

# Taking Defense's Hand Out Of State's Pocket

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The Pentagon has steadily tightened its grip over U.S. aid and foreign policy in recent years. Now, the Senate Armed Services Committee is trying to pry it loose.

In its lengthy June report accompanying the 2008 Defense Authorization bill, the Senate panel sheds light on the workings of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), a little-known Pentagon group that is central to the Defense Department's forays into foreign assistance. Aware that the Defense Department's share of U.S. foreign aid has grown from 7 percent to 20 percent over the past few years, the Armed Services panel cut one-third of the DSCA's requested \$673.4 million program budget in the authorization bill, according to the report. Among other things, the DSCA manages \$12 billion in foreign military sales each year, has 900 security assistance personnel in 102 countries, supervises 14,000 international military students annually and spends \$50 million in humanitarian aid.

The DSCA also handles Section 1206 funds, whose "Global Train and Equip" programs are designed "to build the capacity of partner nations supporting the global war on terrorism operations," according to the budget that the DSCA submitted to Congress in February. With State Department concurrence, those funds are used to instruct and supply other countries' forces to support military or stability operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, according to the committee.

Section 1206 was considered a pilot program in legislation approved last year, and its funding was to be limited to \$300 million in 2008. However, the Pentagon asked for \$500 million for 2008 because the program has spread -- with the State Department's blessing -- to cover coalition partners in Iraq, including Algeria, Chad, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Yemen, and Sao Tome and Principe. The program was to include "a number of African, East Asian and Central European countries" next year, according to the DSCA.

But the Armed Services panel has refused to approve the additional funds, cutting the Section 1206 request for next year back to the original \$300 million.

A second major Pentagon foreign aid pilot program, Section 1207 funds, provides that \$200 million in Defense Department equipment or funds for stability assistance and reconstruction be shared with the State Department. The committee required the secretaries of State and Defense to collaborate on this

effort because "to date, the Department of Defense and the Department of State have failed to coordinate . . . except in a limited number of programs."

In two other cases, the Armed Services panel eliminated funding for DSCA programs in which the overlap with other government agencies was apparent.

First, DSCA sought \$7.4 million for its Center for International Issues Research, which produces a Daily Arabic Media Report and Global Issue Reports. DSCA told Congress that the reports provide "critical security updates and analysis to the president, leadership and other nations" regarding the battle against global terrorism.

However, the Senate panel recommended eliminating such "open-source media reports," arguing that they constitute "an unnecessary duplication of reporting available from other sources."

The second program funding that the committee eliminated was the DSCA's request for \$5 million to launch a Stability Operations Fellowship program -- an initiative expected to grow to \$25 million per year to train "international civilian and military officials to be effective partners in stability operations and perform certain stability operations missions in lieu of U.S. participation."

The committee report concluded that "no authority currently exists for the Department of Defense to conduct this fellowship program." And given the less-than-stellar U.S. record in leading stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, one has to wonder where the instructors would come from.

*National security and intelligence reporter Walter Pincus pores over the speeches, reports, transcripts and other documents that flood Washington, and every week uncovers the fine print that rarely makes headlines -- but should.*