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TECHNICAL REPORT

Understanding Country Planning

A Guide for Air Force Component Planners

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Prepared for the United States Air Force

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide U.S. Air Force planners with an overview of country planning processes and the key elements of country plans. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has placed a renewed emphasis on planning for security cooperation with foreign militaries, but it has yet to develop comprehensive guidance on how to conduct this type of planning. As a result, the combatant commands (COCOMs) and their Air Force components have had to develop country plans with little guidance as to what these plans should look like and what purpose they should serve.

This report is, in many ways, a collection of best practices. It is based on multiple discussions with Air Force component and COCOM planners and a thorough review of their country plans and planning processes.¹ The RAND study team found that there was no single approach to country planning in DoD. The Air Force component and COCOM planners with whom the study team spoke were all attempting to develop country plans that linked guidance to resources—with varying degrees of success. From these discussions, the study team developed the country planning cycle depicted in Figure S.1 and the key elements of a country plan depicted in Figure S.2.

The country planning cycle is a simple way of thinking about a number of complicated processes. It has five main parts: guidance, development of the country plan, resourcing, execution, and assessment. This report addresses each part of the planning cycle in detail: Chapter Two describes the role of guidance and the development of the country plan; Chapter Three discusses resourcing and execution; and Chapter Four describes the assessment process.

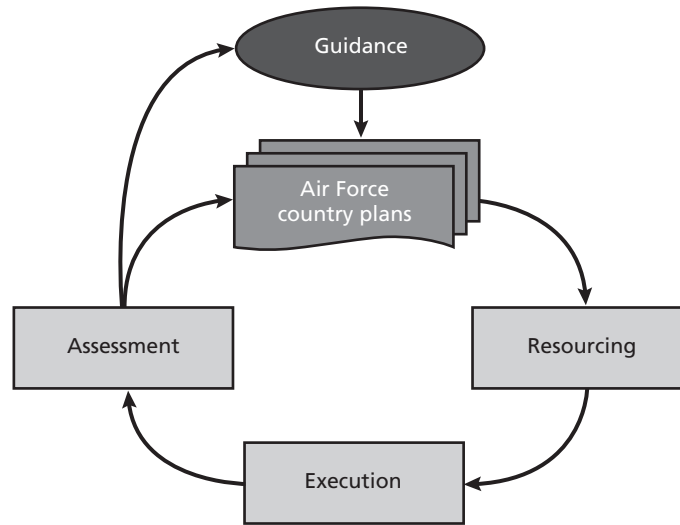
Guidance is both the beginning and the end of the country planning cycle. Air Force component planners can influence the guidance they are given by assessing previous country planning efforts. While there are many sources of guidance, the COCOM campaign and country plans and the U.S. Department of State's Mission Strategic Resource Plan are the most important to the development of an Air Force country plan. In fact, the Air Force country plan is essentially that service's slice of the COCOM country plan.² This report will help the Air Force component planners understand the various sources of guidance so they can build country plans that link guidance to resources.

The next step in the country planning cycle is the development of a country plan. This report does not prescribe a specific planning format that Air Force component planners must use. However, in the absence of any definitive DoD guidance, Air Force component planners

¹ A list of these discussions with representatives from the COCOMs and Air Force components can be found in Appendix A.

² An Air Force country plan is not limited to Air Force activities; it also covers the air, space, and cyber domains.

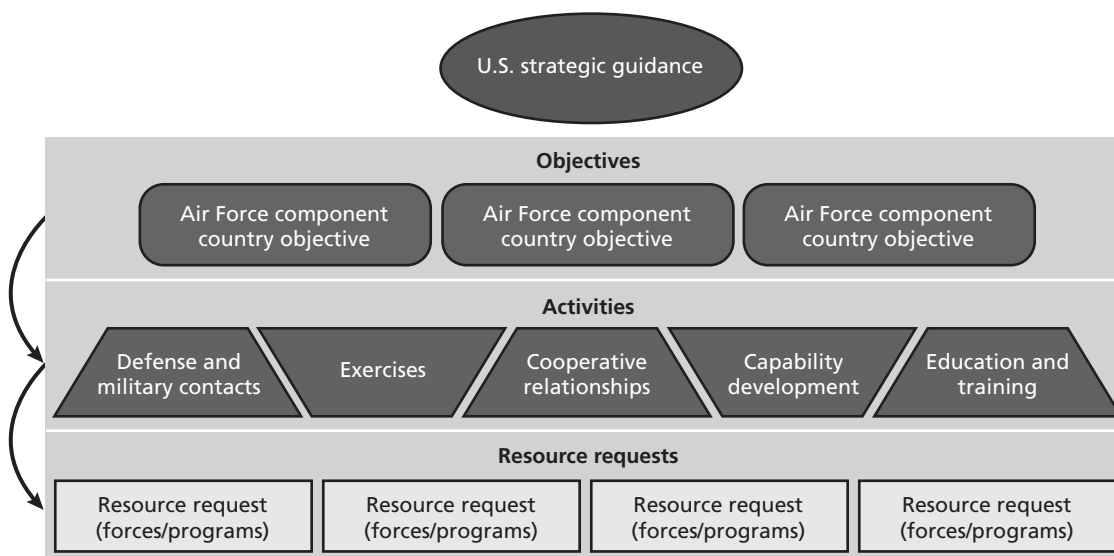
Figure S.1
Country Planning Cycle



RAND TR1186-S.1

need some waypoints to help them develop their country plans. This report identifies and describes the key elements of an Air Force country plan and ways to bridge the gap between guidance and resources. These key elements are shown in Figure S.2: objectives, activities, and resource requests. *Objectives* describe what the Air Force component wants to achieve in a given country. *Activities* describe how the Air Force component intends to achieve the objectives. And, finally, *resource requests* outline the forces and funding necessary to undertake activities and achieve objectives in support of the guidance.

Figure S.2
Key Elements of a Country Plan



RAND TR1186-S.2

Once the country plan is developed, the next steps in the cycle are resourcing and execution. Air Force components submit resource requests to various Air Force, DoD, and U.S. government resourcing processes. The complicated nature of the resourcing process was a common complaint among Air Force and COCOM planners in discussions with the study team. There are hundreds of security cooperation programs and dozens of ways to request funding. In response to these concerns, this report also seeks to help Air Force component planners understand their role in the resourcing process.

Executing the country plan is a simple matter, at least compared with the resourcing process. In most cases, the country plan will need to be modified to reflect available resources. In this constrained budget climate, it is unlikely that all of an Air Force component's resource requests will be approved. Air Force planners help execute the country plan by ensuring that activities are tasked to the appropriate organizations and by assisting with scheduling and coordinating activities.

The final phase of the country planning cycle is assessing the country plan. Air Force and COCOM planners understand the need for assessment but are unsure how to do it well. Indeed, assessment is perhaps the least developed part of the country planning process in DoD. While DoD has multiple assessment processes, few were designed with country planning in mind. Nonetheless, Air Force planners can use these processes to identify and rectify issues that prevent them from achieving the objectives in their country plans and to inform the development of future guidance and country plans.

This report concludes by identifying two major areas for improvement in DoD and Air Force country planning and offering some related recommendations (see Chapter Five). The lack of comprehensive guidance on country planning is a real obstacle to planning,³ as is the lack of any standard process for resourcing country plans. While these are DoD-wide problems, the Air Force need not wait for DoD-wide solutions. As a first step, we recommend that the Air Force develop guidance on country planning, perhaps in a future version of the Air Force Campaign Support Plan or Air Force doctrine on building partnerships. In addition, the Air Force should better synchronize the resourcing process for Air Force-managed programs by aligning them with its planning, programming, and budgeting cycle.

³ Since the writing of this report, the Security Cooperation Reform Task Force in the Office of the Secretary of Defense has begun work on a country planning guide.