U.S. Security Assistance to Central Asia: A Post-Afghanistan Shift in Strategy

Introduction

Since the U.S. military announced its withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States is focusing less on providing military and police aid to Central Asian security forces. In FY 2014, the State Department allocated $33.3 million in security assistance to the sub-region. The FY 2016 request for security assistance includes just $24.7 million, representing a 26 percent decrease. Yet, this aid still remains well above pre-9/11 levels, with $7.9 million allocated in FY 2000 to Central Asia. In comparison to U.S. security assistance for FY 2016, development assistance, particularly economic and justice aid, to Central Asian is mostly on the rise, increasing by 14 percent from FY 2014 ($86.3 million) to FY2016 ($103.4 million) (See Figure 1).

![Figure 1: State Department Aid to Central Asia by Type from FY 2014 to FY 2016](image)

Source: Security Assistance Monitor’s Military and Economic Aid database, collected from the State Department’s Congressional Budget Justification for FY 2016.

Despite the decline in U.S. security assistance, senior U.S. government officials have indicated that U.S. military and police aid to the sub-region remains an important element of U.S. foreign assistance to Central Asia. In a speech in late March, Deputy Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said that U.S. security is enhanced by a more stable, secure Central Asia, and the United States seeks to
strengthen “partnerships to advance [these] mutual security” issues. Blinken also highlighted some of the key U.S. security assistance priorities for the sub-region such as counterterrorism, border security, drug trafficking, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and security sector reform.

According to the State Department’s budget request for FY 2016, it plans to prioritize assistance to tackle counterterrorism/border security and stabilization operations/security sector reform and over counternarcotics/transnational crime efforts for Central Asia for next year (See Figure 2). However, what types of military equipment and training is the State Department planning to provide and to what countries? This fact sheet seeks to answer these key questions. This analysis leaves out U.S. security aid provided through the Defense Department, which could easily reach a total of $159 million, as the Pentagon does not provide details on its projected levels of spending to Central Asia.

**Figure 2: State Department Security Assistance to Central Asia for FY 2016 by Category**

- Counterterrorism/Border Security: 32%
- Counternarcotics/Transnational Crime: 22%
- Stabilization Operations/Security Sector Reform: 46%

*Source: Security Assistance Monitor’s Military and Economic Aid database, collected from the State Department’s Congressional Budget Justification for FY 2016.*

**Counterterrorism/Border Security**

The State Department’s FY 2016 request includes an estimated $7.8 million for counterterrorism and border security-related assistance to Central Asia countries, which represents a 31 percent drop in such aid compared to FY 2014 levels. About 41 percent ($3.2 million) of this assistance would go to Central Asian national militaries through the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. The remaining aid under this category ($4.6 million) would be provided to Central Asia law enforcement through the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Program (NADR) (See Figure 3 below).

The State Department’s budget request for Central Asia indicates that FMF would “strengthen partner capabilities to combat transnational threats such as
terrorism and illicit trafficking in the wake of the U.S. drawdown in Afghanistan.” This program would also “enhance partners’ abilities to monitor and secure their borders...” FMF funding would accomplish these goals largely by providing military equipment and training to support the use of such equipment. For example, the U.S. could help finance the sale of military sensors and vehicles.

![Figure 3: State Department Counterterrorism/Border Security Assistance to Central Asia for FY 2016](image)

Source: Security Assistance Monitor’s Military Aid database collected from the State Department’s Congressional Budget Justification for FY 2016

Notes: Although the State Department categorizes FMF funding to Central Asia as stabilization operations/security sector reform, it says the purpose of this FMF aid is largely for counterterrorism and border security-related issues. For this reason, we placed it under this category.

Of the $4.6 million in NADR funding, the State Department would allocate $3.3 million in Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program funding, which seeks to “prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and destabilizing accumulations and irresponsible transfers of conventional weapons.” Some of the EXBS aid would be used to provide modern inspection and detection equipment for border security and fund cross-border interdiction training. About $1.3 million in antiterrorism (AT) assistance would go to “build capacity in counterterrorism deterrence, detection and response” with a focus on increasing capabilities in “border security and counterterrorism investigations.”

Unlike previous years, all of the FMF funds and NADR antiterrorism funds for FY 2016 would be provided through a Central Asia regional funding account. Previously, FMF funds were allocated to Central Asian countries on a bilateral basis. The State Department indicated the reason for the change is to “enable bottom-up driven FMF proposals that will be more responsive to quickly changing security needs in this volatile region.” However, regional funding accounts often obscure efforts to see the full nature and extent of U.S. priorities and spending by country.
Counternarcotics/Transnational Crime

According to the State Department, “narcotics trafficking through Central Asia breeds corruption and social, health, and economic ills within Central Asia and beyond.” In order to assist Central Asia countries with its counternarcotic efforts, the State Department is requesting $5.4 million for FY 2016, which is a 43 percent drop in such aid since FY 2014. See Figure 4 for a breakdown of counternarcotics aid to Central Asia by country. Funded through the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) program, the stated U.S. goal is to assist Central Asian countries to “deter the illicit narcotics economy through law enforcement cooperation that encourages transition to licit alternatives.”

Of the $5.4 million requested for FY 2016, the State Department requested $4 million (or 75 percent) of this funding to finance the Central Asia Counternarcotics Initiative (CACI), which functions under the auspices of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Through CACI, DEA plans to support “highly specialized units, interagency drug task forces, intelligence-led investigations and regional cooperation to disrupt trafficking networks.” The remaining $1.4 million would go to enhance the “operational capacity” of the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center and support training through both the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Counternarcotics Training Program.

Stabilization Operations/Security Sector Reform

In addition to U.S. support to Central Asia for counterterrorism and counternarcotics assistance, the State Department plans to provide close to $11
million in stabilization operations and security sector reform aid for FY 2016, which is a 17 percent drop from FY 2014 levels ($13 million). This State Department category can include a wide range of security assistance activities such as training on leadership skills for military officials, operating and repairing military equipment and building effective logistics operations. It can also help fund the provision of arms and equipment. The State Department is planning to fund aid to Central Asia under this category for FY 2016 through three programs: International Military Education and Training (IMET), INCLE and NADR (See Figure 4).

By far, Tajikistan is slated to receive the largest amount of stabilization operations and security sector reform assistance for FY 2016 with a total of $6.6 million. According to the State Department, IMET aid would be used to fund professional military education courses and to address Ministry of Defense’s needs in areas such as communications, digital technology and tactical skills. About $2 million in NADR funding would support efforts to identify and destroy surplus weapons and demining efforts along the Tajik-Afghan border. Another $2.4 million would help strengthen police force ability to prevent crime. At the moment, however, it’s unclear if the funding levels to the Tajik police would change following news that a senior Tajik police commander defected to the Islamic State.

The second and third largest recipient of this type of assistance is Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. About $1.3 million of the total $2.5 million in aid going to Kyrgyzstan would be spent on improving “police capacity to deliver services to the Kyrgyz people…” Additional funding to Kyrgyzstan seeks to improve U.S.-

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**Figure 5: State Department Stabilization Operations/Security Sector Reform Aid to Central Asia, FY 2016**

*Source: Security Assistance Monitor’s Military Aid database collected from the State Department’s Congressional Budget Justification for FY 2016*

**Notes:** Under this category, total IMET aid is $2.8 million, total INCLE aid is $5.8 million and total NADR aid is $2.2 million.
Kyrgyzstan military cooperation abilities for international combat activities. Of the $429,000 in aid going to Uzbekistan, an estimated $300,000 in IMET funding would provide Uzbekistan with training to modernize its defense establishment to “ensure access for U.S. forces in Uzbekistan and the Wider Region…”

**Conclusion**

Based on the above data analysis, it is clear that the State Department seeks the greatest amount of aid to support stabilization operations and security sector reform assistance to Central Asia security forces. U.S. counterterrorism and border security aid comes in a close second and counternarcotics and transnational crime comes in last as far as priorities. This proposed allocation of funding by category is very similar to actual appropriation levels for FY 2014. However, as indicated above, the State Department is planning to give less total security assistance to Central Asia for FY 2016, leaving fewer dollars for each of the categories. U.S. development aid is increasing.

The above data and analysis also shows that the bulk of U.S. security assistance ($18.7 million) to the sub-region is going to law enforcement. The remaining $5.9 million would go to Central Asia militaries, mostly to support counterterrorism and border security-related efforts.

Unlike previous years, it is much harder to see how much security assistance would go to individual countries for counterterrorism and border security and counternarcotics and transnational crime because of the new Central Asia regional funding account. According to the information available, it appears that Tajikistan would receive the most U.S. security assistance for FY 2016 with $7.6 million. Krygzstan would receive the second most U.S. military and police aid with $4.6 million. However, the Central Asia regional account includes a projected $8.5 million, which would significantly change the numbers for each country.

As Congress continues to review the President’s request for security assistance to Central Asia, there could be many changes and amendments. This fact sheet will be updated as new information becomes available.

**A Note About the Fact Sheet**

This fact sheet was prepared by the Center for International Policy’s Security Assistance Monitor program, which tracks and analyzes U.S. foreign military and police aid, training and arms sales worldwide. All of the data used in the Security Assistance Monitor’s databases are directly sourced from official U.S. government reports. For questions or information, please contact us at sam@ciponline.org.