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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-05-793](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The executive branch has bolstered assistance to the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand to contribute to U.S. foreign policy and security goals. To further human rights goals, Congress restricts certain security assistance funds from being provided to any units of foreign security forces when credible evidence exists that units have committed gross violations of human rights. GAO (1) describes the nature and extent of U.S. assistance to foreign security forces in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand, (2) assesses the controls used to achieve compliance with human rights restrictions on U.S. funding to foreign security forces in these countries, and (3) assesses the U.S. government's national security assistance strategy.

What GAO Recommends

The Secretary of State should (1) strengthen management controls for vetting foreign security forces by clarifying existing guidance to posts and (2) develop and periodically report to Congress an integrated strategic plan for all U.S. government assistance that provides training and equipment for foreign security forces. State commented that its briefing to Congressional staff fully satisfied legislative objectives. While an oral briefing is a good first step, a written plan is needed for wider distribution and tracking progress.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-793.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Joseph Christoff at (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Better Human Rights Reviews and Strategic Planning Needed for Assistance to Foreign Security Forces

What GAO Found

The United States allocated about \$265.7 million in assistance from fiscal years 2001 to 2004 to equip and train security forces in the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia.

U.S. law restricts the provision of funds to units of foreign security forces when the Department of State has credible evidence that the unit has committed gross violations of human rights. Agency guidance extends these restrictions to individuals of foreign security forces and requires posts to establish procedures to vet candidates for U.S. sponsored training for possible violations. However, we found no evidence that U.S. officials vetted an estimated 6,900 foreign security trainees—about 4,000 Indonesian, 1,200 Filipino, and 1,700 Thai police—trained by Justice with State law enforcement assistance between fiscal years 2001 through 2004. These candidates included a total of 32 Indonesian individuals trained over time from a notorious special-forces police unit previously prohibited under State policy from receiving U.S. training funds because of the unit's prior human rights abuses. We found better evidence of vetting in training programs managed by DOD. State issued new guidance in February 2005 intended to improve the human rights vetting process and establish a database of human rights abuse allegations.

Foreign Police in U.S. Law Enforcement Training



Source: GAO.

State has not produced a clear and coherent national security assistance strategy that meets objectives that Congress urged State to address in 2000 legislation. As a result, State and Congress may be deprived of the information needed to make future decisions about these programs. State's 2003 strategy met only two of nine objectives in the law. Among other shortfalls, the strategy did not identify how programs would be combined at the country level to achieve objectives or be coordinated with other U.S. government agencies. Several State and DOD planning documents, while not collectively providing a complete national security assistance strategy, address some of the legislation's objectives.