



THE EXPANDING SCOPE OF U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE SINCE 9/11

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SECURITY ASSISTANCE MONITOR



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The Center for International Policy (CIP) is an independent nonprofit center for research, public education, and advocacy on U.S. foreign policy. CIP works to make a peaceful, just, and sustainable world the central pursuit of U.S. foreign policy. CIP was founded in 1975 in the wake of the Vietnam War by former diplomats and peace activists who sought to reorient U.S. foreign policy to advance international cooperation as the primary vehicle for solving global challenges and promoting human rights. Today, we bring diverse voices to bear on key foreign policy decisions and make the evidence-based case for why and how the United States must redefine the concept of national security in the 21st century.

About the Security Assistance Monitor

The Security Assistance Monitor (SAM), a program of CIP, tracks and analyzes U.S. security and defense assistance programs worldwide. By informing policymakers, media, scholars, NGOs, and the public (in the United States and abroad) about trends and issues related to U.S. foreign security assistance, we seek to enhance transparency and promote greater oversight of U.S. military and police aid, arms sales, and training.

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Cover photo is of an armed soldier standing guard in front of Prime Minister Hamid Karzai's compound in Kandahar, Afghanistan, 2001. Photo via Paula Bronstein/Getty Images



U.S. Soldiers Continue Patrols Outside Forward Operating Base Shank In Afghanistan, 2014. Photo via Scott Olson/Getty Images

KEY FINDINGS

- Between fiscal year (FY) 2001 and FY2020, the United States budgeted \$406 billion for security assistance programs.¹
- Annual U.S. security assistance has grown steadily over the past two decades, from a low of \$8.28 billion in FY2001, to a peak of \$30.57 billion in FY2007.
- Broken down into four-year blocks, between FY2001 and FY2004, the average annual U.S. security assistance budget was \$12.39 billion. Over the next four years, that average rose to \$23.16 billion, an 86.81% increase, rising again to \$26.26 billion annually between FY2009-FY2012, an increase of 13.37% from the previous four-year period, and 111.79% more than the yearly average between FY2001-FY2004.
- The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region retained status as a top recipient of U.S. security assistance, totaling \$165 billion between FY2001-FY2020, 40.7% of all U.S. security assistance spending. MENA was followed by South and Central Asia at \$141 billion, or 34.68% of U.S. security assistance spending between FY2001-FY2020.
- The number of U.S. security assistance programs rose from 22 in 2001, with 9 managed by the U.S. Department of Defense, 8 by the Department of State, and 5 other, to 36 in 2020, with 29 of those managed by the Defense Department, 6 managed by the State Department, and 1 other.
- In 2001, the U.S. Department of State managed nearly 79.09% of U.S. security assistance funding. By 2020, that share had shrunk to 46.67%. The increasing scope of the Defense Department over security assistance throughout this period has, at times, blurred the lines between diplomacy and defense.

¹ This report relies primarily on the Security Assistance Monitor (SAM) databases, built using official U.S. government documents, including Department of Defense and Department of State budget requests, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports, and other U.S. government documents. SAM's databases on U.S. security assistance, arms sales, and foreign military training are the most comprehensive accounting of U.S. security assistance publicly available and can be found at <https://securityassistance.org/>.

- Despite massive increases in security assistance since 9/11 in support of counterterrorism, capacity building of security forces has done little to stem terrorism in practice around the world. In many cases, security assistance has reinforced the security power structures of authoritarian governments, particularly in the MENA region.
- Given the increases in security assistance and a lack of demonstrated results to achieve U.S. policy objectives, a greater accounting is needed to weigh the potential for successful outcomes against potential risks.

Security Assistance

U.S. security assistance consists of U.S. government programs, authorized under Title 22 of the U.S. Code, by which the United States provides defense articles, military education and training, and other defense-related services to international partners in accordance with U.S. national security objectives. Security assistance falls under the general direction of the U.S. Department of State and is variously administered by the Department of Defense or the Department of State.¹

¹ "Security Cooperation Overview and Relationships," Defense Security Cooperation Agency, <https://samm.dsca.mil/chapter/chapter-1>.

INTRODUCTION

America's cooperation with foreign security forces is nearly as old as the country itself, though its methods, rationale, authorities, and partner countries have shifted over time. What has remained constant is a long tradition of U.S. arms, assistance, and training delivered to other countries, often regardless of the humanitarian consequences.

U.S. security assistance has evolved markedly since the September 11, 2001 attacks, as the United States winds down its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and moves from the paradigm of counterterrorism to that of great power competition.

Viewing the last 20 years of security assistance in context is critical for a number of reasons. First, the scale of the enterprise and its geographic distribution expanded dramatically, reflecting changes in the national security priorities of the post-9/11 period. Second, and more importantly, the evolving security assistance effort also left its mark on the very structures of the U.S. foreign policy establishment. Expanding military aid efforts elevated the role of

the Defense Department (DoD) in security cooperation at the expense of the State Department (DoS), and as a result, the Pentagon's role in shaping diplomatic priorities and national security objectives sharply increased.

Finally, the post-9/11 security cooperation enterprise also represents a practical stress test for the theory of allied counterterrorism capacity building as a core national security strategy. The prevailing assumption over the past two decades has been that investing in the capacities of allied security forces to contain or defeat terrorist organizations would mitigate threats from armed actors, improve global stability, and minimize the direct cost in blood and treasure for the United States.



A U.S. Marine patrols with a member of the Afghanistan National Police in Kajaki, Afghanistan, 2010. Photo via Scott Olson/Getty Images

Although the United States has not suffered an attack with fatalities on the scale of 9/11 since 2001, the threat of terrorism and the ideology of extremist armed groups continue to adapt and grow. Put another way, if the theory had worked as intended, we should have seen, from 9/11 until the present, a reduction in terrorism in the countries where the United States has delivered security assistance, resulting from increased capacities by militaries and police forces to counter armed groups. Instead, sub-state armed groups have proliferat-

ed and metastasized globally, spreading, and in some cases, progressing in sophistication. Conversely, many of the security services that have seen the most robust U.S. support have either failed to make inroads against militants or collapsed altogether.

As we know today, America's militarized solution to terrorism did not reduce its prevalence. In some ways, it shaped and distorted it. Today, there are more Salafi-inspired terrorist organizations than there were on 9/11,² and al Qaeda has since expanded its reach³ into Syria, multiple African states, and elsewhere around the world. Unfortunately, the increases in cost, scope, and reach of America's security assistance enterprise have not achieved their goals of empowering foreign partners to combat terrorism and other sources of instability. What it has brought about is instability in a shifting landscape of new and growing arenas of conflict.

THE POST-9/11 EVOLUTION OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE

After the 9/11 attacks, the foreign policy establishment within the United States concluded that fragile states and the roles of sub-state armed groups were the most imminent and serious threats to U.S. national security. Accordingly, U.S. security assistance began to shift in scale, geography, and program management.

The Scale of the Enterprise

In FY2001, which ended just after the 9/11 attacks, U.S. security assistance totaled \$8.28 billion globally, adjusted for inflation.⁴ By FY2004, that total would nearly double to \$14.7 billion, eventually rising to a peak of \$30.57 billion in FY2007, a 269.39% increase – more than three and a half times the FY2001 levels.

Broken down into four-year blocks, between FY2001 and FY2004, the average annual U.S. security assistance budget was \$12.39 billion. In the next four years, that average would rise to \$23.16 billion, an 86.81% increase, nearly double the prior levels. It would rise even further between FY2009-FY2012 to \$26.26 billion annually, an increase of 13.37% from the previous four-year period, and 111.79% more than the yearly average between FY2001-FY2004.

² Bruce Hoffman, "How Has the Terrorism Threat Changed Twenty Years after 9/11?" Council on Foreign Relations, August 12, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/how-has-terrorism-threat-changed-twenty-years-after-911>.

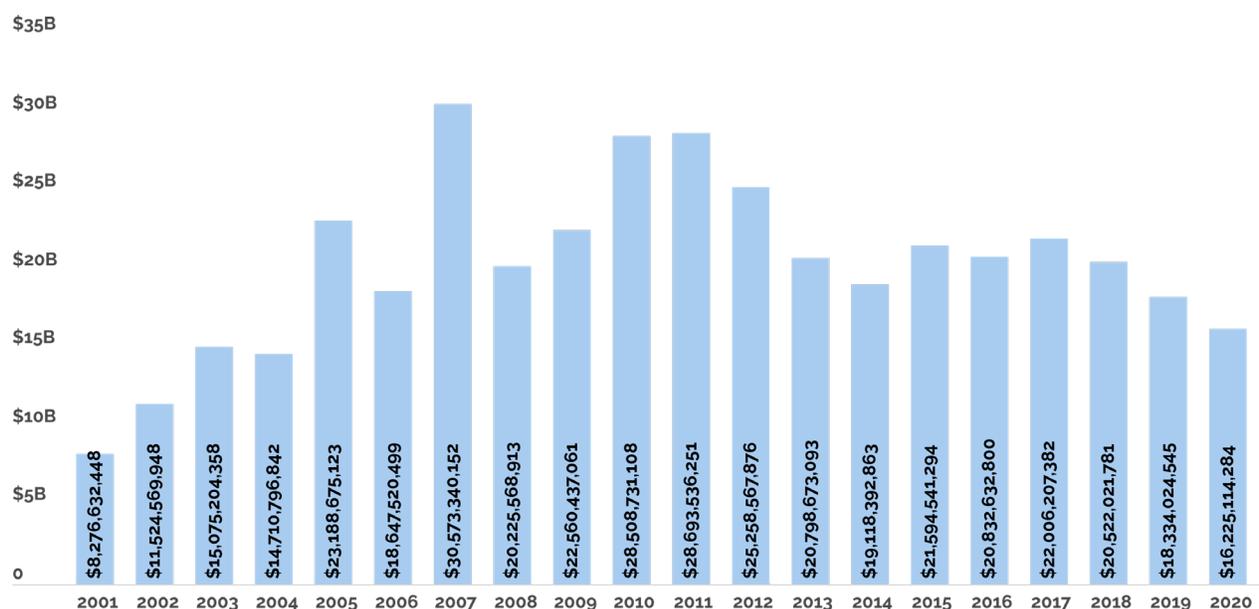
³ Global Terrorism Overview: Terrorism in 2019, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, July 2020 https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_GlobalTerrorismOverview2019_July2020.pdf.

⁴ All figures are adjusted for inflation to be in 2021 dollars. Inflation adjustments were made using the GDP (Chained) Price Index from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

The four-year average would taper in the coming years. The average between FY2013-FY2016 was \$20.59 billion, and between FY2017-FY2020 was \$19.27 billion. Even the lowest annual security assistance total of the last decade, \$16.23 billion in FY2020, is nearly 96.04% more than the FY2001 total of \$8.28 billion.

Rising U.S. security assistance budgets reflected an expansion in security cooperation globally, but also the large-scale U.S. interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, each of which entailed ambitious defense institution building efforts in parallel to active U.S. combat operations. In FY2007, for example, Afghanistan and Iraq amounted to 58.09% of the entire U.S. security assistance budget, eclipsing even Egypt and Israel, which had long taken the lion's share of America's annual military aid. The spike in FY2007 was in part due to an emergency supplemental request⁵ by the Defense Department, bringing security assistance to Afghanistan for that year to \$10.77 billion, as well as a requested increase for Iraqi security forces from \$4.11 billion in FY2006 to \$6.99 billion in FY2007.

U.S. Security Assistance Annual Totals FY 2001-2020



U.S. security assistance would peak again in FY2010 and FY2011, at \$28.51 billion and \$28.69 billion, respectively. These increases in security assistance spending coincided generally with the surge of U.S. troops in Iraq in 2007 and 2008, followed by a surge in Afghanistan⁶

5 Amendment to FY 2007 Emergency Supplemental Request for the Global War on Terror, Department of Defense, March 2007, https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/Docs/FY2007_Emergency_Supplemental_Request_for_the_GWOT_Amendment.pdf.

6 Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "The Afghan Surge is Over," *Foreign Policy*, Sept. 25, 2012, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/25/the-afghan-surge-is-over/>.

in 2009-2012. Similarly, the relative decline in security assistance spending beginning after FY2011 also reflected shrinking U.S. combat efforts in those theaters.

Notwithstanding the surge-related peaks in Iraq and Afghanistan, the security assistance enterprise as a whole grew after 9/11. Excluding Iraq and Afghanistan, the four-year average still rose from \$11.31 billion between FY2001-FY2004 to \$12.15 billion between FY2005-FY2008, \$13.57 billion between FY2009-FY2012, \$14.21 billion between FY2013-FY2016, and \$13.31 billion between FY2017-FY2020.



A Northern Alliance soldier points out an American bomber December 7, 2001 in the Tora Bora area of Afghanistan, 2001. Photo via Chris Hondros/Getty Images

Shifting and Expanding Geographies of U.S. Security Assistance

The geographic distribution of U.S. security assistance also underwent notable changes. Although the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has historically dominated U.S. security assistance efforts, owing largely to the now routine multi-billion-dollar aid packages to Israel and Egypt, its share of the annual security aid budgets diminished, as other regions and new countries took up larger slices of the assistance pie.

South and Central Asia saw the most dramatic change in its security assistance allocations, rising from 16.94% of the annual U.S. security assistance budget between FY2001-FY2004 to a peak of 53.07% of the security assistance budget between FY2009-FY2012. The change is

overwhelmingly attributable to the \$88-billion-dollar security forces capacity building effort in Afghanistan.

Conversely, the Western Hemisphere saw notable reductions in its share of U.S. security assistance after 9/11, as counterterrorism centered in Africa, the MENA region, and South and Central Asia, supplanted the counter-drug initiatives of the 1990s. The region dropped from a security assistance peak between FY2001-FY2004 of 11.69% of the budget (\$5.79 billion during those years), to just 3.91% of the budget between FY2017-FY2020 (\$3.01 billion during those years).

The Europe and Eurasia region also experienced substantial reductions in its share of the annual U.S. security assistance package, as the prominence of managing the dissolution of the Soviet Union diminished as a U.S. foreign policy priority. The region saw a decline from a peak between FY2001-FY2004 of 9.27% of the annual security assistance budget (\$4.82 billion during that time) to a low of 3.11% between FY2013-FY2016 (\$2.56 billion during that time).

The East Asia and the Pacific region shifted slightly from 1.67% of the annual security assistance budget in FY2001-FY2004, dipping its share in the following years, before rising again to 2.08% in FY2017-FY2020, reflecting an increased U.S. policy interest in the region.

Additionally, though only a fraction of the total U.S. security assistance budget, Sub-Saharan Africa saw a significant increase in the relative size of its security assistance package over the past two decades. From just 1.10% of the security assistance budget between FY2001-FY2004 (\$545 million during those years), Sub-Saharan Africa's share of the average annual budget rose to 5.67% between FY2013-FY2016 (\$4.67 billion during those years). In terms of dollar value, the change amounts to more than a 756% increase in security assistance for the region. In FY2017-FY2020, its share dipped slightly to 4.21%.

But across the past two decades, the preeminence of the MENA region has remained a relative constant. Between FY2001-FY2004, the MENA region accounted for 51.29% of the U.S. security assistance budget.

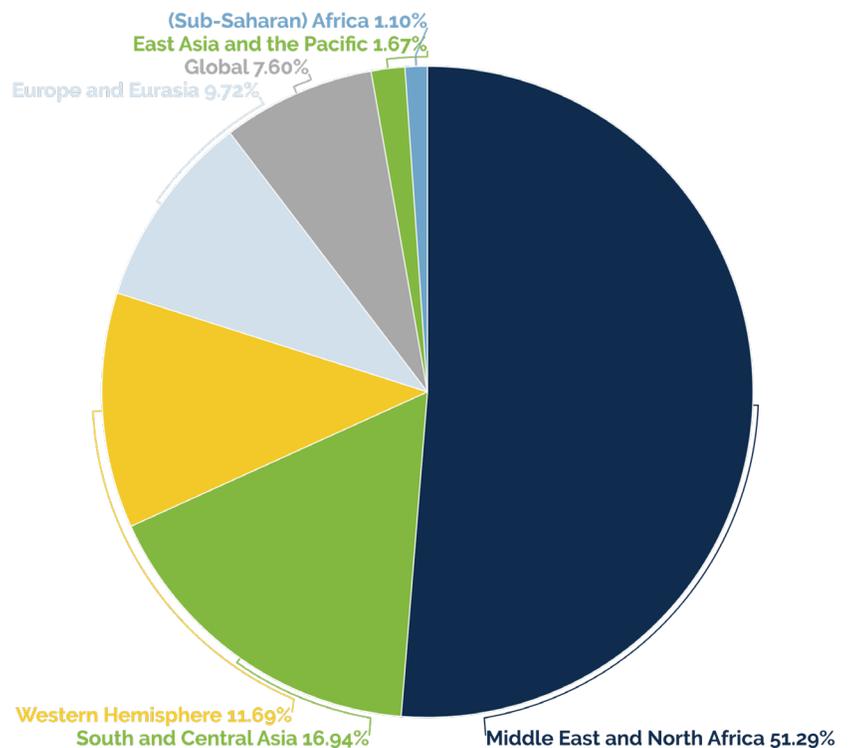
Although the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has historically dominated U.S. security assistance efforts, owing largely to the now routine multi-billion-dollar aid packages to Israel and Egypt, its share of the annual security aid budgets diminished, as other regions and new countries took up larger slices of the assistance pie.

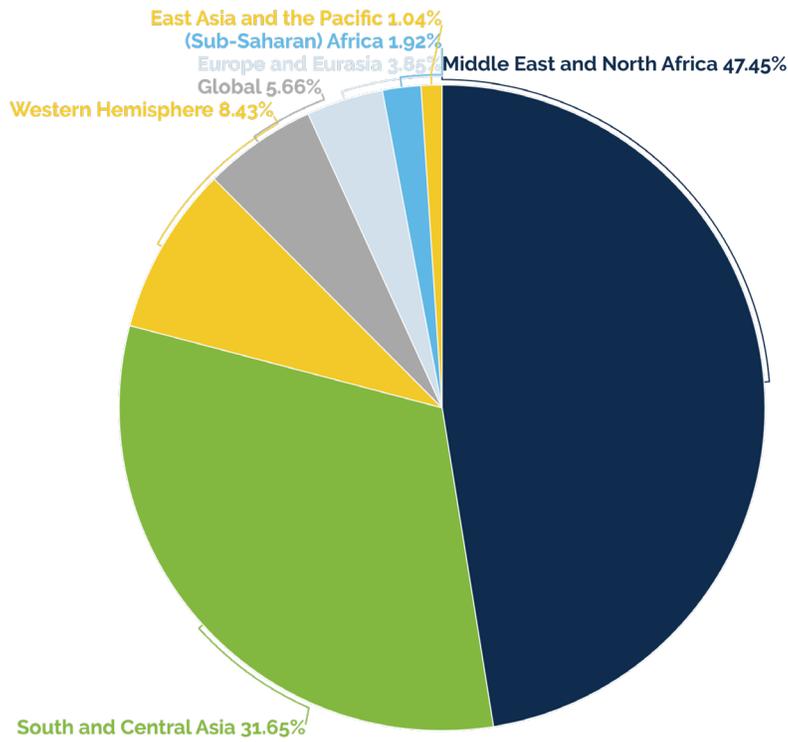
It dropped in the coming years, to 47.45% between FY2005-FY2008 and to a historic low of 30.55% of the budget between FY2009-FY2012, before bouncing slightly back to 39.54% between FY2013-FY2016 and 40.85% between FY2017-FY2020.

Taken together, even those regions where the percentage of security assistance shrank still received significant levels of assistance because of the increasing levels of U.S. security assistance overall. In short, recipients were simply drawing from a deeper well. The impact of these increases can be seen everywhere the United States has sought to assist and influence foreign security forces. In the MENA region, which has seen some of the historically highest levels, the U.S. role in prioritizing resources and training for militaries and police has reinforced their power structures at the expense of other government institutions. The regimes with which the United States has partnered have declined to address deeper political grievances, while using the power of the military and police as a short-sighted means of projecting power, fueling instability.

Regional Breakdowns of U.S. Security Assistance FY 2001-2020

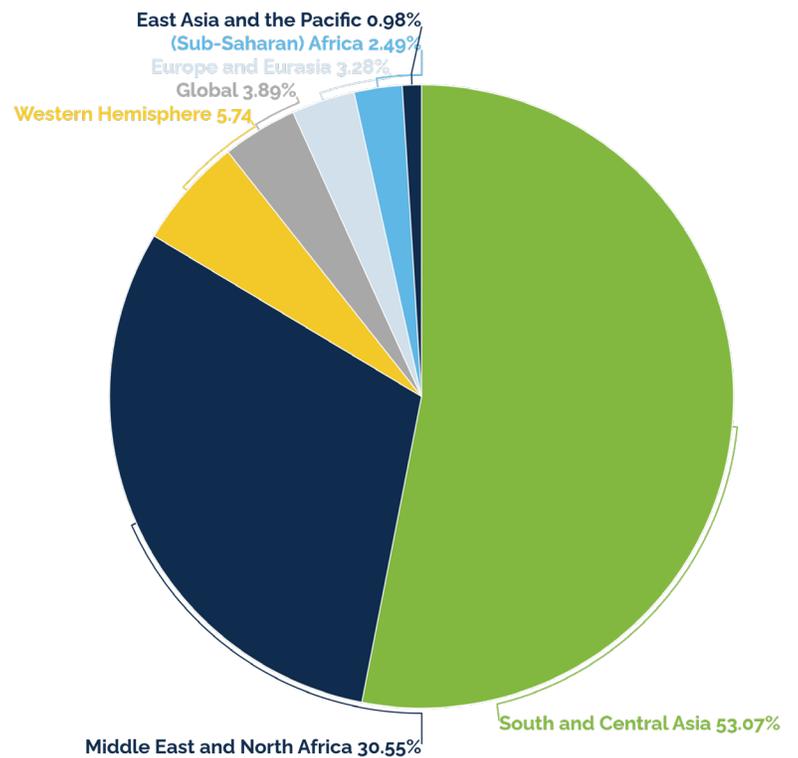
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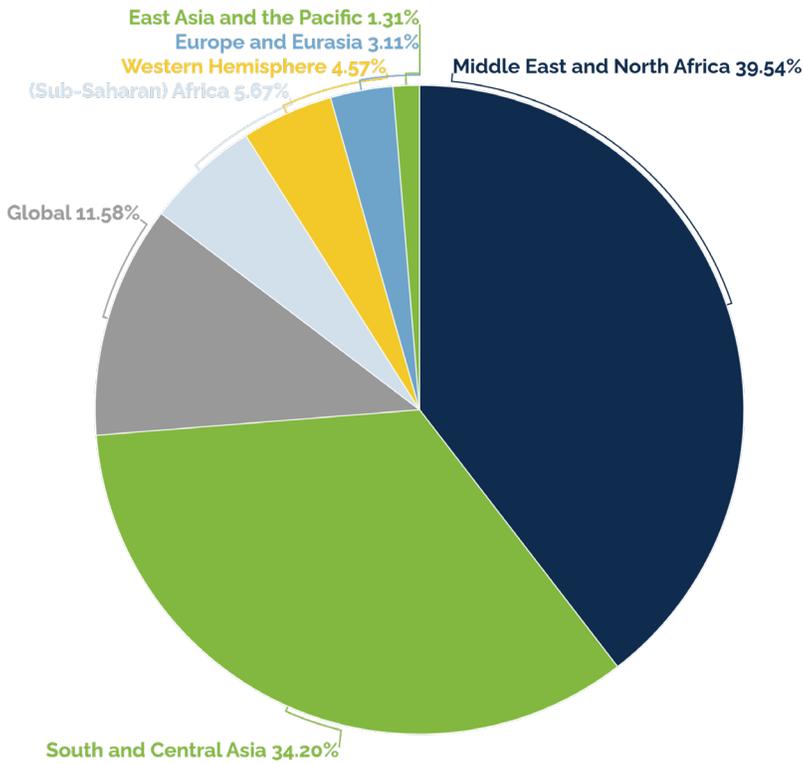




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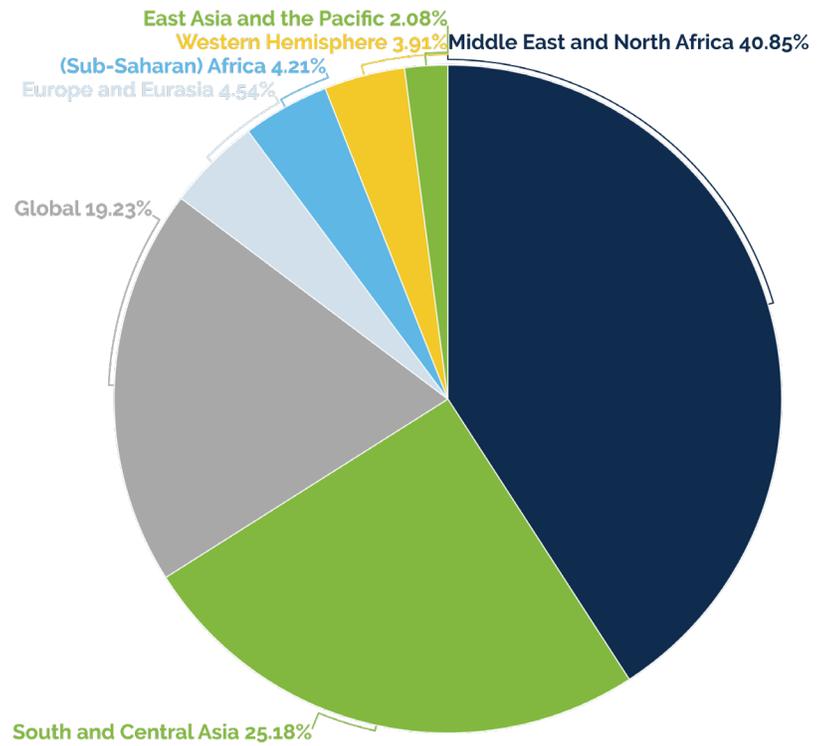
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Changes in the Management of U.S. Security Assistance Programs

Changes in the scale of U.S. security assistance also reflected and shaped structural and thematic developments in the way the United States conducts and manages security assistance throughout the world. In the first place, security assistance programs proliferated in the years after 9/11. The number of U.S. security assistance programs rose from 22 in 2001, with 9 managed by the U.S. Department of Defense, 8 by the Department of State, and 5 other, to 36 in 2020, with 29 of those managed by the Defense Department, 6 managed by the State Department, and 1 other.

Additionally, the focus of these new programs narrowed. For example, some of the of the largest programs of the last two decades – the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund, Iraq Security Forces Fund, Counter-Islamic State of Iraq, and Syria Train and Equip Fund – were specific to their recipient countries.

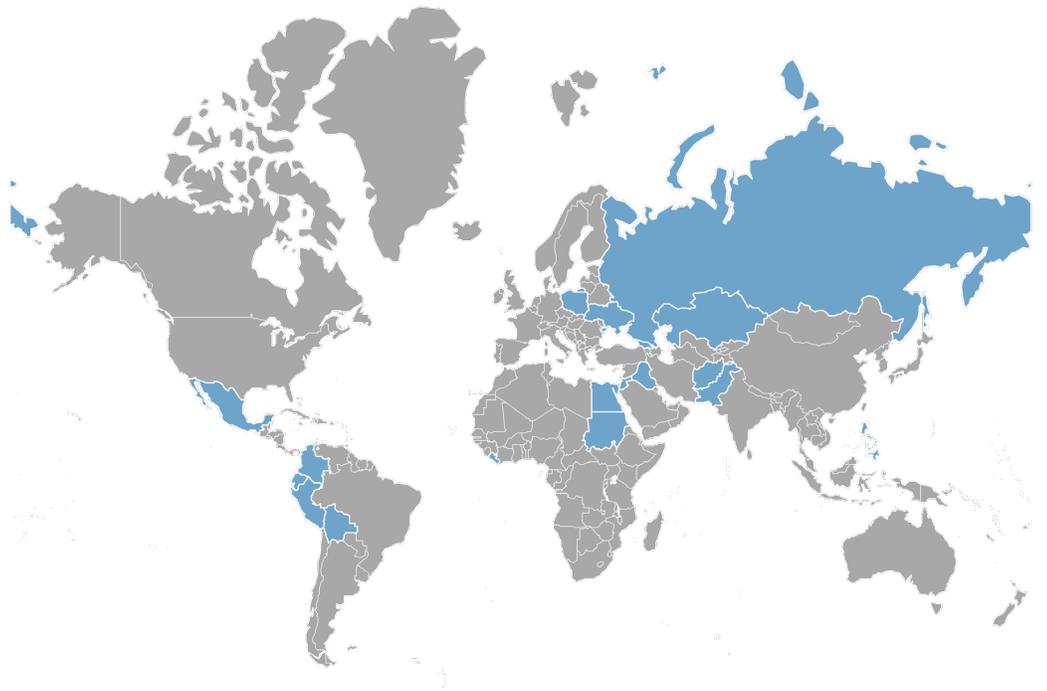
Top 20 U.S. Security Assistance Recipients FY 2001-2020



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2008



2009

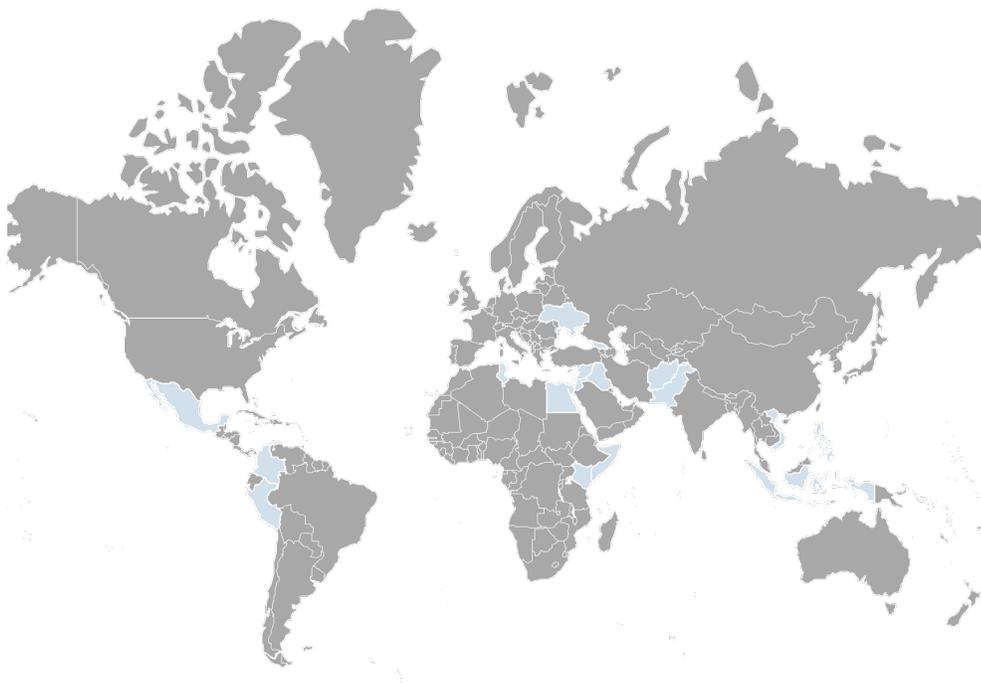
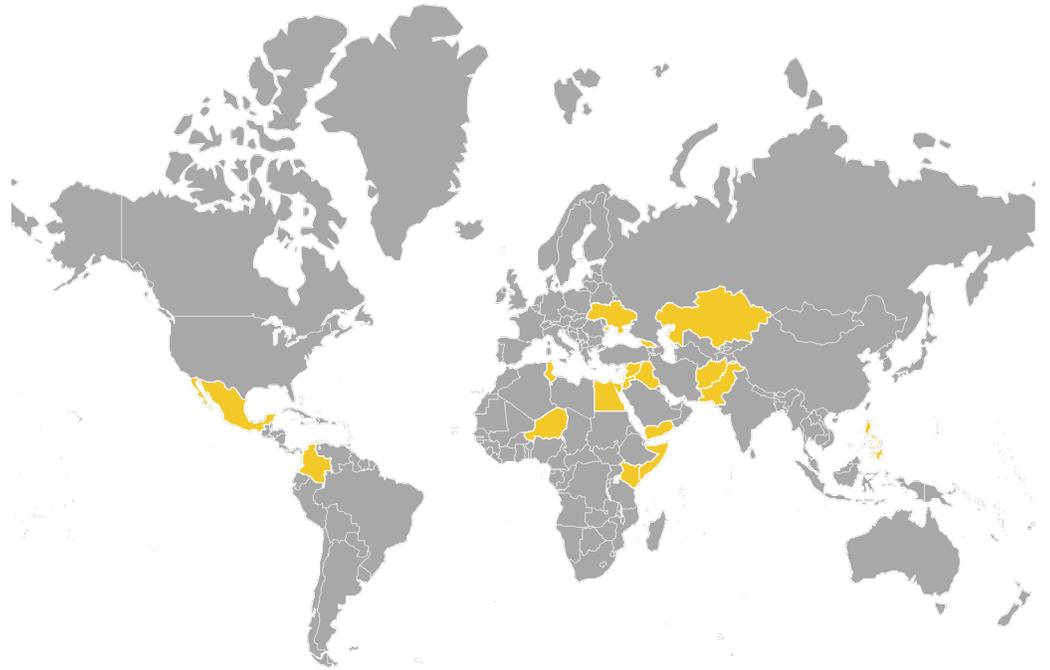
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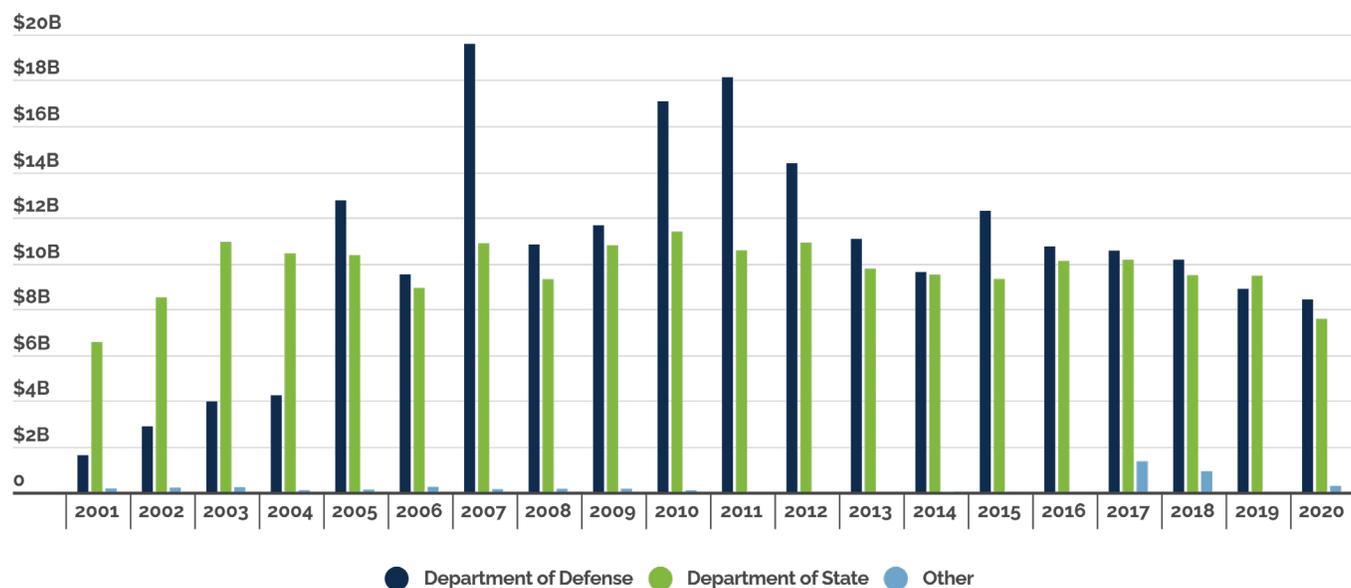
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Although the legal foundations for security assistance charge the Secretary of State with the responsibility to provide “continuous supervision and general direction of foreign assistance and military assistance to ensure its coherence with foreign policy,”⁷ DoS has rarely acted alone in security assistance. Beginning in the 1980s, Congress began providing DoD with responsibilities under Title 10 of the U.S. Code and annual National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA) to conduct a range of programs focused on military assistance. Although the authorities existed earlier, particularly after the 9/11 attacks, Congress expanded DoD’s authorities over time to embrace the security assistance mission—until it became a key and central aspect of DoD’s work.

In FY2001, of the \$8.28 billion security assistance budget, \$6.55 billion was managed by DoS, nearly 79.09% of all security assistance spending. By FY2007, though the DoS security assistance budget had risen to \$10.87 billion, its share of the wider enterprise had fallen to 35.54% compared to DoD’s \$19.59 billion. By 2020, DoS’ share was 46.67%. This share would be closer to a consistent parity in security assistance budgeting but would still be far from the pre-9/11 days when DoS was responsible for the vast majority of security cooperation programming.

Department of State vs. Department of Defense Funding FY 2001-2020



Part of this pivot toward DoD has to do with the war-driven security assistance budgets for Iraq and Afghanistan. Given the centrality of standing up the Afghan and Iraqi security forc-

⁷ Susan B. Epstein and Liana W. Rosen, “U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview of Funding Trends, Congressional Research Service, Feb. 1, 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R45091.pdf>.

es to the wider U.S. war efforts in those theaters, these programs rested squarely in DoD's camp. But it also reflected the expansion of a number of Title 10 train and equip authorities, which by FY2019, amounted to \$1.22 billion globally, making it the fifth largest security assistance program that year.

The rapid expansion of DoD's role in the security assistance enterprise also elevated its stature in shaping foreign policy and national security priorities, authorities that had traditionally rested with DoS and the National Security Council. In effect, the lines between defense and diplomacy were blurred. Consequently, short-term, defense-related tactical priorities often overshadowed the longer-term strategic objectives that were meant to be guiding U.S. security assistance.

Unsurprisingly, post-9/11 U.S. security assistance tended to prioritize weapons and technical advances over deeper training, advising, and other long-term, human-centered security reforms. The U.S. military's expanding presence in Africa is a case in point, along with the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, a government-wide initiative that has in practice focused on training elite counterterrorism units at the expense of broader institutional reforms.⁸

The 2017 NDAA included a number of security assistance-related reforms on the U.S. government side, consolidating and clarifying authorities and establishing a monitoring and evaluation program, among other modifications. Most of these have yet to be fully implemented. As various government entities seek to establish who has leadership of security assistance and in what circumstances, the answer will greatly impact the nature of this assistance and the extent to which it pursues more militarized, tactical goals or longer-term diplomatic ones.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TOP 10 U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS SINCE 9/11 (FY2001-FY2020)

- **Foreign Military Financing (\$127,374,602,395)** – The Foreign Military Financing program provides grants and loans to foreign governments to purchase U.S.-made defense articles and defense services on the U.S. Munitions List.

⁸ Stephanie Savell, "The Costs of United States' Post-9/11 'Security Assistance,' A Costs of War Research Series, Brown University, March 4, 2021, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20Counterterrorism%20in%20Burkina%20Faso_Costs%20of%20War_Savell.pdf.

- **Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (\$93,805,850,876)** – A country-specific security assistance program, the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) is a Defense Department program yearly appropriated by Congress that provides funding, equipment, and services to the security forces of Afghanistan, including the Afghan National Army, National Police, Air Force, and Special Security Forces. It was tailored to fund the U.S. defense institution building efforts in Afghanistan.
- **International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (\$38,380,698,736)** - International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) program provides equipment, training, and strategic guidance to foreign countries' justice and law enforcement sectors for counternarcotics and anti-crime efforts.
- **Coalition Support Funds (\$28,299,815,094)** - Coalition Support Funds (CSF) refers to money from the Defense Emergency Response Fund (DERF) that is eligible to be used to reimburse coalition partners for logistical and military support to U.S. military operations. The lion's share of the funds have been disbursed to Pakistan in the context of the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan.
- **Iraq Security Forces Fund (\$25,569,962,873)** – The Iraq Security Forces Fund (ISFF) is another country-specific program that provided funding, training, equipment, and services to the Iraqi security sector.
- **Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (\$14,704,251,039)** - The Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR) funds a wide range of security-related programs focused on nonproliferation efforts related to chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons and material, anti-terrorism funding through training and equipping foreign countries for a variety of functions, and elimination of mines and other unexploded ordnance.
- **Section 1004 Counter-Drug Assistance (\$11,580,259,486)** - This Defense Department program assists foreign forces confronting threats that have some connection to international drug trafficking or organized crime networks. In the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act, it was combined with a number of other authorities under section 333 of the U.S. Code.
- **Cooperative Threat Reduction (\$9,766,171,038)** – Cooperative Threat Reduction programs aim to prevent proliferator states and terrorist groups from developing or acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and delivery systems that could threaten the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests abroad.
- **Peacekeeping Operations (\$8,914,014,227)** - U.S. Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) funds support multilateral peacekeeping and regional stability operations that are not funded through the United Nations mechanism.

- **Section 1206 and 333 Train and Equip Authority (\$8,719,276,113)** – Section 1206, which was folded into a consolidated section 333 authority, is a Department of Defense authority to provide training, assistance, equipment, funding, and other services to foreign security forces counterterrorism operations, counter-weapons of mass destruction operations, counter-illicit drug trafficking operations, counter-transnational organized crime operations, maritime and border security operations, military intelligence operations, and others.

SAME ASSISTANCE, NEW PARADIGM

Having seen the shift in security assistance from the post-Cold War period, through 9/11 and beyond, the most durable condition through each changing foreign policy paradigm has been the U.S. commitment to address foreign policy priorities through security assistance and arms sales.

Those priorities have shifted, despite the preeminence of the MENA region in receiving arms and training. With counterterrorism for now on the back burner and great power competition rising again, it would not be a surprise to see another reorientation in security assistance, as the U.S. increasingly seeks to balance Russia and China, or other regional powers by partnering more closely with their neighbors. That could mean increasing security assistance for Southeast Asian countries, for example, alongside a continued presence in South and Central Asia to contain the fallout from the Afghanistan withdrawal.

“Over the horizon” remote training is also gaining traction, as the U.S. seeks to withdraw troops from conflict zones, while maintaining a remote and occasional in-country presence in places like Somalia and other fragile states. That could further impact geographic focuses, as the United States provides weapons and training in countries neighboring those that it seeks to directly support.

If the trend of ever-increasing security cooperation continues, as we have every indication to believe it will, it will be increasingly important to take better stock of risks, including the risks of escalating conflicts, danger to U.S. personnel, misuse of weapons and training by recipient countries, missing weapons, and corruption, and to the extent possible, to measure and weigh these risks against the likelihood of achieving policy goals through security assistance. The best hope of reducing these risks and meeting goals lies in better understanding and responding to these trends, to facilitate a more careful calibration of security assistance, limiting assistance when goals are not being met, and considering the impact on partner nations, military, police, and civilians impacted by their conduct.



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