

## Safe and Secure Environment—Security Sector Reform (SSR)

### DEFINITION

Security sector reform (SSR) is a process that establishes or transforms security institutions so that they play an effective, legitimate and democratically accountable role in providing external and internal security.

### RELATED THEMES

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), civil and democratic control of armed forces, military assistance, security force assistance, stability policing, security force capacity building, legitimacy, protection of civilians

### RELEVANCE TO THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

Almost 100 peace agreements in the past 30 years have included reform of the state security sector because of their role as perpetrator of violence and abuse of power. As stipulated in all the major regional framework agreements on SSR, the SSR process should be undertaken proactively and early in order to reduce the possibility of future violent conflict sparked by corrupt and unjust institutions. Lasting reform requires embedded local leadership. Accelerating reform assistance beyond the capacity of legitimate local institutions and cultures risks exacerbating resistance to reform, which can fan rather than prevent violence when supporting militaries drawdown and attempt to exit.

### CONTEXT

Many states and international organizations have adopted SSR as an integrated concept and field of action.<sup>1</sup> SSR is a multi-agency undertaking and needs to be understood holistically. 'Improving' effectiveness in one sector (arrests) can cause blockages and lead to greater human rights abuses in others (detention centres).

**Situational Awareness – the Comprehensive SSR Assessment.** SSR may have to be conducted at any stage along the spectrum of conflict, ranging from requested assistance during peacetime military engagement to post-major combat operations. Regardless of the stage of conflict, any SSR intervention needs to understand where it fits into reform of the overall security system (including police, justice, corrections, and non-state providers), in order to avoid potentially very negative repercussions downstream. Increasingly, comprehensive and holistic SSR assessments are done jointly with the Host Nation, usually with a multilateral lead (eg those done in CAR, Guinea Bissau, and Madagascar).

The absence of such an assessment triggers the need to decide how to do one, whether a subset of a comprehensive assessment has utility, who to do it, what role the military plays, and what skills are needed to deploy to do this, and when, including warning orders. A lead nation may be the best way to instigate an assessment, preferably several nations

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. OECD-DAC 2007; European Security Strategy 2016; UN Secretary General reports on SSR 2008, 2013; African Union Framework Policy for SSR 2013; OSCE Integrated Guidance Notes 2016) see <http://issat.dcaf.ch/Learn/SSR-Overview>; <http://ssrbackgrounders.org>; NATO, AJP 3.4.5 (Ratification Draft), Annex B.

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in conjunction with the Host Nation. Friendly Force Info Requirements (FFIRs) via established liaison with the Host Nation will be key to contributing to any assessment.

**Perception of Host Nation Forces.** An understanding of how Host Nation forces are perceived, and the problem they face or pose, is paramount to understanding what would be appropriate initial reform measures

- quantitative measures - is it simply a matter of rightsizing, more soldiers, less officers, recruiting and retention?
- qualitative measures
  - basic craftsmanship - classic training needed in shooting, section/platoon/company attacks, operational planning etc?
  - professionalism and leadership - if the Host Nation forces are part of the problem due to human rights abuse and corruption, then giving them training on how to shoot straight and on operational planning is not going to reassure the local population about the Host Nation or our own intentions, and could in fact make things worse on all fronts by legitimising the problem.

**Reform Space.** The most demanding situation for SSR will occur when the supporting military is tasked to impose of a secure environment. In such a situation, the military will need to balance the operational imperative to improve effectiveness of the physical aspect of fighting power with the essential requirement to pave the way for the accountability, integrity and responsibility of wielding lethal force on behalf of the State. Most reform needs to be done out of battle. In ongoing hot stabilisation scenarios, the physical and political space that can be secured to allow reform of at least part of the Host Nation armed forces, will be a decisive condition for achieving an SSR objective.<sup>2</sup>

**Mutual Support.** Due to the diverse nature of SSR, it is essential that a mutually supportive, comprehensive approach is adopted utilizing political, economic and military input, guided by unity of effort, and underpinned by a common information campaign. A clear requirement for the security sector must be developed from analysis of the threat, historical precedent, cultural requirements, economic sustainability and, most important, the aspirations of the host nation. The formation of a security sector is a strategic-level task shaped at the highest level, and the ownership of any program must lie with the host nation government.

## MILITARY CONTRIBUTION

In terms of the supporting military's role, SSR is classified as a stability operation. The supporting military may support the transformation or establishment and training of host nation armed forces, within the strategic guidelines set for the reformation of the security sector . This constitutes security force capacity building (SFCB)<sup>3</sup>. Capacity building is the process of increasing a host nation's ability to achieve self-sufficiency, typically through improved governance, security, human capital, development and reconstruction. The ultimate aim is to hand over the execution of and responsibility for public order and security to the local authorities.

If a comprehensive SSR assessment has already been conducted jointly by the Host Nation and a multilateral or bilateral lead, then a variety of short, medium and long term recommendations will have been made, including for the reform of military forces. If a full

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<sup>2</sup> See eg <http://issat.dcaf.ch/Share/Forum/Are-there-any-good-examples-of-military-reform-efforts> (examples include, Liberia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> Security force assistance and military assistance tend to major solely on building effectiveness in order to achieve purely military objectives, without enough consideration of the legitimacy and accountability of reform measure that will have significant downstream political implications.

or partial assessment has still to be conducted, then, providing there is political engagement for reform, some initial reform measures can be started, particularly as confidence building measures and potentially to contribute to overall security. Without genuine and wide-reaching political engagement for reform by the Host Nation, external support for reform is likely to be misused and potentially further destabilising. Supporting doctrine on the military contribution to SSR is at AJP 3.4.5 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction*, Annex B: Security Sector Reform, Paragraphs B001-B036, NATO, Edition A, Version 1, Ratification Draft 1, 2015.

**Reform Skills Requirement.** Depending what reform measures can be deployed will affect who is brought in to support such measure, i.e. providing a battalion to support SSR should not imply a battalion of infantry soldiers or an armoured unit. In most cases a mixed battlegroup minus concept would need to be SNCO and officer heavy, with considerable experience in training, advice, and mentoring.

**Initial Reform Measures.** Whilst train and equip alone can be counter-productive, if there is political will for change, then some reform measures under the leadership of the Host Nation, such as training consolidation, infrastructure improvement, recruitment standards<sup>4</sup>, education in leadership, internal oversight mechanisms, disciplinary and justice systems, command and control measures can help to achieve immediate supporting effects<sup>5</sup>. Once a suitable and secure reform space is available, it will be important to determine

- number of troops to undergo reform at any given moment (i.e. who and what size of unit can be cycled out of normal duty for enhanced training)
- length of training – which may need initially to be quite short (six weeks, or two or three months) and using a phased approach, to allow troops to cycle in and out of normal duty

**Supporting Effects for Decisive Conditions.** The type of effects that the SSR objective of the operation needs to achieve include:

- **Strengthen** Host Nation Forces (along physical, intellectual, and moral components, ie training in leadership, as well as in planning; equipment provision and management; and infrastructure husbandry)
- **Reassure** local population
- **Deter** adversaries

Implementing such effects will require not only actual reform measures, but also supporting influence and communication measures. This in turn will require an understanding of local channels of communication, and if necessary potential skills transfer to the Host Nation Forces on local community relations. Improving local community relations is in itself a strong reform and confidence building measure.<sup>6</sup>

**Long Term Change Enablement.** Longer term measures will include institutional, educational, career management, and oversight reform which will likely require an understanding of the necessary legal underpinnings in the Host Nation as well as potential opportunities for change. The support of the nation's population will be key to re-establishing the legitimacy of reform measures and ultimately of the Host Nation Force.

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<sup>4</sup> Vetting comes with its own considerable issues including on transitional justice, and should not be embarked on without in-depth knowledge of good practice and potential pitfalls.

<sup>5</sup> See for example <http://issat.dcaf.ch/Learn/Resource-Library/Case-Studies/Capacity-and-accountability-in-the-military-some-examples-from-the-SSD-program-Burundi>

<sup>6</sup> See for example <http://issat.dcaf.ch/Learn/Resource-Library2/Case-Studies/The-Philippines-Civil-Society-Military-Police-Capacity-Building>

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Sustainable reform will need to be fully locally owned, ideally from the outset, and incorporates mechanisms for future reform.

**Measures of Success.** A comprehensive and nuanced understanding of potential positives and negatives is need early on to be able to provide early warning indicators of potential risks as well as opportunities and to measure effect. Traditional craftsmanship testing after training is a straightforward measure, but the internalisation of training and education in leadership be culturally diverse and require more sophisticated measures of evidence. Other measures might include how infrastructure changes help to improve morale, a sense of duty, pride in the Unit, an ability to learn, team spirit, comradeship; how are attitudes to diversity and gender mainstreaming in the armed forces changing, if this is a stated objective of reform; How is the local population's perception of the armed forces changing as a result of reform efforts. Further information on measures of effect can be found in ABCA Publication 369, *Security Force Capacity Building Handbook*, Edn 2 (2011), Chapter 8 Measuring The Effect.

#### FURTHER RESOURCES

ABCA Publication 369, *Security Force Capacity Building Handbook*, Edn 2 (2011),  
DCAF. *Introduction to SSR* e-learning course <http://issat.dcaf.ch/Learn/E-Learning>

- *SSR Backgrounders* <http://ssrbackgrounders.org/>

Department of National Defence. B-GL-322-010/FP-001 *Stability Activities and Tasks*.  
Canada: 2012.

Department of National Defence. B-GL-323-000/FP-001 *Security Force Capacity Building*.  
Canada: 2015.

Major, Claudia, Tobias Pietz, Elisabeth Schöndorf, and Wanda Hummel. *Toolbox Crisis Management: From Civilian Crisis Prevention to Peacebuilding: Principles, Actors, Instruments*. Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) / Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), 2012.

NATO. AJP 3.4.5 *Allied Joint Doctrine For The Military Contribution To Stabilization And Reconstruction*, Annex B: Security Sector Reform. NATO, Edition A, Version 1, Ratification Draft 1, 2015.

NATO. AJP 3.22 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Stability Policing*, Edition A, Version 1, Ratification Draft 1, 2015.

OECD DAC. *Handbook on Security Sector Reform: Supporting Security and Justice*. Paris: OECD, 2008.

Schnabel, Albrecht, and Hans Born. *Security Sector Reform: Narrowing the Gap between Theory and Practice*. Geneva: DCAF, 2012.

## CHECKLIST QUESTIONS

Does a comprehensive SSR assessment on the country exist already?

How permissive is the environment?

What physical and political space could be secured to allow reform of at least part of the Host Nation armed forces?

How many can be released for training at a time (section, platoon, company size etc)?

What length of training is needed before they can be recycled back into service (6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months etc)?

What levels of legitimacy exist in the local security forces?

Who are the key actors?

How does the strategically driven campaign plan align with the reality experienced on the ground?

Is there unity of purpose and effort between all of the agencies involved and how is this coordinated?

What new capabilities and competencies are required for the effective functioning of professional, ethical and respected security forces?

Is there a well-defined path to acquiring these capabilities and competencies?

What is the plan for the host nation to assume responsibility for independent operation of the reformed security forces?

What training, education and professional development requirements are there for rule of law?

What considerations are there for the sustainability of this particular SSR?

What are the socio-cultural and language factors that have significant impact of this SSR endeavour?

What needs to be put in place early on to be able to measure effect, and to provide early warning indicators of potential risks as well as opportunities?