

# US SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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## ISSUES

- A sustainable and reliable U.S. system for security cooperation that can more effectively leverage America's extensive web of alliances and partnerships in the Middle East and around the globe does not yet exist.
- Unspecified U.S. objectives and a confused process represent the two main problems of U.S. security cooperation. Often, the U.S. pursues security cooperation with no coherent policy toward the partner or a clear end-state. It also practically approaches security cooperation as an exercise in supplying hardware to its partners, failing to invest in defense institution building, which is crucial for the partner's ability to optimize and sustain the defense of its people and territory, and ultimately graduate from U.S. help.

## US INTERESTS

- U.S. partners in the Middle East with more developed defense institutional capacities — not just military capabilities — are able to responsibly share security burdens and sustain U.S. security investments in the region during challenging fiscal times in Washington.
- Defense institutional reform is inextricably linked to political reform, which is a key ingredient of long-term regional stability, and thus a core U.S. interest.
- Effective U.S. security cooperation in the Middle East affords the United States greater strategic flexibility to pursue its new priority of great power competition.

cooperation. It would have budget authority and organize, employ, train, equip, and sustain a joint security cooperation force. It would provide a coherent global framework for action and synthesize the perspectives and inputs of the GCCs into a single comprehensive assessment of the Pentagon's security cooperation efforts worldwide.

- If a global security cooperation command were to be established and headed by a four-star general, it would automatically have to be overseen by senior civilian leadership in the Pentagon to uphold the core principle of civilian control of the armed forces. A new position of an undersecretary of defense for security cooperation ought to be formed to enable the most effective kind of civilian oversight.
- U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin should communicate his strong endorsement of Congress's security cooperation reforms in the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (FY17 NDAA) and press all stakeholders, including his own immediate subordinates, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), and CENTCOM, to fully implement the reforms.
- Congress should perform consistent oversight of security cooperation and insist on accountability by more frequently holding public and closed hearings.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- U.S. executive and legislative leadership should form a global security cooperation command. Such a command would essentially seek to solve the problems of competition and lack of effective communication and integration among the geographic combatant commands (GCCs) on security