and stockpiled conventional munitions assistance (10 U.S.C. §407), Humanitarian assistance (10 U.S.C. §2561), and Friendly foreign countries; international and regional organizations: defense institution capacity building (10 U.S.C. §332)) or through utilizing singular authorities at the PN level over the five year period from 2014 to 2019?
3. How could the SPP planning and implementation process be better integrated and aligned with GCC execution of the Department's strategic objectives as outlined in the NDS and CCPs, and complement other SC efforts?

**Evaluation Design:** The evaluation included a process and performance evaluation and used a case study approach. It focused on three GCCs, U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and U.S. Southern Command, with one country case study within each region. The evaluation team evaluated both the strategic and country-level outcomes within each country case study as well as planning processes and integration with other SC programs. The case studies considered a range of factors including length of partnership, variety of intended outcomes, interagency involvement, and examples where paired authorities were used. The focus period covered a retrospective evaluation of past SPP activities over the five year period from 2014 to 2019.

**Conclusions:** The evaluation team determined the following conclusions.

- SPP builds trust and develops valuable relationships through persistent engagement. The SPP positively affects the relationship between a PN and the U.S. while advancing specified DoD objectives in general and objectives of the GCCs and U.S. Embassies in particular. The program builds persistent relationships especially given the tendency of NG personnel to remain in the same units or state NG throughout their careers.
- The annual process for expanding SPP to new PNs limits DoD's ability to proactively align state NGs best suited for potential partnerships. The process, outlined in DoDI 5111.20, "State Partnership Program," relies on the GCCs, on an annual basis, to nominate countries, which must then be endorsed by the Joint Staff and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, before undergoing a separate matching process among state NGs that desire the partnership. While DoD looks at the appropriateness of a specific state NG being paired with a PN, the current process only addresses the immediate year ahead.
- Pairing 10 U.S.C. §341 SPP activities with other SC authorities has been an important factor in the success of partnerships and objective achievement, but the nuances and complexities of pairing continue to challenge SPP planners. Pairing refers to the simultaneous or sequential

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use of SPP funding and authority with another SC authority to affect the same objective or line of effort. The evaluation team found that pairing of SC authorities can be an indicator of an impactful partnership that reinforces multiple initiatives with a PN, while noting standalone SPP activities can also be valuable. NGB and the Defense Security Cooperation University (DSCU) have improved courses to educate SPP planners on the nuances of pairing SPP with other SC authorities. Additionally, 10 U.S.C. §384, enacted in Section 1250 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year (FY) 2017 required a DoD SC Workforce Development Program (SCWD-P). SCWD-P has the potential to improve SPP planners' ability to leverage and synchronize SPP activities with other SC authorities to achieve DoD objectives.

- Data quality issues continue to affect SPP effectiveness and efficiency, but improvements are underway. Since the FY 2017 NDAA, the SC enterprise, including the NGB with SPP, has taken steps to improve data collection, standardization, and analytics. This includes replacing the Global Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System (G-TSCMIS) with a new system. Evaluation findings indicate a lack of standardized data governance and data input requirements as well as measurable indicators and information requirements in program documentation and reporting that could help better assess activities with PNs and the impact on DoD's strategic objectives.

**Recommendations:** The evaluation team proposed recommendations that are intended to inform future DoD decision-making about the SPP.

- Framework for the Future: Establish a framework to inform future SPP partnerships and conditions-based partnership adjustments to leverage the SPP as a unique and specialized tool in the SC toolkit. Develop a five-year plan to prioritize and proactively pursue new partnerships while identifying areas for budgetary shifts. The framework should guide level of degree of engagement based on strategic priorities. In some cases, this could involve concepts for remediation of partnerships impacted by extant political circumstance, including human rights violations or over reliance on, or influence of, strategic competitors.
- Nomination Process: Modify the annual SPP nomination process to refine upfront processes and incorporate longer-term planning. The Department could consider an annually reviewed five-year rolling list of nomination packages and prioritize based on strategic considerations.
- Training and Education: Continue to implement prescribed training for SPP leaders/planners and begin comprehensive tracking of the SPP workforce. Through a trained workforce, SPP can contribute in more ways to objective achievement when successfully paired and synchronized with other SC authorities either simultaneously or sequentially. The 2021 SPP Program Management Guide mandates training courses for various key positions within the SPP enterprise including SPP Directors and Coordinators, BAOs, and NGB J53, state NG, GCC, Service, and Special Staffs working SPP. The NGB J53, in coordination with DSCU, should continue to improve its data collection and monitoring of SPP SCWD-P training to ensure compliance with and continued progress toward SCWD-P requirements.
- Data Collection: To support improved SPP contributions to strategic objectives, the Department should continue to improve its SC data collection, standardization, and analytics. The Department should conduct a comprehensive review to determine sources of existing data, standardization opportunities, additional data sources, and quality control mechanisms.

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These improvements should be included in updated versions of the SPP Program Management Guide and DoDI 5111.20, “State Partnership Program.”

This evaluation noted several areas for further examination, including the following recommendations:

- Continue to improve upon best practices for planning and collaboration by (1) optimizing BAO opportunities in partnership countries, (2) leveraging virtual meetings where appropriate, (3) including the most capable U.S. allies and partners in combined planning and activities where feasible, and (4) ensuring GCC SPP planners are well integrated into other SC efforts.
- Update DoDI 5111.20, “State Partnership Program,” to reflect changes made to the SPP since 2016 and recommendations articulated in the evaluation.

**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 adjust policy, programs, and resource allocations, including the following.

- The Department is assessing the capacity for new SPPs, and how much growth the SPP can handle annually while sustaining existing partnerships. Additionally, the Department is developing projections and priorities for program growth, plans for aligning appropriate state NGs to pair with forecasted growth, and frameworks to leverage the SPP as a unique and specialized tool in the SC toolkit.
- The Department is continuing to improve the quality of the SC workforce to ensure it has the capacity to perform its mission including the ability to leverage the SPP with other SC authorities to achieve DoD objectives. The Department continues to implement DoDI 5132.15, “Implementation of the Security Cooperation Workforce Certification Program,” pursuant to 10 U.S.C. §384.
- The Department is including NG implementation of SC within the scope of its assessment, monitoring, and evaluation program, which ensures centralized, routine data collection, standardization, analytics, and quality control mechanisms to support improved SPP contributions to strategic objectives.