ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE US COUNTERTERRORISM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Foreign Service of Georgetown University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Security Studies

By

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ABSTRACT

The United States may be losing the war against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The past five years have seen an increase in sophistication and scale of terrorist attacks and the group’s ideological message remains persuasive for many disenfranchised Yemenis. Terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman believes that AQAP is now as much of a threat as Al Qaeda central.¹ To confront the threat, the United States is spending more money than ever on Yemen. According to the Congressional Research Service, the Obama administration requested $106 million in military and economic assistance to Yemen for FY2011.² These funds will ostensibly be used to train and equip troops against Al Qaeda, but success with the current counterterrorism assistance program remains elusive. The main question this paper seeks to answer is: what are the essential attributes of a counterterrorism assistance program? That answer is critical to improving how the United States conducts its counterterrorism program in Yemen, which could increase prospects for defeating Al Qaeda and make Americans safer.

This paper compares the US counterterrorism program in Yemen to those in Pakistan and Colombia. It measures the effectiveness of these counterterrorism programs using six factors – customized programs, high-level US political engagement,

¹ Bruce Hoffman, Director of the Center for Peace and Security Studies, Georgetown University Walsh School of Foreign Service, personal interview, March 30, 2011.
high-level US military engagement, training and equipment, government cooperation, and funding support. An analysis of these factors produces two main observations. First, only by applying all of the aforementioned factors will the United States have a chance at success. Second, intergovernmental cooperation is a precondition for a successful counterterrorism assistance program.³

The author identifies two underlying causes for the failure of US counterterrorism programs: 1) the government partner’s unwillingness to conduct counterterrorism operations and 2) a US government focus on crisis management instead of sustained political engagement. The paper’s final chapters offer remedies to these and other issues, with the hope that implementing them can turn counterterrorism failure into success. One solution is to institute a “trust, but verify”⁴ approach with partner governments to observe counterterrorism operations, with future assistance predicated on performance. The paper concludes by offering a new path for the US counterterrorism assistance program in Yemen.

³ For an abbreviated look at this paper’s conclusions, see Summary of Findings on page 9.
⁴ A phrase coined by US President Ronald Reagan that refers to United States-Soviet Union relations during the Cold War.
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### Abbreviations

- **ACI** – Andean Counterdrug Initiative
- **ATU** – Anti-Terrorism Unit
- **AQAP** – Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
- **BCC** – Border Coordination Center
- **CENTCOM** – US Central Command
- **CIA** – Central Intelligence Agency
- **COIN** – Counterinsurgency
- **CRS** – Congressional Research Service
- **CSF** – Coalition Support Funds
- **CT** – Counterterrorism
- **CTU** – Counter-Terrorism Unit
- **DoD** – Department of Defense
- **DOJ** – Department of Justice
- **DCG** – Defense Consultative Group
- **ELN** – Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
- **GAO** – General Accounting Office
- **GCC** – Gulf Cooperation Council
- **GWOT** – Global War on Terror
- **IMET** – International Military Education and Training
- **ISAF** – International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan
- **ISI** – Inter-Services Intelligence
- **JCG** – Joint Counterterrorism Group
- **JSRP** – Justice Sector Reform Program
- **JWG-CTLE** – Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and Law Enforcement
- **FARC** – Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces)
- **FATA** – Federally Administered Tribal Areas
- **FC** – Frontier Corps
- **FMF** – Foreign Military Financing
- **NATO** – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- **NSB** – National Security Bureau
- **ODRP** – Office of the Defense Representative to Pakistan
- **PCCF** – Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capabilities Fund
- **PLO** – Palestine Liberation Organization
- **PSO** – Political Security Organization
- **SOA** – School of the Americas
- **UAV** – Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
- **USAID** – United States Agency for International Development
- **WHNSEC** – Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation

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5 For a complete glossary on the terrorist groups mentioned herein, see Russell Howard and Reid Sawyer, eds., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment* (Guilford: McGraw-Hill, 2004), Appendix A. For Al Qaeda, see page 521. For the FARC, see page 523. For the ELN, see page 518.
Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

The United States is the second-largest Western financial contributor to Yemen’s counterterrorism efforts against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) – in 2010, the United States gave $66 million to Yemen for military financing, equipment procurement and “tribal engagement.” This aid is meant to bankroll operations against AQAP with the goal of disrupting and dismantling the organization. As the poorest country in the Arab world, Yemen does not have the capital or resources to train counterterrorism troops, conduct extended operations, effectively gather and analyze intelligence, or purchase modern weaponry. State coffers are further strained by the central government’s practice of buying tribal loyalties. Yemen requires significant sums of aid to improve its overall security apparatus, and the United States has thus far been a willing, albeit sporadic partner in this process. In 2004, the United States lifted a 14-year-old ban (originally in place due to Yemen’s support for Saddam Hussein in the First Gulf War) on military equipment transfers to Yemen. Under the Pentagon’s post-September 11, 2001 “arm and assist” program, the money was supposed to be used to purchase advanced military equipment suitable for counterterrorism operations,

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7 Christopher Boucek, “Yemen: Avoiding a Downward Spiral,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Number 102 (September 2009), 22.
10 Boucek, “Yemen: Avoiding a Downward Spiral,” 22.
train military personnel to conduct raids on AQAP strongholds and members, and support Yemen’s domestic intelligence services. Yet as AQAP grows stronger, the United States must measure the extent to which its counterterrorism efforts have failed in order to build a more successful program. The need for this counterterrorism assistance metric generates the following question:

Main Question: What are the main factors influencing the effectiveness of the US counterterrorism assistance program to Yemen?

Methodology: Measuring the Effectiveness of Counterterrorism Assistance Programs

This study uses six factors to evaluate the effectiveness of Yemen’s counterterrorism assistance program:

1) Customized Program
2) High-Level US Political Engagement
3) High-Level US Military Engagement
4) Training and Equipment
5) Government Cooperation
6) Funding Support

These factors constitute the most important US contributions to counterterrorism assistance programs. The first four factors – customized program, high-level US political engagement, high-level US military engagement, and training and equipment, are adapted from William Pope, the former Principal Deputy Coordinator for

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13 An analysis of hypothesis 2, on page 28, discusses how AQAP has grown stronger.
Counterterrorism at the US State Department. These factors are derived from his March 2005 “Eliminating Terrorist Sanctuaries” testimony to the House of Representatives’ International Relations Committee. He notes that these factors provide a “[m]easurable, lasting improvement in a partner nation’s capability to confront terrorist activity.”

Terrorism expert Daniel Byman inspired the fifth factor of government cooperation from his discussion of passive sponsorship of terror, defined as “a regime’s deliberate inaction [that] allows terrorist groups to flourish.” The sixth factor, funding support, comes from Christopher Boucek, an associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In his 2009 work “Yemen: Avoiding a Downward Spiral,” Boucek notes that “direct financial assistance can better address the interconnected challenges facing Yemen than can military and security aid.”

These factors provide a holistic picture of the status of the US counterterrorism program in Yemen and are the methodological basis for this study for three reasons. First, they are measurable from open-source information. Second, these factors are broad enough to encompass other important qualities of a counterterrorism assistance program; for example, factors like capacity building and institution-strengthening policies, also noted by Christopher Boucek, are folded into the discussion of direct financial assistance. This paper does not specifically address humanitarian assistance.

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15 See Daniel Byman, “The Changing Nature of State Sponsorship of Terrorism,” The Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, Analysis Paper Number 16 (May 2008), www.brookings.edu/~/.../papers/...byman/05_terrorism_byman.pdf, 4. Excerpts from Byman’s article can be found in the Appendix.
16 Boucek, “Yemen: Avoiding a Downward Spiral,” 22. Excerpts from Boucek’s article can be found in the Appendix.
as a factor because it is intertwined with funding support. Other factors also touch on issues of political and military dialogue, quality of personnel, and cooperation between bureaucracies. Third, the factors recognize the need for a whole of government approach to improve counterterrorism programs. William Pope highlights that “impersonal training or equipment packages cannot be simply dropped into the hands of our partners and reasonably be expected to get results.”\textsuperscript{17} Rather, interagency cooperation is a multifaceted operation that must support any counterterrorism assistance program. By focusing on a broad range of factors, the United States can make more informed decisions that reflect the complexity of subsequent counterterrorism operations.

This paper will explore how the US counterterrorism program in Yemen fares against these factors by testing the following hypothesis:

\textit{Hypothesis 1: The US counterterrorism assistance program to Yemen lacks many of the factors required of successful US counterterrorism assistance programs.}

This paper will use the six factors outlined above to determine the effectiveness of Yemen’s counterterrorism assistance program.

\textit{Case Study Selection: Pakistan and Colombia}

Yemen’s case will be compared to Pakistan’s struggle against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Colombia’s offensive against the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). Dozens of countries are recipients of US counterterrorism

assistance, including Israel, Kenya, Djibouti, Chad, Niger, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Mali, the Philippines, and Lebanon, among others. While each might merit its own analysis, for reasons of length this study is limited to two cases and it focuses on Pakistan and Colombia for the following reasons. First, they are similar to the US counterterrorism assistance program in Yemen because they combat domestic terrorist networks that conspire to attack US interests in the region. Second, they are deliberately diverse to prevent skewed results due to climate, religion, geography, culture, and ethnicity. Third, both programs have strengths and weaknesses from which Yemen can learn and improve. Fourth, there is sufficient open-source evidence available to evaluate both programs. Israel, Kenya, and the Philippines were prime candidates for this study, but Pakistan and Colombia best highlight Yemen’s successes and failures. This is because the US counterterrorism assistance programs in Pakistan and Colombia can teach applicable lessons about the effectiveness of certain counterterrorism measures. Christopher Boucek supports the use of these two cases, as he believes that Yemen should look “less like Pakistan, and more like Colombia.” Analyzing the most important characteristics of these case studies may produce recommendations that could improve Yemen’s counterterrorism program.


A Three-Country Study of Counterterrorism Factors

A chart entitled “A Three-Country Study of Counterterrorism Factors” can be found on page 9 of this paper. The chart displays the extent to which the factors were present in these countries’ counterterrorism assistance programs for the duration of time the specific program was funded. Each cell is marked with a “High”, “Medium,” or “Low” rating, depending on the degree to which the country in question fulfills the target factor according to the research presented in this paper. There is also a line for “Success” of the counterterrorism program, which the author defines as whether the United States has, to date, accomplished its strategic objectives. Including a row for success is important in order to compare best practices among the programs. After determining the ways in which the United States can improve the return on its counterterrorism investment, this author will outline the benefits of improved assistance through the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The benefits of US counterterrorism assistance are not evident in Yemen.

This author defines US counterterrorism benefits as a decrease in AQAP’s capacity to wage a campaign of terror against the United States and its interests in the region. This capacity includes the sophistication and scale of terrorist attacks and the attractiveness of its ideological message. By analyzing the state of Yemen’s fight with AQAP, the reader can better determine how adjustments in US counterterrorism policy can improve Yemen’s current security predicament.

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20 The chart will show three countries – Yemen and the two case studies (Pakistan and Colombia).
21 There is no definition of counterterrorism assistance benefits, so the author creates his own definition. See Chapter 3: Benefits of US Counterterrorism Assistance in Yemen for a detailed treatment of the variables.
Importance and Contribution

Understanding and analyzing the causes for US counterterrorism failure is important for five reasons. First, comprehending how to improve counterterrorism failures can save American lives by crafting a program that is more likely to succeed. Inherently, a program that constrains AQAP’s ability to conduct attacks can keep vital American interests more secure. Boucek believes that making small improvements on a number of fronts can mitigate the worst effects of a failed counterterrorism program in Yemen. Improving these factors will reduce the power of terrorist groups, and consequently will make Americans safer. Second, US counterterrorism assistance to Yemen can improve by dedicating more resources (or shifting resources) to address failures. Third, by improving the efficacy of a regional counterterrorism assistance program, the United States would thereby be laying the groundwork for improving its worldwide counterterrorism strategy in light of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Conversely, assistance programs can also be uniquely tailored to a particular country, and they can be launched, directed, and coordinated more effectively to mitigate the effects of global terrorism. The United States can modify existing programs to concentrate on specific goals and be in a better position to create future programs that will achieve greater success. Fourth, the United States can better gauge the utility – or futility – of continued funding for counterterrorism assistance programs. With a clear way to judge the failure of counterterrorism programs, funds may be moved quickly to another program in which that money may be more effective. Knowing when to stop bankrolling programs may be just as useful as knowing when to start them.

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22 Boucek, personal interview, March 28, 2011.
Research Limitations

This research is constrained by four factors. First, the study is limited by the author’s breadth and depth of research. Because this paper only uses open-source materials, a full overview of US counterterrorism programs is impossible. Second, the universe of possible cases is large, while the sample of cases used in this study is relatively small. The author tried to be as representative as possible, but may not have accounted for all variations in a study of this size. Third, this paper relies on the explanatory power of the chosen factors. If other factors are found to affect the analysis, more research is needed to build upon the study’s findings. Finally, the factors may not be mutually exclusive. High-level political engagement and training and equipment often overlap, as this paper will demonstrate in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5. For all cases this overlap is unavoidable, but the author attempted to prevent it as much as possible.

Confirming Success or Failure

This paper goes to great lengths to confirm the failure of the current US counterterrorism program to Yemen.\footnote{See Chapter 3: Benefits of US Counterterrorism Assistance in Yemen on page 28.} The author also claims that the US counterterrorism program to Pakistan has failed, and that the Colombian program has succeeded. All three of these assertions are contentious and therefore require empirical evidence, as well as testable hypotheses. While this paper has succeeded in doing just that for the US counterterrorism assistance program in Yemen, both the Pakistani and Colombian claims are not supported by such hypotheses. In lieu of expanding this paper to include testing success or failure in these cases, the author has included a
footnote that details sources whose research suggests that the Pakistani case is a failure and the Colombian case is a success.\footnote{See “United States Support for Colombia,” Department of State (28 March 2000), http://www.state.gov/www/regions/wha/colombia/fs_000328_plancolombia.html; Fair, C. Christine, Keith Crane, Christopher S. Chivvis, Samir Puri, and Michael Spirtas, Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State? Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2010.}

Summary of Findings

The following chart highlights the broad conclusions of this paper’s research.

\textit{A Three-Country Study of Counterterrorism Factors}\footnote{The “Low,” “Medium,” and “High” answers populating the spreadsheet cells are the author’s determination based on the available evidence. For resources used to derive conclusions for “Customized Program,” see page 12. For “High-Level US Political Engagement,” see page 16. For “High-Level US Military Engagement,” see page 18. For “Training and Equipment,” see page 20. For “Government Cooperation,” see page 22. For “Funding Support,” see page 26.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yemen</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>Colombia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customized Program</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Level US Political Engagement</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>High-Level US Military Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training and Equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government Cooperation</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding Support</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 1 - The US counterterrorism assistance program to Yemen lacks many of the factors required of successful US counterterrorism assistance programs – is partially supported by the chart above. Both Yemen and Colombia support hypothesis 1. Yemen’s counterterrorism assistance case is evenly split among “Low,” “Medium,” and “High” factors. With such a diverse split, it is no surprise that Yemen fails overall. In contrast, every factor of successful counterterrorism programs is ranked as “High” for Colombia, which is an overall success. However, Pakistan confounds hypothesis 1, because it fulfills all requirements with “High” marks, except for a “Low”
ranking for “Government Cooperation,” and does not have a successful
counterterrorism program. This raises an additional research question: to what degree
is government cooperation a necessary precondition for successful counterterrorism
programs?

Two conclusions stand out. First, the factors indicate success only if they are all
ranked “High”. The factors are also able to predict the failure of a program based on the
lack of a single indicator, as seen in the Pakistani example. However, correlation of all
“High” factors and “High” in the “Success” cell does not imply causation. As such, other
indicators may be at play that cause success or failure in conjunction with, or wholly
separate from, these factors. Second, the Pakistan case reveals that a “Low” mark in
“Government Cooperation” is an automatic cause for failure. This study posits that
government cooperation is a prerequisite for a successful counterterrorism assistance
program.

This paper presents three other major conclusions from the data gathered in the
chart:

1) “Training and Equipment” is ubiquitous. All countries in the study received a
   “High” mark for this factor. The United States excels at giving suitable equipment
   and comprehensive training.

2) “High-Level US Military Engagement” is ubiquitous. All countries in the study
   received a “High” mark for this factor. The United States excels at interfacing with
   partner militaries in a variety of capacities.

3) In the Yemen case, successful “High-Level US Military Engagement” and
   “Training and Equipment” are not indicators of overall success. Other factors like
“Funding Support,” “Government Cooperation,” “High-Level US Political Engagement,” or “Customized Program” have more explanatory power. From the Pakistan case, “Government Cooperation” proves to have extraordinary explanatory power, accounting for the failure in that case.

Areas for Future Research

Future research could focus on how much descriptive power government cooperation has in determining success or failure of counterterrorism programs. Further research could also broaden the selection of cases beyond those included in this study. Some suggested countries include Israel, Kenya, and the Philippines because of their strategic importance to the United States and (in the cases of Kenya and the Philippines) the indigenous evolution of terrorist cells. Finally, a study on how the amount of counterterrorism monies affects specific operations would also be a useful expansion of this research.26

Roadmap

Chapter 2 tests hypothesis 1 by measuring the extent to which each factor is evident in Yemen, Pakistan, and Colombia. Hypothesis 1 is partially supported by the accompanying evidence. Comparing the three countries provides the framework for policy recommendations. In Chapter 3, this paper reveals to what extent the benefits of US counterterrorism assistance are evident in Yemen, and finds that hypothesis 2 is fully supported. Chapter 4 analyzes competing approaches or explanations for the trends in the data, and recognizes that though there are fair critiques to conclusions

presented in this study, none are significant enough to invalidate the results. Chapter 5 explores the implications of this paper’s findings and recommends a new counterterrorism approach in Yemen.

Chapter 2: Assessing Factors for Counterterrorism Assistance Programs

Factor I: Customized Program

This study finds that the US counterterrorism assistance program to Yemen is based on a series of mainly informal agreements between military officials and politicians in both countries. According to Paul Pillar, while specific counterterrorism programs do exist, they are not well advertised in open-source publications.27 Pillar emphasizes that there are informal channels that are frequently utilized, like phone calls from top officials, which do not fall under the title of a specific program.28 This ad-hoc approach to their communication strategy allows US Special Forces and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to conduct limited operations against AQAP.29 Under the same informal agreement, the United States outfitted and trained Yemen’s coast guard and the Yemeni Central Security Force’s Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU).30

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) drone attacks are the main substitute for any formal program in Yemen. The program shows mixed results over the past decade. In November 2002, Yemen allowed a Djibouti-based American operator to launch a

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27 Paul Pillar, Director of Graduate Studies, Center for Peace and Security Studies, Georgetown University Walsh School of Foreign Service, personal interview, March 29, 2011.
28 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
Hellfire missile from a Predator drone near Marib, in eastern Yemen.\textsuperscript{31} The unmanned aircraft targeted an automobile carrying AQAP leader Qaid Salim Talib Sinan al-Harithi, one of the planners of the USS Cole attacks.\textsuperscript{32} The missile killed six suspected terrorists, including al-Harithi, in the attack. This was a very successful counterterrorism operation; however, President Saleh was furious after then-Defense Under Secretary Paul Wolfowitz announced the US role in the operation and broke a promise of secrecy to his administration.\textsuperscript{33} In a botched operation from 17-24 December 2009, Yemen launched airstrikes in Abyan and Shabwa that failed to kill AQAP leaders, but did kill a number of civilians. AQAP militants actually returned to the location to grieve with the families of those killed in the attacks.\textsuperscript{34}

In contrast to this ad-hoc approach, the US counterterrorism assistance program to Pakistan is highly customized, outlining the preferences of both parties to improve specific outcomes. For example, the United States and Pakistan implemented a program to secure the volatile FATA region. The US Embassy in Islamabad, US Central Command (CENTCOM), and the Pakistani government jointly drafted a six-year Security Development Plan, the objective of which is to “permanently prevent militants and terrorists from exploiting Pakistani territory as a staging ground for attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and beyond.”\textsuperscript{35} To accomplish this objective, the Security Development Plan advocates the creation of six Border Coordination Centers (BCCs) in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Rotberg, ed., Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa, 160.
\textsuperscript{35} C. Christine Fair, Keith Crane, Christopher S. Chivvis, Samir Puri, and Michael Spirtas, Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State? (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2010), 165.
\end{flushright}
both Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to reduce Taliban presence by forming a “common operational picture” of the most Taliban-heavy border regions. The Security Development Plan complements the BCC strategy by training both Pakistan’s Special Service Group (SSG) and the 21st Quick Reaction Squadron to “enhance [Pakistan’s] ability to conduct combat missions in FATA and other parts of the western border areas.” As Pakistan’s elite military corps and helicopter unit, respectively, the SSG and the 21st are uniquely suited to patrol the mountainous border area and conduct raids on Taliban forces. The Department of Defense (DoD) budgeted $200 million for them in 2007 and 2008 alone.

The United States and Pakistan have also customized their approach to mending Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. NATO, Pakistan, and Afghanistan created the Tripartite Commission, which “seeks to foster greater understanding about the security situation in Afghanistan, especially with regard to border security.” In the most recent Tripartite Commission meeting on 23 December 2010, International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) Commander General David Petraeus, Pakistan Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Kayani, and Afghan Chief of Staff General Sher Mohammad Karimi discussed economic growth and how to improve security in the region. This is the Commission’s 32nd meeting, and always includes representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and NATO.

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36 Ibid, 166-167.
37 Ibid, 167.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid, 165.
40 Ibid, 154.
42 Ibid.
Yet while the United States has created plans and commissions to tackle security in the FATA and shore up the unsteady Afghanistan-Pakistan alliance, institution building requires cooperation and commitment. The Security Development Plan is criticized because the Pakistani Frontier Corps (FC) is infiltrated by, and clandestinely supports, the Taliban.\textsuperscript{43} The Tripartite Commission is ineffective because of an historic mistrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan.\textsuperscript{44} President Karzai almost withdrew Afghanistan from the Commission because of his belief that Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) had attempted to assassinate him. Pakistan is no less skeptical of its neighbor – Pakistan refused the February 2008 invitation to the Tripartite Commission, although they accepted an invitation four months later.\textsuperscript{45}

Colombia experiences few of the problems that plague the US counterterrorism program in Yemen, and mirrors the customization of the Pakistan-US relationship. The most significant of Colombia’s customized programs is Plan Colombia, a bilateral US-Colombia effort to rout the FARC and ELN terrorist groups through improved economic opportunities for coca farmers and improved security.\textsuperscript{46} The program was extended because of its initial success, credited for improving security and living conditions for millions of Colombian citizens. Both the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program and the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) support Plan Colombia.\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{44} Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas, \textit{Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?}, 155.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} “Background Note: Colombia,” \textit{US Department of State} (4 October 2010), http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35754.htm.
\end{footnotes}
Under Plan Colombia, the United States invests in economic alternatives for opium and coca-producing farmers. The program builds local infrastructure, eradicates illegal crops, and helps farmers transition to legal planting. The US-Colombia Trade Promotion Act, a precursor to the free trade agreement signed between the two countries, was a milestone for economic development. Plan Colombia is credited with substantially improving economic conditions for Colombia’s poor and unemployed who may have otherwise been exploited and/or recruited by drug traffickers and paramilitary organizations.

Factor II: High-Level US Political Engagement

President Barack Obama announced that he wants to “strengthen [American] partnership with the Yemeni government” in order to collaborate more closely on counterterrorism issues. According to Principal Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism Robert Godec, the Assistant to the President John Brennan, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman, and Coordinator for Counterterrorism Daniel Benjamin often travel to Yemen to advocate for increased countermeasures (drone strikes, raids) against AQAP. However, Christopher Boucek notes that Yemen received scant attention from the Obama Administration until Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the country in January 2011.

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49 Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hearings on U.S.-Colombia Relations, 110th Cong., 1st sess., April 24, 2007, 18.  
52 Boucek, personal interview, March 28, 2011.
But, coercion sometimes replaces engagement in order to accomplish American strategic objectives. For example, in 2001, Vice President Dick Cheney warned Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh that the United States would unrelentingly pursue Al Qaeda in Yemen “with or without” Saleh’s blessing.\(^53\) As a result of his entreaties, Saleh’s support for US countermeasures between 2002 and 2004 greatly improved.\(^54\) True high-level political engagement has been sporadic during the Obama and Bush presidencies.

In contrast, the US government has remained politically engaged with Pakistani political officials working on counterterrorism issues since 2001. Two political groups – the Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and Law Enforcement (JWG-CTLE) and the US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue – have expanded core discussions of defense to include a wider range of issues, like regenerating local economies.\(^55\) The JWG-CTLE has met five times since August 2008, and has discussed a range of issues intertwined with terrorism and illicit networks, including human trafficking and counternarcotics.\(^56\)

Yet political problems persist with these programs. In particular, the Strategic Dialogue has been monopolized by discussions of defense, and has not spread to other important issues like economic and political empowerment.\(^57\) Without broader cooperation that provides a forum for addressing all aspects of a counterterrorism strategy, the US-Pakistan alliance will remain stagnant and underlying issues of conflict between the two countries remain unresolved.

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\(^{53}\) Rugh, “Yemen and the United States,” 112.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas, *Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?*, 150.

\(^{56}\) Ibid, 154.

\(^{57}\) Ibid, 151.
Conversely, the United States regularly hosts high-level exchanges with Colombian officials. Illinois Representative and former Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert emphasizes the sustained commitment between the United States and Colombia, saying that the groundwork for Plan Colombia happened “because we were there. We saw it. We saw answers, and we put those answers into legislative language.”  

Charles Shapiro, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs for the US State Department, also noted increased political engagement by top US officials, beginning with President George W. Bush’s visit to Colombia – the first presidential trip since the 1982 Reagan visit.  

**Factor III: High Level US Military Engagement**

US military engagement to Yemen has been steadier than political engagement because the US intelligence community was more attuned than the political establishment to the AQAP threat. In 2005, CENTCOM pledged more aid to Yemen at a time when politicians were focused on Iraqi sectarian strife. In May 2009, CIA Deputy Director Stephen Kappes attempted to improve Yemeni military cooperation against AQAP by increasing cooperation between intelligence services. However, the support is at times crisis-driven: then-CENTCOM General David Petraeus rushed to Yemen shortly after the attempted 2009 Christmas Day bombing of an American airliner, promising the Yemeni government even more counterterrorism aid. A feeling of powerlessness in addressing underlying grievances for terrorist activity and juggling the

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58 *Hearings on U.S.-Colombia Relations*, 3.
counterterrorism effort in Yemen with other competing counterterrorism issues contribute to the inability to maintain focus.

Again, this contrasts sharply with Pakistan, where the US counterterrorism assistance program is distinguished by frequent bi-national military cooperation. 2004 marked an important milestone in the US-Pakistan relationship, in which Pakistan was labeled a “Major Non-NATO Ally” of the United States.\textsuperscript{62} The relationship established that “security cooperation between the two states continued to be based on a transactional agreement whereby Pakistan participated in the war on terror in exchange for financial remuneration.”\textsuperscript{63}

Unlike Yemen, Pakistan participates in frequent and notable military exchanges with the United States, the most important of which is the Defense Consultative Group (DCG). The DCG is a medium for airing grievances and collaborating on security policy.\textsuperscript{64} The Security Assistance Working Group, a DCG subsidiary, is Pakistan’s most important mechanism for ordering defense equipment from the United States and discussing improvements on existing defense systems.\textsuperscript{65}

US-Colombia high-level military engagement is successful because of the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA).\textsuperscript{66} Through this accord, bilateral defense relations improved steadily since 2000 due to collaboration on “interoperability, joint procedures, logistics and equipment, training and instruction, intelligence exchanges,

\textsuperscript{62} Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas, \textit{Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?}, 152.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{65} Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas, \textit{Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?}, 152.
\textsuperscript{66} The formal title for the DCA is the “Supplemental Agreement for Cooperation and Technical Assistance in Defense and Security Between the Governments of The United States of America and the Republic of Colombia.” For more information, see footnote 67 (next).
surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, [and] combined exercises." The DCA is an essential component to the US-Colombia military relationship because of the consistent coordination between the two countries. The DCA requires both parties to meet annually in order to discuss the improvements made over the previous year and recommendations for further cooperation.

**Factor IV: Training and Equipment**

Yemen’s National Security Bureau (NSB), the Central Security Forces (CSF), the Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU), and the military are the main beneficiaries of US counterterrorism aid because they execute raids and other offensive measures. While outfitting the Yemeni military behind the scenes is necessary in order to guard against criticism that President Saleh is “an anti-Muslim American puppet,” a major drawback of providing aid is a lack of oversight and input into how the money and materiel is used. For example, the CTU is trained and equipped to fight AQAP, yet the CTU has been also used to fight against the Houthis. President Saleh prefers to use the advanced weaponry provided by the United States not against Al Qaeda, but instead to impose his will on the southern secessionists and disgruntled tribes.

Pakistan also trains and equips its forces fighting Al Qaeda and the Taliban using US financial resources. The main difference, though, is that Yemen is not reimbursed

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72 Levitt, “Targeting Terror,” 95.
for operations like their Pakistani counterparts. Foremost, Coalition Support Funds (CSF) reimburse the Pakistani government for costs incurred while executing counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.\textsuperscript{73} Foreign Military Financing (FMF) allowances also drive training and equipment spending.\textsuperscript{74} The United States also sponsors the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, which finances Pakistani military officer training in the United States. According to Richard Boucher, the former Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs for the US State Department, “IMET is one of the most important programs that we have” because it develops a professional cadre of Pakistani military officers.\textsuperscript{75} It also encourages “positive relations with the United States and officer-to-officer networks.”\textsuperscript{76} However, the Pakistani military leadership is unwilling to retrain troops for counterterrorism purposes. In the past, Chief of Army Staff Kayani revealed that he will not deploy large portions of the army to the FATA, opting instead to station troops on the eastern front in order to engage India in the unlikely event a war breaks out between the two countries.\textsuperscript{77}

Colombia also receives important training and equipment from the US military. One major focus for training is the Colombian National Police, whom the United States assists in their coca eradication strategy by upgrading and purchasing aircraft, and enhancing Colombian intelligence capabilities.\textsuperscript{78} In addition, the Justice Sector Reform Program (JSRP) has been successful in improving Colombia’s court system. Through

\textsuperscript{73} Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas, Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?, 157.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 162.
\textsuperscript{75} Subcommittee on International Development and Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs, and International Environmental Protection, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings on U.S. Foreign Assistance to Pakistan, 110\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., December 6, 2007, 23.
\textsuperscript{76} Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas, Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?, 164.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 167.
\textsuperscript{78} “United States Support for Colombia.”
the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States provides assistance, training and equipment to improve the transparency of the judicial system. Since April 2007, the JSRP “provided training to more than 53,260 prosecutors, judges, criminal investigators, and forensic experts in Colombia.”79 Improving the justice system is critical to prosecute and convict captured FARC and ELN insurgents, as well as to uncover corrupt military and political officials. In terms of officer exchange, Colombia sends more of its officers to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHNSEC) than any other country in Latin America.80 After training, these professional soldiers return to Colombia prepared to confront the insurgency. Colombian military officials also benefit from a significant US presence at military bases across Colombia. In October 2009, Colombia allowed US troops expanded access to seven Colombian military bases to fight narcotrafficking and insurgency.81

Factor V: Government Cooperation

US counterterrorism assistance has done little to prevent Yemeni political and religious leaders from covertly or overtly aiding extremists. Yet in terms of dealing with those who aid extremists, or those who undertake violent acts themselves, the United States and Yemen have found that incarceration can be used as a successful counterterrorism measure. This policy removes dangerous militants from society and is more politically palatable than killing them outright. In doing this, Saleh embarked on an

79 Hearings on U.S.-Colombia Relations, 31.
80 WHNSEC is formerly known as the School of the Americas (SOA).
 ambitious wave of student and Islamist arrests, under the pretense that they are
dangerous radicals with ties to Al Qaeda.\textsuperscript{82} In this way, Yemeni authorities have
arrested over 200 people alleged to be aiding and abetting Al Qaeda members.\textsuperscript{83} Under
former President George W. Bush, American forces also detained Yemeni fighters
associated with Al Qaeda at the Guantanamo Bay prison facility – half of the prisoners
there are Yemeni citizens.\textsuperscript{84} In response to this rash of incarcerations, President
Saleh’s re-education and “dialogue program” was created ostensibly for the purpose of
rehabilitating these terrorists and reentering them into society.\textsuperscript{85} Under this program in
2003, Saleh announced the decision to release Al Qaeda-linked militants if they
“pledged to respect the rights of non-Muslim foreigners living in Yemen or visiting it.”\textsuperscript{86}
Yet in an illustration of a lack of intergovernmental cooperation, in 2007 the Bush
administration canceled a Yemeni economic assistance package of unknown size
because Saleh released Al Qaeda terrorist and USS Cole attack mastermind Jamal Al-
Badawi on the promise that he had renounced militancy.\textsuperscript{87} This more recent
development has led President Obama to suspend further transfers of Yemenis from
Guantanamo Bay.\textsuperscript{88}

It is also important to note that both the United States and Saudi Arabia have
mishandled the issue of incarceration as well, most notably in the Said al Shihri case. Al
Shihri, a Saudi terrorist, was released from Guantanamo Bay in 2007 and subsequently

\textsuperscript{82} Shaul Shay, \textit{The Red Sea Terror Triangle: Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and Islamic Terror} (New
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{84} “Al Qaeda in Yemen and Somalia,” 3.
\textsuperscript{85} Rotberg, ed., \textit{Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa}, 162.
\textsuperscript{86} Mumtaz, “Terrorism in Yemen,” 2.
\textsuperscript{87} Rugh, “Yemen and the United States,” 113.
\textsuperscript{88} “Al Qaeda in Yemen and Somalia: A Ticking Time Bomb.” \textit{A Report to the Committee on Foreign
Relations, United States Senate} (21 January 2010), http://foreign.senate.gov/reports/ (third link from the
bottom as of the writing of this thesis), 3.
underwent Saudi Arabia’s terrorist rehabilitation program.\textsuperscript{89} He then went on to become one of the individuals responsible for the official formation of AQAP in 2009, becoming its deputy commander – he is valued for his detailed planning skills and business knowledge.\textsuperscript{90}

Yemen’s case is also a failure because of the high number of terrorists that have escaped from prison.\textsuperscript{91} The most notorious example is the 3 February 2006 escape of 23 jihadi prisoners, including the two future leaders of the AQAP movement, Nasir al Wuhayshi and Qasim Yahya al Raymi.\textsuperscript{92} Al Wuhayshi, known by his alias Abu Huriya al Tzanani, is the current head of AQAP and a former secretary to Osama bin Laden\textsuperscript{93} - he also fought in the battle of Tora Bora.\textsuperscript{94} Similarly, Al Raymi also spent time in Afghanistan training camps.\textsuperscript{95} The prisoners, many of whom were sentenced to death for the 2002 Limburg tanker bombing and the 2000 USS Cole bombing\textsuperscript{96} (and 13 of whom were convicted Al Qaeda members),\textsuperscript{97} dug a tunnel from a high security prison to a nearby mosque from which they made their escape.\textsuperscript{98} It is believed that AQAP sympathizers infiltrated the Yemeni intelligence services – Yemen’s Political Security Organization (PSO) – and may have assisted in the 2006 Sana jailbreak.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{89} Prados and Sharp, “Yemen: Current Conditions and U.S. Relations,” 16.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Byman, “The Changing Nature of State Sponsorship of Terrorism,” 22.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{96} Prados and Sharp, “Yemen: Current Conditions and U.S. Relations,” 2.
\textsuperscript{98} “Yemen Headlined,” 13.
The Yemeni government has also shown a propensity to accommodate rather than confront AQAP terrorists. At its apex, the government tacitly allowed AQAP to use space for schools, mosques, and government buildings in the Hadramawt, an eastern Yemeni governorate.\footnote{100} An even more blatant example is President Saleh’s refusal to arrest Sheikh Abd al Majid al Zindani, an AQAP member who was labeled a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” by the US Treasury Department.\footnote{101} Saleh’s reluctance to arrest al Zindani probably stems from the fact that he is the president of Sana’s Al Imam University, is popular with the student body, and is a leading political voice in the Yemeni Islah party.\footnote{102}

Yemeni officials have turned a blind eye to many extremist activities over the last decade. For example, until his arrest in 2002, Al Qaeda terrorist Sameer Mohammed Ahmed al Hada lived freely in Sana – his father operated “an Al Qaeda communications switchboard for Osama bin Laden” – until February 2002, when the US government succeeded in pressuring Yemeni authorities to arrest him and 39 other terrorists operating in Yemen.\footnote{103} In the 1990s, General Ali Muhsin formed personal relationships with Al Qaeda sympathizers during the secessionist war from 1992-1994.\footnote{104}

Pakistan also has a troubled history of cooperation with the United States, especially with its political and military exchanges. There is an unwillingness on the

\footnote{103} Levitt, “Targeting Terror,” 95-96.
\footnote{104} Rotberg, ed., \textit{Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa}, 162.
Pakistani side to discuss methods to defeat jihadi fighters and their ideology.\textsuperscript{105} American officials have also complained that the DCG has devolved into a “shopping opportunity” for the Pakistani military, in which they make requests for warfighting equipment.\textsuperscript{106} The topic of illegitimate remuneration for Pakistani costs incurred in the War on Terror will be discussed in the next section (Factor VI: Funding Support).

In contrast to Yemen and Pakistan, the US and Colombian governments are close allies and collaborate on all fronts against the FARC insurgents. Cooperation is evident in the joint operations to encourage coca growers to pursue other livelihoods – 102,000 hectares have been successfully converted to legal uses.\textsuperscript{107} In addition, the two governments find common cause in extraditing drug traffickers to the United States to stand trial. As a result, more than 500 individuals have been prosecuted in the United States under this system.\textsuperscript{108}

\textit{Factor VI: Funding Support}

The lack of US sustained commitment to counterterrorism activities in Yemen from 2003-2006 allowed for an unanticipated AQAP resurgence in both their funding for, and conducting of, terrorist activities. In 2003, the arrest of Mohamed Hamdi al Ahdal, a mastermind of the 2002 Limburg tanker bombing, resulted in a three-year lull in AQAP attacks in the country.\textsuperscript{109} In that time, the United States deemed Al Qaeda as inconsequential in Yemen, partly because of the pan-extremist call to jihad in Iraq, but

\textsuperscript{105} Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas, \textit{Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?}, 152.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Hearings on U.S.-Colombia Relations}, 31.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, 27.
\textsuperscript{109} “Yemen Headlined,” 13.
mostly because the group was both scattered and disorganized.\textsuperscript{110} Thus, during the apparent lull between 2003 and 2006 AQAP was able to quickly reconstitute itself due to the precipitous decline in US support. In 2005, for example, nonmilitary assistance to Yemen in 2005 was $7.9 million, whereas the United Kingdom gave $40.6 million.\textsuperscript{111} Focus on Yemen was given short shrift because of the war in Iraq. The United States held no high-level political talks with Yemeni officials until AQAP’s resurrection in 2006.

Since 2001, Pakistan has received nearly $8.1 billion in security assistance from US taxpayers.\textsuperscript{112} While this money is a powerful weapon with which to combat the considerable threat posed by Al Qaeda in Waziristan and the insurgency at the Afghan border, much of this funding is wasted on conventional weapons that have little benefit in counterterrorism operations. For example, in 2008, $227 million of security assistance funds were used to purchase upgrades for Pakistani F-16 aircraft fighter systems.\textsuperscript{113} Even with evidence that Pakistan is purchasing weapons in the event of war with India, the United States has continued to honor 81\% of its CSF reimbursements.\textsuperscript{114}

Pakistan also refuses to provide a proper accounting of the costs of fighting the War on Terror, hindering proper transparency and accountability of counterterrorism resources. It cites a right to sovereignty that precludes it from handing over receipts from arms sales.\textsuperscript{115} The problem goes much deeper, as there are bogus receipts for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Knights, “U.S. Embassy Bombing in Yemen,” 2.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas, Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?, 157.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Ibid, 162.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas, Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?, 158.
\end{itemize}
soldiers’ meals and many other phony charges.\textsuperscript{116} Corruption is so pervasive that the Department of Defense does not know if the operations against the Taliban – for which the US government was billed $5.56 billion – actually took place.\textsuperscript{117}

Like Pakistan, Colombia has a long history of US support. In 2000, the US Congress passed legislation to support Colombian development and drug interdiction programs.\textsuperscript{118} Since then, Colombia claimed the title of third-largest recipient of US foreign aid (after Israel and Egypt), and has received $5 billion for counterinsurgency purposes.\textsuperscript{119} Unlike Pakistan, however, Colombia spends more on Plan Colombia than its US ally, expending nearly $7 billion over the same time period.\textsuperscript{120} In order for an effective counterterrorism strategy to be built in Yemen, case studies illustrate the need for continuous, highly transparent funding, subject to oversight and accountability.

\textbf{Chapter 3: Benefits of US Counterterrorism Assistance in Yemen}

The current US counterterrorism program in Yemen fails to exhibit many of the factors required of successful counterterrorism programs. This chapter will analyze how those failures affect the overall counterterrorism effort in Yemen by looking at the following hypothesis:

\textit{Hypothesis 2: US counterterrorism assistance’s benefits are not evident in Yemen.}

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ibid}, 159-160.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Hearings on U.S.-Colombia Relations}, 7.
\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid}, 24.
Benefit I: A decrease in the sophistication and scale of AQAP attacks

This study finds that US counterterrorism assistance to Yemen has not diminished the sophistication and scale of attempted or successful AQAP attacks. The 29 October 2010 printer-cartridge explosives incident – an AQAP plot designed to bring down UPS and FedEx cargo planes en route to the United States – is the most recent evidence of the failure of US efforts to reduce AQAP’s capacity to carry out attacks. This attempt is the continuation of a dangerous trend that began with Al Qaeda’s USS Cole bombing in 2000, followed by the 2002 attack on the French-flagged Limburg oil tanker, and the more recent AQAP-inspired Fort Hood massacre and AQAP-trained Umar Farouk Abdelmutallab’s attempted 2009 Christmas Day bombing of a Detroit-bound airliner. AQAP attacks in neighboring countries have likewise increased in their sophistication; Abdullah Al-Asiri’s 2009 attempted assassination of Saudi security chief Prince Mohammed bin Nayef marks the first time a member of the Saudi royal family was targeted for attack by the group.\footnote{Al Qaeda claims Saudi prince bomb,” BBC News (30 August 2009), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8229581.stm.}

Benefit II: A decrease in the attractiveness of the ideological message

This study also finds that US counterterrorism assistance to Yemen has not significantly decreased the attractiveness of AQAP’s ideological message. Both Yemenis like Abdullah Al-Asiri and westerners such as Fort Hood’s Major Nidal Hassan continue to empathize with AQAP because of a combination of affinity with the group’s goals and a hatred of the Yemeni and American governments.\footnote{Prados and Sharp, “Yemen: Current Conditions and U.S. Relations,” 2.} AQAP’s Inspire magazine, according to terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman, “is designed to appeal to
Generation Z” and regularly publicizes and glorifies terrorist attacks.\textsuperscript{123} For example, in AQAP’s third release of Inspire magazine, AQAP noted that it only cost $4200 to launch the printer bomb plot that caused millions of dollars worth of revenue loss from cargo shipments, passenger flight cancellations, increased security at airports across the western world, and a public backlash from citizens who feel unsafe.\textsuperscript{124}

There is little, if any evidence that the United States is successful in countering AQAP’s ideological message. Instead, the United States has tried to suppress the AQAP message in a variety of ways. For example, on 3 November 2010, American and British authorities concluded a successful lobbying effort to ban AQAP cleric Anwar al Awlaki’s radical video sermons and speeches from the YouTube website.\textsuperscript{125} President Saleh has made it illegal for Islamists to speak with the press, thereby hampering their ability to disseminate radical messages.\textsuperscript{126} Saleh has further attempted to tighten speech controls at Friday prayers by offering pro-government alternative messaging to reduce the appeal of AQAP’s ideology.\textsuperscript{127}

Conclusion

Hypothesis 2 is fully supported throughout the analysis. Because the evidence suggests an increase in sophistication and scale of attacks, as well as increased

\textsuperscript{124} “Inspire,” Al-Malahem Media (November 2010), https://campus.georgetown.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_tab_group_id=2_1&url=/webapps/blackboard/execute/launcher%3Ftype%3DCourse%26id%3D_132122_1%26url%3D%252Fwebapps%252Fblackboard%252Fexecute%252FdisplayIndividualContent%253Fmode%253Dview%2526content_id%253D1807836_1%2526course_id%253D_132122_1, 1.
\textsuperscript{125} Andrew Lebovich, “The Legal War On Terror: Awlaki videos banned from YouTube, in theory; more arrests made for supporting al-Shabaab,” Foreign Policy (5 November 2010), http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/11/05/the_lwot_awlaki_videos_banned_from_youtube_in_theory_more_arrests_made_for_suppo, 1.
\textsuperscript{126} Miller, “Demand, Stockpiles, and Social Controls,” 4.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
ideological affinity with AQAP, the US counterterrorism assistance program to Yemen fails to mitigate the rising AQAP presence. The current strategy is untenable, but the conclusions from Chapter 2 illustrate the possibility of a new policy based on the experience of other US counterterrorism assistance programs.

**Chapter 4: Alternative and Competing Explanations**

The results of this study may be influenced by the following factors:

*Difficulty in defining the benefits of counterterrorism assistance*

The analysis presented in Chapter 3 is confined by the author’s ability to define “counterterrorism assistance benefits.” The author could have defined these benefits as the following: the complete elimination of the terrorist organization, the number of terrorist attacks, or the number of new recruits. Unfortunately, the first would be an near-impossible standard to meet and also a difficult claim to validate. And while the other two benefits – the number of attacks and the number of new recruits – might be good empirical indicators of success or failure, precise measurements are difficult to establish and counter-reference in open-source publications.

The analysis suffers from a lack of accessible information at the local level, where the real benefits could be hiding. Other indicators of success, like improved firearms controls or increased number of terrorist informants, remain classified or highly speculative. Again, though, this study is limited by broad, country-level implications of the US counterterrorism assistance program. These restrictions are important disclaimers to the above analysis. Nevertheless, at the macro-level, hypothesis 2 is substantiated by compelling evidence.
Cannot focus on the outcome

The factors used in analyzing hypothesis 1 are judged solely based on their application, not on their outcome. Daniel Byman uses a metaphor to describe this problem: a surgeon cannot be blamed for his patient’s death if he used the most appropriate surgical techniques.\textsuperscript{128} In the same way, the United States should not fail a counterterrorism assessment if it uses all of the right tools and the terrorist group remains strong. Yet while it is the case that the United States has tried certain tools in Yemen, it has by no means employed the best strategies all the time, and there are clear areas for improvement.\textsuperscript{129} This analysis does not conflate success in the application of counterterrorism assistance with success against AQAP. The case studies also further illustrate that despite the numerous differences between terrorist groups and insurgencies across the globe, the counterterrorism aid packages that the United States provides to mitigate the power and effectiveness of these groups should, in essence, have satisfied the same aforementioned factors and categories.

Lag time and AQAP’s power

The United States might not reap the immediate benefits of counterterrorism assistance because there may be considerable lag time between dispensing the funds for training purposes and the graduation of a well-trained Yemeni soldier or police officer to counter the terrorist threat. The timeline may be too short to decisively conclude whether counterterrorism in Yemen has failed – the benefits of counterterrorism assistance may be forthcoming, and could yield future dividends.

\textsuperscript{128} Daniel Byman, Professor, Security Studies Program, Georgetown University, personal interview, April 5, 2011.
\textsuperscript{129} See Chapter 5: Policy Implications and Recommendations on page 33.
On the contrary, AQAP may grow stronger, and at a faster rate, than the counterterrorism measures arrayed against it. The very fact that the United States is present in Yemen could be ideological fuel for the attacks. One way to decrease AQAP attacks in Yemen may be to remove the US presence. Another approach to counteract this trend may be to increase counterterrorism measures – not necessarily their effectiveness – in order to outpace the growth of the group. Allocating more funds to the US counterterrorism program in Yemen may be a way to solve this problem.\(^{130}\) However, there is no evidence to suggest that efforts to stop AQAP are outpacing the attempts to expand the organization. Nor is there evidence that AQAP is conducting attacks solely to oust the United States from the country. Therefore, improving the effectiveness of US counterterrorism assistance to Yemen remains the best way to counteract AQAP.

**Chapter 5: Policy Implications and Recommendations**

From Chapter 2, this study confirms that all of the aforementioned factors must be present in order to label a US counterterrorism assistance program as successful. Any lack in these factors, illustrated using the abovementioned cases, is grounds for failure. Therefore, according to this litmus test Yemen needs improvement in the following areas: customized programs, high-level US political engagement, government cooperation, and funding support.

\(^{130}\) See Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point* for further theoretical explication of the subject.
Customized Program: Predators and the Triple Commission

There are two ways in which the United States can improve the “customization” of its counterterrorism program in Yemen. First, Predator strikes should be paired with local intelligence provided by the Yemeni government. The program should remain hidden in order to avoid political fallout à la Paul Wolfowitz.¹³¹ Like the Yemeni-led raids, US drone strikes should, on balance, be covert in order to spare President Saleh the embarrassment of being called “America’s lackey.”¹³²

Second, Yemen must join with regional allies like Saudi Arabia in order to combat the AQAP threat.¹³³ Saudi Arabia has a massive stake in the fight against AQAP, most clearly evidenced by the $2 billion per year subsidy the Saudi government extends to Yemen for institution building and counterterrorism.¹³⁴ According to Boucek, the Saudis also understand the Yemenis much better than Americans.¹³⁵ An alliance between the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, which this author calls the “Triple Commission,” can be a forum for exchanging ideas on counterterrorism and influencing regional policy. Just like the NATO-Pakistan-Afghanistan Tripartite Commission, the Triple Commission can repair relations between the countries. One of the most immediate changes the Commission should undertake is to petition member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), requesting aid for their ailing neighbor by lifting the ban on Yemeni workers who were expelled for supporting Saddam Hussein in the First

¹³¹ Paul Wolfowitz broke a promise of secrecy about the Predator drone strike program to the Saleh government. See page 13 for more details.
¹³² Philips, “What Comes Next in Yemen?,” 11.
¹³⁵ Boucek, personal interview, March 28, 2011.
Gulf War and now suffer from the preferential treatment given to Gulf nationals. This step would immensely increase remittances to the cash-strapped country. Any opportunity for Saleh’s regime to improve the sagging economy would likewise bolster the prospects of success against AQAP – Yemenis are more likely to support government policies when they are financially stable. Rallying these powers under a single, cohesive strategy to combat AQAP and prevent Yemen’s collapse will be a major boon to counterterrorism efforts in the country.

**Political Engagement – Substituting Training for Engagement**

Political engagement suffers from the perennial syndrome of receding when threat perception is low, and then increasing when AQAP attempts a sensational attack. Unfortunately for Yemen, consistent, high-level dialogue has never been a priority for this or previous administrations. To improve this factor of the counterterrorism assistance program, the United States must have sustained political engagement that does not wax and wane with the news cycle. Few high-level US officials would offer to travel to Yemen when there are other, more important crises on which to focus. Instead, Paul Pillar suggests that improved training opportunities for Yemeni officials in the United States can actually be a “better substitute than high-level political engagement.” Therefore, the answer to improved political engagement may actually lie in the training opportunities afforded to Yemeni officials. The United States would do well to mirror successful training programs in Colombia like the Justice Sector Reform Program, which received notoriety for improving the justice system. These trainings may

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137 Boucek, personal interview, March 28, 2011.
be a proxy for political exchanges and could mend relations between the countries, but still it is not a substitute for high-level intergovernmental political dialogue and cooperation.

*Government Cooperation – Wrong Agent for Reform, Building Capacity*

Ultimately, Yemeni officials want to continue their lucrative counterterrorism relationship with the United States so that they can benefit financially and purchase new weapons with which to confront their domestic enemies. However, they also have important domestic issues to contend with that outweigh their attention to Al Qaeda. From this perspective, Yemen will remain interested in a small, but persistent Al Qaeda threat to gain the attention of American observers. Though cynical as that may be, it explains the lackluster efforts taken by the Yemenis to rid themselves of the threat of terror. Without proper governance and infrastructure, critical items of a functioning polity, the Yemeni government will never be a reliable partner in the fight against AQAP – in this respect, it is similar to Pakistan. Ultimately, however, Yemen’s problem with Al Qaeda, the Houthis, and the southern secessionists are not security challenges; instead, they are all manifestations of the failure of the Yemeni state. The US counterterrorism program in Colombia may have some of the answers to this problem. Also plagued by many of these challenges when former President Alvaro Uribe came into office, he notes that his success was rooted in treating “security as the means, [while] solving social problems was the end.” An American program that attempts to build capacity among the population, support the economic needs of the youth, and

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139 Byman, personal interview, April 5, 2011.
140 Ibid.
141 Alvaro Uribe, Former President of Colombia, Presentation to Professor Bruce Hoffman’s course SEST – 520: Counterinsurgency, Georgetown University, 24 March 2011.
resolve the underlying causes of Yemeni strife may eventually dampen the Al Qaeda threat. However, the United States alone cannot be expected to commit the resources necessary for this undertaking. This is because, as Robert Komer noted about the Vietnam War, “No amount of know-how and motivation on the part of an outside intervening partner can substitute for lack of motivation on the part of a local government.”\(^{142}\) As long as the Yemeni government is not a partner, the US counterterrorism program will continue to be led by decapitation strategy drone attacks and crisis-driven diplomacy.

**Funding Support – Trust, But Verify Scheme, Setting High and Realistic Goals**

When only 20% of the $4.7 billion pledged by international donors in 2006 to Yemen was delivered to intended recipients in Yemen, governance and corruption must be confronted as a drain on resources and on state legitimacy.\(^{143}\) The United States has a right to know how its funds are being used and where they are directed. This should by no means become the central pillar of American support for Yemen, but it should have a place and a purpose in placating tribes outside of Sana’s direct control. This economic package must both address the grievances that radicalize Yemenis to fight for AQAP and secure the loyalty of tribes that provide AQAP with tacit support due to disenchantment with government services. This strategy can accomplish one of the main facets of strong counterterrorism strategy – eliminating the ability of the terrorist group to continue recruitment among the local population.


\(^{143}\) Philips, “What Comes Next in Yemen?,” 11.
The United States must also insist on oversight and accountability in the distribution of ordnance and materiel. The aforementioned increases in economic aid, military assistance, and equipment should be contingent upon stronger relations between the United States and Yemen, as well as assurances that AQAP terrorists will not be treated leniently. To be sure, the stakes are much higher in Pakistan, and the budget for the program should reflect this reality. However, the US assistance package must be large enough to convince the proud Yemeni government that its support is worth the political risks, and that future large rewards are contingent upon taking more risks to completely dismantle the Al Qaeda network in Yemen. An increasingly weak Yemeni government is unlikely to make painful compromises as long as US nonmilitary aid is far lower than those countries to which the United States provides even greater assistance without conditions. Aside from ensuring counterterrorism cooperation, there is a strong strategic rationale for the United States to ramp up its nonmilitary aid to help prevent state failure. The chances of receiving counterterrorism cooperation from a collapsed Yemen are zero, and the cost of rebuilding a failed state far outweighs the costs of preventing such a collapse. One solution is to institute a “trust, but verify” scheme with partner governments to observe counterterrorism operations, with future assistance predicated on performance and performance-related indicators.

Conclusion: Understanding the Challenges Ahead

As long as the United States and other financiers of Saleh’s government cannot build the Yemeni capacity to handle broad social and economic ills, the regime will collapse. And in doing so, a far greater terror threat may be born in its wake. The

United States thus cannot remain idle in its counterterrorism policy, lest it allow Yemen to become a failed state with a large ungoverned vacuum that is filled by extremists. Funding needs to continue unabated by crises in other parts of the world; high-level bilateral talks addressing issues of politics and economy, as well as security, need to occur between the US and Yemen; regional partners like Saudi Arabia and the GCC need to more heavily invest themselves in Yemen’s stability; and the United States needs to demand greater transparency and accountability with the aid it gives. Yemeni stability is American security. These changes will remain elusive until the Yemeni government perceives Al Qaeda as a threat to the regime. In the meantime, drone strikes are the only reasonable kinetic approach to keeping AQAP from improving its Yemeni operations. But this approach must be tempered by active efforts on the part of both governments, implementing the strategies outlined above, to ensure that counterterrorism in Yemen continues and improves.
Appendix

William Pope’s Testimony: Selected Text

The President’s National Strategy for Combating Terrorism describes four main objectives:

**Defeat** terrorist organizations of global reach by attacking their sanctuaries, leadership, finances, and command, control and communications;

**Deny** further sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorists by cooperating with other states to take action against these international threats;

**Diminish** the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit by enlisting the international community to focus its efforts and resources on the areas most at risk; and

**Defend** the United States, its citizens, and interests at home and abroad.

Partnership with foreign governments is important for each of these objectives. In today’s testimony, I will focus primarily on the second – the denial of support and sanctuary to terrorists through cooperation with other states….

As Members of Congress, you are accustomed to reviewing budgets and allocating resources. Please allow me to say a few words about something that is not easily reflected in budget figures. In counterterrorism assistance, how we do things is as important as how much we have to spend. From long experience, we know that impersonal training or equipment packages cannot be simply dropped into the hands of our partners and reasonably be expected to get results. *Measurable, lasting improvement in a partner nation’s capability to confront terrorist activity in or emanating from its territory usually demands customizing programs, hands-on training, locally appropriate equipment, and ongoing mentoring. It requires frequent, face-to-face contact between U.S. government personnel and the host nation’s security establishment. It requires talented, experienced trainers, who regard their students as colleagues and treat them with respect. It requires the engagement of ambassadors and the most senior members of our foreign policy establishment to encourage an institutional environment in which tactical and operational training can take root and bear fruit. And it requires that our diverse federal agencies, both military and civilian, work together to ensure that distinct initiatives are complementary and collaborative.*

[Emphasis added]

Daniel Byman: Selected Text

Categories of Passive Sponsorship

Even more confusing is the variety of activities within passive sponsorship, which I define as when a regime’s deliberate inaction allows terrorist groups to flourish. As terrorism today is often self-funded, and as the international arms market has seen a

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proliferation of small arms, passive sponsorship is an increasingly important category of state support. Types of passive sponsorship include:

**Knowing toleration.** Some governments may make a policy decision not to interfere with a terrorist group that is raising money, recruiting, or otherwise exploiting its territory. In essence, the regime wants the group to flourish and believes that by not acting it can help it do so. Syria did this shortly after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, allowing jihadists, ex-Ba’thists, and others to organize from Syrian soil.

**Unconcern or ignorance.** Some states may not seek to further a terrorist group’s activities, but they may not bother to stop it, either because they do not believe its activities are extensive or because they do not believe the group’s activities affect the state’s interest. Thus Canada allowed the “Snow Tigers”—the Canadian branch of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)—to raise money with little interference, in part because the Canadian government does not regard the LTTE as a true threat.

**Incapacity.** Some states do not fully control their territory or the government is too weak vis-à-vis key domestic actors that do support terrorism to stop the activities. The Lebanese Armed Forces, for example, are too weak to clamp down on Hizballah’s activities, while there are parts of Pakistan that the government does not fully control.

*Christopher Boucek: Selected Text*¹⁴⁸

It is essential that Washington take a holistic approach to Yemen. Although the major U.S. foreign policy concern with regard to Yemen since 2001 has been security and counterterrorism, the country’s deteriorating security is a result of problems unrelated to security. As such, in many cases development assistance, education and technical cooperation, capacity building, institution strengthening, and direct financial assistance can better address the interconnected challenges facing Yemen than can military and security aid.

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¹⁴⁸ Boucek, “Yemen: Avoiding a Downward Spiral,” 22.
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