

US: Alliance for Peacebuilding Training

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How does the US military work with NGOs and relate to civilians? How does it participate in or contribute to conflict prevention, governance, and humanitarian assistance? The US military's experience in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as involvement in humanitarian assistance in Pakistan, Haiti and the Philippines and elsewhere prompt US military leaders to ask these questions and invite civil society to provide training on a range of topics related to these questions.

The Alliance for Peacebuilding is a network of peacebuilding organisations with the shared goal of improving human security. After 9/11, the US peacebuilding community began exploring how to impact US foreign policy, concerned about the reliance on military force rather than skills and processes from the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. While first emphasizing outreach efforts to Congress, AfP learned that it was challenging to make an impact influencing Congress without speaking the language of security. Experimenting with translating conflict prevention and peacebuilding language into security discourse, AfP eventually emphasised the concept of human security.

The challenge

The US military recognised that there were not military solutions to many security challenges.

Theory of change:

Training offered a broader perspective on conflict prevention and peacebuilding options for addressing security challenges.

AfP engaged directly with US military leaders to help shift US policy toward human security. Throughout this work, AfP learned to build a “narrative bridge” to explain how conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches could address some of the same security threats facing the US military. AfP stressed that civil society had an important role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and improving coordination between civil society, military and police – as well as policymakers – was essential to peace and security. AfP sought to both highlight common ground between the US military and civil society organisations working in conflict prevention and peacebuilding while also highlighting the differences in the approaches.

AfP highlights civil society's contribution to peacebuilding and human security by enabling local civil society leaders from countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to share their perspectives on human security, the impact of current US policy, and alternative strategies to better support conflict prevention and peacebuilding leaders in these contexts. AfP publishes policy briefs and conducts research to improve US government and military support to peacebuilding and human security.

AfP provides training to a variety of US military training centres for military personnel at all levels. This includes teaching new cadets, such as at West Point Military Academy, in their course on “Winning the Peace”, training senior military leaders who are preparing for future deployments, such as Special Operation Command University or Quantico Marine Center, or training specific military units who are about to deploy, such as the 101st Airborne Division or the 12 PRT commanders and their teams preparing to go to Afghanistan. AfP also provided training at the US Foreign Service Institute several times a month for over 1,000 US Foreign Service officers and embedded military personnel who were preparing to work in the US Embassy in Afghanistan.



Photo 12: AfP training for US military
Photo Credit: John Filson