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TECHNICAL REPORT

Developing a Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool

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Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

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Summary

The U.S. government spends billions of dollars annually on foreign assistance. Foreign assistance programs span many agencies, including the U.S. Department of State (DoS), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). There is currently a variety of assessment tools and frameworks to assist in the design of foreign assistance programs and allocation of resources.¹ However, there is no comprehensive tool to assist policymakers in assessing the state of the defense sector in a given country, to provide them with a systematic way of determining a country's capabilities to achieve various security goals that the U.S. government may have, or to monitor the success of defense sector programs over time. This study aimed to fill that gap and design the Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool (DSART). The DSART can be found at the end of this report.

For the purpose of the DSART, the defense sector is defined as the uniformed military, plus the military and civilian management, accountability, and oversight systems, mechanisms, and processes that sustain it.

U.S. Goals For Defense Sector Reform

The United States could have a variety of goals for defense sector reform in a given country. One goal could be to support the country in its efforts to better manage its own security problems and potentially partner with the United States and other countries in international military operations. Such reforms would involve the country changing its defense institutions and processes to include those capacities that the United States views as critical for effective military planning and operations (e.g., civilian control of the military, military professionalism).

Another set of goals could be to improve the country's ability to counter specific threats and improve its own internal security and thereby contribute to U.S. security. These threats could include terrorism and insurgency, drug trafficking, porous land or sea borders, piracy, and instability in the aftermath of a conflict. Foreign assistance that seeks to promote this set of U.S. goals could involve improving a country's military capabilities for surveillance and interdiction, training its military in counternarcotics or counterterrorism operations, and helping establish processes for military coordination with civilian law-enforcement organizations. The structure of the DSART flows directly from these potential goals for defense sector reform.

¹ See the appendix for a list of assessment tools.

Structure of DSART

The first section of the DSART sets the stage for the subsequent assessments, and the assessor is asked to answer questions about the characteristics of the defense sector in a country. The focus areas and questions were drawn from the many assessment tools that are used by the U.S. government, foreign governments, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to assess countries' security or defense sectors.

The introductory section is followed by six assessments, the first of which focuses on the country's defense institutions and processes and how they match up with a set of capacities that the United States views as "critical" in any defense sector. These capacities are defined in various U.S. government documents. The DSART assessor is asked to provide a qualitative appraisal and then a quantitative score of the country's "critical" capacities on a scale of 1 (entirely lacking) to 5 (strong and no major improvement needed). Once the deficiencies in capacities have been identified, the section ends by asking a series of questions about the prospects for reforming those areas in which deficiencies were found. The end result is an assessment that identifies deficiencies in the country's defense institutions and processes, as well as an assessment of the prospects for reform in the deficient areas.

The subsequent sections in the DSART assess the country's capabilities to carry out operations to counter high-priority internal security threats (terrorism and insurgency, drug trafficking, porous land or sea borders, piracy, and instability in the aftermath of a conflict). The research team drew from U.S. government planning documents, historical case studies, and discussions with subject-matter experts to identify a list of "critical functions" necessary to respond to each of these security threats.

In these sections, the assessor is asked to provide a qualitative appraisal and then a quantitative score of the country's capabilities to carry out these "critical" functions on a scale of 1 (entirely lacking) to 5 (strong and no major improvement needed). Once the deficiencies in capabilities have been identified, the sections end by asking a series of questions about the prospects for reforming those areas in which deficiencies were found. The end results identify deficiencies in the country's capability to conduct counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, counternarcotics, border and maritime security, counterpiracy, or postconflict stabilization operations and provide an assessment of the prospects for reform in the deficient areas.

The Way Ahead

The DSART can play a vital role in assisting U.S. policymakers in identifying deficiencies in a country's defense sector and then prioritizing and allocating foreign assistance resources. Once U.S. policymakers decide that a country's defense sector will need to be assessed, a decision will also need to be made about which assessment tools are most appropriate for their goals. For instance, the DSART could be used by itself or in combination with other assessment tools, such as the Criminal Justice Sector Assessment Rating Tool, depending on what issues policymakers are most interested in understanding. Once it is decided that the DSART should be used to assess a country's defense sector, the assessor always fills out Section One of the DSART, "Characteristics of the Defense Sector." The assessor then completes those assessments that are applicable to the chosen goals. In some cases, only one of these assessments may be applicable to the country; in other cases, multiple assessments may need to be com-

pleted because the United States has multiple goals. The completed DSART assessment is then returned to U.S. policymakers, who review it and use it as background for deciding whether to undertake defense sector reforms and how resources should be allocated for those reforms. The initial DSART assessment of a country's defense sector should be viewed as only the starting point for what will need to be a series of activities, potentially over many years, that will involve programs and follow-on assessments.

The DSART, in its structured set of questions and assessments of critical defense sector capacities and the capabilities needed to meet different types of internal security threats, is similar to the assessment tools of other U.S. government agencies and multinational organizations. The DSART does, however, lend itself to being used for a more formal and systematic assessment of these capacities and capabilities. To this end, the assessor could take additional steps to validate the information that is collected, e.g., answering the questions in the DSART through structured interviews, holding workshops with a cross-section of local experts, or conducting tabletop exercises for the qualitative evaluations.

The DSART could be used by countries other than the United States to assess either their own defense sector capabilities or those of countries to which they are providing assistance. The DSART could also be used by multilateral organizations to assess the countries to which they are or may wish to provide assistance.

While the DSART is now ready for use, U.S. goals for defense sector reform may evolve. The DSART is designed with a flexible architecture so that it can be adapted to a changing security environment. Our goal is that the tool will continue to evolve as it is used in different countries and with different goals in mind.