

U.S. Partnered Operations and the Protection of Civilians

NGO Recommendations for DoD Policy on Civilian Harm

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Summary

Across the full range of U.S. partnered operations – including support operations; advise, assist, and accompany operations; regional partnerships; and fully combined partnered and coalition operations – issues of limited partner capacity, uneven professionalism and training, as well as gaps in command-and-control and interoperability, can expose civilians to greater risk of death, injury or loss of livelihoods along with gaps in attribution, accountability, and remedy for civilian harm. Moreover, through the act of partnership, the U.S. may become associated with a range of mistreatment of civilian populations, including civilian casualties and other abuses and violations caused by the partner force, such as forced displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, forced disappearances, torture, or other threats to civilian safety, security, health, and livelihoods.

From the onset of a security partnership and throughout the course of the partnership, the U.S. military should take the necessary steps to integrate the protection of civilians, including civilian harm prevention and mitigation in relation to the conduct of hostilities and the promotion of human rights, in all settings and at all levels of engagement with the partner force. Any form of U.S. support to a partner or coalition should be accompanied by a corresponding package of measures to ensure partner force capabilities for the protection of civilians and tools to minimize harm. The U.S. military should also constantly monitor partner conduct and capabilities with respect to the protection of civilians to ensure the continued appropriateness of U.S. support, and be willing to modify, reduce, or end support when the risk of civilian harm is too high.

The U.S. military should also anticipate changes in a partnership (e.g., transitioning from non-lethal to lethal support or from an advise, assist, and accompany mission to a fully combined partnered or coalition operation) and constantly monitor partner conduct and capabilities with respect to the protection of civilians to ensure the continued appropriateness of U.S. support. Any changes to the terms of a partnership should be accompanied by a thorough risk assessment and policy review, as well as corresponding measures to evaluate, assess, monitor, and bolster partner capacity on the protection of civilians, international humanitarian law (IHL), and human rights compliance throughout the cycle of hostilities as well as during peacetime.

Any comprehensive DoD policy on civilian harm must be used as a preventative tool to minimize civilian harm in U.S. partnered operations, and not only U.S. military operations.

The recommendations below encompass a spectrum of types of U.S. partnered operations, including:²

- Train and equip programs, in which the U.S. conducts or supports programs providing training, services, and equipment to national security forces of foreign countries for the purposes of building capability and capacity

¹ Recommendations compiled by Annie Shiel, Protection Innovation Fellow at Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) and Archibald S. Henry, Senior Program Associate for Protection at InterAction, drawing on materials referenced herein, with inputs from various NGOs and informed by ongoing NGO dialogue with counterparts at the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). These recommendations were submitted to DoD in December 2019.

² Based on terminology from Melissa Dalton, et al., “[Civilians and ‘By, With and Through’: Key Issues and Questions Related to Civilian Harm and Security Partnership](#),” *Center for Strategic & International Studies, Center for Civilians in Conflict, and InterAction*, April 2018. See also: Melissa Dalton, et al., “[The Protection of Civilians in U.S. Partnered Operations](#),” *Center for Strategic & International Studies, Center for Civilians in Conflict, and InterAction*, October 2018.

of Partner Nations (e.g., training and equipment support to the armed forces of Colombia, Nigeria, or the Philippines, or to non-state actors like the Syrian Democratic Forces - SDF);

- Support operations, including the provision of materiel, intelligence, training, and other forms of support (e.g., refueling support, targeting advice, intelligence, arms sales, and training to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia);
- Advise, assist, and accompany operations, characterized by a limited presence of U.S. forces on the ground providing intelligence, training, advice, and other forms of technical assistance to partners conducting operations (e.g., Joint Special Operations Task Force–Juniper Shield in the Republic of Niger);
- Regional partnerships, in which the U.S. may play a role in shaping the policy and planning, funding, and training of regional security collectives (e.g., support to the G5-Sahel Joint Force); and
- Fully combined partnered and coalition operations, in which the U.S. is directly involved in planning and hostilities/use of force alongside a partner, possibly in addition to advising or assisting in other ways (e.g., providing air support to Iraqi national security forces fighting ISIS; combined operations through Operation Inherent Resolve).

Forces involved in different types of U.S. partnered operations may include both nation-state militaries as well as non-state armed groups (e.g., support for and joint operations with the Syrian Democratic Forces and Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga). While some of the following recommendations may vary in terms of relevance, applicability, or implementation based on the type of partnership and context, they highlight the spectrum of measures and tools the U.S. military should use, promote, or encourage across the range of partnerships. The protection of civilians in partnered operations should be fully integrated into training and education curricula for U.S. forces and future development of doctrine and tools.

Creating Conditions Conducive to the Protection of Civilians

The recommendations below encompass steps that should be taken prior to and during partnerships in order to create conditions conducive to the protection of civilians and avoid U.S. complicity in civilian harm.

Assessments

Perform an assessment of the partner’s capacity and will to adhere to IHL and IHRL, and to prevent, minimize, and mitigate harm to civilians in the course of military operations, optimally before a partnership commences and in collaboration with the Department of State (Embassy country teams, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and relevant regional desk).

The purpose of up-front assessments is to establish a baseline regarding critical capabilities, identify potential risks (particularly risks to civilians), and determine what improvements may need to be made in partner capacity and will. This assessment should be a continuous, ongoing process and serve as a basis to inform partnership agreements and the evolution of a partnership moving forward. In some cases, a negative assessment may require significant adaptations to the scope or expectations of a partnership or should stop the partnership from being pursued altogether. Policymakers can also use assessments to develop tripwires and contingency plans in the anticipation of instances of civilian harm.

Such an assessment should examine, inter alia:³

- Political considerations and objectives as they impact civilian lives and livelihoods, including dynamics of armed conflict if conflict already exists; any political orientation or bias of security forces; objectives and incentives regarding the use of force; and national and local politics affecting civilians;
- Security governance, including oversight and accountability mechanisms; command climate and chain of command; and corruption;
- Conduct, including forces' record regarding IHL and human rights compliance, including history of IHL violations and human rights abuses, such as forced displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, violence against children and use of child soldiers, torture, enforced disappearances, unlawful detention and other inhumane treatment, and other harm to civilians occurring in the context of kinetic operations, and capacity by relevant military, national and/or other political authorities to investigate and prosecute violations and abuses;
- Forces' record of integrating IHL and human rights law into training, defense regulations, rules of engagement, and operational planning;
- Forces' military professionalism, ethos, and discipline, including context-specific normative frameworks, values, and traditions that promote good conduct and reinforce the protection of civilians in practice;⁴
- Relationship to civilians, including forces' behavior towards civilian populations and local communities, history of civil-military relations, and civilian perceptions of the military/force;⁵ and
- Capacity to minimize harm in military operations, including technical training on the protection of civilians and civilian objects; steps to safeguard essential services and minimize forced displacement, threats to livelihoods and other concerns; intelligence gathering and preparation; targeting proficiency; availability of appropriate weapons systems and competence in weapon engineering; and interoperability with U.S. military Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) regarding the protection of civilians.

Assessments should be made in consultation with other U.S. agencies – notably State and USAID – as well as local and international civil society, including humanitarian and human rights organizations, and intergovernmental bodies and fact-finding missions such as UN missions and human rights offices. Assessments should be informed by a range of sources, including open-source information and public reporting, and sources internal to the U.S. military and government. Assessments should be conducted with a view to informing and tailoring the partnership according to context-specific issues and realities, notably by evaluating the range of tools and strategies the U.S. military and U.S. government as a whole could use to address key issues and gaps in partner capacity to protect civilians,

³ See: Melissa Dalton, et al., [“Civilians and ‘By, With and Through’: Key Issues and Questions Related to Civilian Harm and Security Partnership,”](#) *Center for Strategic & International Studies, Center for Civilians in Conflict, and InterAction*.

⁴ The inculcation of norms is an important element of building partner force capacity on the protection of civilians. Assessing partner force capacity should include an assessment of existing context-specific normative frameworks, traditions, and customs to identify and develop persuasive arguments and points of leverage that may be harnessed through training, mentoring, coaching, and other measures to build capacity on the protection of civilians. It should be noted that, traditional norms, when harmful, may not be used to justify abuses. See for example: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [“The Roots of Restraint in War,”](#) 18 June 2018. See also: “Traditional, Social, Religious, and Cultural Norms,” in ICRC, [“Professional Standards for Protection Work,”](#) Third Edition, 20 March 2018.

⁵ See, for example: Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), [“Civilian Perceptions of the Yan Gora \(CJTF\) in Borno State, Nigeria,”](#) 22 June 2018.

strengthen norms building and institutionalization on the protection of civilians, and promote human rights and adherence to IHL.

Conditioning, leveraging, and sequencing security assistance

Condition, leverage, or sequence security assistance to promote the protection of civilians, encourage adherence to IHL and human rights, and strengthen efforts to minimize and mitigate civilian harm.

Patterns of misconduct, negligence and/or repeated incidents or credible allegations of civilian harm should initiate a process of reduction or cessation of security assistance so as to avoid supporting or facilitating civilian harm, including human rights abuses and IHL violations by the partner force. Depending on the case, conditionalities and sequencing may not necessarily lead to a wholesale cessation of support, but may rather be targeted: for example, DoD may suspend certain weapons packages to a partner until an investigation on allegations of civilian harm has been initiated or until specific training on the protection of civilians, IHL, and/or human rights has been completed. While conditioning, leveraging, and sequencing security assistance processes constitute a shared responsibility among U.S. agencies, DoD civilian and military leadership must be equipped to play a key role within these processes, for instance by alerting the broader inter-agency when specific issues associated with the partner force or patterns of misconduct, negligence abuses, or violations are identified or suspected by the U.S. military; and being honest about the effectiveness of security cooperation to curb human rights abuses and minimize civilian harm.

Partner agreements

Establish formal and, where appropriate, informal agreements to define the scope, objective, responsibilities, and expectations of the partner/partnership. This should include a joint statement of principles and identify responsibilities specifically pertaining to civilian harm as well as broader objectives that will affect civilian protection outcomes.

Across the range of possible partner agreements – whether formal agreements, memoranda of understanding, exchange of assurances, or other internal and informal documents – emphasis must be placed on the mutual benefit of the protection of civilians and the need to reinforce good practice to minimize civilian harm throughout the course of the partnership. If a clear agreement vehicle does not currently exist, the DODI should create or direct the creation of such a vehicle, while allowing for context-specific adaptability. Partner agreements must be shaped by the initial assessment of partner capacity on the protection of civilians, and also be tailored to the type of partnership, partner force capabilities, and other context-specific information such as conflict dynamics or traditional norms.

The process of developing the agreement can serve as a valuable means of dialogue with the partner force about the importance of, and the means to ensure, the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The agreement itself, should ensure alignment of mission, objectives, and expectations – including the role of the use of force – and clarity about where alignment is imperfect or lacking. Partner agreements can help clarify the different roles and responsibilities of the U.S. military versus those of its partner, and should include measures to control for the risks created by any shared command and control structures, such as oversight and accountability mechanisms.⁶ An agreement should also help secure commitments from the partner relevant to the protection of civilians, IHL compliance, and promotion of human rights (e.g., investigating alleged IHL violations and human rights abuses and ensuring accountability; protecting civilian objects and minimizing forced displacement; humanitarian access; respect for targeting and detention rules; etc.) and civilian harm mitigation more broadly (e.g., parameters of the rules of engagement; commitments to prevent and mitigate incidental harm; tracking, assessing, and investigating

⁶ Melissa Dalton, et al., [“Civilians and ‘By, With and Through’: Key Issues and Questions Related to Civilian Harm and Security Partnership,”](#) Center for Strategic & International Studies, Center for Civilians in Conflict, and InterAction.

civilian harm; and policies for response, to include acknowledgement of harm and post-harm amends).

The agreement should also include clearly defined U.S. commitments to monitor, account for, and disclose harm incurred during its partner's operations. Where relevant, agreements on end-use monitoring should establish processes to track partner force behavior, including human rights abuses, civilian casualties, and civilian harm associated with the weapons' employment. Agreements can set pre-conditions for supporting the partner and should transparently identify causes for revising or terminating the partnership, including problematic conduct. The U.S. military should participate in inter-agency consultations to ensure the partner agreement is harmonized with other agencies' efforts and policies, notably on human rights promotion, IHL compliance, and the protection of civilians.⁷

Development of protection of civilians policies

Work with partners at both the strategic and operational levels in developing policies and procedures around the protection of civilians.

Such policies and procedures would give U.S. partner forces guidance on how to operationalize key provisions and rules of IHL and human rights law, elements of best practice, and offer context-specific prevention and mitigation techniques for operations with high risk of civilian harm (e.g., airstrikes; use of explosive weapons in populated areas; urban operations; checkpoints and other escalation of force situations; search operations; avoiding displacement; protection of health care and other civilian objects/essential services and infrastructure). Policies and protocols should encompass capabilities for tracking, assessment and investigations, disciplinary procedures, and other means to execute and reinforce commander's intent, operational protocols, directives, and rules of engagement. Policies and protocols should focus on issues and trends relevant to the operational context, which may not necessarily include all of the aforementioned topics. To disseminate and reinforce guidance, the U.S. military should develop and conduct regular trainings on the protection of civilians, IHL, and human rights compliance.

Periodic review of partnership

Undertake periodic reviews/evaluations of the partnership over the course of its lifetime, in collaboration with the Department of State, to ensure that it continues to meet the interests and objectives outlined at the outset (e.g. as established in a partner agreement), including prioritizing the protection of civilians.

Reviews/evaluations should be based on predetermined benchmarks, including a review of civilian harm trends and changing conflict dynamics, as well as lessons learned and best practices on the protection of civilians from earlier stages of the partnership. Certain events, such as major civilian casualty and other civilian harm allegations or incidents, a repeated pattern of harm accompanied by a failure to adopt corrective measures or an existing partner's entry into an armed conflict, should be treated as "tripwires" that automatically trigger a review of the partnership. Reviews that establish that a partnership is no longer meeting the interests or objectives identified at the outset may result in a revision or complete withdrawal from a partnership, to include reducing or ending direct and/or lethal support. In particular, findings that a partner is not effectively meeting its protection of civilians obligations and fails to take measures to minimize civilian harm should trigger increased efforts from the U.S. military to ensure the partner force meets compliance standards (e.g. through additional training and coaching), but may also result in a fundamental revision of the terms of partnership or a complete withdrawal, including ending lethal support. Changes in the levels or forms of support may also be undertaken as a means to leverage demonstrable and specific improvements by the partner force with respect to the protection of civilians.

⁷ Larry Lewis, "[Promoting Civilian Protection during Security Assistance: Learning from Yemen](#)," *Center for Naval Analyses*, May 2019.

Exit and transition planning

Undertake early and continuous planning for responsible U.S. exit strategies from the partnership and the full transition of rights-based security provision to the host partner.

Such planning should be undertaken through close consultation with civilian agencies, including State and USAID, as well as the host nation, as these actors have essential roles to play in shaping the political and other conditions for exit and in processes such as Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR). However, the U.S. military has the primary role to plan for a responsible termination or transition of U.S. military support, notably with respect to the protection of civilians. Planning should consider various scenarios for drawing down U.S. security assistance as well as options for non-lethal support (e.g., train-the-trainer programming on the protection of civilians and human rights; infrastructure support to lawful detention; or logistical support to partner forces). In particular, planning should consider how to ensure the partner will take effective responsibility for future civilian protection activities, to include civilian casualty tracking and mitigation cells and related capabilities in order to institutionalize such a function beyond the lifetime of the partnership.⁸ Responsible exit planning should also consider and mitigate the broader risks for civilian harm (e.g., harm caused by other actors) that may arise from a U.S. exit, such as the impact of a security vacuum in vulnerable areas.

Transparency regarding partnered operations

Ensure clear communication to the U.S. and host-nation public on the nature, purpose, and activities of its partnerships to ensure public awareness of U.S. partnered operations and security partnerships.⁹

This should include releasing information on the civilian impact of partnered operations, through regular reporting on CCMD websites and/or briefings to journalists and monitoring organizations.¹⁰

Operational Measures to Minimize Harm

The recommendations below encompass steps that should be taken during the execution of a partnership and its corresponding activities/operations to ensure that both the U.S. and its partners prevent, minimize, and mitigate civilian harm.

Peacetime training

Include civilian harm prevention and mitigation scenarios, practices, and procedures in security assistance and combined exercises with all partners, including peacetime training and pre-deployment training.

This should consist not only of classroom training, but also operational and scenario-based training that demands trainees rehearse the decision-making required for civilian harm prevention and mitigation in real time. Training should also contextualize protection of civilians' norms and legal obligations within the host-nation culture and normative frameworks to enhance a sense of responsibility for critical obligations and to ensure that concepts are

⁸ Sahr Muhammedally, "[Addressing Civilian Casualties: An Implementation Plan for a Civilian Casualty Mitigation Team and Recommendations for the Government of Afghanistan](#)," *Center for Civilians in Conflict*, October 2015.

⁹ See, for example, revelations following the October 3, 2017 ambush that led to the deaths of four American special forces and five Nigerien soldiers – a mission whose nature even the US Congress was unaware of: Joe Gould, "[Did military hide the real mission of the Niger ambush from Congress?](#)," *Defense News*, 8 May 2018.

¹⁰ Melissa Dalton, et al., "[The Protection of Civilians in U.S. Partnered Operations](#)," *Center for Strategic & International Studies, Center for Civilians in Conflict, and InterAction*.

fully absorbed and integrated.”¹¹

Operational planning for the protection of civilians

Support efforts to instill and prioritize the protection of civilians in partner force operational planning, including strategies to minimize and mitigate harm to civilians and measures to avoid exacerbating harm during operations.

Such measures might include determining critical measures of distinction, proportion and precaution appropriate to the operational context and battlefield scenarios; measures to avoid causing displacement; plans for safe evacuation of civilians should displacement become inevitable; methods to communicate with the civilian population; deconfliction with humanitarian operations and other arrangements for medical care and humanitarian assistance; and engagement in civil-military coordination mechanisms. Operational planning by partners, including measures to prevent civilian harm, should include examples of best practices and lessons learned on the protection of civilians in other contexts and build on the specific capabilities and protective traditional norms of the partner force.

In parallel, the U.S. military and partner nation should pursue regular dialogue with humanitarian and human rights organizations, including international and local civil society, community leaders, and UN bodies and offices, before and throughout military operations so as to anticipate and monitor risks to civilian populations and plan for humanitarian needs and other contingencies. Timely and regular military engagement with humanitarian and human rights organizations is important for a variety of reasons: exchanging and corroborating information to anticipate and assess the impact of military operations, developing practical steps to avert and mitigate harm, supporting constructive two-way dialogue on civilian harm, informing reporting and transparency processes, and generating lessons learned for replicating best practices on minimizing harm during the operational cycle.

Command climate and senior military engagement

Model best practice and encourage engagement by senior commanders to reinforce IHL compliance and the protection of civilians with partner leaders, urge concrete action to follow up on alleged abuses and violations, and cultivate a culture of respect for IHL and the protection of civilians at all levels of the partner force.

Military leaders should coordinate with the State Department and other civilian agencies to ensure inter-agency alignment and consistent messaging on the protection of civilians towards the partner. U.S. commanders should also emphasize the importance of consistent messaging to partners at all levels of the U.S. chain of command, including U.S. officers and enlisted personnel that interact with the partner forces on a daily basis. Messaging should consistently emphasize both the moral, legal and strategic importance of the protection of civilians, including but not limited to a need to adhere to the law and systematize good practice. The U.S. military should urge messaging within the partner’s chain of command and in the public sphere that underscores the importance of the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Targeting process

Consider how U.S. expertise can be leveraged in the targeting process to improve compliance with IHL and practical measures to enhance distinction, proportion and precaution in the partner’s military operations.

This may include developing No-Strike Lists (NSL) with the partner, refining rules of engagement and targeting rules, teaching partners the current U.S. collateral damage estimation (CDE) methodology, sharing operational

¹¹ See ICRC, “[The Roots of Restraint in War](#),” and ICRC, “[Professional Standards for Protection Work](#),” p. 37.

experiences, providing legal and other expertise, and, where appropriate, developing a combined operations center to monitor operations. U.S. military coaching of partners on targeting processes should also include considerations relating to the protection of medical care and other civilian objects, deconfliction measures and engagement in deconfliction mechanisms, collecting and sharing information about potential explosive remnants of war, technical solutions to improve situational awareness, engagement with humanitarian and human rights actors and civilian populations, and harnessing timely information flows and feedback loops to inform real-time decision making.¹²

Intelligence

In combined operations, develop processes and procedures to (a) ensure that U.S.-provided intelligence does not contribute to IHL violations or incidental civilian harm; and (b) mitigate the risk of faulty, incomplete, outdated, or manipulative intelligence or analysis collected from or shared by partnered forces.

This may include stipulating specific purposes for U.S.-shared intelligence¹³ or limiting intelligence-sharing where risks of misuse may be present. This should also include appropriate safeguards to ensure that partner intelligence is accurate and objective, including rigorous corroboration and verification procedures; limitations on the use of outdated intelligence in rapidly changing conflict environments; training and advising of partner intelligence officers; and monitoring of trends related to faulty intelligence. Additionally, the U.S. military and its partners should ensure that any efforts to collect information or intelligence from civilians does not unintentionally expose them to risk. The provision of intelligence by civilians may never be a precondition for the U.S. or its partner to fulfill its obligations for the protection of these civilians.

Tracking, assessing, investigating, acknowledging, and responding to civilian harm

Ensure a clear and thorough process for tracking, assessing, investigating, acknowledging, disclosing, and responding to all credible allegations of civilian harm that arise through partnered operations, including harm caused by both U.S. and partnered forces.

To mitigate partner sensitivity over issues such as attribution and public disclosure/reporting, this should be addressed in the initial partnership agreement, and its operational importance should be continually emphasized at the highest levels of command. Where attribution of civilian harm to a specific partner is not feasible, joint disclosure and response mechanisms should be established (e.g., taking joint public responsibility for harm; establishing a joint process for engaging affected populations about harm experienced or witnessed, joint fund for amends and other forms of response to civilian harm caused by any parties to a partnership).

U.S. military mentoring and capacity building of partnered forces in tracking, assessing, investigating, acknowledging, and responding to civilian harm is essential. This should follow the U.S. military's improvement of its own assessment, investigation and acknowledgment procedures, and should include improved joint after-action reviews (AARs) that prioritize understanding civilian harm, as well as broader assistance and capacity building in data analysis and lessons learned processes. Frequent AARs conducted by the U.S. military with its partners is a positive tool to identify problems in the protection of civilians, take appropriate measures to change problematic behavior (e.g. adjusting RoEs) and to learn from, reinforce, and systematize good practice. The DoD should also consider how to reinforce and institutionalize this practice by embedding advisors with expertise in civilian casualty and other civilian harm trend analysis into partnered operations. Such advisors would work closely with civilian

¹² Larry Lewis, "[Promoting Civilian Protection during Security Assistance: Learning from Yemen](#)," *Center for Naval Analyses*.

¹³ For example, wary of potential Turkish use of German intelligence in operations against the Kurdish YPG, German intelligence products provided to OIR are labeled with "SECRET // RELEASABLE TO USA, IRKS [Inherent Resolve Kinetic Strike] For Anti DAESH Operation Only." See Annie Shiel, "[The Sum of All Parts: Reducing Civilian Harm in Multinational Coalition Operations](#)," *Center for Civilians in Conflict*, January 2019.

casualty tracking cells/mitigation teams set up by U.S. commanders. As part of mentoring on civilian harm response, the U.S. military should encourage and, where appropriate, support partner forces in developing a viable two-way channel for engagement with civilian populations, including ensuring civilians suffering harm have information on access to a means to report and seek responses to harm experienced.

Toward the end of a partnership, conflict, or mission, advisors should also work with the partner to transition such a process (ideally in the form of a cell responsible for the full range of civilian harm tracking, assessing, investigating, acknowledgment/disclosure, response including analysis functions with ensuing modifications of SOPs and TTPs where required, and amends) to full local partner ownership and help to ensure resources are in place to support continuity.

Monitoring and reporting civilian harm and/or suspected abuses or violations

Establish clear guidance on the responsibilities of U.S. military forces in monitoring the conduct of partners in partnered operations and reporting on civilian harm incidents, including suspected human rights abuses and IHL violations as well as incidental harm.

More broadly, the U.S. military should actively monitor and identify repeated patterns of civilian harm in order to identify gaps and inform U.S. government policy reviews of the partnership as well as lessons learned processes with partner forces. In doing so, U.S. military should regularly monitor information from a variety of sources, including internal sources and open-source information, and proactively reach out to external sources of information, such as local leaders and local civil society, international humanitarian and human rights organizations, and UN agencies, to collect, assess, and corroborate information relating to partner conduct including allegations of civilian harm and other wrongdoing. Similarly, the U.S. military must provide a viable channel for local and international society and UN actors to submit relevant information or allegations feeding into DoD review and regular monitoring of partner conduct. At the same time, external information on partner conduct should not supplant the U.S. military's own responsibilities to proactively monitor and report on civilian harm incidents or suspected abuses and other wrongdoing by partner forces. Additionally, regular monitoring and reporting on civilian harm and human rights abuses should form an integral part of partner capacity building.

Engagement with humanitarian and human rights organizations

Regularly engage with humanitarian and human rights organizations, including international and local civil society as well as UN missions and bodies, to encourage frank and open dialogue on the protection of civilians, including human rights and humanitarian concerns, in partnered operations undertaken by the U.S.

Regular engagement on civilian harm associated with a security partnership could take place through a forum or other body where appropriate and safe for civil society. Operational matters such as humanitarian access, deconfliction, evacuations, safe routes, operational pauses, and coordination with the humanitarian mine action sector should also be addressed or negotiated in civil-military coordination channels.

References and further reading on U.S. Partnered Operations and the Protection of Civilians

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