

# U.S. Central Command Assessment Team



## Annex B Diplomatic Functional Report

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**ANNEX B: DIPLOMATIC**

**1. (U) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

(U) One critical factor defines U.S. operations and relations in U.S. Central Command's (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR): the United States has ceded the initiative. Across the AOR, U.S. forces react to events, whether base closures in Kyrgyzstan or missile tests in Iran. U.S. defensive efforts to secure supply lines, regain lost ground in Afghanistan, obtain Pakistani cooperation, and align Arab partners' interests with U.S. interests stand in stark contrast to our adversaries' increasingly confident actions. The global economic recession and declining price of oil exacerbate present challenges but also provide incentives for regional economic integration and help to create a favorable context for the United States to regain the diplomatic initiative and shape our interlocutors' strategic thinking.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Diplomatic challenges in the USCENTCOM AOR are complex because

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(U) The situation in Iraq is still tenuous and the United States must further develop the diplomatic tools to protect the fragile political progress there, to help contain threats to security, and to maintain U.S. ability to positively influence the Government of Iraq (GoI). The success of recent military efforts in Iraq demonstrated not only how rapidly political change can be engineered in the region, but also the political value of effective military operations. While the recent provincial elections saw previously disenfranchised Sunnis join the political process, sustained progress will depend on the residual U.S. presence to set the conditions.

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(U) If the United States focuses on understanding the needs of the “street,” it can avoid becoming prisoners of the local leadership and elite. To accomplish this, the United States must accept greater risk as the price of greater influence, and it must adopt a new approach to “force protection.” It can no longer divide U.S. Government (USG) civilians into security providers and security consumers when a whole-of-government approach is required. The USG’s reservoir of language skills has proven inadequate for effective strategic communications, street-level engagement or effective diplomacy. A massive training effort is required and incentives and personnel policies to keep regional experts working on the region should be implemented.

(U) A core function at every overseas base should be building links to the host country. U.S. installations, from temporary combat outpost to major installations, send signals to the local population simply by their location, appearance, employment practices, and engagement programs. Joint bases provide clear benefits in building the habits of cooperation. USCENTCOM can also strengthen mil-to-mil engagement efforts, such as professional exchange programs and security cooperation relationships. The synergies that could be derived from modifying the Unified Command Plan to bring combatant command boundaries into harmony with those used by the U.S. Department of State (DoS) are well-known, but the United States might also consider how USCENTCOM will interact with global actors outside its AOR, such as the European Union (EU), Russia, and China.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Short-term diplomatic actions that would help the United States quickly regain the initiative include:

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**2. (U) PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

(U) This report was completed by the USCENTCOM Assessment Team over a 100-day period from November 2008 to February 2009. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the situation in the USCENTCOM AOR, a review of existing strategies and plans across relevant departments and organizations, and suggested actions for USCENTCOM in the context of an illustrative plan for the integration of all instruments of national power and efforts of Coalition partners in time, space, and purpose to achieve policy goals.

(U) The Dip-Pol team consisted of members from the DoS, Air Force, Army, and a Coalition Partner from the Canadian Army. It drew on existing U.S. and Coalition plans and policy guidance, relevant reports and studies, its members' expertise, the broader USG community, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, and consultations throughout the region, including with country teams, bilateral partners, and local actors.

(U) Disclaimer: This document does not represent the official position of USCENTCOM, the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State or any other agency of the United States Government.

**3. (U) SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION ASSESSMENT**

(U) Although USCENTCOM's diverse AOR frustrates efforts to succinctly describe its key characteristics, one critical factor stands out: the United States has ceded the initiative. Across this vast region, the United States reacts to events orchestrated by others, whether base closures in Kyrgyzstan or missile tests in Iran. U.S. defensive efforts to preserve basing rights, regain lost ground in Afghanistan, obtain Pakistani cooperation, and align Arab partners' interests with those of the United States stand in stark contrast to our adversaries' increasingly confident actions

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(U) Policy initiatives based solely upon a clear definition of U.S. objectives, however, fail to acknowledge the valid strategic imperatives driving partners' and adversaries' actions. "Strategic partners," even allies, greet U.S. efforts with lip service or half-hearted efforts towards supposedly shared goals. Without shared goals, the United States find itself compelled to rent its partners' agency and usually fail to obtain the desired results.

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(U) U.S. operations in almost all of the AOR now face high-threat levels. U.S. response has been to harden facilities and limit exposure. As a result, U.S. forces are unable to effectively use forward bases as vehicles for engagement with local populations, and both military and diplomatic efforts are seriously hampered by security concerns. The limits on engagement are exacerbated by the fact that there are still inadequate numbers of fluent speakers of Arabic, Pashtu, Urdu, or other key regional languages.

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**4. (U) DIPLOMATIC APPROACHES AND ACTIONS**

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**(U) Promoting Democratic Values.** There is frequent tension in the USCENTCOM AOR over pursuing strategic objectives in partnership with foreign governments and promoting democratic rule in their countries. In many cases, the governments see U.S. efforts to promote democracy as a threat to regime survival. Public pressure by U.S. officials frequently backfires, at times leading to restricted access to the country's leadership, thereby weakening communication channels, limiting cooperation, and occasionally jeopardizing the bilateral relationship itself. A common local reaction is to portray U.S. programs as efforts to impose Western values or as foreign interference. This can lead local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations to reject U.S. assistance, even when both sets of objectives agree, out of fear of retribution by their governments or popular backlash. In recent years, the association of democracy promotion initiatives with unpopular U.S. actions such as the war in Iraq has fostered the impression that democracy promotion is merely a plot to impose U.S. rule as much as U.S. values.

(U) Regional observers note, however, that democratic practices retain broad support among regional publics. In one survey, 80 percent of the Arab world supported democratic competition among political parties in comparison to 40 percent who favored the rule of sharia law with no elections or political party competition. According to those observers, only nine percent supported allowing only Islamist parties to compete in elections. That said, those observers acknowledge that with one or two exceptions, democratic reform in the Arab world has been merely cosmetic. There has been no redistribution of power, no establishment of checks and balances, and no accountability. In part, they attribute this to the fact that "incumbent survival," not democracy, remains the priority of nearly all rulers, and that government action has succeeded so far in controlling collective action and diffusing pressure from below. In addition, the United States' excessive ambition and overreaching has contributed to public perception of hypocrisy and ultimately to the failure of programs.

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(U) U.S.-sponsored programs aimed at democratic reform will have to overcome important obstacles. Reforms that may threaten regime survival will be met with reflexive opposition. The broad deterioration in U.S. credibility among AOR populations also limits receptiveness to U.S. assistance of potential program beneficiaries because of the potential damage to their own public appeal (not to mention possible arrest and harassment) of such assistance. As a result, the U.S. faces being criticized for supporting democracy while it is taken to task for supporting oppressive regimes.

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(U) **Iraq.** The challenge for the United States—in the context of a reduction in U.S. and Coalition forces and increasing exercise of Iraqi sovereign authority—is to develop the means to protect fragile political progresses, to help Iraq contain eruptions of political violence and other security threats, and to maintain U.S. influence on governance.

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