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R E P O R T

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# Lessons from U.S. Allies in Security Cooperation with Third Countries

The Cases of Australia, France,  
and the United Kingdom

Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Celeste Ward Gventer,  
Stephanie Pezard, Laurence Smallman

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# Summary

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## Introduction

The USAF has long worked with partner countries in the context of security. Many U.S. allies conduct similar activities, sometimes with the same partners, but at a smaller scale. However, neither OSD, the combatant commands, nor the military services have the full picture of how, where, and why these allies engage the same countries; whether working together in particular areas is a worthwhile or viable option; or whether specific lessons can be learned from the experiences of our allies, for example, in the areas of planning, resourcing and assessments. The research provided in this report is a step toward filling in these critical knowledge gaps for DoD and USAF planners, programmers, and resource managers.

This report argues that USAF, and indeed DoD, should increase its awareness of the kinds of approaches, resource expenditures, and specific security cooperation activities of key U.S. allies. Knowledge of these activities is important for several reasons. Working with U.S. allies might be a good option because there are occasions when combining activities with U.S. allies can be beneficial. However, there are also occasions when, for example, U.S. and ally interests may differ in a particular country, so that partnering would not be the best option. In other instances, the partner country or countries involved may prefer to work directly with the United States or its ally, but not in combination. At a minimum, however, increasing awareness of the kinds of activities U.S. allies are conducting with partners, when, where, why, and how is very useful from a planning and resourcing perspective and can help allies speak with one coordinated voice, whenever possible and appropriate.

How U.S. allies approach working with partner countries can also offer beneficial lessons for the USAF. For example, the militaries of Australia, France, and the United Kingdom (UK) are capable, are experienced in working with civilian counterparts, and benefit from higher-level departmental guidance. Because these allies generally devote fewer resources to the security cooperation mission than the United States does, they have in many cases had to learn to economize to spread these limited resources as far as possible across the civilian and military agencies.

After comparing and contrasting the similarities and challenges among three case studies, the report discusses instances of possible best practices, as outlined in the following two sections.

## Similarities and Challenges Among the Three Case Studies

This report identifies both the positive aspects and the challenges of the security cooperation approaches of three key U.S. allies—Australia, France, and the UK. Chapter Five compares each ally's approach to security cooperation, specifically in the terms of strategic outlook, partner country selection and planning, geographic focus, types of activities, resourcing processes, and assessments and lessons learned. These findings can be used to inform current USAF thinking on security cooperation.

Table S.1 summarizes some of the major aspects of each ally's approach to security cooperation, based on the data and analyses provided in Chapters Two, Three, and Four.

## Best Practices

This report identifies several possible best practices for DoD and USAF consideration. These areas focus on improving joint and interagency partnering and planning, combining resources, and partnering with allies when national interests align.

### Improving Joint and Interagency Partnering and Planning

Overall, Australia, UK, and France all have fairly tight planning processes at the joint level and have civilian counterparts in place for security cooperation. One reason for this is that they involve fewer personnel and stakeholder organizations than the United States does. Additionally, from a proximity perspective, the members of each defense headquarters staff tend to be located in or near the same building, making regular face-to-face meetings more likely, thus improving coordination. Moreover, top-level direction means that the allies' interagency actors tend to work together using the same plan to coordinate, deconflict, address key gaps in assistance, and leverage scarce resources.

One possible best practice from this discussion might be to attempt to create smaller planning teams, perhaps focused by country or even by issue area, across the USAF, DoD, and across agencies, to the extent possible. The development of something like a country air, space, and cyberspace plan for the entire U.S. government might be one way to socialize and test a possible new joint and interagency planning process. Such a plan might consist of U.S. government-wide objectives, security cooperation programs and activities, identified resources, and metrics for assessing the plan's effectiveness. Of course, because of the way the U.S. resourcing system is set up for security cooperation, decentralization would mean that it would be up to each agency to determine the extent to which participation in such an effort would be in its interests.

### Combining Resources

The allies we surveyed all support the combining or pooling of various resources for security cooperation to some degree. These resource pools would be overseen by senior officials from defense and foreign affairs, as well as the development community in the case of the UK.

USAF leaders should consider some potential benefits of security cooperation resourcing pooling, from the perspectives of both planning and economizing resources, particularly in the context of USAF-managed security cooperation resources. Resource pooling could help take some of the mystery out of the security cooperation budgeting process for the USAF, ensur-

**Table S.1**  
**Comparing the Allies**

	Australia	France	United Kingdom
Key document	2009 white paper <sup>a</sup>	2008 white paper on defense and national security <sup>b</sup>	2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) <sup>c</sup>
Strategic outlook	Defence engagement and defence cooperation to shore up middle-power influence; takes a joint and interagency approach to security cooperation	Expanding France's cultural and economic influence and deploying to countries of operational interest	The review indicates that "defence diplomacy" will gain in importance and resources, while other programs, such as acquisition, diminish
Partner selection and planning	Military departments prioritize their own international engagement plans; defence international engagement groups coordinate	A bottom-up process, with a principle of engaging partners equally; partners whose requests fit France's strategic interests, however, have higher priority	A top-down process driven by the Ministry of Defence's (MOD's) Security Cooperation Operations Group and determined by UK national interests rather than old "force for good" position; Royal Air Force has a prioritization matrix and an Air Regional Engagement Plan
Geographic focus	South Pacific and Southeast Asia, predominantly	Francophone Africa and Caribbean, Balkans, Afghanistan, Middle East	Overseas operations (Afghanistan) and territories with a global focus, especially South America, India, Indonesia, China, and Brazil
Types of activities	Professional military education and small training teams, bilateral exercises, increasing activities in Africa. Distinguishes between defence engagement (e.g., staff talks) and defence cooperation (e.g., training)	Structural (5 year) and operational (annual) projects; multiservice involvement in Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capacities and European Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capacities; work through existing regional organizations, particularly in Africa	Emphases on understanding the partner country and its people, culture, and politics; and on helping shape the decisions of the partner country's leaders; defense attachés are key as a security cooperation activity
Resourcing approach	The Defence Cooperation Program funds most security cooperation activities	Evolving to increase pooling of education and training efforts with allies. Shifting emphasis to in-country training and education (e.g., Regional-Focused National Schools concept) for budgetary reasons	Defence diplomacy likely to become an official, funded military task; defense exports are taking on a higher priority; and pooled resources allocated by contact group (MOD, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for International Development)
Assessment and lessons	None. Officials believe such a process would be useful	Ad hoc, based on qualitative impressions of mobile training teams; pilot committees assess progress on structural cooperation projects every six months	None. UK MOD is very interested in this topic in the context of the SDSR increase in resources and the military task concept

<sup>a</sup> Australian Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030, Defence White Paper 2009*, May 2, 2009c.

<sup>b</sup> Commission du Livre blanc, *Défense et Sécurité Nationale: Le Livre Blanc*, Paris: Odile Jacob/La Documentation Française, June 2008.

<sup>c</sup> Her Majesty's Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, October 2010a.

ing that program managers are not necessarily competing against one another for sustained or additional resources. The pooling approach would remove some authority from the program managers, which could be a positive move because coordination and deconfliction among programs have been challenging.

### **Partnering with U.S. Allies**

We have identified three key areas: staff talks, exercises, and training followed by exercises. Staff talks are a key area for the Air Force to consider in the context of collaboration with U.S. allies. The USAF engages in a variety of staff talks at various levels with allies and partner countries around the world; these talks are primarily bilateral. The U.S. Air Force should consider extending the idea to multilateral staff talks, perhaps focused on a specific issue, such as security cooperation, and inviting Australia, France, and the UK to the table.

Exercises are another key area that could be ripe for partnering with key allies. The USAF hosts a number of bilateral and multilateral field and tabletop exercises with partner countries. U.S. allies could be invited to cohost a few of these exercises, starting perhaps with tabletop exercises. For example, the AF/A5X-managed Building Partnerships seminars could be used as the vehicle.<sup>1</sup> The content of these exercises could be discussed and coordinated during USAF staff talks with the allies involved.

Another area in which the USAF might partner with an ally is training followed by exercises, which are designed to test skills and readiness after the partners are trained. Military training teams are deployed very frequently around the world by Australia, France, the UK, and the United States. However, unless an exercise was part of the original training package, many times those skills are not tested in a realistic context in the field. It would be useful for the USAF to attempt to coordinate training events with planned exercises. Here again, these kinds of events could be coordinated during the staff talks.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations for the USAF are presented under the headings of planning, resourcing, and assessing. They focus on insights from U.S. allies that could be useful for the USAF from a military service's perspective, and as a supporting agency to the combatant commands:

- Planning
  - Discuss security cooperation formally with key allies during routine USAF-managed security cooperation events.
  - Consider developing air, space, and cyberspace country plans that reflect allies' security cooperation activities.
  - Consider discussing joint and interagency planning processes with Australia and France in particular to learn possible lessons from a military service's perspective.
  - Consider how USAF's security cooperation activities contribute to soft power.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Jennifer D. P. Moroney and Jeffrey Engstrom, *Assessing the U.S. Air Force Unified Engagement Building Partnerships Seminars*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Whole-of-government activities that influence foreign nations through attraction. See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs 2005.

- Resourcing
  - Explore collaboration opportunities to leverage shrinking budgetary resources devoted to security cooperation.
  - Engage the UK directly and at multiple levels on changes in defence diplomacy and budget increases as a result of the comprehensive UK SDSR as its recommendations and decisions are being implemented (starting in October 2010).
  - Consider ways to combine resources within the programs and activities USAF manages, perhaps using the pooling resourcing concept the UK and Australia use.
  - Consider several new modalities that several allies we studied employ, such as the French Regional-Focused National Schools concept.
- Assessing
  - Offer to discuss security cooperation assessments—including processes, approaches, techniques, results of recent programs, activity and country assessments—with allies during routine staff talks or perhaps in a dedicated multilateral session or workshop that would include the United States and its allies.
  - Consider offering to share security cooperation country needs and capability assessments with allies to identify potential areas of coordination and leverage U.S. or allies' comparative advantage.