
Pentagon Hopes To Expand Aid Program

Legislation Would Help Fund Foreign Governments' Military, Security Forces

By

Walter Pincus

Washington Post Staff Writer

[The Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management gratefully acknowledges reprint permission for this article granted by the Washington Post. It appeared in the 13 May 2007 edition, on page 13 and provides insights into potential growth in current P.L. 109-163 *National Defense Authorization Act for 2006*, Section 1206 authorities, also known as “Pseudo-cases.”]

The Pentagon is seeking to make permanent and expand to other countries some security and foreign assistance programs underway in Iraq and Afghanistan that traditionally have been supervised by the State Department and the Agency for International Development.

Legislation sent to Capitol Hill under the title of *Building Global Partnerships Act of 2007* would allow the secretary of defense, “with the concurrence of the secretary of state,” to spend up to \$750 million to help foreign governments build up not only their military forces, but also police and other “security forces” to “combat terrorism and enhance stability.”

In a January 25, 2007 memo for top Pentagon officials, Robert L. Wilkie, assistant secretary of defense for legislative affairs, said the act would increase “speed and efficiency” in training and equipping other countries and would give the Pentagon greater ability to assist partners deployed “alongside or instead of U.S. forces.” He called the act “the centerpiece of our legislative program in 2007.”

The act is an outgrowth of the Section 1206 authority, which initially provided funds to the Pentagon, renewed annually, to train and equip military and police forces in Iraq and Afghanistan without Department of State (DoS) involvement. It was later broadened to allow for paying the costs with DoS agreement of coalition partners in Iraq, including Algeria, Chad, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Yemen, and Sao Tome and Principe.

Another Iraq initiative the Pentagon wants to expand is the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP), which remains under discussion with the DoS and is not in the Pentagon draft bill. Begun in Iraq in 2003 with cash seized from Saddam Hussein’s government, CERP gives commanders money that they can spend on small construction projects such as rebuilding schools and roads. For fiscal 2008, the Pentagon is seeking \$1 billion to fund the CERP program worldwide.

However, Congress approved authorization for an additional \$500 million in the fiscal 2007 Iraq supplemental for combat commanders around the world to spend on foreign assistance within their regions of responsibility. That bill, which President Bush vetoed, is back before Congress, though the CERP funds are not an issue of debate.

Since 2002, the Department of Defense has also provided \$3.5 billion to countries such as Pakistan and Jordan as reimbursement for basing rights and other assistance for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The vetoed fiscal 2007 supplemental contained an additional \$600 million for this program, and the fiscal 2008 request totals \$1.7 billion.

The House Armed Services Committee took a step in formalizing the Special Operations Command's activities abroad by writing into law its authority to undertake "counterinsurgency" and "information operations." In an April 23 interview with the national security blog IntelliBriefs, Major Gen. David P. Fridovich said the Special Operations approach includes providing "civil affairs assets to assist in humanitarian and civic assistance" and offering "information operations resources to aid the host nation in countering violent ideological threats."

The Pentagon's growing role in foreign assistance has drawn criticism. Last month, former House speaker Newt Gingrich told a Council on Foreign Relations meeting that "we do not want uniformed military doing what others should be doing." He suggested that DoS funding should grow by 50 percent so ambassadors could lead such projects.

December 2006, following an investigation directed by then-Chairman Richard G. Lugar (Republican Indiana), the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported the following:

. . . as a result of inadequate funding for civilian programs . . . U.S. defense agencies are increasingly being granted authority and funding to fill perceived gaps in public diplomacy and foreign economic assistance.

The result "risks weakening the Secretary of State's primacy in setting the agenda for U.S. relations with foreign countries," the report said. The committee also warned that "some foreign officials question what appears to be to them a new emphasis by the United States on military approaches to problems that are not seen as lending themselves to military solutions." Gordon Adams, a former national security official at the Office of Management and Budget, said in congressional testimony in February that the process is gaining momentum. "The more we ask the DoD and the military to do, the more they become responsible for our overseas relationships," he said. He called Iraq and Afghanistan "a test bed for a new concept" in U.S. foreign aid.

Pentagon officials, however, have pushed such programs on Capitol Hill. In February testimony for the House Armed Services Committee, Marine General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called for an interagency National Security Initiative Fund "to better invest in countering terrorism with other countries."

"We need a dramatic leap forward in our relationship with interagency and international partners," Pace said in prepared remarks. Terrorists sometimes "hide in countries with whom we are not at war," he said, adding that in many cases the best way to respond "is by augmenting the capacity of those countries to defeat terrorism and increase stability." An unclassified briefing by Marine Lt. Gen. John F. Sattler, director for strategic plans and policy of the Joint Staff, said the fund, which would be administered by the DoD and DoS was necessary because "beyond Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. is underinvested in preventative strategies that build the capacity of foreign partners."