Testimony of Dr. Reuben E. Brigety, II
Before the
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee:

It is my distinct honor to address you today on the matter of "Striking the Appropriate Balance: The Defense Department's Expanding Role in Foreign Assistance." In the invitation to appear before you, there was a series of very specific questions that I was asked to address. I shall do my best to answer each of them in turn. During the course of my presentation, I intend to convey a central message: The successful performance of foreign assistance programs across the spectrum of conflict should be seen as a matter of vital national interest. Accordingly, it is imperative to reform our civilian development institutions to perform the tasks our brave men and women in uniform often find themselves performing due to a lack of capable civilian partners present in the quantity in which they are needed.

1) What are the fundamental causes of DoD's expanding role in foreign assistance?

The Defense Department's expanding role in foreign assistance comes from the recognition of two important circumstances.

The first is that conventional, or kinetic, military operations are often insufficient to achieve the strategic objectives of a given war. Put another way, the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have retaught the military that you can win the war through decisive military operations, but you cannot necessarily win peace that way.

The second is that there is great value in preventing conflicts instead of reacting to them. Investing in a country's development today could prevent it from becoming a battlefield tomorrow. Certain threats, such as the spread of violent extremist ideologies, can best be countered through proactive measures. These measures, however, are almost all nonkinetic in nature. To the extent that they help counter a present or future threat, the military often avails itself of these nonkinetic instruments to prevent conflict and counter extremism in various locations around the world.

2) Do you see the expansion of the Defense Department's role in these activities as a philosophical shift in how the United States addresses global challenges?

These development activities undertaken by the military certainly represent a philosophical shift in how the Pentagon views threats to America's security. Thus, it also colors its approach to fighting and winning the nation's wars. Yet it does not necessarily represent a shift in the philosophical approach of the people or government of the United States in how we address global challenges. If it did, then such a shift would be marked

by a concomitant commitment to strengthen our civilian development institutions urgently as a national security priority. It remains to be seen if our country is prepared to take this step.

3) What do you perceive to be the comparative advantages and disadvantages of DoD conducting foreign and security assistance?

There are a variety of advantages of the military performing foreign and security assistance. First, the military is much more likely to tailor assistance programs to meet tactical or strategic threats to American interests than are civilian development agencies. Second, the military has capabilities that can be deployed rapidly and robustly in a crisis, such as the use of U.S. naval assets to respond to the 2004 Asian tsunami. Finally, the military has surplus humanitarian capacity that can be used to address enduring development challenges, such as the use of the U.S. navy hospital ship *Comfort* to address medical needs in Latin America in partnership with nongovernmental organizations.

Yet there are a series of disadvantages of the military's involvement in assistance missions. First, the focus on programs of tactical or strategic value can mean that assistance efforts are directed to places of the greatest potential threat rather than places of the greatest human need. This would be in contravention of essential principles of humanitarian action, which dictate that the provision of assistance should be determined solely by the level of need and free of any political considerations. It can also downplay the importance of indigenously sustainable programs.

Second, the military's growing involvement in this space risks the appearance of "militarization" of America's foreign assistance. This is a perception which makes many of our partners—governments, NGOs, etc.—extremely uncomfortable. It also has real operational consequences in the field when implementing partners refuse to cooperate with the military, or are reticent to work with the United States Agency for International Development, for fear of being linked to U.S. foreign policy and losing their operational neutrality.

Finally, and most importantly, DoD does not posses a coherent assessment methodology for evaluating the strategic or tactical success of its assistance programs, especially in permissive environments. For example, the military does not have a rigorous way of determining if the vaccination of goats in Djibouti by U.S. Army veterinarians—or other similar activities around the world—actually makes America safer in very specific ways. Without an assessment methodology, the military will not be able to justify these sorts of programs to Congress in the long term, nor will they be able to determine their relative strategic effectiveness.

4) What is the development impact of the Defense Department's foreign assistance activities in the field?

To my knowledge, no comprehensive assessment exists of the development impact of the Defense Department's foreign assistance activities in the field. There are examples to suggest both the positive and negative effects of these programs.

Many NGOs and civilian development professionals may cite examples of military assistance projects that are unsustainable and poorly thought out, such as the construction of schools without mechanisms to employ teachers and supply textbooks. In the view of skeptics, such examples demonstrate why the military should not be involved in foreign assistance focused on achieving development outcomes.

Conversely, proponents of the military's involvement in foreign assistance argue that our armed forces are helping to address a vast sea of human need and, as such, their efforts should be welcomed. To the extent that such assistance also promotes America's image abroad or supports discrete security objectives, those are collateral benefits. They will often cite the military's role in disaster response (such as aiding earthquake victims in Pakistan in 2005) or supporting the tasks of civilian development agencies (such as refurbishing schools in Ethiopia in cooperation with USAID).

The lack of a comprehensive analysis of the development impact of these programs suggests both differences in the philosophy and purposes of development assistance between many civilian development advocates and those in the national security community.

It is helpful to think about two types of assistance: fundamental and instrumental.

Fundamental assistance sees improving the lives of beneficiaries as an end in and of itself. It may have the residual benefit of supporting American interests by promoting regional stability and global prosperity, but those geostrategic considerations are at best secondary to the performance of the activities. Thus, the success of fundamental assistance can be measured by the extent to which it improves the lives of the recipients.

Instrumental assistance sees improving the lives of beneficiaries as a means to some other tactical or strategic end. Whether it is a quick impact project to employ disaffected youth—as the military did in Sadr City, Iraq in 2004—or supporting governance initiatives in Mindanao, Philippines as part of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines, or JSOTF-P to fight the Abu Sayyef Islamist insurgency, such activities are designed specifically to advance U.S. security interests. Yet they can only be successful if two things happen. First, they must actually improve the lives of the beneficiaries, as in fundamental assistance. Second, those improvements must be casually linked to the achievement of discrete American policy objectives.

Both fundamental and instrumental assistance should operate on the principle of "first, do no harm." Only when we differentiate the types of assistance in this manner can we meaningfully assess the relative development impact of the Defense Department's foreign assistance activities.

5) What is your assessment of the Defense Department's programs, including the 1207 programs, the Commander's Emergency Response Program, or CERP, and programs carried out by the various combatant commands such as SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM?

Both the 1207 programs and CERP have given Combatant Commanders and tactical commanders on the battlefield much needed flexibility to bring nonkinetic tools to pressing security problems.

Yet the very existence of these programs represents two more fundamental issues.

First, the Pentagon has recognized the strategic relevance of improving the lives of foreign civilians through foreign assistance. In this sense, the Pentagon is much further ahead than much of the development assistance community, the conventional U.S. foreign policy community, and the American public.

Second, it demonstrates the inability of the U.S. government's development assistance institutions in their present form to perform these missions in every environment when they are needed, with the flexibility they are needed, and within the timeframe they are needed.

With regard to AFRICOM and SOUTHCOM, I believe it is still too early to determine the efficacy of their assistance programs. Despite its best intentions, the mission of AFRICOM is still vague with regard to implementation. SOUTHCOM has a long history of doing disaster response missions in the Americas, but it is not yet clear how they will utilize humanitarian assistance as a mechanism to advance prosperity in the Americas, consistent with U.S. interest, in a manner unique to the capabilities of the U.S. armed forces.

6) What steps need to be taken to ensure that the State Department and USAID are better able to undertake those missions currently executed by the Department of Defense, including 1206 security assistance and development programs?

There are a series of hard and soft tasks that should be taken to ensure the ability of the State Department and USAID to undertake assistance missions currently being executed by DoD. Hard tasks may be defined as steps which require changes in legislation, policy, or programs. Soft tasks are shifts in culture, attitude, or approach.

Among the hard tasks to be taken are the following:

- There should be an easing of the legal restrictions on USAID mission directors in the field that critically limit their ability to respond flexibly to changing conditions on the ground, particularly in support of USG or U.S. military strategic objectives.

- The size of the cadre of USAID foreign service officers and development professionals should be increased enough to support every development billet in every USAID mission, to provide one Tactical Development Advisor to every deployable Brigade Combat Team in the U.S. Army and every Marine Expeditionary Unit in the U.S. Marine Corps, to support every regional Combatant Command, and every relevant interagency planning and policy staff.
- USAID and State Department personnel must truly be worldwide deployable and be trained to operate in expeditionary, semi- to- nonpermissive environments as a matter of course.
- The U.S. government should write and promulgate a National Strategy for Global Development, derived from the National Security Strategy, to guide the use of development assistance in support of American foreign policy and to coordinate the foreign assistance activities of all U.S. government agencies abroad.

Some of the soft tasks that should be performed are:

- A cultural shift in USAID is needed in which all of the personnel in the agency recognize their role in support of the national security of the United States through the performance of both fundamental and instrumental development assistance.
- The State Department must recognize the value of developmental and stability operations and reward people professionally who take such assignments in their careers.

7) What concerns, if any, do you have about the Department of Defense casting its development and humanitarian assistance programs in terms of "military necessity," i.e., for counterterrorism or counterinsurgency purposes?

I have no concerns about the undertaking of development and humanitarian programs as a matter of "military necessity," so long as it is understood within the framework of fundamental versus instrumental assistance defined earlier (wherein military necessity would roughly equate to instrumental assistance). Indeed, I support it in principle. I believe that our nation must utilize all instruments of its power—defense, diplomacy, and development—to advance its interests abroad.

It is imperative, however, that our government recognizes that we have an interest in doing both fundamental and instrumental assistance effectively. We should ensure that we support both of those missions accordingly with the resources that are required to advance our objectives.

8) If USAID and State were blessed with unlimited resources, what would need to occur internally for those agencies to effectively execute their development and diplomatic missions, respectively?

If there were no constraints on resources, the following measures would, in my view, best enable USAID and the State Department to execute their missions most effectively:

- **The creation of a cabinet-level Department for Development**. The creation of a cabinet-level development agency is the best way to ensure that the development mission (both fundamental and instrumental) is sufficiently protected bureaucratically and that it will be an enduring, strong feature of our national security policy. While there are other ways in which one can elevate the third "D" of development to be on par with diplomacy and defense, a cabinet-level agency is the one most likely to be effective in the long run.
- **Protect the fundamental development mission.** The lack of a formidable domestic constituency for foreign assistance often makes such assistance vulnerable to budget cuts. Yet we know that fundamental development requires long-term commitment. Furthermore, the United States has a clear interest in helping states continue along the path of sustainable democratic development, regardless of their near-term strategic value. Thus funds dedicated to this mission must be protected against the vicissitudes of the annual appropriations process. There are at least two ways to do this. The first is to mandate by law that some portion of the budget (either tied to the entire budget, or the defense appropriation, or the foreign operations appropriation, or some other budgetary mechanism) will be dedicated to fundamental development assistance to be executed by USAID or another relevant agency. The other is to contract out the fundamental development assistance mission to the U.N. Development Program or another major international organization, and dedicate a fixed multiyear appropriation to them with whatever caveats might be particular to American foreign assistance priorities.
- **Increase the USAID FSO and civil servant corps.** There is no question that we are desperately in need of increasing the number of full-time employees of USAID. The only question is by how much. In an environment free of resource constraints, the number of USAID FTEs should be increased back to its Vietnam-era compliment of 15,000 people. This would provide enough staff to give robust support to all essential USAID missions around the world, to deploy development professionals with the military at every level of the chain of command, ensure their participation on all relevant staffs, rebuild in-house technical expertise, and provide ample cushion for training, attrition, and a surge of personnel in response to complex emergencies and national disasters.

Conclusion

Development assistance is not just a moral good or a matter of enlightened self-interest. It is in our vital national interests. There is no greater evidence of this than the military's increasing involvement in this sphere. Yet our own political culture and legal processes have not yet caught up to this reality on the ground. Our government has a clear stake in the successful performance of fundamental and instrumental assistance. I hope this hearing will be a meaningful step to empower our civilian agencies to be effective in this regard.