

# THE DUBAI INITIATIVE برنامج دبي

## *An Enhanced Engagement* **Moving Beyond Security Training for the Palestinian Authority**

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***An Enhanced Engagement***  
**Moving Beyond Security Training for  
the Palestinian Authority**

Dubai Initiative – Policy Brief

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## Policy Recommendations

- The United States cannot rely on Palestinian Authority (P.A.) security training alone to ripen conditions for the development of a Palestinian state. Deep division between Hamas and Fatah and growing resentment towards security trainees call for an enhanced engagement aimed at equipping P.A. bureaucrats with tools necessary to meet internal Palestinian challenges.
- The U.S. should consider expanding training programs in good governance, diplomacy and effective communication to target a variety of P.A. officials and institutions, which could increase capacity in myriad areas necessary to state-building. Incorporating such topic areas into security training itself could also improve community relations.
- Given growing suspicion of U.S. involvement and resentment towards U.S.-trained forces, American decision-makers should better frame U.S. involvement with the P.A. The U.S. must clarify that its development work is temporary and aimed at fostering the development of a robust and sustainable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel.
- In crafting its policy, the U.S. should be mindful of Palestinian concerns which, if not addressed, could stymie its efforts to assist in the development of a state.

## Summary

As part of its ongoing campaign to facilitate the development of a Palestinian state, the United States has made strides in empowering security forces within the Palestinian Authority (P.A.). Yet without further training in key areas of diplomacy, governance and public communication, the U.S. cannot adequately address growing concerns of factional strife, increased suspicion of trainee behavior in the West Bank and the perception of excessive American interference in internal Palestinian affairs. Beyond ongoing negotiations with Israel and security training, U.S. policy must address core capacity-building needs within the P.A. in its struggle to govern effectively a future Palestinian state.

## Security Successes

The administration of President George W. Bush understood that security was a key requirement of stabilizing the West Bank and paved the way for other key components of Palestinian statehood to take shape. The administration first turned to Gen. Kip Ward in March of 2005 to train and equip Palestinian security forces. When Ward's mission was hampered by Israel's unilateral pullout from Gaza, he was replaced with Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, previously the Director of the Iraq Survey Group, in December 2005. As the United States Security Coordinator (USSC), Dayton formed a multinational team whose mission was to advise the P.A. on the extent of restructuring and training necessary to enforce the rule of law in the Palestinian territories; essentially, Dayton was tasked with reshaping Palestinian security forces.

After Hamas's takeover of Gaza in June 2007, Dayton focused exclusively on the West Bank. With \$161m provided by the U.S. Government, Dayton's team focused on four areas: training Palestinian men in their twenties in efficient security methods; revamping the Ministry of Interior (responsible for coordinating security); building training infrastructure; and training senior security leaders.

Thus far, Dayton has succeeded in carrying out this mission. By effectively training hundreds of Palestinians within the National Security Forces (NSF) and Presidential Guard both in Jordan and the West Bank, the U.S. now enjoys momentum generated by the successful deployment of four battalions throughout the West Bank and the opening of a Presidential Guard training facility in Jericho. Often in coordination with Israel Defense Force (IDF) commanders, trainees are running operations that are, in Dayton's words, clamping down on armed gangs amid a visible police presence, dismantling illegal militias, working against illegal Hamas activities and focusing on the safety and security of Palestinian citizens.

In late May 2009, Dayton was asked to continue this training for another two years and serve as deputy to President Obama's Middle East Envoy, Sen. George Mitchell. Despite initial roadblocks early in his tenure almost four years ago, Dayton now seems poised to reach his goal of having ten battalions operational by 2012. Within its \$48.8b appropriations bill passed on July 9, the U.S. House of Representatives set aside \$100m of the more than \$400m devoted to Palestinian economic aid to Dayton's work.

## **Increased Difficulty**

However, increased effectiveness in security comes with potential obstacles that may stymie the USSC in its mission to enhance West Bank security. Ongoing strife between Fatah and Hamas, coupled with a growing resentment towards Palestinian security forces for a variety of reasons, threaten to hamper Dayton's progress and the broader U.S. effort to foster statehood.

## ***A Deepening Internal Rift***

A significant feud between Fatah and Hamas threatens to shift the loyalty of P.A. players from the idea of using P.A. security as a means of state-building to using it as a means of advancing a partisan agenda. With the P.A. led by longtime Fatah stalwart Mahmoud Abbas, Hamas perceives this increased deployment of security forces, not as a logical step in attaining security capacity for a future state, but as a means of strengthening Fatah's position through the consolidation of its power and subsequent isolation and weakening of Hamas.

Clear P.A. loyalty to one side without external oversight only serves to deepen the rift between Fatah and Hamas, making the U.S. job of fostering statehood more difficult. Two examples in the past months illustrate the growing tension. First, while some perceived the relative calm in the West Bank during the Israeli attacks on Gaza in December and January as an indicator of trainee effectiveness, others perceived it as a way for security forces loyal to Abbas to control and quell public support for Hamas-ruled Gaza. Second, in the wake of a bloody battle in the West Bank town of Qalqilya that left six dead in May – the worst such battle between Hamas and Fatah forces in two years – a spokesman for P.A. security forces touted its increased capabilities in dismantling armed groups, saying "In

the last two years, we have proved our ability to impose law and order.”<sup>1</sup> However, while the manifestation of gangs is surely a threat to law and order, the suppression of these gangs by P.A. security forces were seen merely as advancing partisan objectives and deepening the Hamas/Fatah rift. Continued posturing further divides the population and makes the job of P.A. security forces more difficult.

In addition, there is a growing trend of using arrests to assert control. Over the past few months P.A. security forces have conducted numerous West Bank raids to round up suspected Hamas militants. Hamas reciprocated by detaining Fatah members in Gaza. In advance of a planned August 2009 conference of Fatah delegates in the West Bank, a Fatah official responded to a Hamas threat of banning delegates from leaving Gaza by countering, “If they do not allow Fatah members to leave Gaza, we will arrest their men here.”<sup>2</sup> With empowered security forces, the P.A. can easily prioritize advancing a partisan Fatah agenda over adhering to the rule of law.

### ***Keeping in Check***

Beyond violent episodes between Fatah and Hamas members, there is a growing sentiment in the West Bank that U.S.-trained security forces are exhausting their welcome, which also threatens to mar progress. Palestinians are increasingly criticizing these security forces, citing intimidation tactics and shows of unnecessary force. The perception that the security forces are simply a method for Abbas to consolidate power threatens to shift public sentiment from respecting the rule of law to resenting those aiming to uphold it.

Further, given that Israel must approve deployments and weaponry used and reserves the right to withhold training from suspected militants, many Palestinians believe that Dayton’s forces are too closely aligned with Israel and are simply reinforcing its military occupation of the West Bank. Dayton’s forces must coordinate with IDF commanders to ensure law and order, but this position may hamper USSC efforts if it appears that P.A. forces are collaborating with Israel to reinforce the occupation. While Palestinians may accept security to protect the P.A. in its effort to build a state, they will have a much more difficult time accepting security to protect Israel.

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### **Security Training is Necessary, But Not Sufficient**

The U.S. cannot rely on security training alone. If it wishes to create an environment conducive to the growth of a Palestinian state, it should expand its training to include other players within the P.A. and communicate the role it is playing more effectively.

<sup>1</sup> Bronner, Ethan. “6 Die as Palestinian Authority Forces Clash With Hamas,” *New York Times*, May 31, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> “Fatah - Hamas Tensions Rise Over West Bank Congress,” Reuters. July 29, 2009.

### ***Expand the Scope of Training***

The unintended byproducts of efficient and successful security training can be addressed with complementary training of other key P.A. officials in the following areas:

- Engaging Hamas. Hamas could escalate the feud if it prevents delegates from traveling to the West Bank for the Fatah conference. Despite their admirable intentions, Egyptian mediators have failed to bolster Hamas/Fatah reconciliation. Without a strategy (absent mediation) for external parties to facilitate resolution and with little prospect of the parties reaching one on their own, the U.S. could be helpful in two ways: first, it can simply be present, expressing concern about the feud and interest in its resolution. Second, if it will not engage with Hamas, it can train P.A. officials in basic conflict management, process design and strategic communications techniques to ensure interactions with Hamas are at least geared toward prevention of further escalation.
- Managing Security. To combat the growing unfavorable perceptions of security force behavior in Palestinian cities, the U.S. should train the P.A. Ministry of Interior to improve community relations in its management of security forces. They can reduce resentment towards security forces if they adopt a model that incorporates enhanced communication and community relations.
- State-building. The U.S. should employ a broad array of capacity-building training to better equip P.A. officials in the complex task of state-building. The U.S. must empower players from across the sphere of Palestinian governance to adequately handle challenges, especially in conditions of military occupation. Such players might include the Ministry of Planning, as it negotiates with multinational donors, and the Ministry of Finance, as it builds international consensus around the need for economic development in the West Bank.

In implementing such training, the U.S. can look to its own efforts in developing non-military capacity in Iraq and Afghanistan. President Bush oversaw the development of a Civilian Stabilization Initiative to assist with civilian engagement in reconstruction and stabilization efforts. This project houses a Civilian Response Corps (CRC), a deployable group of experts in and outside government that addresses the need for myriad expertise in reconstruction and stabilization areas in Iraq and Afghanistan. Situated in the Department of State, the CRC not only bridges the gaps associated with reconstruction and stabilization in conflict and post-conflict areas, but plays a coordination role, ensuring community needs are met by drawing from various entities in and outside government.

The CRC model would work well in Palestine. The development of a Palestinian state will require coordinated assistance in topics ranging from mobilizing revenue and stabilizing the economy to ensuring delivery of basic public services. The U.S. must coordinate expertise from entities in all three sectors to develop highly-customized training materials for P.A. officials. Further, the CRC model could be used to complement Dayton's training, incorporating external dispute resolution and development theory into security training. Employing the CRC model would not only provide the expertise necessary to mitigate negative effects of isolated security training, but also provide an example of inter-agency coordination that P.A. ministries and affiliated partners could follow.



### ***Ensure Effective Communication***

Beyond providing skill-building training, the U.S. can make progress by simply communicating its own role more effectively. First, in terms of its overall presence in the region, the U.S. can avoid accusations of overstaying its welcome by emphasizing that its significant presence now is aimed at reducing the need for it later. To avoid accusations of meddling in internal affairs, the U.S. must reinforce its commitment to Palestinian security and growth while reiterating that it has no interest in maintaining a permanent presence in the region. The suggestion to introduce additional capacity-building training will invite more scrutiny and criticism, further stressing the need for effectively communicating American intentions. Overall, the U.S. should frame its work as a means of temporarily supporting the P.A. with the end result of the P.A. governing the Palestinian people with efficiency, transparency and diligence.

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Second, the USSC can assist the overall U.S. mission by effectively communicating its own role. Dayton has publicly referred to recently-trained force members as “state-builders,” stressing the importance of security in state-development but implicitly denying importance to other key aspects of it. The USSC must acknowledge that its work represents only one aspect of state development and that the P.A. must work on other areas to effectively build a state.

### **Considerations for Expanded Training**

In carrying out such training, the U.S. should be mindful of broader Palestinian concerns which, if not addressed, will complicate matters. First, while many Palestinians support the U.S. goal of creating a secure and prosperous state alongside a secure and prosperous Israel, they also understand a state as a means of recognizing individual rights, not as an end in itself. The notion of statehood means very little if it does not address the core concerns of self-determination inherent in Israel’s current occupation of the West Bank.

Second, the U.S. must be aware of skepticism and complacency associated with the Oslo period, during which similar discourse on state formation provided hope for Israelis and Palestinians. The U.S. must acknowledge the lessons of Oslo and ensure that their current efforts will not simply repeat history. Without a fundamental understanding of Palestinian self-determination and recent history, the goal of statehood becomes less attractive to Palestinians, more difficult to achieve and more of a burden for the U.S.

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Finally, the U.S. must realize a major difficulty associated with implementing its vision: Palestinians are expected to build a state while under military occupation. This places significant pressure on the P.A., which battles accusations of corruption, waning popularity, weakness in its stance on Israel and poor governance. In any training it delivers, the U.S. must manage its own expectations around overseeing results, and those of the P.A. in producing them.

## Conclusion

If the U.S. is to successfully facilitate the creation of a Palestinian state, they must couple any steps that increase Palestinian security capabilities with steps that build capacity and credibility. While security is necessary, it is not sufficient to enable Palestinian statehood. The U.S. can achieve the most success by complementing its security work with customized training for a wider group of P.A. officials in dispute management, good governance and stabilization practices. Further, by effectively communicating its own role in the Palestinian statehood process, the U.S. can reinforce the notion that America understands Palestinian interests and is fully incorporating these interests into its work with the P.A.



# THE DUBAI INITIATIVE

The Dubai Initiative is a joint venture between the Dubai School of Government and the Harvard Kennedy School supporting the establishment of DSG as an academic, research and outreach institution in public policy, administration and management for the Middle East. The primary objective of the Initiative is to bridge the expertise and resources of HKS with DSG and enable the exchange of students, scholars, knowledge and resources between the two institutions in the areas of governance, political science, economics, energy, security, gender and foreign relations in the Middle East.

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