

## **Linking The Defense, Diplomatic And Development Communities to Reduce Forest Conflict**

### A. The Rationale for Linking Defense, Diplomacy and Development

- The terrorist attacks in September 2001 influenced significant changes in the management and implementation of US foreign assistance. Among these changes is an emphasis on the need for greater synergy among Development, Diplomacy and Defense as noted in the USG's National Security Strategy of 2002.
- The institutions responsible for each of these areas have different strengths and responsibilities in encouraging peace, stability and democracy across the globe. Working together allows for the achievement of these goals in a comprehensive manner.
- In July 2004, the State Department established the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) to lead and coordinate the USG civilian strategy and policy needed to stabilize and rebuild states during and post-conflict.
- In March 2005, USAID created the Office of Military Affairs to serve as its primary point-of-contact with the U.S. Military and to implement the civilian side of the partnership between development and defense. USAID's programs in health, education, agriculture, environment, economic growth, democracy, justice and humanitarian assistance mitigate against violence and promote stability.
- In November 2005, the Defense Department issued a new policy directive that recognizes that Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) as critical to their mission as combat operations and is seeking civilian partners to assist.
- This coordination will lead to agreement on policy across implementing agencies; coordination of programs on the ground; improved service delivery and more efficient use of funds.

### B. Example of the Closer Ties Forming among the Among Defense, Diplomacy and Development Communities

- In fragile environments, development cannot effectively take place without the security that armed force provides. And security cannot ultimately occur until local populations view the promise of development as an alternative to violence.
- In Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Teams are joint civil-military units deployed throughout most of the country to establish and maintain good working relationships with key government, tribal, military, religious, NGO and UN

leaders in the provinces. PRTs implement assistance projects, with a focus on geographic areas that civilian agencies cannot reach.

- In countries emerging from conflict (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, etc.) UN forces and joint civilian/police units have coordinated efforts and conducted joint activities in their reconstruction and development efforts – with the defense units
- Working jointly and effectively is possible. The challenge is to develop new partnerships in other parts of the world where conflict over natural resources currently exists or there is high potential for conflict. Preventing such conflict is an important part of the security strategy.

### C. Relationship between Forest Conflict and Fragility and Instability

- The degradation of natural resources and conflict over resources due to poor governance exacerbates instability and fragility. Two forces can be at play: anger at corruption and mismanagement of resources; and the loss of natural capital for economic growth.
- Jared Diamond, author of *Guns, Germs and Steel* and *Collapse* has written, “If a dozen years ago you had asked an ecologist uninterested in politics to name the countries with the most fragile environments, the most urgent public health problems and the most severe overpopulation (measured against available resources), the answer would have included Afghanistan, Burundi, Haiti, Iraq, Nepal, Rwanda, Somalia, Yugoslavia and Zimbabwe.” These, of course, are also the same countries which have experienced or are experiencing major conflicts and human rights abuses.
- Militaries and rebels in forested countries sell timber to finance conflicts and buy arms
- Discontent demonstrated by local level conflicts over forests and land contribute to instability and provide fodder for recruitment by rebel movements and potential new home bases for terrorists.
- In some countries, governments do not have significant presence or control over forests which provides fertile ground for violence
- In poor countries, forested areas tend to be remote and inaccessible, located on disputed land, inhabited by marginalized ethnic groups and minority populations, inadequately governed and the subject of conflicting claims.

#### D. The Implications of Forest Conflict in the Work of Each

- Defense: Counterpart militaries in forested countries are often unofficially involved in logging. Rebels also gain significant financing from selling or “taxing” forest products
- Diplomacy: Clarification of rights to forests is critical to peace-building and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction
- Development: Forest conflict creates insecure areas, and is an overall obstacle to development and economic growth – including the sustainable use and exploitation of forest resources. Wise and sustainable use of renewable and non-renewable resource fosters development.

#### E. How Each Institution Can/Could Work Together to Resolve Forest Conflict

- An explicit approach linking the Defense, Development and Diplomatic Communities is useful in designing comprehensive programs to the significant challenges presented by forest conflict. Possible roles for each institution to reduce forest conflict are:
- Defense: Strategic planning and risk analysis particularly at the local-level, to identify triggers for large-scale conflict
- Military to Military dialogue to encourage proper operating procedures for legitimate defense functions that protect and uphold the rights of citizens
- Diplomacy: Encouragement of good governance, conflict resolution and reconstruction efforts strengthening the ways to hold political leaders accountable for the use natural resources
- Diplomacy: Prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife, so they can reach a sustainable path towards peace, democracy and a market economy.
- Development: On-the-ground conflict resolution, promotion of local participation and democracy, poverty reduction and livelihood improvement, strengthening governance and land rights, and investment in economic growth.
- A holistic approach that involves the skills and strengths of each institution and that considers the role of natural resources such as forests in conflict can work to identify pre-conflict situations to prevent large-scale conflicts and in post-conflict situations encourage the sound governance of resources for peace, reconstruction and economic growth.