



Defense & Security

Harmonizing State Partnership Programs in Asia with U.S. Foreign Policy

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In the current period of declining budgets and fiscal uncertainty, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) is being forced to prioritize the use of limited resources. Updating and retooling existing programs is a cost-effective way of achieving policy objectives in an austere budget environment, and the [National Guard State Partnership Program \(SPP\)](#) is certainly a candidate for such an overhaul. For fiscal year 2014, the [DOD budget requests](#) a small increase in funding for the SPP, but it is unclear whether the request will survive. Today the SPP has 65 partnerships with 71 nations, including 22 in Europe and 7 in the Asia-Pacific region. This distribution of partnerships could be considered outdated, given the current U.S.

foreign and defense policy priorities in the Asia-Pacific, whose strategic importance has grown substantially.

In July 2013, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau hosted a luncheon in Washington, D.C. for Asia-Pacific defense attachés from SPP countries. During this session, attendees discussed the Asia-Pacific rebalance policy, as well as growth opportunities for the program. The National Guard may wish to consider expanding its partnerships in the Asia-Pacific while harboring reluctance to take resources from existing partnerships in Europe. Some of the partnerships in Europe are over [20 years old](#), and while their strategic value may have decreased with the Cold War coming to a close, the U.S. does not want to alienate these important allies, either. In the absence of new funding, tough decisions await National Guard leaders, who may be asked to reprioritize assets to support much needed security cooperation efforts in the Asia-Pacific.