

# Ungoverned Areas and Threats from Safe Havens\*

Final Report of the Ungoverned Areas Project

Prepared for the  
**Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy**

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## Abstract

Individuals and groups who use violence in ways that threaten the United States, its allies, or its partners habitually find or create ways to operate with impunity or without detection. Whether for private financial gain (e.g., by narcotics and arms traffickers) or for harmful political aims (e.g., by insurgents, terrorists, and other violent extremists), these illicit operations are most successful — and most dangerous — when their perpetrators have a place or situation that can provide refuge from efforts to combat or counter them. Such places and situations are often called *safe havens*, and potential safe havens are sometimes called *ungoverned areas*. A key component of counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, counternarcotics, stabilization, peacekeeping, and other such efforts is to reduce the size and effectiveness of the safe havens that protect illicit actors. Agencies in defense, diplomacy, development, law enforcement, and other areas all have capabilities that can be applied to countering such threats and building the capacity and legitimacy of U.S. partners to prevent ungoverned, under-governed, misgoverned, contested, and exploitable areas from becoming safe havens. To do this effectively requires careful consideration of all the geographical, political, civil, and resource factors that make safe havens possible; a sober appreciation of the complex ways those factors interact; and deeper collaboration among U.S. government offices and units that address such problems — whether operating openly, discreetly, or covertly — to ensure unity of effort. This report offers a framework that can be used to systematically account for these considerations in relevant strategies, capabilities, and doctrines/best practices.

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\* This report was prepared for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) as the final report of the Ungoverned Areas Project, which was managed by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning. The content reflects input, directly or indirectly, from a series of interagency workshops, individual consultations with USG offices, reviews of scholarly research, and participation in interagency working groups. Earlier drafts were titled “Safe Havens Assessment and Strategy Tool” (SHAST) and “Safe Havens Manual.” The lead author of this report was Ungoverned Areas Project manager Mr. Robert D. Lamb. The indispensable contributions of former Ungoverned Areas Project managers Ms. Leslie Hunter, Dr. Colin H. Kahl, and MAJ Sandra Reyna are gratefully acknowledged, as are the contributions (direct and indirect) of countless staff throughout the USG.

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## Summary

Individuals and groups who use violence in ways that threaten the United States, its allies, or its partners habitually find or create ways to operate with impunity or without detection. Whether for private financial gain (e.g., by narcotics and arms traffickers) or for harmful political aims (e.g., by insurgents, terrorists, and other violent extremists), these illicit operations are most successful — and most dangerous — when their perpetrators have a place or situation that can provide refuge from efforts to combat or counter them. Such places and situations are often called *safe havens*, and potential safe havens are sometimes called *ungoverned areas*.

- A key component of counterinsurgency (COIN), counterterrorism (CT), counternarcotics (CN), stabilization and reconstruction, peace operations, and other such efforts is to reduce the size and effectiveness of some illicit actor's safe haven.
- Agencies in defense, diplomacy, development, law enforcement, and other fields all have capabilities that can be applied to countering such threats and to building the capacity and legitimacy of U.S. partners to prevent ungoverned, under-governed, misgoverned, contested, and exploitable areas from becoming safe havens.

Effectively countering threats from ungoverned areas and safe havens (UGA/SH) requires careful consideration of all the geographical, political, civil, and resource factors that make safe havens possible. This report offers a framework that can be used to systematically account for these considerations in relevant strategies, capabilities, and doctrines/best practices, or to facilitate collaboration among U.S. government (USG) offices and units that address UGA/SH problems — whether operating openly, discreetly, or covertly — to ensure unity of effort.

## Main Findings

1. Governance. Few places in the world are truly “ungoverned”; where formal governance breaks down, localized or informal governance structures tend to emerge. Therefore, the concept of ungoverned areas presented in this report is a concept not about threats that emerge from the absence of governance, but about certain potential threats that emerge from the way a place is governed. For example, weakly governed societies have governance gaps (by definition), which can give freedom of action to illicit actors; but some highly governed societies have legal protections that give freedom of action to everybody (including illicit actors), while other highly governed societies provide freedom of action to certain illicit actors as a matter of policy. In short, the degree of governance matters, but the particular way a place is governed matters more: the manner of governance affects the local conditions and resources that are available for illicit actors to exploit, and affects the policy instruments that are available to the USG and its partners to address those conditions or target those resources. Organized around those conditions and resources, the UGA/SH framework offered in this report is designed to help analyze under-governed, misgoverned, contested, and exploitable areas as well as ungoverned areas — a broad range of situations that can be exploited for safe haven.

2. Building partnership capacity. Safe havens can exist in remote areas, urban areas, maritime environments, or communication networks that are “ungoverned” in the sense that nobody has the capacity or willingness to control or govern those particular areas in a way that

prevents their use by illicit actors. Under the current international system, the host state is the entity responsible for controlling and governing its territory in a way that prevents its use as a safe haven for transnational illicit actors. As a consequence, it is generally assumed that the appropriate USG policy for UGA/SH is to encourage and enable the host state to carry out that responsibility. This is a reasonable first assumption — but it is not the whole story:

- First, it matters *what* the host state is encouraged and enabled to do. Safe havens emerge amid a broad range of geographical, political, civil, and resource issues that interact in complex ways. Building capacity in one sector without understanding how that sector affects seemingly unrelated issues risks undermining the effectiveness and legitimacy of the entire venture. For example, building a state’s capacity to take control of an autonomous region can trigger a power struggle with local leaders that ultimately makes the safe haven problem worse. To echo this study’s first finding: the capacity to govern matters, but the way of governing matters more. States that use U.S. assistance in ways that undermine their own legitimacy rarely make good partners.
- Second, encouraging the political will of all relevant factions of the host state is rarely possible, and building the institutional capacity needed for the state to reassert control over an ungoverned area is not often successful. In many cases, provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous governments — and in some cases, other countries, corporations, or organizations — are simply better positioned than the central government to address the local conditions that enable illicit actors to operate there. It often will be more efficient and effective to influence and enable those entities rather than — or, preferably, in addition to and with the assistance of — the host state in the short term. For diplomatic, legal, and practical reasons, the host state cannot be ignored or bypassed, but nor should it be permitted to impede progress against safe havens when other entities are positioned to help. An appropriate balance is needed.

In short, capacity-building to address UGA/SH problems should be done in a way that not only enhances our partners’ capacity to govern effectively — and oppose the illicit actors — but also enhances their legitimacy to act on behalf of the people the illicit actors exploit. Legitimacy without capacity is unproductive. Capacity without legitimacy is counterproductive. The UGA/SH framework explicitly recognizes the importance of both. (It also recognizes the converse with respect to illicit actors: Efforts to reduce their capacity to operate are more effective when bolstered by efforts to reduce their legitimacy in the eyes of key populations.)

3. Unity of effort. Much has been made recently of how “stove-piping” makes it difficult for the USG to carry out operations that require interagency collaboration. This report finds a related problem: the “stove-piping” of doctrine, even within departments. Most CT, COIN, CN, irregular warfare (IW), peace, and stability, security, transition, and reconstruction (SSTR) operations undertaken by the USG are not yet fully benefiting from each other’s capabilities and doctrines, even though the offices and units responsible for these operations often encounter a fundamentally similar challenge: how to counter a nonstate adversary who is skilled at exploiting local conditions and resources to operate with impunity or without detection or capture. A wide variety of illicit actors create or exploit ungoverned areas to enjoy safe haven — not just terrorists, but insurgents, criminals (e.g., narcotics and arms traffickers), spoilers to peace and stability operations, and other violent extremists as well. These different types of adversary often do operate in different ways, and to the degree this is the case it makes sense to employ separate doctrines/best practices for each. However, these different types of adversary also do exploit the

same kinds of local conditions and resources that make safe havens possible. USG, foreign, and international programs or strategies for addressing one type of illicit actor are therefore relevant — and often applicable — to programs and strategies for addressing other types. This suggests a need to identify where it would be useful and appropriate to share capability and establish common doctrine/best practices for addressing safe haven problems across different types of operation as well as across different agencies. Because the UGA/SH framework provides a checklist of issues that should be accounted for in any effort to address safe havens problems, it could be used, as needed, to organize a dialogue among relevant offices about the challenges they share (the conditions and resources that adversaries exploit for safe haven) rather than the adversaries they target (terrorist, drug trafficker, militia, etc.).

## **The Ungoverned Areas/Safe Havens (UGA/SH) Framework**

The framework offered in this report was developed in collaboration with interested offices throughout DoD and the USG, and it reflects input from a series of interagency workshops hosted by The RAND Corporation, informal consultations with USG offices, formal coordination with DoD offices, reviews of scholarly research, and participation in interagency working groups. The UGA/SH framework is designed to be a checklist of:

- factors that can characterize an ungoverned area;
- conditions that can generate or sustain a safe haven; or
- considerations that can help to identify, prioritize, assess, or address UGA/SH.

This framework is most useful as a way to systematically identify the full range of issues that might affect or be affected by efforts to address specific safe havens in the field; to systematically account for these issues in relevant strategies, capabilities, or doctrines/best practices; and to facilitate collaboration among USG offices and units that address UGA/SH problems — whether operating openly, discreetly, or covertly — to ensure unity of effort at all levels. The numbers refer to the corresponding section of the report.

### **1.1. What are safe havens?**

- Safe haven — A place or situation that enables illicit actors to operate while evading detection or capture, including ungoverned, under-governed, misgoverned, or contested physical areas (remote, urban, maritime) or exploitable non-physical areas (virtual) where illicit actors can organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, and operate in relative security.
- Ungoverned area — A place where the state or the central government is unable or unwilling to extend control, effectively govern, or influence the local population, and where a provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government does not fully or effectively govern, due to inadequate governance capacity, insufficient political will, gaps in legitimacy, the presence of conflict, or restrictive norms of behavior. For the purposes of this report, the term “ungoverned areas” encompasses under-governed, misgoverned, contested, and exploitable areas as well as ungoverned areas. In this sense, ungoverned areas are considered *potential* safe havens.

- Illicit actor — A nonstate group or individual who uses or incites armed violence (or who assists those who use or incite armed violence) for political or private gain in ways that threaten the United States, its allies, or its partners.
- Governance — The delivery of security, judicial, legal, regulatory, intelligence, economic, administrative, social, and political goods and public services, and the institutions through which they are delivered.
- Legitimacy — The political support or loyalty that a local population provides to a central, provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government because the population believes the government has a right to govern or is worthy of their support or loyalty.

## **1.2. What forms do safe havens take?**

### *1.2.1. Ungoverned and exploitable areas as potential safe havens*

- Ungoverned areas (potential comprehensive safe havens)
- Under-governed areas (potential partial safe havens)
- Misgoverned areas (potential state-sponsored safe havens)
- Contested areas (conflict zones and situations of competing governance)
- Exploitable areas (potential functional, or non-physical, safe havens)

### *1.2.2. Safe haven types*

- Remote havens
- Urban havens
- Maritime havens
- Virtual havens

## **1.3. What makes safe havens possible?**

### *1.3.1. Geographical considerations: What areas could be used for safe haven?*

- 1.3.1.1. Remote haven
- 1.3.1.2. Urban haven
- 1.3.1.3. Maritime haven
- 1.3.1.4. Virtual haven

### *1.3.2. Political considerations: How is this area governed?*

- 1.3.2.1. Political will
- 1.3.2.2. Governance capacity (intelligence, security, law, justice, economics, essential services)
- 1.3.2.3. Conflict and crisis (war, humanitarian, natural, economic, etc.)

### *1.3.3. Civil considerations: How hospitable is the local population?*

- 1.3.3.1. Political or social grievances
- 1.3.3.2. Ethnic, linguistic, cultural, ideological, or religious affinities

### *1.3.4. Resource considerations: What is available to facilitate illicit operations?*

- 1.3.4.1. Personnel
- 1.3.4.2. Funds
- 1.3.4.3. Communications
- 1.3.4.4. Transportation
- 1.3.4.5. Weapons

## **1.4. What makes a safe haven problematic to U.S. security?**

- 1.4.1.1. U.S. foreign policy



- 1.4.1.2. Military operations
- 1.4.1.3. Weapons of mass destruction
- 1.4.1.4. Presence of transnational illicit actors
- 1.4.1.5. Projection capability of transnational illicit actors
- 1.4.1.6. Nexus among illicit actors
- 1.4.1.7. Natural resources
- 1.4.1.8. Public opinion
- 1.4.1.9. Foreign influence
- 1.4.1.10. Proximity to the U.S. homeland
- 1.4.1.11. Susceptibility to U.S. action

## **Recommendations for the Department of Defense**

Just as this report is intended for a broad USG audience, the recommendations that follow are intended to help DoD contribute to what ultimately has to be an interagency conversation about meeting shared challenges by sharing capability or establishing common doctrine, as appropriate, across the full range of agencies and programs that address, could help mitigate, or are affected by UGA/SH problems.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: Share doctrine and capability for addressing UGA/SH**

Where doctrine exists for CT, CN, COIN, SSTR, IW, or peace operations, those doctrines have evolved along more or less separate paths, largely because they focus on different types of adversary. Today, however, criminals, insurgents, terrorists, and warlords increasingly borrow each other's tactics, buy each other's services, and exploit each other's missions. The USG, by contrast, has mostly separate doctrines for each type of adversary or type of conflict, with limited overlap. There is no need for a single, overarching doctrine for all of these operations; but where these operations affect or are affected by UGA/SH, they could benefit from a shared understanding of how the relevant issues can be addressed. Concepts for IW and "complex operations" are already being developed in a similar spirit, and their continued development should be encouraged and supported. However, no USG-wide doctrine exists for UGA/SH; in fact, no *mechanism* exists for developing USG-wide doctrine at all. Recommendation:

- Identify where doctrines for CT, CN, COIN, SSTR, IW, peace operations, and civil affairs are already complementary, where they could be made complementary, and where they might be contradictory with respect to how they address problems of ungoverned areas and threats from safe havens. Use the UGA/SH framework to inform the development of common doctrine, as appropriate, to facilitate the sharing of relevant best practices and capabilities across complex operational environments and USG agencies. Lead: Joint Staff/J-7.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: Use the UGA/SH framework to inform relevant strategies**

It will take some time to implement the first recommendation. Meanwhile, offices and units working in CT, CN, COIN, SSTR, IW, and peace operations continue to face a similar problem: illicit actors (of various sorts) use local conditions and resources to operate with impunity or without detection. This challenge of safe havens needs to be addressed in the near term. The UGA/SH framework offered in this report has attempted to integrate the best of

current USG thinking across these different fields about what UGA/SH are, what forms they take, what conditions can generate or sustain them, and why the USG might be interested in them. This framework could be used to inform how DoD and the USG address UGA/SH in current doctrine, guidance, planning scenarios, plans, and directives. Recommendations:

- Incorporate the UGA/SH framework into existing processes for developing doctrine, guidance, planning scenarios, plans, and directives that involve problems of ungoverned areas and threats from safe havens. Leads: DASD(Policy Planning) and Joint Staff/J-5(Strategy & Policy).
- Use the UGA/SH framework to inform, as appropriate, the development of policies, strategies, and plans for specific ungoverned areas or safe havens. Lead: ASD(SO/LIC&IC).

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: Use the UGA/SH framework to inform relevant assessments**

An assessment of any problem is incomplete if it fails to account for all the conditions that give rise to the problem and for the complex interactions among those conditions. If, as this report suggests, safe havens are a problem for people working in a wide variety of fields — defense, diplomacy, development, law enforcement, and others — then the assessments that inform work in those fields should account for all of the relevant conditions and the unique ways they interact in specific environments. Recommendation:

- Use the UGA/SH framework to inform existing processes for identifying, assessing, or analyzing problems related to instability, ungoverned areas, or safe havens. Leads: USD(I) and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA).

### **RECOMMENDATION 4: Sharpen the focus of UGA/SH research**

This report pulls together much of the USG’s current thinking about UGA/SH, but it is not the final word on any of the issues it addresses. The report mentions nine topics in particular that require further study: (1) urban, (2) maritime, and (3) virtual havens; (4) safe havens with features of multiple types (e.g., port cities as “urban maritime” havens); (5) interactions among the enabling conditions for safe havens (e.g., UGA/SH as complex systems); (6) understanding and influencing populations (e.g., culture, politics) in complex environments (including options for a more unified USG approach to information effects); (7) influencing political will; (8) options for improving the USG’s capacity for capacity-building; and (9) alternatives to capacity-building (e.g., legitimacy-building) as a strategy for UGA/SH. Recommendation:

- When funding or undertaking studies of governance, safe havens, complex operations, and related issues, treat the topics identified above as issues that merit further attention. Lead: JFCOM/J-9.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5: Require ‘geo-referencing’ in data collection**

Ungoverned areas are complex operating environments. Safe havens emerge from complex sets of conditions that interact in unpredictable ways. Geographers who map complex environments and social scientists who analyze complex systems and social networks require good-quality data. When the data they have are not “georeferenced” (location-specific) or not available as “microdata” (data about individuals, households, or other small units), many of their analytic techniques cannot be used to their full potential — and policy makers cannot benefit from the sophisticated analyses they otherwise could produce. Analysis of UGA/SH and other

complex environments would be improved — e.g., better mapping, early warning, and tactical intelligence — if more and better georeferenced microdata were available to analysts.

Recommendation:

- Work to establish a requirement, and to develop associated capabilities, for the “geo-referencing” of all or most data collected by DoD. Work to develop a mechanism for making such data available within DoD and the Intelligence Community as needed to facilitate spatial, social network, and complex systems analyses. Leads: USD(I) and National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA).

## Abbreviations

ASD — Assistant Secretary of Defense

ASD(SO/LIC&IC) — Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities

CBRN — chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear

CN — counternarcotics

CoCom — Combatant Command

COIN — counterinsurgency

CSG — Counterterrorism Security Group

CT — counterterrorism

CTTSO — Combating Terrorism Technology Support Office

DASD — Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

DASD(FT&R) — DASD for Forces Transformation and Resources

DDR&E — Office of the Director of Defense Research & Engineering

DHS — U.S. Department of Homeland Security

DIA — Defense Intelligence Agency

DNI — Director of National Intelligence

DoD — U.S. Department of Defense

DTRA — Defense Threat Reduction Agency

DVD — digital versatile disk (a portable electronic storage medium)

GIS — geographic information system

GPS — Global Positioning System

HSCB — Human Social Culture Behavior Modeling

IC — Intelligence Community

IGO — intergovernmental organization

IMIC — Interagency Methodology to Assess Instability and Conflict

INL — U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics & Law Enforcement Affairs

INR — U.S. Department of State Bureau of Intelligence & Research

IW — irregular warfare

JFCOM — Joint Forces Command

JIACG — Joint Interagency Coordination Group

JOC — joint operating concept

MPICE — Measuring Progress in Conflict Environments  
NCTC — National Counter-Terrorism Center  
NGA — National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency  
NGO — nongovernmental organization  
9/11 — the terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001  
NIP — National Implementation Plan for the War on Terror  
NPS — Naval Postgraduate School  
PCC — Policy Coordinating Committee  
ODNI — Office of the Director of National Intelligence  
OMA — USAID’s Office of Military Affairs  
OSD — Office of the Secretary of Defense  
OUSD(AT&L) — Office of the USD(AT&L)  
OUSD(I) — Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence  
OUSD(P) — Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy  
OUSD(P&R) — Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness  
PM — U.S. Department of State Bureau of Political-Military Affairs  
S/CRS — Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization  
S/CT — Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism  
S/F — Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance  
SSTR — stability, security, transition, and reconstruction  
SSTRO — stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations  
TCAF — Tactical Conflict Assessment Framework  
TRADOC — U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command  
U.S. — United States  
UGA/SH — ungoverned areas and safe havens  
USAID — U.S. Agency for International Development  
USD(AT&L) — Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics  
USD(I) — Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence  
USD(P) — Under Secretary of Defense for Policy  
USD(P&R) — Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness  
USG — United States government  
WMD — weapons of mass destruction

# Ungoverned Areas and Threats from Safe Havens

## Final Report of the Ungoverned Areas Project

Individuals and groups who use violence in ways that threaten the United States, its allies, or its partners habitually find or create ways to operate with impunity or without detection. Whether for private financial gain (e.g., by narcotics and arms traffickers) or for harmful political aims (e.g., by insurgents, terrorists, and other violent extremists), these illicit operations are most successful — and most dangerous — when their perpetrators have a place or situation that can provide refuge from efforts to combat or counter them. Such places and situations are often called *safe havens*, and potential safe havens are sometimes called *ungoverned areas*.

A key component of counterinsurgency (COIN), counterterrorism (CT), counternarcotics (CN), stabilization and reconstruction, peacekeeping, and other such efforts is to reduce the size and effectiveness of the safe havens that protect illicit actors of various types. Agencies in defense, diplomacy, development, and other fields all have capabilities that can be applied to countering threats from safe havens and building the capacity and legitimacy of U.S. partners to prevent ungoverned, under-governed, misgoverned, contested, and exploitable areas from becoming safe havens. This report offers a framework that can be used as a common reference point for sharing complementary capabilities, doctrines, and strategies across operational environments and agencies.

What are ungoverned areas and safe havens (UGA/SH)? What forms do they take? What generates or sustains them? And how can the U.S. government (USG) position itself to effectively counter the threats that emerge from them?

This report addresses each of these questions in turn. It is intended for strategists, planners, and implementers in the USG or its allies and partners who want a better understanding

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of the different kinds of illicit safe havens and the full range of factors and conditions that generate or sustain them. It describes those conditions and how they enable illicit actors to operate freely, and it discusses some implications of this knowledge not only for efforts to address safe havens directly (e.g., CT, COIN, CN) but also for programs that address the enabling conditions for safe havens (e.g., public diplomacy, development, democratization, conflict resolution).

Given the number of USG agencies and interagency bodies that already exist to address relevant issues, it probably is not necessary to create any additional organizations to focus exclusively on developing policies and strategies for UGA/SH: Much good work is already being done, ways to improve on that good work are already being studied, and while adequate interagency mechanisms for planning and implementation do not yet exist, the need for more effective whole-of-government collaboration is increasingly recognized throughout the USG.

The purpose of this report is not to inspire additional organizations or tools but to help build on — and build bridges across — those that already exist: to be incorporated (or appended) into existing products; to inform revisions of existing planning frameworks, assessment tools, and periodic country reports; to be used as a reference for strategy, planning, and implementation; to guide data collection for spatial, social-network, and complex-systems analysis and early warning systems; and to sharpen the focus of future research and experimentation, leading ultimately to the development of mechanisms for sharing capability and doctrine across agencies and operations.

The report has three main sections. Section 1: Framework sifts through the byzantine terminology of ungoverned areas and presents a framework for analyzing the numerous factors — geographical, political, social, etc. — that can help to generate or sustain safe havens. It addresses four basic questions: what are safe havens, what forms do they take, what makes them possible, and what makes them problematic to U.S. security? Section 2: Application considers some implications of the answers to those questions for current efforts to develop strategies, assessments, maps, and models for safe havens. Section 3: Recommendations makes specific suggestions for improving collaboration, strategies, assessments, data, and research on ungoverned areas and threats from safe havens.

## 1. Framework

### 1.1. What are safe havens?

Different USG agencies use the term “safe haven” and related terms<sup>1</sup> in different ways, and these terms can have positive or negative connotations depending on the merit of the person or group seeking refuge. A safe haven is desirable when it is a place where migrants can “seek protection or relief from persecution or other hardships”<sup>2</sup> or homeless persons “can feel at ease, out of danger, and subject to limited service demands”<sup>3</sup> or noncombatants may be evacuated to during an emergency.<sup>4</sup> In CT, COIN, and law enforcement, however, safe havens are considered undesirable. The USG annual terrorism report defines them as “ungoverned, under-governed, or ill-governed areas of a country and non-physical areas where terrorists that constitute a threat to U.S. national security interests are able to organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, and operate in relative security because of inadequate governance capacity, political will, or both.”<sup>5</sup> The *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* uses “sanctuary” to mean essentially the same thing, a place where insurgents or “nonstate actors with intentions hostile to the host nation or

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<sup>1</sup> Synonyms include: asylum, base, cove, cover, harbor, haven, hideout, refuge, sanctuary, shelter, and stronghold.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Definition of Terms, s.v. *safe haven*, <http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/stdfdef.shtm>.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Labor and Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Ending Chronic Homelessness through Employment and Housing: Notice," *Federal Register* 68, no. 138 (18 July 2003).

<sup>4</sup> JP 1-02, DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, s.v., *safe haven*, <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/data/s/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2006 (United States Department of State Publication 11409)" (Washington: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, April 2007), p. 156.

United States” can “rebuild and reorganize without fear of counterinsurgent interference.”<sup>6</sup> Other terms used to describe different types of safe haven (or potential haven) include: ungoverned area/space/territory, under-governed area, misgoverned/ill-governed area, situations of contested/competing governance, conflict zone, base camp, state-sponsored safe haven, comprehensive safe haven, partial safe haven, global commons, rural/remote haven, maritime haven, urban haven, safe house, functional/non-physical safe haven, virtual safe haven, legal haven, financial haven, and ideological safe haven.

While many of these terms have official definitions in different USG agencies, this report, for the sake of convenience, uses *safe haven* (or simply *haven*) as an umbrella term for places and situations that enable illicit actors to operate with impunity or evade detection or capture. It can be formally defined by broadening the definition used in the USG’s annual terrorism report to include: (1) contested and exploitable areas in addition to ungoverned, under-governed, and ill-governed areas; and (2) other kinds of illicit actors (primarily insurgents and criminals) in addition to terrorists. A safe haven, then, is defined here as *a place or situation that enables illicit actors to operate with impunity or evade detection or capture, including ungoverned, under-governed, misgoverned, or contested physical areas (remote, urban, or maritime) or exploitable non-physical areas (virtual) where illicit actors can organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, and operate in relative security.*

Like “safe haven,” *illicit actors* and *ungoverned areas* are terms of convenience. “Illicit actors” refers to all nonstate groups and individuals who use or incite armed violence (or who assist those who use or incite armed violence) for political or private gain in ways that threaten the people and most important interests of the United States, its allies, or its partners.<sup>7</sup> Such actors include a wide variety of organizations and individuals: violent extremists, terrorists, insurgents, criminals, traffickers, launderers, and so on. What all illicit actors have in common, regardless of the ends toward which they act, is that they have an incentive to find or create ways to operate without detection or interference. Where U.S. policy opposes the ends toward which they act, their ability to operate freely — their safe havens — are often targeted as a matter of policy; the term therefore refers primarily to nonstate illicit actors with transnational capabilities and intentions hostile to the

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**Illicit actor:**

A nonstate group or individual who uses or incites armed violence (or who assists those who use or incite armed violence) for political or private gain in ways that threaten the United States, its allies, or its partners.

**Ungoverned area:**

A place where the state or the central government is unable or unwilling to extend control, effectively govern, or influence the local population, and where a provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government does not fully or effectively govern, due to inadequate governance capacity, insufficient political will, gaps in legitimacy, the presence of conflict, or restrictive norms of behavior. “Ungoverned areas” should be assumed to include under-governed, ill-governed, contested, and exploitable areas.

<sup>6</sup> Department of the Army and Marine Corps Combat Development Command, "Counterinsurgency: Field Manual No. 3-24 / Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5" (Washington: Department of the Army / Marine Corps Combat Development Command, December 2006), p. 1–16.

<sup>7</sup> Illicit actors also could include rogue elements of the state, for example, a police force that has been “captured” by organized crime and operates essentially as an arm of the illicit power structure.



United States. As a term of convenience, “illicit actor” is imperfect, but it can be replaced, without much strain, by “narcotrafficker,” “violent Islamic extremist,” “guerrilla,” “spoiler to peace,” or whatever other term suits the reader’s needs.

Also imperfect but convenient as an umbrella term, “ungoverned area” refers to ungoverned, under-governed, ill-governed, and contested territories and exploitable areas — places where the state or the central government is unable or unwilling to extend control, influence the local population, or otherwise effectively govern, and where a provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government does not fully or effectively govern, due to inadequate governance capacity, insufficient political will, gaps in legitimacy, the presence of conflict, or restrictive norms. Ungoverned areas — which are potential safe havens — exist not only in underdeveloped foreign countries, as is often assumed, but also in strongly governed countries, including Western liberal democracies, where illicit actors sometimes take advantage of “blind spots” in governance capacity and political will, pockets of social discontent, geographical remoteness, or overcrowding (e.g., gang-controlled housing projects, suburban ethnic enclaves, night-time inner-city neighborhoods, mountain militias, etc.); they also exist in other strongly governed countries that voluntarily abdicate control over part of their territory as a matter of policy.

Working definitions of these terms are needed because different agencies use different terms to refer to all the different kinds of illicit actors and all the different kinds of safe havens those actors use for various purposes under various circumstances. The working definitions are not meant to supersede any agency’s formal definitions, but rather to communicate these concepts across agencies without confusion.

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## 1.2. What forms do safe havens take?

Safe havens take a wide variety of forms because they come about through a wide variety of mechanisms. Most emerge from or are sustained by various gaps in governance: the government — either the central government or a provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government — cannot or, for some reason, does not effectively perform some or all of the security, judicial, legal, regulatory, intelligence, economic, administrative, social, and political functions and public services that an effective and legitimate government is generally expected to provide to the people residing in its territory. Such ungoverned areas are vulnerable to exploitation because no state — and no local government — is willing or able to prevent its exploitation. Most safe havens are also associated with conflict, as either a cause or an effect. And some safe havens emerge not in places *per se* but in situations or environments that facilitate opaque activities, such as communication networks and social networks.

This section presents two ways to categorize safe havens: *functionally*, as different kinds of “ungoverned and exploitable” places or situations that could become safe havens ([Section 1.2.1](#)), and *physically* according to geographical characteristics ([Section 1.2.2](#)).

### 1.2.1. Ungoverned and exploitable areas as potential safe havens

The term “safe haven” is widely presumed by the lay public (and even by some in government) to refer to “*comprehensive*” *safe havens* — areas that no state effectively governs and illicit actors openly exploit, or areas in which the state permits complete freedom of action to selected illicit actors. The archetypical comprehensive safe haven is usually considered to be Somalia: a truly *ungoverned area*, with no functioning central government, no single entity in control of most of the country, and widespread localized contests for control over small areas of territory. Since September 11, 2001, however, many consider the archetype to be Afghanistan under Taliban rule (pre-9/11), a *state-sponsored safe haven* where al Qaeda was free to recruit, train, gather resources, and plan attacks throughout the country without state opposition, and, in fact, with state support.

#### Governance:

The delivery of security, judicial, legal, regulatory, intelligence, economic, administrative, social, and political goods and public services, and the institutions through which they are delivered.<sup>8</sup>

While both cases could be considered classic examples of the comprehensive safe haven, they are also extreme cases: most havens emerge more insidiously, as “*partial*” *safe havens*: Whereas Somalia is an example of an ungoverned area, most safe havens exist in *under-governed areas*, places that a central government controls only partly or tenuously, such as some of the smaller islands in Southeast Asia. Likewise, whereas pre-9/11 Afghanistan was an example of a state-sponsored safe haven, other havens emerge in *ill-governed* or *misgoverned areas*, places controlled by a central government whose local officials are too negligent, corrupt, or intimidated to prevent illicit actors from operating freely, as often happens in, for example, the trans-Sahara and Andes regions.

These categories — “un-, under-, and mis-governed” areas — are not as neat as the foregoing discussion might suggest. A single country could have multiple UGA/SH that take different forms and even overlap geographically. For example, a state might not have any effective control over an entire province, in which case that province would be an ungoverned area (and potentially a comprehensive remote haven, perhaps with one or more urban havens); but the state also might have weak judicial institutions or insufficient policing capacity country-wide, in which case the entire country would be an under-governed area (and potentially a partial haven); and it might have a corrupt intelligence apparatus or a military unit aligned with violent

<sup>8</sup> The definitions of governance and related terms used in this report were drawn from a combination of formal and informal definitions already in use by various USG offices, and from adaptations of definitions used in the scholarly literature, including: Marie Besançon, “Good Governance Rankings: The Art of Measurement” (Cambridge, Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 2003); Daniel Kaufmann, “Governance Redux: The Empirical Challenge,” in *Global Competitiveness Report 2003-2004* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2004); Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Pablo Zoido-Lobaton, “Aggregating Governance Indicators,” Working Paper No. 2195, *World Bank Policy Research Working Papers* (Washington: World Bank, 1999); Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003); Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Robert I. Rotberg and Deborah L. West, “The Good Governance Problem: Doing Something About It,” Working Paper No. 39, *World Peace Foundation Working Papers* (Cambridge, Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 2004).

extremists, in which case that unit's area of responsibility would be a misgoverned area (and potentially a state-sponsored safe haven). It is not useful, therefore, to bluntly characterize a place as being "under-governed" or "misgoverned"; it is more useful to specify which governance functions are deficient or corrupt, in what areas, and to what effects.

Further, it should not be assumed that a central government's lack of control over an area implies that the area is thereby an un- or under-governed area and therefore a potential safe

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haven. Few places in the world are literally "ungoverned": where the central government is weak or missing, another governing body — usually a provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government, but sometimes an informal or nongovernmental organization — tends to emerge (or already exists) to maintain order and deliver needed services. Local-level governance in competition with central governance is not, by itself, problematic; competition in governance provides checks and balances in a healthy, federal political system, as it does in the United States. It can become problematic, however, when an illicit actor tries to become the locally governing body, especially if its doing so has the effect of further weakening a responsible sovereign state (e.g., Hizballah provides social services to some Lebanese civilians, competing with the government of Lebanon for legitimacy and influence).

In other words, *situations of competing or contested governance* — situations in which governance vacuums are created by state incapacity or collapse, or by a political decision to relinquish authority over areas of territory or essential state functions (e.g., health services, education) — are not uncommon and are not always problematic, but they *are* problematic when they have an enabling effect on illicit actors.

Most safe havens are associated with some degree of conflict, either as a precursor or as an outcome. That is, many safe havens attract conflict (e.g., the state neglects an area, which becomes a safe haven for illicit actors, who then fight each other for control of the area), and many conflicts produce safe havens, as when insurgents defeat the state in a battle for control over an area that then becomes a safe haven (e.g., a *base camp* or "*guerrilla stronghold*") for the insurgency — and often for other groups.<sup>9</sup> Such *conflict zones* represent governance gaps, since in the face of mass violence few governments could ever hope to adequately deliver political goods and public services. For short, this report will refer to both conflict zones and situations of competing governance as "contested areas."

**Potential safe havens:**

- Ungoverned areas (comprehensive haven)
- Under-governed areas (partial haven)
- Misgoverned areas (including state-sponsored havens)
- Contested areas (conflict zones and situations of competing governance)
- Exploitable areas (functional or non-physical havens)

In summary, all ungoverned, under-governed, misgoverned, and contested areas are *potential safe havens*, because governance gaps in such places are vulnerable to exploitation by illicit actors seeking invisibility; they become actual safe havens when illicit actors actually

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<sup>9</sup> Department of the Army, "Counterinsurgency: Field Manual No. 3-24 / Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5", p. 1-16.

exploit them (and they become safe havens of concern to the USG when they are exploited by illicit actors of concern to the USG):<sup>10</sup>

- *Ungoverned areas*: A weak, failed, or collapsed state performs *none* of its governance functions effectively in a given area, freeing illicit actors to pursue threatening activities (e.g., terrorist training and recruiting, arms trading, drug and human trafficking, etc.). All ungoverned areas have the potential to become comprehensive safe havens, but not all of them do; of those ungoverned areas that do become safe havens, many are exploited not by transnational illicit actors but by groups whose activities and interests remain strictly local.
- *Under-governed areas*: The state performs only *some* governance functions effectively, either in a particular area or throughout its territory, and illicit actors exploit the void (e.g., they take advantage of gaps in law enforcement). All under-governed areas have the potential to become partial safe havens. Most safe havens of concern today are under-governed areas that have been exploited by transnational illicit actors, but, as with ungoverned areas, not all under-governed areas are actually exploited as safe havens.
- *Misgoverned (or ill-governed) areas*: The state, or some significant faction of the state, performs its governance functions in ways that potentially (whether purposely or inadvertently) provide freedom of action to illicit actors (e.g., a faction of the state provides material support to terrorists or genocidal militias; or a drug cartel intimidates or bribes government officials to overlook the cartel's deeds<sup>11</sup>). This includes potential safe havens that exist due to state sponsorship, state neglect, official corruption, or intimidation.
- *Contested areas*: The state does not perform some or all of its governance functions, because of state incapacity, state failure, state collapse, war, or a political decision to relinquish authority over specific places or essential functions, and illicit actors fill the void by performing some of the missing governance functions themselves (e.g., extremists become the primary providers of education or social services as a way to spread their ideology and win popular support) or vying to control the relinquished territory (e.g., militias try to become the primary providers of "security" in an area). The difference between a contested area and an under-governed area is largely one of emphasis: It is an under-governed area if the governance gap is something illicit actors could exploit, but a contested area if the gap is something the illicit actors could fill (even if the illicit actor helped to create that gap).
- *Exploitable areas*: The state performs all or most governance functions effectively, but illicit actors are able to exploit social networks, legal and social norms (such as assembly rights, asylum laws, legal protections against unwarranted searches, or

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<sup>10</sup> Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, "Ungoverned and Exploitable Areas," project briefs, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> "Though corruption may seem a less obvious threat than the challenge of armed insurgents, the weakening of government institutions through bribery and intimidation ultimately poses just as great a danger .... Terrorist groups or guerrilla armies overtly seek to topple and replace governments through violence. Drug syndicates, however, work behind the scenes, seeking to subvert governments in order to guarantee themselves a secure operating environment by co-opting key officials. Unchecked, the drug trade is capable of taking de facto control of a country by essentially buying off a majority of key government officials." U.S. Department of State, "2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report" (Washington: U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 2007).

cultural prohibitions against “snitching”), or communication and transportation networks. Exploitable areas are not geographical areas of territory, but functional areas of activity<sup>12</sup> — specifically, activities that, by their nature, can be undertaken opaquely, at a distance, or anonymously and thereby restrict the range of actions with which the state can respond without breaking laws or social taboos, alienating politically significant populations, or unduly harming commerce. Exploitable areas have the potential to become what sometimes are called *functional* or *non-physical havens*,<sup>13</sup> and they account for the ability of illicit actors to operate with impunity in both repressive states and liberal democracies.

The term “ungoverned areas” therefore has a narrow and a broad sense: narrowly, as a potential comprehensive safe haven (i.e. the first bullet above), and broadly, as a potential safe haven more generally (i.e. all five bullets above); unless specified otherwise, this report uses the term in its broad sense.

The pertinent question with respect to ungoverned areas is not about the *degree* of governance but about the *manner* of governance: *Who is, and who is not, governing an area, and what are the consequences of the particular way they govern?* If a semi-autonomous tribal government is willing and able to govern its territory in a way that is inhospitable to transnational illicit activity, then that is likely to be satisfactory from the perspective of U.S. safe havens policy — the USG will probably not consider it a potential safe haven. It should be emphasized, however, that safe havens are only one aspect of U.S. security policy, and U.S. security policy is only one aspect of U.S. interests more generally: the USG might have reasons, beyond concern about safe havens, for focusing on how such a place is governed, including political, humanitarian, or development interests.

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***The pertinent question is not “Does the state govern the area?” but “Who is governing the area, and what are the consequences of the particular way they govern?”***

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<sup>12</sup> The realization that functional, or non-physical, havens can facilitate terrorist, insurgent, and criminal activity has prompted the switch from using “ungoverned spaces” and “ungoverned territories” to using “ungoverned areas” (since “area” can connote both physical areas and subject areas) or “ungoverned and exploitable areas,” which distinguishes potential physical safe havens (un-, under-, and mis-governed areas) from potential non-physical safe havens (exploitable areas). Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, “Ungoverned Spaces,” “Ungoverned and Exploitable Areas,” and other project briefs, 2004-2006.

<sup>13</sup> Non-physical or functional safe havens are sometimes considered to include not only legal safe havens (exploitation of legal and social norms), but also financial safe havens (exploitation of financial systems, such as off-shore banking or traditional remittance systems) and what have been called “ideological” safe havens (exploitation of belief systems — sometimes manifested as identity politics or “culture wars” — and media). See [Section 1.2.2: Safe haven types](#) for a discussion of why this report does not use these categories.

### 1.2.2. *Safe haven types*

The types of UGA/SH that have been the greatest concern to the USG have traditionally been physical places that are remote and sparsely populated. Recently, however, urban, virtual, and maritime havens have become growing concerns:

- In villages, cities, and suburbs, illicit actors can hide in plain sight by exploiting conditions that are relatively more prevalent in urban than in rural settings, conditions such as anonymity (e.g., in densely populated areas, nobody knows there is an extremist next door) or restrictive legal or social norms (e.g., Western democracies are justifiably reluctant to allow unwarranted searches of private homes).
- Virtual havens exist in the physical world only in the literal sense that real human beings exploit physical infrastructure to operate, but they do so not in geographically contiguous places but through physically diffuse computer networks, mobile phone systems, and the media to communicate, transfer electronic funds, disseminate information, or disrupt others' computer operations.
- Maritime havens (an umbrella term used here to include *littoral havens* and *riverine havens*) enable illicit actors to move between continents or, more commonly, among islands, taking advantage of the vastness of the sea or the protections of highly crenulated or poorly monitored coastlines to evade detection.<sup>14</sup>

The categorization scheme presented in this section is intended to respond to a demand for a typology of safe havens. Before discussing the typology, however, it is important to note that addressing safe havens is not a simplistic matter of identifying “what type” of haven a particular place is, then mechanically applying “the” tools that are supposedly designed to deal with “that” type. There certainly are some tools that are more applicable to some types than to others — an effective coast guard is more relevant to maritime than to urban havens, to take an obvious example — but the specific, local conditions that give rise to a particular haven matter a great deal more to its successful elimination than does the broad category to which the haven belongs. Moreover, these safe haven types overlap: many urban areas are also port cities (where coast guards are an integral part of law enforcement in densely populated “urban maritime” environments) and most also have a communication infrastructure (e.g., Internet cafés) that can be used to support virtual illicit activities. The typology discussed in this section, therefore, should be treated primarily as a prelude to Section 1.3: What makes safe havens possible?

To develop a typology of UGA/SH, it makes sense to begin with the most obvious distinction that can be made among the various safe haven types, that between physical and non-physical safe havens — places vs. activities. This distinction is natural for the U.S. government to make, since most departments, agencies, and services are organized to some degree along regional and functional lines. Because all illicit activities happen in specific places — and because diffuse or networked activities are done by people who come from or identify with specific places — there will always be some overlap between the two categories. Both regional

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<sup>14</sup> Maritime havens (excluding the littoral and riverine subtypes) are part of the *global commons*, which include international communication networks, international transportation networks, and global environments — water, air, and space — that, by nature and agreement, are not governed by individual states except in limited circumstances recognized in international law (e.g., within some horizontal distance from land in the case of water and some vertical distance from land in the cases of air and space). Air space and outer space are, conceivably, exploitable as safe havens, but, like Antarctica, they have not yet been shown to be so problematic.

and functional expertise will therefore be useful in determining how best to address any given safe haven regardless of which category it falls under.

Physical safe havens are fairly simple to categorize by basic geography: some are on land, some are on water — two extremely different operating environments. Land-based havens range in scale from a neighborhood, up through the city or village level, all the way to a province, a country, and in some cases a region encompassing parts of multiple countries. The most important distinction among these levels, however, is probably population density: it makes a great deal of difference, in terms of programs and operations for locating and capturing illicit actors, whether those actors are taking advantage of their remoteness from population centers or of their assimilation within population centers. The main reasons illicit actors choose remote, urban, or maritime settings for safe haven are discussed briefly in [Section 1.3.1: Geographical considerations](#).

It is a little more difficult to categorize the functional, or non-physical, havens, if only because there is no one dimension across which they all vary (the way physical havens vary by geography). All the different functional areas of activity and belief that are so difficult to detect and penetrate individually are also so interdependent with one another that they are often difficult to distinguish. For example, belief systems can be influenced or exploited face-to-face to create a physical safe haven (e.g., indoctrination at extremist religious schools), but belief systems also can be used to create what would be called: a cyber haven if the medium of influence were the Internet (e.g., propaganda sites); or a legal haven if the belief system in question were reflected in a set of legal practices that restricted unwarranted state intrusion (e.g., privacy laws); or an ideological haven if a physical haven existed primarily due to political or religious affinities between the local population and an insurgent or terrorist group (e.g., ethnic separatists). Likewise, to say, for instance, that a computer network can generate cyber havens while a satellite network generates ideological havens would seem overly precise: both can be used for recruitment and fundraising.

More fundamentally, however, it is questionable whether a “function” should be considered a kind of haven in the first place. How does one distinguish between an activity and the safe haven that enables it, or between a condition and the safe haven it enables? What sometimes are called ideological havens, for example, are really just the exploitation by illicit actors of social networks, social grievances, identity politics, or belief systems — conditions that generate most physical havens anyway (see [Section 1.3.3: Civil considerations](#)). It therefore makes little sense to have a separate category for “ideological safe havens.”

Nonetheless, one category of non-physical haven does seem to be a distinct phenomenon: “Virtual” safe havens, sometimes called cyber-havens, exist where computer and communication networks make it possible for illicit actors to organize, plan, raise or launder funds, communicate, recruit, or train without actually meeting face-to-face, often anonymously or separated by tens of thousands of miles. They are safe havens in the sense that they enable illicit actors to operate while evading detection or capture, but they are safe havens that exist not as a physically contiguous space, like a remote, urban, or maritime area, but as a network. The other kinds of putative non-physical haven — legal, financial, ideological — are actually important aspects of the political and civil terrains that can generate or sustain any UGA/SH ([Section 1.3: What makes safe havens possible?](#) elaborates).

**Safe haven types:**

Physical		Non-physical	
Land	Water	Network	
<i>Remote havens</i>	<i>Urban havens</i>	<i>Maritime havens</i>	<i>Virtual havens</i>

This leaves us with four general categories of safe haven: three kinds of physical haven (remote, urban, and maritime), and one kind of non-physical haven (virtual). There is nothing special about this four-category scheme, other than that it seems a convenient way to organize the discussion and respond to commonly expressed interest in these particular categories; other categorization schemes are possible and some would arguably be superior.<sup>15</sup> In any event, the real work in countering threats from safe havens is not in *categorizing* them along one or two dimensions but in *characterizing* them according to the full range of needs they fill for illicit actors, an exercise taken up presently.

### 1.3. What makes safe havens possible?

Fundamentally, *people* make safe havens possible. A safe haven exists because somebody wants it to exist, somebody is letting it exist, and somebody is powerless to prevent its existing. While this is an oversimplification, it gets to the heart of the challenge: Eliminating a safe haven is primarily a matter of influencing or enabling specific people, individually or collectively, to take or refrain from taking specific actions. Ultimately, the people whose behavior we want to change are the illicit actors themselves — we want them to stop planning and carrying out attacks against U.S. citizens and interests or trafficking in products that harm

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***Fundamentally, people make safe havens possible. A safe haven exists because somebody wants it to exist, somebody is letting it exist, and somebody is powerless to prevent its existing.***

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U.S. citizens and interests. But the best strategy for changing their behavior will depend on the particular set of conditions that apply in a given case: sometimes it will require direct action against the illicit actors (arrests, incentives, military operations, etc.), sometimes it will require pressure to deter the states that sponsor the illicit actors, and often it will require indirect action, working through others who are better situated to influence or act against the illicit actors (e.g., government officials, foreign leaders, civilian populations, etc.). In all cases, understanding the people who have a stake in the area — and the politics, cultural values, religious beliefs, and social norms that drive their behavior — is central to understanding what it is that makes the place attractive to illicit actors.

What specifically do illicit actors look for when they want freedom of action and peace of mind? This section provides what amounts to a checklist of factors that can characterize an ungoverned area, but it also could be seen as a list of conditions that can generate or sustain a

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the excellent typology in Phil Williams, “Here Be Dragons: Dangerous Spaces and Early Warning,” draft paper prepared for the Conference on Ungoverned Spaces, Naval Postgraduate School, 2-3 August 2007, which describes six kinds of what the author calls “dangerous spaces”: (1) strong, stable states with governance gaps; (2) weak and failed states with capacity gaps and functional holes; (3) alternatively governed spaces; (4) confrontational spaces: borders, border zones, and prisons; (5) concentrated spaces, zones of social exclusion, and feral cities; and (6) the space of dangerous flows: illicit commodities, dirty money, and digital signals. RAND employs a much simpler typology in Angel Rabasa and John E. Peters, “Comparative Analysis of Case Studies,” in Angel Rabasa et al. *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*, RAND Project Air Force, 2007, ch. 4: (1) contested governance; (2) incomplete governance; and (3) abdicated governance.



safe haven or a list of considerations that can help policy makers identify, prioritize, assess, or address ungoverned areas and safe havens. In any case, these factors (“conditions,” “considerations,” etc.) are grouped into four general categories addressing geographical, political, civil, and resource considerations.

The categories overlap: one factor that makes an area attractive to illicit actors, for example, is a hospitable population, which is an important *civil* consideration, but that population’s reasons for being hospitable toward the illicit actors could derive from any number of *political* considerations, such as the central government’s neglect or mistreatment of the people in that area of the country. In other words, this is a dynamic (or complex) system, in which each factor influences and is influenced by one or more other factors — sometimes in unexpected and perverse ways. Successfully manipulating one factor could affect another factor in ways that undermine the overall goal. Take, for example, a successful effort to improve the effectiveness of government security forces to act against illicit actors: if those forces use their newly improved capabilities not against illicit actors but against political rivals, they risk exacerbating the political grievances that enabled the illicit actors to recruit supporters in the first place. Similarly, a successful development project could spark jealousy-driven ethnic competition over the new resource. Because of these complex social, political, and cultural dynamics, it pays to account for the possible second-order effects — and even third- and fourth-order effects — of various player’s actions (including our own) at every step in planning and implementation.

Better analytic tools are needed to understand the consequences of actions taken within complex systems. Until such tools are available, the following considerations can be used as a systematic way to account for the broad range of issues that might be relevant to planning, implementing, and assessing UGA/SH efforts.

### ***1.3.1. Geographical considerations: What areas could be used for safe haven?***

It is rarely a simple matter to identify the precise geographical boundaries of any particular UGA/SH. A physical safe haven might exist in part or all of a city or village, part or all of a province or country, parts of multiple countries (as in border areas), or rivers, littorals, or the sea. A country or region area might have multiple safe havens of different types (ungoverned, under-governed, virtual, urban, etc.) that overlap geographically. Sometimes knowing the precise boundaries is not critical to the task at hand (see [Section 2.3: Developing safe haven maps and models](#)). Sometimes the boundaries actually are reasonably clear. In any case, the specific place an illicit actor uses as a safe haven often does depend in part on whether the place has particular geographical characteristics that will meet their needs — different kinds of places are useful to illicit actors for different reasons at different times.

#### ***1.3.1.1. Remote haven***

The classic illicit safe haven is a remote and rugged region with low population density, dense vegetation cover (although deserts can also provide adequate cover), and minimal central government presence. Undefined, ill-defined, undefended, and disputed borders are notorious for being sources of exploitation as safe havens. The possibility to create or find caves to hide in, or sympathetic villagers to hide among, can likewise make a place attractive to some groups. Places with reasonably well developed transportation and communication infrastructures tend to be more attractive to illicit actors than undeveloped places, for the simple reason that such

infrastructure enables them to operate, even if it provides the central government access to such areas as well. If the central government does not control the area, illicit actors will be concerned to know whether the group that does control it (if any) or the population that occupies it (if any) is or could be made hospitable to their presence. Waziristan, on Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, is a current example of a classic remote haven.

#### 1.3.1.2. Urban haven

Increasing urbanization worldwide, combined with growing attention to illicit actors in remote areas, suggests that “hiding in plain sight” in urban and suburban areas or rural villages will be a strategy that illicit actors are likely to increasingly follow. Gangs and other organized crime networks have long used “safe houses” for their members. Many cities, even in Western liberal democracies, have entire housing projects, neighborhoods, or slums that are known to be controlled by drug traffickers or other illicit actors and are “no go” areas for police; many *favelas*, urban slums, shanty towns, refugee camps, and squatters' villages outside of major cities lack police protection or government oversight. There is growing concern that entire cities, such as Lagos (Nigeria) or Karachi (Pakistan) are or soon could become “feral.”<sup>16</sup> Similarly, some tight-knit immigrant communities, even in middle- or upper-class neighborhoods and in Western liberal democracies, can be easy targets for illicit actors seeking to blend in and hide out within established social networks. And there is growing concern about international terrorists living anonymously among urbanites who do not know their neighbors.<sup>17</sup>

#### 1.3.1.3. Maritime haven

The sea, littorals, coastlines, small islands, and rivers can provide a great deal of freedom of action to terrorists, insurgents, and pirates, especially in places where the state does not have the capacity to maintain a presence or monitor activities across its entire maritime domain. This is particularly a concern in archipelagos, where littorals *are* the transportation infrastructure, small islands are isolated, and coastal crenulations provide ready hiding places from security forces, as is the case, for example, in maritime Southeast Asia. Most land-based havens in archipelagos are, by force of geography, also maritime and coastal havens. Maritime havens are attractive to illicit actors because no one government controls it and many archipelago states have weak coastal security capacity.<sup>18</sup>

#### 1.3.1.4. Virtual haven

The Internet, mobile phone systems, satellite networks, global communications networks, portable digital media, and global transportation and delivery companies make it possible for individuals and small groups to communicate with each other or to the anonymous masses without having to meet in person or speak in public. Not only does this make it possible for transnational illicit actors to undertake global operations opaquely and efficiently; it also enables organizations to change from hierarchical structures to network structures, and facilitates the

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<sup>16</sup> Richard J. Norton, “Feral Cities: The New Strategic Environment,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 56 No. 4, 2003, and “The Security Implications of Feral Cities,” draft paper prepared for the Conference on Ungoverned Spaces, Naval Postgraduate School, 2-3 August 2007.

<sup>17</sup> “An al Qaeda manual recovered by the Manchester (England) Metropolitan police explains how to evade detection and capture in ‘hiding places’ such as apartments in cities (urban havens) while collecting information and launching operations. ... The [police] located the manual during a search of an al Qaeda member's home. It was found on a computer file.” MAJ Sandra Reyna, draft paper prepared for the Ungoverned Areas Project, May 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, “Identifying Coastal Waters Favorable to Maritime Armed Crime,” map, August 2006.

development of global movements without any command-and-control structure at all (e.g., the spontaneous formation of completely autonomous terrorist cells inspired by messages communicated by global media and trained by information available on web sites and DVDs). Consequently, virtual havens can give individuals and small groups a highly effective platform for strategic communication, fund raising, and recruitment, among other activities.<sup>19</sup>

### ***1.3.2. Political considerations: How is this area governed?***

Governance includes any or all of the security, judicial, legal, regulatory, intelligence, economic, administrative, social, and political functions and public services that an effective and legitimate government is generally expected to provide to the people residing in its territory (see Section 1.2.1.: Ungoverned and exploitable areas as potential safe havens).<sup>20</sup> It is often the case that the central, provincial, local, or tribal governments in a country cannot or, for whatever reason, do not effectively perform these functions. Where these functions are not performed or not performed effectively, terrorists, insurgents, and criminals can operate without fear of detection or capture by the state, and can exploit local hardships and conflicts to win resources, refuge, and recruits. This section considers three sets of conditions that illicit actors might look for when seeking haven: inadequate political will to counter them; inadequate governance capacity to counter them; and crises or conflicts that provide them operational benefits.

#### **1.3.2.1. Political will**

“Political will” is the current term of art for the attitudes held and the incentives faced by government officials with respect to whether (and how) they might take action to counter the safe havens in their country. That is, the state, or influential factions within the state, lacks desire, resolve, or incentive to spend the resources and political capital needed to take either direct action against illicit actors (e.g., arrests, incentives, military operations) or indirect action against them via broader policies (e.g., exercising effective authority over an area or population, redressing exploitable political grievances, taking action against corruption, etc.).

No state is a monolith. Different individuals, agencies, parties, or branches of government at any level (from neighborhood to national) have different opinions and face different incentives. It is important, therefore, to consider both the structure of political influence within that society (i.e. whose opinions matter?), and the entities within that society (e.g., individuals, agencies, parties, tribes, religious organizations, etc.) who are, and who are not, willing to counter the safe haven. At least as important as identifying supporters and opponents is understanding each of those actors’ attitudes and incentives, as different people would have different reasons for not countering the safe haven in question:

- Some individuals or groups might support the goals or leaders of the terrorist or insurgent group, or might have a financial stake or other personal interest in supporting such groups; for them, allowing the safe haven is a matter of policy;
- Some might not share the USG’s assessment of the illicit group’s threat, so countering the safe haven is not a priority;

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<sup>19</sup> Martin C. Libicki, “Sanctuary in Cyberspace,” draft paper prepared for RAND at the request of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning, 6 July 2007.

<sup>20</sup> see note 8

- Some might fear reprisal by the illicit actors; for them, allowing the safe haven is a matter of survival;
- Some might want to counter the safe haven but, due to domestic politics or foreign pressure, lack the political capital or popular support to do so; for them, trying to counter the safe haven could end their career or possibly their life;
- Some might want to counter the safe haven but are constrained to do so by restrictive norms of behavior (e.g., cultural or legal); their options are limited to actions that would be considered taboo or illegal (see Section 1.2.1: Ungoverned and exploitable areas as potential safe havens); and
- Some might want to counter the safe haven but only if they can do it their way, which might be ineffective or counterproductive (e.g., willing to use force against terrorists but not willing to protect unarmed civilians in the process, thereby risking further radicalization).

The USG has a wide range of tools available to influence the political will of actors ranging from national-level political leaders to local-level opinion leaders: diplomatic persuasion, development aid, political or economic sanctions, security cooperation, and military force, to name a few. A successful effort will identify who needs to be influenced (including, or especially, at the local level) and choose the appropriate tools based on their particular attitudes and incentives.

#### 1.3.2.2. Governance capacity

Under the current international system, the host state is the entity responsible for controlling and governing its territory in a way that prevents its use as a safe haven for transnational illicit actors.<sup>21</sup> As a consequence, it is generally assumed that the appropriate USG policy for UGA/SH is to encourage and enable the host state to carry out that responsibility: Given that the USG as a whole is limited in its resources and capabilities, the most effective approach to a safe haven problem in the long term would be to encourage and enable non-U.S. stakeholders to undertake the needed efforts. In this view, the goal of capacity-building is not to create a perfectly governed society, but to enable partners to take care of the UGA/SH problems themselves, at least enough that the safe haven is no longer a transnational problem. (There are likely to be U.S. interests, other than countering threats from safe havens, that would be served by building governance capacity even further, including efforts to lay the foundation for democratization, but the minimum goal of capacity-building should be to ensure that safe haven problems can be addressed locally.)

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<sup>21</sup> Increasingly, globalization makes it difficult for states to carry out this responsibility: many issues that affect security, for example, are transnational by nature. Some states have responded to this trend by working cooperatively to address such issues or by outsourcing management of such issues to transnational and other nonstate bodies. See, for example, Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, “Conceptualizing Ungoverned Spaces: Territorial Statehood, Contested Authority, and Softened Sovereignty,” draft paper presented at *Ungoverned Spaces*, conference co-sponsored by the Center for Civil-Military Relations of the Naval Postgraduate School and the Advanced Systems and Concepts Office of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2-3 August 2007, Monterey, Calif.; John D. Steinbruner, *Principles of Global Security* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000); and Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, “Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-Level Governance,” *American Political Science Review* (2003), vol. 97, pp. 233-243.

However, it matters *what* the host state is enabled to do. Safe havens emerge amid a broad range of geographical, political, civil, and resource issues that interact in complex ways. Building capacity in one sector without understanding how that sector affects seemingly unrelated issues risks undermining the effectiveness and legitimacy of the entire venture. For example, building a state’s capacity to take control of an autonomous region can trigger a power struggle with local leaders that ultimately makes the safe haven problem worse. As a consequence, capacity-building should be geared toward legitimacy-building as well (see [Section 1.3.3: Civil considerations](#)): if our partner uses its capacity in a way that undermines its own legitimacy in the eyes of the population being exploited by illicit actors, our partner is ultimately unlikely to succeed in making the safe haven problem manageable locally.

It is increasingly recognized that the USG’s own capacity for capacity-*building* is limited, and some transnational issues simply cannot be addressed in a bilateral relationship. USG efforts to address safe haven problems, therefore, will have to depend not only on approaches beyond bilateral capacity-building but also on the help of other countries, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. These stakeholders have capabilities, resources, and relationships that can help to achieve desired outcomes in particular places — whether through capacity-building, diplomacy, influence, development, direct action, etc. — and many are far better suited to do such work in particular places than the USG ever will be.

The following categories of governance capacity are illustrative: other categorization schemes can be used as guides to building partner capacity. The point to remember here is that each of these sectors affects and is affected by each other sector.

- *Intelligence capacity*: Where the central, local, or tribal governments lack resources, skills, or contacts to gather intelligence about illicit operations or information about local populations, illicit actors can operate undetected. Sometimes building such intelligence capacity involves training personnel and supplying equipment. Usually, however, it also requires improvements in the government’s relations with local populations, who are usually well positioned to provide good human intelligence.
- *Security and law enforcement capacity*: There are two sides to capacity in this sector. First is whether the security forces have the capacity or capability to find, capture, eliminate, or otherwise neutralize terrorist, insurgent, or criminal networks in their territory (e.g., can they win on the “battlefield”?). Second is whether they are professional or sophisticated enough to use their capability in a way that does not undermine their own legitimacy by generating resentment among unarmed or unaligned civilians (e.g., would they use counterterrorism training and equipment against political opponents, or ethnic minorities?), and, more broadly, in a way that does not undermine other important U.S. foreign policy objectives.<sup>22</sup>
- *Legal, judicial, and regulatory capacity*: Where laws and regulations are non-existent, unpublished, or weak, members or supporters of terrorist, insurgent, and criminal networks cannot be brought to justice and prosecuted within a framework of legal order. Further, corruption, intimidation, and ethnic bias among the security

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<sup>22</sup> There is a risk to building a state’s security, intelligence, and law-enforcement capacity, and in building a nonstate actor’s military capacity: once they have successfully used that capacity against the illicit actors we wanted them to target, whom will they use it against afterwards? Will they use it against civilians instead of solely against terrorists, insurgents, or criminals? Might they use it against us at some point in the future? These long-term risks have to be weighed against the short-term benefits of getting help in targeting the illicit actors of current concern.

forces, prosecutors, and judges can greatly hamper efforts to counter illicit actors and their safe havens. Finally, where the rule of law is weak, innocent civilians frequently become victims of pervasive crime or are themselves subjected to arbitrary arrest or unduly harsh punishment for minor or fabricated crimes, leaving vigilantism or reliance on illicit power structures as their only recourse to protection, punishment, or retribution. This dynamic (discussed in [Section 1.3.3: Civil considerations](#)) can generate political, economic, or social grievances against the state, which weakens the state's legitimacy and opens the door to illicit actors to recruit supporters from among the aggrieved or radicalized population. On the other hand, where laws and regulations are highly developed in favor of individual liberties, as in Western liberal democracies, or where legal regimes have not been revised to account for the activities of nonstate actors, as in some international conventions, the rights of defendants and the obligations of governments can constrain the options that governments have to act against illicit actors, putting them in a lose-lose situation of either violating (or seeming to violate) their own laws and treaty obligations or not acting against illicit actors who are suspected of plotting to harm national security (see [Section 1.2.1: Ungoverned and exploitable areas as potential safe havens](#)).

- *Economic opportunities and public service capacity:* Many illicit actors do not come from impoverished or aggrieved populations, but they often rely on such populations to provide resources, recruits, or simply cover. Where economic opportunities are lacking and overall development is weak or greatly inequitable — or, more commonly, where progress is just beginning to be made in addressing shortcomings in development — there is a risk that illicit actors could mobilize a population in destabilizing ways. Because instability is often correlated with improvements in development, addressing such problems is often as risky as allowing them to fester; development and conflict specialists often need to work hand-in-hand to mitigate such risks and prevent illicit actors from exploiting them. Not all governance functions need to be performed by a government, and certainly not always by a central government. Local and tribal governments, private companies, cooperatives, churches, charities, non-governmental agencies, and other bodies commonly provide economic opportunities or perform essential services for local populations (including local police, local schools, tribal justice systems, private security firms, health co-ops, factories, power companies, water and sewage treatment plants, etc.; see [Appendix A: Safe Haven Manual](#), Module 3). This is problematic only when the organization providing the opportunities or services is affiliated with a terrorist, insurgent, or criminal group that is trying to influence the local population (such as Hizballah's social services arm, or organized criminals feeding the poor in slums). In such situations of competing governance (see [Section 1.2.1: Ungoverned and exploitable areas as potential safe havens](#)), capacity-building often focuses on finding and assisting alternative institutions to provide those opportunities or meet those needs, while taking care to mitigate the risks of instability; in many cases, of course, the central government will, in fact, be the appropriate institution to lead this effort, particularly for steering the country's overall economy.

#### 1.3.2.3. [Conflict and crisis](#)

A few other factors related to the political terrain can make a place attractive to illicit actors seeking haven:

- *Civil unrest or active insurgency*: These situations include pre-conflict situations, actual civil wars or insurgencies, post-conflict situations, and other destabilizing situations. Some illicit actors try to attach themselves to local conflicts and social movements, either to buy or sell arms or services to one side or the other, or to win local support and recruits for their own cause, or simply to foment chaos to make it easier to maintain operational invisibility. Countering such exploitation usually involves either separating the local movement or conflict from the influence of transnational illicit actors or, where a conflict makes other U.S. policy goals impossible, providing additional support to its resolution or mitigation.
- *Regional conflict*: Regional tensions and disputed borders can help illicit actors operate with impunity when the state is too preoccupied by the conflict to pursue them, or when the illicit actors are aligned with one of the state parties to the conflict. This can complicate efforts to encourage political will (see [Section 1.3.2.1](#)).
- *Recent humanitarian emergencies or natural disasters*: Where chaos and misery reign, illicit actors have opportunities to operate freely and recruit supporters. Refugee camps are notorious hideouts and sources of recruits for guerrillas and terrorists, and responses to natural disasters can make or break popular support for a domestic or foreign government or, on the other hand, for a terrorist or insurgent group. Such disasters therefore provide both opportunities and dangers for efforts to counter safe havens, by strengthening partners and weakening adversaries, or *vice versa*.

### **1.3.3. Civil considerations: How hospitable is the local population?**

Safe havens can emerge not only from gaps in governance capacity, but also from gaps in government legitimacy, defined here as the support or loyalty that a local population provides to a central, provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government out of a belief that the government has a right to govern or is worthy of their support or loyalty.<sup>23</sup>

The “governability”<sup>24</sup> of a society has a lot to do with how that society views the legitimacy of the existing power structure (e.g., of the government currently in power, of an opposition government or party, or of the state itself) — and with their reasons for holding those views. A population’s belief in the legitimacy of a power structure can have many sources, including procedural (e.g., elections and the rule of law), theological (e.g., the divine right of kings), psychological (e.g., cults of personality), cultural (e.g., tribal law), practical (e.g., steady improvements in material well-being), or most commonly a combination of these sources. Illegitimacy likewise has many sources.

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<sup>23</sup> All definitions of legitimacy are controversial; for example, state legitimacy sometimes is considered to derive from the international community (e.g., the United Nations), regardless of local opinions. In fact, legitimacy has many facets and many objects (i.e. not just the state or the central government). Where control over territory and the people living in it is contested (as it usually is in UGA/SH), a construct of legitimacy that focuses on the beliefs of the local population (like the definition used here) would tend to be more useful to groups that plan to operate there.

<sup>24</sup> Angel Rabasa and John E. Peters, “Dimensions of Ungovernability,” in Angel Rabasa et al. *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*, RAND Project Air Force, 2007, ch. 2.

Terrorist, insurgent, and criminal groups can foment crises of legitimacy or exploit legitimacy gaps in any number of ways. Classic terrorism strategy, for example, is to attack civilians, not only to demonstrate that the state is too weak to protect them, but also to provoke the state into overreacting in a way that creates further civilian casualties; this tends to generate a sense among the population that the state is not merely weak but malicious as well. Historical experience suggests that a strategy to reduce safe havens is most successful if it focuses not only on disarming, defeating, or delegitimizing the illicit actors in the area, but often more importantly on winning the support (or neutrality) of the local population, or at least on separating the illicit actors from their base of support within that population. These components are interdependent, but the primary component — and one commonly neglected — is winning popular compliance. Strategies focusing on military victory, law enforcement, and intelligence capacity, at the expense of the soft-power tools that win over or placate skeptical populations, often tend to exacerbate existing grievances or generate new ones that some illicit actors can exploit to facilitate their own freedom of action and impede efforts at intelligence collection.

**Legitimacy:**

The political support or loyalty that a local population provides to a central, provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government because the population believes the government has a right to govern or is worthy of their support or loyalty.<sup>25</sup>

Governments can increase their legitimacy — and the legitimacy of their efforts to counter safe havens — by acting with restraint in the face of provocation, addressing real grievances, reducing corruption, giving population sub-groups or their leaders an opportunity to participate in the development of laws and rules, making those laws and rules broadly known, and enforcing them effectively and equitably, among other efforts. At the same time, the government must be, and must appear to be, strong enough to enforce its laws against the illicit actors (who themselves are faced with the challenge of maintaining their own capacity and their own legitimacy in the eyes of key populations). As with capacity-building to improve effectiveness (which can help with legitimacy-building and, more broadly, influence-building), the purpose of addressing grievances and other legitimacy-related issues is not to create a perfectly governed democratic society, but to increase the legitimacy of the sovereign government (whether central, provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous) at least enough that grievances and affinities are no longer barriers to countering safe havens there (although, again, there might be other U.S. interests that would be served by going beyond that minimum objective).

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<sup>25</sup> The definition of legitimacy used here is drawn most directly from Robert D. Lamb, "Measuring Legitimacy in Weak States," working paper (College Park, Md.: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, 2005), and Karol Soltan, "Legitimacy and Power," working paper (College Park, Md.: University of Maryland, 2005). Other works consulted to develop this discussion include: Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995); David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Houndsmill: MacMillan Education, 1991); Robert Grafstein, "The Legitimacy of Political Institutions," *Polity* 14, no. 1 (1981), pp. 51-69; Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, expanded ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Ian Shapiro, *The Rule of Law* (New York: New York University Press, 1994); Matthew Tilling, "Refinements to Legitimacy Theory in Social and Environmental Accounting," Working Paper No. 04-6, *Commerce Research Paper Series* (Adelaide, Australia: Flinders University School of Commerce, 2004); Jonathan Waskan, "De Facto Legitimacy and Popular Will," *Social Theory & Practice* 24 (1998), p. 25; M. Stephen Weatherford, "Measuring Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 1 (1992), pp. 149-166; and Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, [1914] 1968).



#### 1.3.3.1. Political or social grievances

Grievances can be generated by political oppression or marginalization, poverty and underdevelopment (or development that fails to meet heightened expectations), greed and jealousies, ethnic hatred, nationalism, perceived slights, social instability, fear, and rapid change (e.g., modernization, globalization), among other causes. Because grievances can derive from such a broad array of causes (including those listed in Section 1.3.2: Political considerations) it is important to understand the dynamics of intercommunal and state-civilian relations — including the different ways that different population groups perceive the legitimacy of local power structures — so that the grievances of relevant population groups can be effectively addressed as needed.<sup>26</sup>

#### 1.3.3.2. Ethnic, linguistic, cultural, ideological, or religious affinities

A key strategy of many illicit actors is to take advantage of their social networks or their ability to blend in with a local population with whom they share an identity of some sort. Illicit actors also latch onto or foment subversive political movements as a way of facilitating their own invisibility and recruitment; this can often be done by exploiting existing grievances, as above, or by appealing to in-group moralities and kinship ties. This is another way for terrorists, insurgents, and criminals to exploit gaps in state legitimacy, and it can be tricky to address, as it requires efforts to influence the political will of political elites to work to improve their legitimacy among those population groups. It also often requires improvements in education so that education gaps are not filled by extremists shaping the ideologies of the next generation.

The exploitation by illicit actors of social networks (in weakly governed societies, repressive states, or Western liberal democracies) is sometimes referred to as an “ideological” safe haven. In fact, most safe havens are characterized by exploitation of social networks (however small the network). Ideological havens are in fact nothing more than the civil considerations discussed in this framework, features of the human terrain that make any UGA/SH possible, where people who adhere to a set of shared values or identities — religious, political, ideological, or philosophical beliefs; social, legal, or moral norms; ethnic, cultural, national, or linguistic identities; or even negative values such as jealousy, hatred, or fear — become willing to protect, support, facilitate, or otherwise tolerate the activities of illicit actors who share or pretend to share those values or identities (or who threaten and intimidate them), whether the illicit actors in question live among them or abroad.

#### ***1.3.4. Resource considerations: What is available to facilitate illicit operations?***

Illicit actors seeking a hospitable situation might find the geographical terrain they need for cover, a political situation that gives them breathing room, and a population that is willing to look the other way, but they have needs beyond maintaining invisibility — they also need some resources that make it possible to operate. These resources can be targeted as part of an overall

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<sup>26</sup> It is also critical to ensure that the USG’s own capacity-building efforts are undertaken in a manner that ensures the government in question will not use its capacity in a way that would exacerbate these grievances and undermine its own legitimacy. As noted in Section 1.3.2.2: Governance capacity, there is a risk to building a state’s security, intelligence, and law-enforcement capacity in places where the state might use that capacity against civilians or political opponents instead of solely against terrorists, insurgents, or criminals. The population itself needs to feel secure — protected against not just criminal elements but against the state as well — otherwise they will seek protection elsewhere.

counter-haven strategy that accounts for the other considerations as well: the converse of building the capacity and legitimacy of our partners is targeting the resources and the relative legitimacy (in the eyes of key populations) of the illicit actors.<sup>27</sup>

#### 1.3.4.1. Personnel

Illicit organizations need leaders, facilitators, fundraisers, recruiters, and recruits to carry out different kinds of tasks. All else equal, when seeking safe haven, illicit actors will choose a place that provides cover and access to personnel over a place that just provides cover. Such individuals can be available due to political or social grievances, identity-group affinities, presence of conflict, or other conditions (see Section 1.3.3: Civil considerations). In many cases, it is only after the local population turns against the illicit actors that the overall effort to address the safe haven problem succeeds.

#### 1.3.4.2. Funds

All illicit operations need funding to support operatives and families, finance operations, and purchase weapons and supplies. A place is more attractive if it provides reasonably easy access to funds, funding schemes (e.g., kidnapping for ransom), and financial havens.

#### 1.3.4.3. Communications

Illicit actors generally require some minimal infrastructure (e.g., telephone lines, satellite uplinks, or access to a virtual safe haven) to support international and local communication, operations, propaganda, networking, transportation, logistics, etc.

#### 1.3.4.4. Transportation

As with communications, illicit actors need access to a reasonably robust transportation infrastructure (e.g., roads, airport, docks, etc.) to enable them to move from, to, and between attack venues.

#### 1.3.4.5. Weapons

Illicit actors need the ability to procure — and hide — bombs, firearms, and other weapons to generate the fear and anxiety needed to achieve their objectives.

### **1.4. What makes a safe haven problematic to U.S. security?**

Because the United States does not have the capacity to address the conditions that generate or sustain all safe havens or potential safe havens worldwide, it needs to prioritize its efforts. There are two aspects to prioritizing UGA/SH for action and funding. First is prioritizing U.S. safe havens *objectives* in a particular place *against other policy objectives* there. Safe havens are only one component of U.S. security policy, and U.S. security policy is only one component of U.S. foreign policy. In some countries or regions, safe havens present such a clear and present danger to U.S. security and other interests that addressing them will take precedence over other imperatives there. But in some places, safe havens — or potential safe havens — are

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<sup>27</sup> This discussion is drawn primarily from discussions with interagency working groups and from the early work of the Ungoverned Areas Project.

not a direct threat to the United States and will not merit as high a prioritization as other goals.<sup>28</sup> The second aspect is closely related: prioritizing safe havens *against other safe havens*. Again, some safe havens pose more of a threat to U.S. security than others and would therefore merit relatively greater attention — in the form of action and funding — than others.

For either aspect, it is helpful to have some criteria against which to measure the degree to which a UGA/SH might threaten U.S. security and other interests. The following considerations, in no particular order, might assist in this regard.<sup>29</sup>

#### 1.4.1.1. U.S. foreign policy

In the current security environment, the illicit actors of greatest interest to USG policy makers are transnational terrorists, primarily those associated with al Qaeda. However, terrorist safe havens are only one component of U.S. counterterrorism policy (albeit an important one), and counterterrorism priorities themselves are only one component of U.S. foreign policy (likewise, an important one). In some regions, other kinds of illicit actors are also of interest (e.g., nonstate combatants in Iraq, transnational criminal networks in South America). The question for any particular safe haven, therefore, is the degree to which the U.S. depends on that area for achieving important foreign policy objectives, including counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, counternarcotics, developmental, political, and other goals.

#### 1.4.1.2. Military operations

A safe haven would merit a great deal of attention if it were in a state, region, or border area that, if destabilized, would negatively affect ongoing U.S. military operations or other activities of the USG.

#### 1.4.1.3. Weapons of mass destruction

A safe haven would also merit the attention of policy makers if the area featured chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) stockpiles, materials, or experts, or if it acted as a potential transit route for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) into the U.S. homeland.

#### 1.4.1.4. Presence of transnational illicit actors

The difference between a potential safe haven and an actual safe haven is the presence of illicit actors. An actual safe haven will be a greater or lesser priority depending in part on what types of illicit actors have significant freedom of action there: terrorist, insurgent, or criminal networks with transnational links or objectives will tend to be considered a higher priority to U.S. policy makers than those with only local ties or concerns.

#### 1.4.1.5. Projection capability of transnational illicit actors

Not all illicit actors with transnational links or objectives have significant transnational *capabilities* (i.e. the ability to organize, train, equip, and launch attacks against U.S. interests

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<sup>28</sup> However, as this report has sought to demonstrate, safe havens emerge from a broad array of conditions; many U.S. foreign assistance programs that are not necessarily designed to address safe havens could nevertheless become, or be considered, part of the safe haven fight.

<sup>29</sup> This discussion is drawn from the early work of the Ungoverned Areas Project, from later discussions with interagency working groups, and from feedback received during formal coordination of the report within DoD.

from the area). Policy makers are likely to prioritize safe havens with high-capacity transnational illicit actors over those with lower-capacity actors.

#### 1.4.1.6. Nexus among illicit actors

Safe havens might provide cause for greater concern if any terrorist, insurgent, or criminal groups in the area, whether transnational or not, currently provide services to any transnational terrorist, insurgent, or criminal networks. Such services can act as a force multiplier for groups of concern to U.S. policy makers.

#### 1.4.1.7. Natural resources

Some policy makers might find it useful to strengthen governance in areas that have natural resources that are vital to the U.S. or global economy (e.g., oil) or that could be used to finance illicit activities (e.g., gemstones).

#### 1.4.1.8. Public opinion

Interest groups and diaspora populations often pressure governments to engage in particular areas or address particular concerns (e.g., pressure from affected expatriate groups in the United States to act in response to natural disasters, genocide, or other humanitarian emergencies). Policy makers are likely to prioritize safe havens based at least in part on the degree of domestic or international pressure to act there.

#### 1.4.1.9. Foreign influence

Priority might be given to safe havens where foreign countries that are unfriendly to U.S. interests influence one or more population groups or illicit actors in the area.

#### 1.4.1.10. Proximity to the U.S. homeland

A safe haven whose location facilitates the migration of terrorist, insurgent, or criminal activity directly into the U.S. homeland would be of great interest to U.S. policy makers.

#### 1.4.1.11. Susceptibility to U.S. action

Finally, before making decisions about priorities for action and funding, policy makers might consider the degree to which any given safe haven is actually susceptible to U.S. action.

## **1.5. Conclusion: Capacity, legitimacy, and policy**

The framework presented here can be seen as either a list of factors that can characterize an ungoverned area, a list of conditions that can generate or sustain a safe haven, or a list of considerations that can help policy makers and implementers identify, prioritize, assess, or address ungoverned areas and safe havens. The overall concept presented here elaborates on the conventional understanding of this topic in the following ways:

- A wide variety of illicit actors use ungoverned areas to enjoy safe haven — not just terrorists, but insurgents, criminals (e.g., narcotics and arms traffickers), spoilers to peace and stability operations, and other violent extremists as well. USG, foreign, and

international programs and strategies for addressing one type of illicit actor are therefore relevant to programs and strategies for addressing other types.

- The concept of ungoverned areas is of limited utility unless it includes under-governed, misgoverned, contested, and exploitable areas — the full range of situations that have the potential to be exploited for safe haven.
- The types of safe haven that pose a threat to U.S. security are not limited to remote havens but include urban, maritime, and virtual havens as well — the full range of environments that illicit actors exploit for freedom of action.
- The range of conditions that make certain places and situations susceptible to exploitation as a safe haven is not limited to the set of political considerations accounted for in the conventional understanding of ungoverned areas (i.e. the idea that a place is ungoverned because a central government is unable or unwilling to control it). Rather, experience suggests a broad range of geographical, political, civil, resource, and U.S. interest considerations are relevant to the emergence of UGA/SH. The UGA/SH framework reflects this broader range and can be seen as either a list of *factors* that can characterize an ungoverned area, a list of *conditions* that can generate or sustain a safe haven, or a list of *considerations* that can help identify, prioritize, assess, or address ungoverned areas and safe havens.
- The range of possible policy responses likewise extends beyond the conventional assumption that addressing UGA/SH is a matter largely of encouraging and enabling governance capacity — an approach that limits itself to a small set of political considerations. Because UGA/SH themselves are relevant to a broader range of considerations (see previous bullet), the full range of policy options that are available to the defense, diplomacy, development, and law enforcement communities can potentially be applied as well to policies and strategies for addressing UGA/SH. At minimum, capacity-building as a strategy could be augmented by “legitimacy-building.” (And where those efforts fail, a strategy that targets the capacity of illicit actors could be augmented by a strategy that undermines their legitimacy — in the eyes of key populations — as well.)
- The range of possible partners for our UGA/SH efforts extends beyond central governments that are unable or unwilling to control territory. Encouraging the political will of all relevant factions of the host state is rarely possible, and building the institutional capacity needed for the state to reassert control over an ungoverned area is not often successful. In many cases, provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous governments — and in some cases, other countries, corporations, or organizations — are simply better positioned than the central government to address the local conditions that enable illicit actors to operate there. It often will be more efficient and effective to influence and enable those entities rather than — or, preferably, *in addition to and with the assistance of* — the host state in the short term. For diplomatic, legal, and practical reasons, the host state cannot be ignored or bypassed, but nor should it be permitted to impede progress against safe havens when other entities are positioned to help. An appropriate balance is needed.

In summary, when illicit actors enjoy freedom of action in places where people and governments are unable or unwilling to oppose them, we should find partners — in the government or among the people — who are willing to work with us in a way that not only

enhances our partners' capacity to govern effectively (or undermines the illicit actors' capacity to operate) but also enhances our partners' legitimacy to act on behalf of the people the illicit actors exploit (or undermines the illicit actors' legitimacy in the eyes of those same people). Legitimacy without capacity is unproductive. Capacity without legitimacy is counterproductive.

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***Legitimacy without capacity is unproductive. Capacity without legitimacy is counterproductive.***

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## 2. Application

The Framework section of this report has attempted to integrate the best of current USG thinking about what ungoverned areas and safe havens are, what forms they take, what conditions can generate or sustain them, and why the USG might be interested in them. It should not be considered the final word on the topic, but should be used as the starting point for a government-wide conversation about what we still need to learn about the problem and what we can do about it.

Further work already is taking place to refine (or, as needed, modify) these concepts and begin the important work of incorporating them into doctrine, strategy, and policy-making processes. For example, the J9 Division of Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) is studying many of these concepts to develop a basis for future military and interagency capabilities. In addition, the Center for Civil-Military Relations at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and the Advanced Systems and Concepts Office at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) recently co-sponsored a conference on Ungoverned Spaces,<sup>30</sup> where scholars discussed papers they are writing for a forthcoming edited volume<sup>31</sup> addressing and elaborating on many of the issues discussed in this report.<sup>32</sup>

These are important efforts. UGA/SH are complex environments, and the Framework section of this report has been intended primarily to identify the range of conditions that can contribute to their emergence; the report has done little more than mention (albeit repeatedly) that these conditions interact with one another. The full complexity of these interactions — how each section of the framework relates to each other section — is barely understood and merits further study and experimentation.

For example, urban havens (Section 1.3.1.2), maritime havens (Section 1.3.1.3), and virtual havens (Section 1.3.1.4) remain poorly understood individually. How, then, can we

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<sup>30</sup> *Ungoverned Spaces*, conference co-sponsored by the Center for Civil-Military Relations of the Naval Postgraduate School and the Advanced Systems and Concepts Office of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2-3 August 2007, Monterey, Calif.

<sup>31</sup> Volume to be edited by Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas of the Naval Postgraduate School.

<sup>32</sup> RAND's Project Air Force has also recently published an edited volume on the topic, but its research was completed in December 2005, before the workshop series that informed this report began. However, RAND had made an advance copy of that publication available to the workshop organizers so that this report could benefit from work already completed. See Angel Rabasa et al. *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*, RAND Project Air Force, 2007.

conceptualize (and deal with) safe havens that have characteristics of all three — such as globally connected port cities where urban, maritime, and virtual features coexist? Also inadequately understood (although interest in the topic is growing<sup>33</sup>) is how to influence political will in complex environments ([Section 1.3.2.1](#)). Similarly, the effectiveness of building capacity for good governance ([Section 1.3.2.2](#)) as a strategy for addressing UGA/SH problems is increasingly questioned: How can we improve our own capacity for capacity-building? Under what circumstances is capacity-building inappropriate? What are the alternatives?

To take another example, an important theme of this report is a point that is often made regarding counterinsurgency and irregular warfare (IW) more generally: in efforts to address UGA/SH, the population is often the center of gravity (see [Section 1.3.3](#)). If that is the case, then

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***The framework offered in this report should not be considered the final word, but the beginning of a government-wide conversation about what we still need to learn.***

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understanding and influencing populations — studying culture, local politics, even theology — should be the order of the day. To that end, multiple efforts are under way to develop the needed capabilities. Within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) alone are several bodies tackling the issue, including:

- the Human Terrain/Social-cultural Analysis Integrated Process Team, operated jointly by the Offices of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (OUSD(I));
- the Defense Science Board’s Task Force on Understanding Adversaries, co-sponsored by OUSD(P) and the Office of the Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (OUSD(AT&L));
- the Human Social Culture Behavior Modeling (HSCB) Program hosted by the Director of Defense Research & Engineering (DDR&E);
- the Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel & Readiness (OUSD(P&R)), which is studying what cultural and regional proficiencies DoD currently requires; and
- the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Policy Planning, which is studying long-term trends in culture, identity, and governance to identify what relevant military capabilities DoD will require in the future.

These efforts are important, but each could benefit from greater collaboration with one another. Beyond that, an even broader effort is needed to understand how “culture” (the short hand often used to describe the various civil considerations mentioned in [Section 1.3.3](#)) interacts with politics, geography, history, and so on — and what, if anything, we can (or should) do about it. As stated earlier, the concepts discussed in this report are only a starting point in that discussion.

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<sup>33</sup> DoD has recently awarded a series of contracts to study the issue.

## 2.1. Developing safe haven strategies

Many USG programs to address important issues around the world — political, ideological, developmental, etc. — can be complicated by the presence of safe havens. Some activities to address issues that might seem unrelated to safe havens (e.g., humanitarian and development work) could in fact contribute to efforts to eliminate safe havens or reduce the threats they generate. Too often, however, these various efforts are not as closely coordinated as the fulfillment of broader strategic priorities might require — and at times one agency's efforts to address one issue actually undermine other agencies' efforts to address other issues.

*Countering threats from safe havens is a whole-of-government effort.* The Framework section identified a broad range of issues that can contribute to a safe haven problem: geography, the motivations of influential political leaders, the capabilities and capacities of governments, the presence of conflict and other crises, an aggrieved population, identity politics, and the availability to illicit actors of needed resources, to name a few. With such a broad range of factors at play, no single approach, and no single agency, can hope to accomplish the full range of outcomes that would be needed to address even a single safe haven.

The State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT), the Intelligence Community's National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC), and the White House's interagency Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG) all coordinate various interagency efforts to identify or eliminate *terrorist* safe havens. But, as noted, the conditions that make safe havens possible for terrorists can also make safe havens possible for drug traffickers, insurgents, and

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### ***Countering threats from safe havens should be considered a whole-of-government effort.***

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spoilers to peace operations or to stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations (SSTRO) — or for all of these at once. In addition to these organizations, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), other State Department components, the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Justice Department, the Treasury Department, and the Intelligence Community (IC) all have relevant authorities, capabilities, and resources to contribute to resolving any particular safe haven problem — regardless of the type of illicit actor causing it.

Many of these offices collaborate to some degree to achieve this end — but they also face constraints with respect to their authorities, capabilities, and resources, and this can make it difficult for them to collaborate to the full degree needed or to take advantage of capabilities and doctrines that could be useful. This difficulty is compounded by standard practices or organizational cultures that, at times, can have the effect of undermining each other's efforts, as when one program is undertaken without awareness of (or in some cases without regard for) its effects on other programs.

Nevertheless, each office would best serve U.S. interests by collaborating at all levels with other offices that operate in a country or region that has a safe haven or potential safe haven. *This collaboration should take place whether the office operates openly, discreetly, or covertly.* At minimum, this means being aware of how one's own goals, programs, and practices affect those of other departments and agencies; individual offices and personnel can take small



steps in this direction by using the UGA/SH framework to identify and contact the offices that work the kinds of issues that might affect or be affected by their work. Ideally, collaboration would entail formal coordination, integration, and synchronization of such efforts: in the long term it will become necessary to have detailed guidance for collaborating systematically. Existing mechanisms for interagency planning are good candidates for using the UGA/SH framework to facilitate this kind of collaboration on UGA/SH issues:

- The Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) system, the CSG, and sub-CSG working groups are the primary interagency policy-making fora for a range of relevant issues, although the CSG and sub-CSG groups focus on terrorism rather than the full range of USA/SH threats.
- The State Department's office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance (S/F), S/CT, S/CRS, and others have developed or are involved in the development of mechanisms for interagency planning and implementation for issues such as foreign assistance, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and stability operations. The *Interagency Planning Framework* and *Essential Tasks Matrix*, for example, were developed jointly by S/CRS and JFCOM to provide a robust interagency planning framework for complex emergencies such as stability operations. The *Economic Empowerment in Strategic Regions Initiative* was developed by State's Advisory Committee on International Economic Policy as a model for whole-of-government empowerment of the private sector in areas prone to instability. S/CT and DoD's Assistant Secretary for Special Operations, Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities (ASD(SO/LIC&IC)) work together to support the Combating Terrorism Technology Support Office (CTTSO).
- The Army-Marine Corps *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* includes doctrine for coordinating interagency efforts in counterinsurgency environments; a forthcoming USG-wide counterinsurgency manual, being drafted jointly by State and DoD, is intended to elaborate on this guidance for interagency coordination.
- DoD's *Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept (JOC)* — which includes counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and other efforts that are directly relevant to countering safe havens — recognizes that militaries cannot by themselves win conflicts whose primary objectives are legitimacy and influence. Other DoD efforts by JFCOM, the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), and others likewise recognize the importance of cooperation between military and civilian agencies, including draft doctrines on *Joint Urban Operations* and *Full Spectrum Operations*, concepts for governance operations, various civil-military publications, and DoD Directive 3000.05 on *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*.
- The USG's *National Implementation Plan for the War on Terror (NIP)* directs the implementation of a wide range of interagency counterterrorism tasks.
- A number of USG offices are dedicated to interagency coordination, such as USAID's Office of Military Affairs (OMA), State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), JFCOM's J9 Division, other Combatant Command (CoCom) interagency coordination organizations, and various CoCom Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG).

- Numerous interagency working groups, communities of interest, and initiatives are dedicated to working out the details of such efforts.

The UGA/SH framework was developed explicitly to give these offices and groups a common point of reference for sharing capabilities, doctrines, strategies, and plans as the need to address safe haven issues arises. Many of them were consulted individually during development, and many participated in OUSD(P)'s *Ungoverned Areas Workshop Series* at The RAND Corporation's headquarters in Arlington, Va., in late 2006 and early 2007.<sup>34</sup> Most of these institutions recognize the need for such whole-of-government collaboration. Some already plan to review, refine, and institutionalize current processes for IW, governance, and SSTR planning, whereas others plan to propose, develop, and experiment on new concepts and processes. In all cases, those processes should be sensitive to the presence of UGA/SH.

While it would be useful to incorporate the UGA/SH framework into existing policy and planning processes where relevant issues are addressed, it is still necessary to develop a formal mechanism for whole-of-government UGA/SH planning and implementation. Discussions during the *Ungoverned Areas Workshop Series* made it clear that demand exists at all levels of the USG for a systematic way to:

- keep track of what the USG is already doing to address UGA/SH, at the global, regional, country, and field levels;
- identify gaps and redundancies in U.S. and foreign efforts and capabilities;
- determine what the USG should be doing that we are not currently doing; what we should stop doing; and what we should encourage and support others to do; and
- coordinate, integrate, and synchronize USG efforts at all levels (global, regional, country, field) and with related international efforts, in a way that helps to achieve key policy objectives.

A whole-of-government safe haven manual could serve as a common point of reference across the USG to help meet those demands. It could be a guide for what to consider when developing and implementing customized, whole-of-government strategies for dealing with

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***A whole-of-government safe haven manual could serve as a common point of reference across the USG for strategy, planning, and implementation.***

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UGA/SH in different parts of the world, or when writing implementation guidance on prioritizing or coordinating programs in particular places to ensure that UGA/SH problems in the region are being adequately addressed; it also could articulate appropriate authorities and command-and-control relationships.

A notional structure for such a manual was discussed during the workshop series and is included as [Appendix A](#). The proposed structure was intended to meet the above needs by providing a series of five modules that could be used either *individually* — as a stand-alone or

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<sup>34</sup> *Ungoverned Areas Workshop Series*, conference sponsored by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and hosted by the RAND Corporation's International Security and Defense Policy Center, Arlington, Va., 24 October 2006, 28 November 2006, and 31 January 2007.

“add-on” module to help country teams and field workers integrate their otherwise unrelated efforts into a broader UGA/SH strategy — or *sequentially*, to help strategists, planners, and regional or country teams develop a comprehensive UGA/SH strategy for a particular country or region or, less ambitiously, to create a “strategic overlay” to help them identify gaps in current approaches:

- Module 1: Describing the problem would be a combination and elaboration of Section 1: Framework and Appendix C: Safe Haven Assessment from this report. The module would offer a framework for identifying and characterizing UGA/SH and could be used to guide data collection for a baseline assessment of the problem and the threat.
- Module 2: Defining potential solutions would be an elaboration of Appendix B: Safe Haven Strategy, a concept for an illustrative planning framework. The module would recommend a process for developing customized strategies for particular safe havens. The output of that process — a statement of the desired outcomes, concepts, information effects, objectives, and tasks for a particular UGA/SH — could be used as a “strategic overlay” or “ideal strategy” to help identify gaps in current efforts, drive funding for future efforts, or create benchmarks for progress that can be used in Module 5.
- Module 3: Surveying available programs would provide a framework for taking stock of ongoing efforts in a region, to help identify the kinds of programs and institutions that have the potential to help resolve a particular UGA/SH problem, including efforts that are not currently considered part of any UGA/SH strategy (e.g., certain development efforts) but that could be incorporated into the overall strategy if necessary.
- Module 4: Linking programs to strategy would suggest a method for mapping available programs onto the overall strategy (as developed in Module 2), for the purpose of analyzing gaps and redundancies in UGA/SH efforts and developing guidance for integrating those efforts.
- Module 5: Measuring progress and adapting would provide guidance for continuous assessment (based on the assessment developed in Module 1 and the objectives defined in Module 2) and for undertaking mid-course corrections to the strategy as needed.

A safe haven manual need not have this exact structure. The substance of the Framework section, the intent of the frameworks in Appendix A and Appendix B, or the questions in Appendix C could be incorporated into the content and structure of existing (or planned) manuals (or tools or frameworks) for COIN, IW, CT, CN, SSTR, complex operations, conflict mitigation, or governance operations. Conversely, the individual modules could be developed separately and either incorporated as appendices to those manuals or distributed as short papers for use in the field or headquarters.

In any case, the most important point to keep in mind when developing the strategies themselves is to account for the full range of conditions — geography, politics, populations, and resources — that make the safe haven possible and ensure that efforts to address one set of conditions do not undermine efforts to address others. Appendix B: Safe Haven Strategy offers guidance and a framework for coordinating disparate efforts into a unified UGA/SH strategy.

## 2.2. Developing safe haven assessments

Policy makers and implementers need to understand the conditions that can generate or sustain safe havens so that they can identify possible means for countering them. Policy makers also need to understand the conditions that would make any given UGA/SH particularly threatening to U.S. security and other interests so they can prioritize them for funding and action. To identify, characterize, prioritize, and act against safe havens requires a thorough assessment of the conditions and the threat.

The UGA/SH framework offered in this report could be useful to regional experts working in strategy, planning, and intelligence offices at the national level, and to strategists, intelligence officers, and others in regional or country teams, who need a reference for developing or revising existing products such as:

- a country report on counterterrorism, drug enforcement, stabilization efforts, etc.;
- an intelligence report on safe havens, the factors that generate them, the illicit actors who create or exploit them, or the problems they create;
- a risk assessment or threat assessment for a variety of issues related to UGA/SH, to inform priorities and facilitate planning;
- a background paper or a comprehensive baseline assessment of the UGA/SH problem in a particular region, country, littoral, or other area, to inform the development of a project proposal, operational plans, or strategy;
- a comprehensive political or governance assessment in a particular region, country, or area to guide the strategy and development of “good governance” programs and to inform diplomatic actions; or
- criteria for measurement, to be used in program evaluation, data collection, quantitative modeling, prioritization methods, etc.

Appendix C: Safe Haven Assessment provides an illustrative framework for a comprehensive safe haven assessment, based on the UGA/SH framework. Not every assessment of UGA/SH will need to be as detailed as that framework suggests. Different users have different needs. Some would require detailed answers to all the questions; others might require general answers to only the top-level questions in the outline (e.g., “How hospitable is the local population to illicit actors?”). The important point about assessing UGA/SH is to ensure that all relevant considerations are incorporated into the research and reporting, in whatever level of detail policy makers and implementers need to make decisions.

The UGA/SH framework also can be used to supplement the broad array of assessment tools, programs, and other frameworks that already are in use or under development for issues such as conflict mitigation, stability operations, and institution-building. Examples include USAID’s *Tactical Conflict Assessment Framework* (TCAF), S/CRS’s *Interagency Methodology to Assess Instability and Conflict* (IMIC), the U.S. Institute for Peace’s *Measuring Progress in Conflict Environments* (MPICE), and USD(I)’S *Human Terrain Initiative*.

Many of the questions listed in Appendix C: Safe Haven Assessment have been drawn from these non-UGA/SH assessment tools. The UGA/SH framework — which itself draws on many of those same sources — is meant to supplement rather than replace these tools. For example, conflict assessments appropriately focus on the factors that contribute to conflict or that

could contribute to its resolution or mitigation. However, conflict areas are safe havens not only for combatants but for other illicit actors as well, including terrorists who have no direct interest in the conflict itself but who are interested in exploiting it to maintain invisibility or gain other benefits, such as weapons or broader public support and more recruits. By assessing issues such as how terrorists and other illicit actors can or do exploit violent conflicts and pre-conflict situations, conflict assessments could contribute to the broader UGA/SH strategy. Incorporating UGA/SH considerations into non-UGA/SH assessments could ultimately improve USG efforts on both fronts.

### 2.3. Developing safe haven maps and models

As noted in [Section 1.3.1: Geographical considerations](#), a safe haven can exist in part or all of a city or village, part or all of a province or country, parts of multiple countries (as in border areas), or rivers, littorals, and the sea; it can also exist not as an area but as a network. Areas and networks both can be mapped geographically; networks, such as social networks, can be mapped conceptually. Because UGA/SH are not always geographically discrete phenomena, mapping out where they exist is a conceptual and practical challenge: conceptual because of the variety of factors that make UGA/SH possible, and practical because of the scarcity of disaggregated (finer-grained), georeferenced (location-specific) data, which are needed for the geographic information systems (GIS) that are used to create maps and develop spatial models of phenomena such as UGA/SH.

Creating maps and models of places and networks that are suitable as safe havens is not straightforward, because a country or a region could have different kinds of UGA/SH that overlap geographically and because the same factor that gives rise to one kind of UGA/SH might have no effect — or the opposite effect — on another kind. For example, low population density can be used as a variable in a spatial model to create a remote havens map, but it would have a negative value in a model of urban havens. For this reason, it often will be necessary to create multiple maps and use them as overlays to one another. Even more challenging is figuring out how to incorporate perceptions of legitimacy or social grievances (see [Section 1.3.3: Civil considerations](#)) into a model of a place's suitability for exploitation, since microdata (data about individuals, households, or other small units of analysis) on such attitudes are rarely collected in places that are suitable as UGA/SH and, when collected, are rarely georeferenced, making spatial analysis impossible.<sup>35</sup>

Getting or creating better data is therefore an important step toward undertaking spatial analysis; it is equally important for social network analysis and complex systems analysis. Various “communities of interest” exist to support or advocate for the development of methods for collecting and analyzing such data — two examples are the Systems Dynamics Community of Interest and the Human Terrain/Social-cultural Analysis Integrated Process Team — and those communities would do well to link up with one another to lay the groundwork for a system of even broader data sharing.

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<sup>35</sup> Such data would be easier to collect in stable countries. However, while even Western liberal democracies have pockets of social discontent or geographical remoteness that could be exploited by illicit actors, overcoming the political sensitivities involved in attempting to map out potential safe havens *at home* can be an even greater challenge to analysts than the analysis itself would be.

Spatial modeling is not only the method available for identifying where safe havens are most likely to be found; for many (probably most) tasks, it would not even be the most appropriate method even when available. Consider these scenarios:

- A military officer stationed overseas has worked with host-nation security forces for many years, and can write on a piece of scrap paper the names of the three provinces in the country that “everyone knows” harbors guerrillas. If pressed, the officer will sketch out a map of the provinces, circle which parts the central government largely neglects, then draw dotted lines through the mountain passes that are known smuggling routes for small arms but that the host government refuses to enter.
- An aid worker who manages rural development projects is able to shade in different areas on a map to indicate where the various ethnic groups live, circle where the infrastructure is least developed and where the soil is becoming increasingly eroded, and draw the migration routes of local nomadic tribes, revealing several potential trouble spots where simmering conflicts and social grievances could be exploited.
- An intelligence analyst with GIS skills is sent to a country to collect data and develop two spatial models, the output of which would be a map of the country’s rural areas that are most likely to be suitable for terrorist training camps, and a map of the streets in the three largest cities most likely to have safe houses. For the rural map, the analyst collects georeferenced data on terrain, vegetation, demographics, infrastructure, and different forms of governance and creates a computer model that layers the data onto a map, with different shades of color indicating different degrees of suitability as training camps. For the urban maps, the analyst gathers neighborhood- or household-level data on demographics, social networks, income, election results, crime incidents, criminals’ addresses, infrastructure, delivery of social services, and so on, and creates a computer model that layers the data onto a satellite image of the city, indicating streets and neighborhoods most likely to have safe houses.

These scenarios illustrate three important points about mapping out likely safe havens. First, information about geographical features — terrain, vegetation cover, transportation infrastructure, etc. — is useful in and of itself. Different kinds of places can serve different purposes for illicit actors and have different requirements for their use as safe havens: a thick jungle is easier to hide in, and is more hospitable to live in, than a desert; an archipelago requires water or air transportation. Moreover, geographical features tend not to change day to day, so they are easier to map and keep track of over time. This kind of information can therefore be operationally useful.

Second, geographical information is even more useful in combination with the kind of information addressed in [Section 1.3.2: Political considerations](#), [Section 1.3.3: Civil considerations](#), and [Section 1.3.4: Resource considerations](#). Illicit actors are people, and they do not live in a social vacuum. To know where they are likely to go, it is useful to know where people who are like them go — what they are like, how they live, where they live — and what resources are available to them in different places. Whereas the geographical terrain provides clues about where illicit actors *can* hide, the political and human terrains provide clues about *why* they might want to hide in particular places with particular resources. Incorporating this information would greatly enhance spatial models, early warning systems, and other such analytic efforts.

Finally, mapping out places that are suitable as safe havens can be as simple and informal as using common sense, common knowledge, and local experience — regional experts and local residents often “just know” which regions or neighborhoods are likely safe havens, and they can be consulted to help sketch a rough map — or it could be as complex and sophisticated as using analytic surveys and computer models. The simple, informal approach is usually the best place to start, and in some cases nothing beyond the resulting rough sketch is needed for operational purposes. Often, however, there is a need for a more detailed map or a more systematic analysis, and in those cases it will be useful to refer to [Section 1.3: What makes safe havens possible?](#), [Section 1.4: What makes a safe haven problematic to U.S. security?](#), and [Appendix C: Safe Haven Assessment](#) for help in identifying questions to include in an expert survey, factors to include in an analytic framework, or variables to include in a computer database or model.

## **2.4. Conclusion: Taking ‘unity of effort’ seriously**

Whole-of-government collaboration to protect U.S. security and achieve other important national objectives is easier to advocate than to accomplish. Nonetheless, steps are being taken throughout the USG to achieve greater unity of effort; some of the most important of these are mentioned in [Section 2.1: Developing safe haven strategies](#).

The problem of safe havens, however, reveals some of the shortcomings of how our national institutions of foreign policy are currently structured: the people who do counterinsurgency are different from the people who do counternarcotics, who are different from the people who do stability or peace operations, or who do counterterrorism, or who prosecute financial crimes, or build capacity for good governance, or promote democracy, or undertake development. Just because a particular place is a safe haven for a drug trafficker instead of an insurgent does not mean that the people who are responsible for finding drug traffickers could not benefit from the lessons of counterinsurgency. Likewise, counterterrorists could learn a lot from peacekeepers — and *vice versa*. Just because development workers are not responsible for finding terrorists does not mean that their work will never be complicated by the presence of a terrorist safe haven — or couldn’t be helpful to those who *are* responsible for finding terrorists. There might be some very good reasons for keeping these functions segregated across different offices; the fact that they have been so divided for several decades is not one of them.

At some point in most COIN, CT, CN, SSTR, IW, peace, and governance operations, the responsible offices or units all encounter a fundamentally similar challenge: how to counter a nonstate adversary who is skilled at exploiting local conditions and resources to operate with impunity or without detection or capture. This suggests a need for a government-wide conversation about sharing capability and doctrine, not only across agencies but across these different kinds of operation as well. The UGA/SH framework offered in this report can be used to organize this dialogue, because it is based on the structure of the challenge they share (conditions and resources that adversaries exploit) rather than the nature of the adversary they target (terrorist, drug trafficker, militia, etc.).

It has been said in this report that, because safe havens are only one aspect of U.S. security policy, and U.S. security policy is only one aspect of U.S. interests more generally, our safe haven interests in any particular country or region have to be balanced against those broader interests. While this is true, the report has also suggested that the conditions giving rise to safe havens are so diverse that it probably is impossible to identify many “safe haven interests” that

are fully distinct from those broader USG interests: in most places, safe havens touch on too many issues. Yet doctrine development today takes place at the department level; there is no mechanism in place to develop USG doctrine — not for UGA/SH, nor for any other issue.<sup>36</sup> Even at the department level, doctrine for one kind of issue is often developed without full awareness of potentially complementary aspects of doctrine/best practices for others issues.

Our ability to develop coherent policy for safe havens is constrained by policy processes that depend on separate institutions to address issues that, by their nature, cannot effectively be dealt with separately. Institutions that were created during the Cold War are working hard to adapt to 21<sup>st</sup> Century realities and complexities, and efforts are being made at all levels to work around the inherited institutional constraints.

To achieve real unity of effort in the short term will require a clear signal from the top that whole-of-government collaboration is expected of everyone — and will be rewarded. Ultimately, though, it will require top-level commitment to developing effective mechanisms to produce USG-wide doctrine so that unified action will no longer require exceptional effort, but becomes a routine part of doing the government’s business.

### **3. Recommendations**

Just as this report is intended for a broad USG audience, the recommendations that follow are intended to help DoD contribute to what ultimately has to be an interagency conversation about meeting shared challenges by sharing capability or establishing common doctrine, as appropriate, across the full range of agencies and programs that address, could help mitigate, or are affected by UGA/SH problems.

#### **3.1. The Challenge: Collaboration**

Much has been made of how “stove-piping” makes it difficult to carry out operations that require interagency collaboration. This report finds a related problem, the “stove-piping” of doctrine, even within departments: Where doctrine exists for CT, CN, COIN, SSTR, IW, or peace operations, those doctrines have evolved along more or less separate paths, largely because they focus on different types of adversary. Today, however, criminals, insurgents, terrorists, and warlords increasingly borrow each other’s tactics, buy each other’s services, and exploit each other’s missions. The USG, by contrast, has mostly separate doctrines for each type of adversary or type of conflict, with limited overlap.

There is no need for a single, overarching doctrine for all of these operations; but where these operations affect or are affected by UGA/SH, they could benefit from a shared understanding of how the relevant issues can be addressed. Concepts for IW and “complex operations” are already being developed in a similar spirit, and their continued development should be encouraged and supported. However, no USG-wide doctrine exists for UGA/SH; in fact, no *mechanism* exists for developing USG-wide doctrine at all. (For further information, see [Section 1: Framework](#), [Section 2: Conclusion](#), [Appendix A: Safe Haven Manual](#), and [Appendix B: Safe Haven Strategy](#).)

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<sup>36</sup> with the exception of the USG counterinsurgency manual, which is a good pilot effort.



### **RECOMMENDATION 1: Establish common doctrine and share capability as needed**

- Identify where doctrines for CT, CN, COIN, SSTR, IW, peace operations, and civil affairs are already complementary, where they could be made complementary, and where they might be contradictory with respect to how they address problems of ungoverned areas and threats from safe havens. Use the UGA/SH framework to inform the development of common doctrine, as appropriate, to facilitate the sharing of relevant best practices and capabilities across complex operational environments and USG agencies. Lead: Joint Staff/J-7.

## **3.2. The Challenge: Strategy**

It will take some time to implement the first recommendation. Meanwhile, offices and units working in CT, CN, COIN, SSTR, IW, and peace operations continue to face a similar problem: illicit actors (of various sorts) use local conditions and resources to operate with impunity or without detection. This challenge of safe havens needs to be addressed in the near term. The UGA/SH framework offered in this report has attempted to integrate the best of current USG thinking across these different fields about what UGA/SH are, what forms they take, what conditions can generate or sustain them, and why the USG might be interested in them. This framework could be used to inform how DoD and the USG address UGA/SH in current doctrine, guidance, planning scenarios, plans, and directives. (For further information, see Section 1: Framework and Appendix B: Safe Haven Strategy.)

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: Use the UGA/SH framework to inform relevant strategies**

- Incorporate the UGA/SH framework into existing processes for developing doctrine, guidance, planning scenarios, plans, and directives that involve problems of ungoverned areas and threats from safe havens. Leads: DASD(Policy Planning) and Joint Staff/J-5(Strategy & Policy).
- Use the UGA/SH framework to inform, as appropriate, the development of policies, strategies, and plans for specific ungoverned areas or safe havens. Lead: ASD(SO/LIC&IC).

## **3.3. The Challenge: Assessment**

An assessment of any problem is incomplete if it fails to account for all the conditions that give rise to the problem. If, as this report suggests, safe havens are a problem for people working in a wide variety of fields — defense, diplomacy, development, law enforcement, and others — then the assessments that inform work in those fields should account for all the conditions that can give rise to safe havens. (For further information, see Section 1: Framework and Appendix C: Safe Haven Assessment.)

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: Use the UGA/SH framework to inform relevant assessments**

- Use the UGA/SH framework to inform existing processes for identifying, assessing, or analyzing problems related to instability, ungoverned areas, or safe havens. Leads: USD(I) and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA).

### 3.4. The Challenge: Research

This report pulls together much of the USG’s current thinking about UGA/SH, but it is not the final word on any of the issues it addresses. The report mentions nine topics in particular that require further study: (1) urban, (2) maritime, and (3) virtual havens; (4) safe havens with features of multiple types (e.g., port cities as “urban maritime” havens); (5) interactions among the enabling conditions for safe havens (e.g., UGA/SH as complex systems); (6) understanding and influencing populations (e.g., culture, politics) in complex environments (including options for a more unified USG approach to information effects); (7) influencing political will; (8) options for improving the USG’s capacity for capacity-building; and (9) alternatives to capacity-building (e.g., legitimacy-building) as a strategy for UGA/SH.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4: Sharpen the focus of UGA/SH research**

- When funding or undertaking studies of governance, safe havens, complex operations, and related issues, treat the topics identified above as issues that merit further attention. Lead: JFCOM/J-9.

### 3.5. The Challenge: Data

Ungoverned areas are complex operating environments. Safe havens emerge from complex sets of conditions that interact in unpredictable ways. Geographers who map complex environments and social scientists who analyze complex systems and social networks require good-quality data. When the data they have are not “georeferenced” (location-specific) or not available as “microdata” (data about individuals, households, or other small units), many of their analytic techniques cannot be used to their full potential — and policy makers cannot benefit from the sophisticated analyses they otherwise could produce. Analysis of UGA/SH and other complex environments would be improved — e.g., better mapping, early warning, and tactical intelligence — if more and better georeferenced microdata were available to analysts. (For further information, see Section 2.3: Developing safe have maps and models.)

#### **RECOMMENDATION 5: Require ‘geo-referencing’ in data collection**

- Work to establish a requirement, and to develop associated capabilities, for the “geo-referencing” of all or most data collected by DoD. Work to develop a mechanism for making such data available within DoD and the Intelligence Community as needed to facilitate spatial, social network, and complex systems analyses. Leads: USD(I) and National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA).

## Appendix A: Safe Haven Manual (notional structure)

This manual is proposed as a common point of reference across the USG for the development, implementation, and assessment of customized, whole-of-government strategies for UGA/SH in different parts of the world. The notional structure — a series of five separate modules — is intended to make it easy for users to find and follow only the guidance they need to do their job. The modules can be used either *individually* — as a stand-alone or “add-on” module to help country teams and field workers integrate their otherwise unrelated efforts into a broader UGA/SH strategy — or *sequentially*, to create a “strategic overlay” for identifying and rectifying gaps in current approaches, or more ambitiously, to can help strategists, planners, and regional or country teams develop a comprehensive UGA/SH strategy for a particular area.

### **Module 1: Describing the problem**

See [Section 1: Framework](#) for an elaboration of the UGA/SH framework and [Appendix B: Safe Haven Assessment](#) for an example of how that framework can be applied to develop a safe haven assessment. This module would use the same framework and could be used not only to assess safe havens that have already been identified as problematic, but also to identify potential safe havens and their risks of becoming actual safe havens.

- *Introduction* — What is a safe haven?
- *Module 1A: Geographical considerations* — What areas could be used for safe haven?
- *Module 1B: Political considerations* — How is this area governed?
- *Module 1C: Civil considerations* — How hospitable is the local population to illicit actors?
- *Module 1D: Resource considerations* — What is available that facilitates illicit operations?
- *Module 1E: U.S. interests* — What other factors might affect U.S. policy in this area?

### **Module 2: Defining potential solutions**

See [Appendix B: Safe Haven Strategy](#) for an illustrative planning framework. This module also could be based on or adapted to any interagency complex-planning model, such as the interagency planning framework for SSTRO being developed jointly by S/CRS and JFCOM. The important point is that the strategy should derive from the facts on the ground (see Module 1) not on stove-piped lines of operation or existing programs (see, for example, the discussions of interagency planning and “logical lines of operation” in the Army-Marines *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*,<sup>37</sup> which can be adapted more broadly to address UGA/SH in CT, SSTRO, and other related efforts).

- *Module 2A: Outcome* — What are we ultimately trying to achieve?
- *Module 2B: Concept* —
  - What is the overall vision for achieving the desired outcome?
  - What information effects will facilitate success?

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<sup>37</sup> Department of the Army, "Counterinsurgency: Field Manual No. 3-24 / Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5", chapters 2, 4, and 5.

- *Module 2C: Objectives* — What intermediate outcomes will achieve the desired outcome?
- *Module 2D: Tasks* — What actions/programs, in what sequence, will achieve the objectives?

### **Module 3: Surveying available programs**

Ideally, strategies should drive programs, not the other way around. That is, a long-term strategy to address UGA/SH should be based, not on current programs and capabilities, but on the desired outcomes and the conditions or threats that would have to be addressed to achieve those outcomes. Once such a strategy is defined (see Module 2), the capability and programming gaps can be identified (see Module 4); Module 3 provides the intermediate step, taking stock of what programs and capabilities are available — not only to the U.S. but to other actors as well, since other actors are often better positioned to address certain conditions than the USG. The specific structure of this module can be based on any comprehensive framework for identifying potential donors or partners.

- *Module 3A: USG programs* — What can the USG do?
- *Module 3B: International programs* — What can non-USG groups do?
  - Foreign donors
  - Intergovernmental organizations (IGO), including regional bodies
  - International non-governmental organizations (NGO)
  - Multinational private sector
- *Module 3C: Internal government programs* — What can domestic governments do?
  - National government
  - Opposition government
  - Provincial governments
  - Local governments
  - Neighborhood governments
  - Tribal, religious, autonomous, or traditional governments
  - Quasi-governmental bodies
- *Module 3D: Internal private-sector programs* — What can domestic nonstate groups do?
  - Civil society organizations
  - Labor unions
  - Businesses
  - Media

### **Module 4: Linking programs to strategy**

Once objectives (Module 2) and programs (Module 3) are identified, a realistic plan can be developed to apply programs to objectives, using non-USG partners to fill capability gaps in the short-term, and beginning development of those capabilities for the long-term.

- *Module 4A: Cross-walking* — Which U.S. programs contribute to which tasks/objectives?
- *Module 4B: Gap analysis* —
  - What should we be doing that we are not?
  - What should we stop doing?
- *Module 4C: Filling the gaps* —

- What non-USG programs could contribute to the mission?
- What other resources and authorities does the USG need?

## **Module 5: Measuring progress and adapting**

This module would provide guidance for continuous assessment, based on the objectives identified in Module 2, and for undertaking mid-course corrections as needed. It could be informed by the illustrative assessment framework in [Appendix C](#).

- *Module 5A: Metrics* — How would we know if we were winning?
- *Module 5B: Adapting* — How can we change course when needed?

## **Appendix B: Safe Haven Strategy (illustrative framework)**

When developing and implementing strategies to address particular safe havens or potential safe havens that have been identified as being problematic, planners and strategists might find the following considerations to be helpful. The basic idea — which is consistent with standard planning practices — is to describe an outcome that the USG would find minimally acceptable for a particular area of concern; to then define an appropriate set of objectives (or intermediate outcomes) that would be individually necessary and collectively sufficient to achieve the desired outcome; and finally to identify an appropriate set of tasks that would be needed to achieve each objective. This structure — outcome, objectives, tasks — can be used as a “strategic overlay” or “ideal strategy” that can help in planning for resources or authorities, identifying gaps in programs or technical skills, or defining benchmarks for progress, among other uses. (It can also be incorporated into Module 2 of the notional safe haven manual proposed in [Appendix A](#)).

### **Outcome: What are we ultimately trying to achieve?**

In some planning frameworks, the desired outcome is referred to as an “end-state,” “goal,” or “strategic objective” (i.e. in contrast to an operational or tactical objective). The desired outcome is a simple statement describing the state of the world that the strategist (or the President, an ambassador, a military commander, etc.) would like to bring about for a particular area or situation. It is that state toward which all objectives and actions are taken, and any objectives or actions that do not contribute to the achievement of that state should be considered extraneous (at least for this strategy — they might be critical for other strategies or priorities).

The main question — “What ultimate outcome is desired?” — could also be restated, “What would winning look like?” For safe havens, the desired outcome would be something to the effect of “This area is no longer vulnerable to exploitation by illicit actors seeking safe haven” (or its vulnerabilities are tolerable and manageable) or “The population in this area is inhospitable to illicit actors seeking their support” or “The threat posed by this safe haven is isolated.” Obviously, such a statement would need to be elaborated somewhat — but it should still be a fairly concise, straightforward statement summarizing the goals toward which all personnel involved in the safe haven effort are working. As such, it should be based on a comprehensive assessment of the specific factors that contribute to that particular safe haven problem (see [Section 2.2: Developing safe haven assessments](#) and [Appendix C: Safe Haven Assessment](#)). It should also be something that is achievable — therefore it should be modest: the purpose of encouraging political will and building governance capacity is not to create a perfectly governed society, but to plug enough gaps in governance and legitimacy that the safe haven problem can be addressed locally. However, that suggests that the desired outcome should be not only achievable but also sustainable — quick fixes fail quickly — and consistent with other important national interests and official U.S. policies.

## **Concept: What is the overall vision for achieving the outcome?**

When developing a strategy to address any given safe haven problem, it should be remembered that the complex interrelations among the various political and civil factors that affect UGA/SH will require careful coordination and sequencing of all instruments of national power, since successful but isolated efforts in one area can potentially harm efforts in other areas: A successful military mission could damage infrastructure, complicate local politics, or harm the local economy; building security capacity for border control risks disrupting cross-border economic activities and alienating or radicalizing affected populations, especially if the partner government uses its capacity in a way that ultimately undermines its own legitimacy. Unintended and self-defeating consequences often emerge from strategies that do not consider the full range of governance functions, political players, and attitudes the local populations have toward their state, each other, and the USG.

While building the governance capacity of states that have a safe haven problem is often a centerpiece of USG strategies to address the problem, it should not be assumed that such capacity-building is always the right approach. If key officials in the safe-haven state lack the political will to reduce the safe havens, one important objective is likely to be to persuade those officials to commit to undertaking whatever efforts are likely to produce success (see [Section 1.3.2.1: Political will](#)). If we fail to achieve that objective, or if our attempt to build capacity fails, a strategic objective might be to isolate the safe haven and mitigate the threats it generates by, for example, building monitoring and interdiction capacities of neighboring states, or by using force, overtly or covertly, to coerce intractable adversaries, or by using information to undermine local support for the illicit actors. If the USG does not have diplomatic relations with a state, or if there are reasons to believe the state might fail or be overthrown, an objective might be to bypass the state and develop or strengthen our relationship with opposition or nongovernmental groups or with the population through strategic communication supported by appropriate action — or, conversely, to establish diplomatic relations with that state as a first step in helping it address broader issues of governance and legitimacy. In all cases, the discussion in the [Section 1: Framework](#) should be used to inform the development of the concept for any safe haven strategy.

### ***Special considerations for information effects***

As noted in the [Section 1.3: What makes safe havens possible?](#), eliminating a safe haven is primarily a matter of influencing or enabling specific people, individually or collectively, to take or refrain from taking specific actions. This includes efforts to influence the political will of government actors and to win the support of local populations. Efforts to influence people are variously called information campaigns, information operations, information strategies, strategic communication, public diplomacy, public affairs, declaratory policy, propaganda, or psychological operations. Which term is used depends partly on the purposes to which the information is put, partly on who is doing the “informing,” and partly on the merit or intentions of the actor.

There are multiple offices throughout the USG doing this sort of work under different names, and the information they develop and disseminate are not necessarily coordinated. This is a mistake, because success in the kinds of efforts this report addresses depends on successfully influencing politicians and populations, many of whom are trying to make sense of what is

happening in their village, city, or neighborhood or in the world at large. Our words, and more importantly our actions, can help them make sense of what is happening — whether to our benefit or our detriment. Substitute “illicit actors” for “insurgents” and the following comment gets to the heart of the matter:

In most societies there are opinion-makers: local leaders, pillars of the community, religious figures, media personalities, and others who set trends and influence public perceptions. This influence — including the pernicious influence of the insurgents — often takes the form of a ‘single narrative’: a simple, unifying, easily expressed story or explanation that organizes people’s experience and provides a framework for understanding events. Nationalist and ethnic historical myths, or sectarian creeds, provide such a narrative. The Iraqi insurgents have one, as do al Qaeda and the Taliban. To undercut their influence you must exploit an alternative narrative: or better yet, tap into an existing narrative that excludes the insurgents. ... [Y]ou do this in baby steps, by getting to know local opinion-makers, winning their trust, learning what motivates them, and building on this to find a single narrative that emphasizes the inevitability and rightness of your ultimate success.”<sup>38</sup>

A narrative is different from a message: A message is words, spoken or written. A narrative is an explanation: what we are doing, why we are doing it, and why it is in their interest to help us or our partners. Put another way, a message communicates, a narrative justifies.

Messages can reflect or undermine the narrative we or our partners want to promulgate, but our actions and the actions of our partners are more important. Presenting a narrative of nationalism, and promulgating messages of nationalism, but subjecting the population to intolerable inconvenience or suffering will likely cause the population to create its own narrative based not on nationalism but on factionalism. Unfortunately, the converse is not necessarily true: the narrative, messages, and actions might all suggest nationalism — but the population might still not buy it, perhaps because of their leaders’ calculations of personal interests or power, or because the population has an alternative narrative that is even more powerful than that of nationalism. Nonetheless, while a well developed information campaign — a narrative offering a public justification of the effort and therefore a means to legitimize that effort — might not be sufficient to accomplish the desired outcome, it certainly is a necessary component of any safe haven strategy.

Because of its central role, the information campaign (or whatever term is used) should be treated not simply as one objective among many, as is often the case, but rather as a filter through which all other objectives are passed on their way to the ultimate outcome we are trying to achieve, or as a yardstick for the objectives’ consistency with the overall concept of the strategy. If any objective — or any of its supporting tasks — undermines the overall concept or the preferred narrative, it will not contribute to the success of the overall effort — and can even undermine the legitimacy of the effort in the eyes of the population we or our partners are trying to influence.

That is not to say that every objective and task needs to actively support the information strategy or take the information strategy as its central component; it is only to say that, at a minimum, the objectives and tasks — and the actions undertaken to carry them out — should not undermine the desired information effects. As noted at the end of Section 1: Framework,

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<sup>38</sup> David Kilcullen, “Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency,” March 2006. Kilcullen made the same point in his keynote speech at the *Ungoverned Areas Workshop Series*, 28 November 2006.



legitimacy without capacity is unproductive, but capacity without legitimacy is counterproductive.

## **Objectives: What intermediate outcomes are needed?**

Some planning frameworks refer to intermediate-level objectives or sub-objectives as “strategic objectives” or “operational objectives”; these terms refer to a small set of intermediate outcomes (roughly, between two and ten objectives) that would need to be realized in order for the ultimate outcome to be achieved. These objectives should emerge from a process that employs *functional experts* to identify the kinds of conditions that safe havens can emerge from (see the “What makes safe havens possible?” section) and *regional experts* to identify the degree to which those conditions are present in the specific safe haven under review.

The objectives that ultimately are chosen for that safe haven should be:

- individually necessary and collectively sufficient to achieve the desired end-state;
- stated as outcomes to keep them tangible and to make it possible to measure progress toward each (see [Appendix A](#), Module 5);
- achievable — but the list of objectives should not be limited only to those achievable by the USG, because other states, the host state, non-governmental organizations, civil-society organizations, private businesses, and inter-governmental organizations all have skill sets and resources that could be put to use to achieve these objectives;
- consistent with — or at least not incompatible with — the desired information effects (see below); and
- defined independently from existing programs, resources, skills, authorities, or tools — this is supposed to be a hard-nosed look at what it would take to actually achieve what we are setting out to achieve; cataloguing what we are already doing, or what we are capable of doing, should be done only after the objectives are identified so we can identify gaps in efforts and capabilities (see [Appendix A](#), Module 3).

A comprehensive analysis of the factors contributing to any particular safe haven problem — and to the interactions among those factors — will assist in identifying the objectives appropriate to the area (see [Section 2.2: Developing safe haven assessments](#)). The specific list of objectives for a particular region will, of course, depend on the factors that have been assessed as contributing to the safe haven. It might be useful, however, to consider as a starting point the following set of generic objectives and sub-objectives, which suggest some desirable outcomes related to the host government, the local population, the illicit actors, and the dangers of the safe haven itself:

### **Safe Haven Objectives (generic and illustrative)**

#### **I. The government is cooperative and capable**

1. No faction within the government sponsors the safe haven
2. The most important and relevant factions within the government agree to the USG’s desired outcome
3. The government has the strategic, operational, tactical, and technical training and resources required to support the USG’s desired outcome

## **II. The local population is cooperative**

1. The area and population are secure from attack
2. The local population's grievances are being redressed and essential services are being delivered
3. The local population, opinion leaders, and power structures consider the government legitimate or, at minimum, its activities tolerable
4. The local population is providing intelligence and other support to the efforts to achieve the USG's desired outcome

## **III. The illicit actors are diminished in their influence, presence, and capabilities**

1. The illicit actors are separated from their base of support in the local population
2. The illicit actors' infrastructure and resources are damaged or destroyed
3. The illicit actors no longer find the area hospitable for use as a safe haven

## **IV. The safe haven problem is isolated**

1. The illicit actors' ability to project capability is geographically restricted
2. Neighboring governments are capable of restricting illicit actors' cross-border and maritime capabilities

Any place where all of these statements are true is unlikely to be a safe haven; any place where most of these objectives have not been met is likely to be considered potentially problematic.

## **Tasks: What actions or programs will achieve the objectives?**

Tasks are the programmatic components of the strategy — identifiable efforts that are undertaken by specific organizations in specific places toward specific ends. However, they should not be simply a list of the programs that are already being undertaken in an area, but rather a list of what would be both individually necessary and collectively sufficient to achieve each of the objectives (as defined earlier).

Once tasks are identified, carrying out the strategy is a matter of taking stock of what is already being done — not only by U.S. actors but by non-U.S. actors as well: foreign donors, international organizations, international non-governmental organizations, the multi-national private sector, the government (national, provincial, local, etc.) of the safe-haven state, civil society organizations, labor unions, local businesses, and the media (see [Appendix A](#), Module 3). All of these groups have something to contribute — the USG does not have the resources to carry out every task that is needed to achieve its safe havens objectives. In fact, it is usually the case that the USG should not be the entity undertaking many of these efforts in any case. But it also does not need to do all of them: the strategy depends not on who undertakes the tasks but on whether the tasks are being successfully undertaken. Taking stock of who is doing what where helps not only to identify tasks that are not being served by any existing programs, but also those that are being served by multiple programs (see [Appendix A](#), Module 4); this should determine whether some of those programs are simply redundant (which could be useful) or extraneous (which is a waste of resources).

In addition to undertaking this basic gap analysis, it is helpful to develop criteria for measuring progress in carrying out these tasks and whether they are achieving their objectives (see [Appendix A](#), Module 5). In developing these criteria, the question to ask might be, How would we know if we were winning? If we can answer that question, we can keep track of whether we are winning — and can start the process over again if it is determined we need to change course.

## Appendix C: Safe Haven Assessment (illustrative framework)

The questions in the text box below are based on the framework introduced in the Framework section of this report and represent issues that would need to be understood in particular places to effectively counter safe havens there. This list is incomplete (for example, indicators are needed to determine an urban area's suitability as a safe haven) and should be considered provisional; as the USG's understanding of safe havens evolves, this assessment framework should be updated to reflect its more refined insights. The Geographical Considerations questions can be used to help identify particular areas within a country or region that are physically suited to becoming one kind of safe haven or other (see Section 2.3: Developing safe haven maps and models); once those "candidate" areas are identified, the Political Considerations, Civil Considerations, and Resource Considerations questions can be used to determine the degree to which those areas could actually be useful to the illicit actors that operate in the region (see Section 2.1: Developing safe haven strategies). The U.S. Interests questions can be used to determine the degree to which U.S. counter-haven resources should be focused on that area (see Section 1.4: What makes a safe haven problematic to U.S. security?).

### **I. Geographical Considerations: What areas could be used for safe haven?**

1. What remote areas are suitable as safe havens?
  - 1.1. Low population density
  - 1.2. Rugged terrain
  - 1.3. Dense vegetation cover
  - 1.4. Undefined, ill-defined, undefended, or disputed borders
  - 1.5. Weak central government control or presence
  - 1.6. Proximity to other ungoverned areas
2. What urban areas are suitable as havens?
3. What maritime areas are suitable as havens?
4. Is the communication infrastructure exploitable as a virtual haven?

### **II. Political Considerations: How is this area governed?**

1. *Does any government have adequate political will to address this safe haven?*
  - 1.1. What kind of regime nominally rules these areas?
  - 1.2. What leaders, parties, or agencies have actual influence over political or economic decisions?
  - 1.3. Which of those leaders or groups are part of an illicit power structure?
  - 1.4. Which of those leaders or groups are unwilling to counter safe havens?
  - 1.5. Why are those leaders or groups unwilling to counter safe havens?
    - 1.5a. Support groups' goals or activities
    - 1.5b. Do not share USG's threat assessment
    - 1.5c. Fear reprisal
    - 1.5d. Domestic politics
    - 1.5e. Foreign pressure
    - 1.5f. Restrictive norms
    - 1.5g. Legal restrictions
  - 1.6. How are those leaders or groups linked to one another and to other politically

- significant groups?
- 1.7. What levers of influence might be most effective to increase political will?
  2. *Does the government have adequate intelligence capacity?*
    - 2.1. Do the intelligence services have adequate training, equipment, and expertise?
    - 2.2. Do state-civilian relations prevent or promote the recruitment of human sources?
  3. *Does the government have adequate security and law enforcement capacity?*
    - 3.1. Who provides security in these areas?
    - 3.2. How does the military operate with respect to illicit actors and to civilians?
    - 3.3. How do the police operate with respect to illicit actors and to civilians?
    - 3.4. What security services does the informal sector (militias, tribal police, etc.) provide?
    - 3.5. What capabilities, equipment, and training do the government military and police services have?
  4. *What system of justice is in place in these areas?*
    - 4.1. What is the overall quality of adherence to rule of law?
    - 4.2. What formal legal system is in place?
    - 4.3. What formal judicial system is in place?
    - 4.4. What informal or customary (e.g., tribal) systems of justice are in place?
  5. *What is the economic situation in these areas?*
    - 5.1. Do adequate economic opportunities exist?
    - 5.2. Who undertakes economic stabilization?
    - 5.3. Who undertakes economic development?
  6. *Who provides essential services in these areas?*
    - 6.1. What is the overall quality of civil administration?
    - 6.2. What is the overall humanitarian situation?
    - 6.3. What is the overall development situation?
    - 6.4. Who ensures access to food?
    - 6.5. Who ensures the availability of shelter?
    - 6.6. Who provides utilities?
    - 6.7. Who provides education?
    - 6.8. Who provides health care?
    - 6.9. How equitably are essential services delivered?
  7. *Is the government likely use its capacity in a way that undermines its legitimacy?*
  8. *Are any conflicts or crises present?*
    - 8.1. Civil war
    - 8.2. Active insurgency
    - 8.3. Militia violence
    - 8.4. Recent humanitarian emergencies
    - 8.5. Natural disasters
    - 8.6. Economic and financial crises
    - 8.7. Post-conflict situations

### **III. Civil Considerations: How hospitable is the local population to illicit actors?**

1. *What identity or affinity groups reside in the area?*
  - 1.1. Ethnic/Racial
  - 1.2. Linguistic
  - 1.3. Cultural
  - 1.4. Political/Ideological

- 1.5. Religious
2. *What political, economic, or social grievances are present?*
  - 2.1. Are any groups politically marginalized or oppressed?
  - 2.2. Which groups score poorly on indicators for human development?
  - 2.3. Which groups are engaged in conflict?
3. *What interest groups have influence or operations in the area?*
  - 3.1. What governmental personnel operate in the area?
    - 3.1a. National
    - 3.1b. Provincial
    - 3.1c. Local or tribal
    - 3.1d. Neighborhood
    - 3.1e. Quasi-governmental bodies
  - 3.2. What private-sector groups operate in the area?
    - 3.2a. Civil society organizations
    - 3.2b. Labor unions
    - 3.2c. Businesses
    - 3.2d. Media
  - 3.3. What foreign groups have interests, influence, or operations in the area?
    - 3.3a. United States
    - 3.3b. Other foreign countries
    - 3.3c. Inter-governmental organizations
    - 3.3d. International non-governmental organizations
    - 3.3e. Foreign or multinational private sector
  - 3.4. What illicit actors are known or suspected to be present in this area?
    - 3.4a. Terrorist groups
    - 3.4b. Insurgent groups
    - 3.4c. Criminal organizations
  - 3.5. What are the most significant links among these various interest groups?
4. *How do different groups perceive the legitimacy of the government?*

#### **IV. Resource Considerations: What is available to facilitate illicit operations?**

1. *What personnel are potentially available to illicit groups?*
  - 1.1. What population groups have political or social grievances that could be exploited?
  - 1.2. What population groups have ideological or political sympathies with illicit groups?
  - 1.3. What population groups have ethnic, linguistic, cultural, or religious affinities with illicit groups?
  - 1.4. What population groups have a fear of reprisal from illicit groups, the state, or other actors?
2. *What funds or funding potential are in this area?*
3. *What communication and transportation infrastructure (formal or informal) is present?*
4. *What weapons are available (for use, sale, or international distribution) in this area?*

#### **V. U.S. Interests: What factors might affect U.S. policy in this area?**

1. *What is the strategic value of this area?*
  - 1.1. Does the U.S. depend on this area for achieving important foreign policy objectives?
    - 1.1a. How would instability in this area affect U.S. diplomacy?
    - 1.1b. How would instability in this area affect treaty obligations?

- 1.1c. How would instability in this area affect commerce?
- 1.1d. How would instability in this area affect other foreign policy objectives?
- 1.1e. How would instability in this area affect the security of the U.S. homeland?
- 1.2. Does the U.S. depend on this area for conduct of military operations?
- 1.3. Does this area contain natural resources that the U.S. depends on or that illicit actors can exploit?
- 1.4. Might problems in this area stimulate domestic or international public opinion pressuring the U.S. to act? (e.g., Does a prominent diaspora from this area live in the U.S.?)
- 1.5. Does this area have weapons of mass destruction (WMD); chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) materials; or CBRN experts?
2. *Does the safe haven problem pose any threat to other U.S. interests?*
  - 2.1. Are any transnational terrorist groups present or suspected to be present in this area?
  - 2.2. Are any insurgents present or suspected to be present in this area?
  - 2.3. Are any criminal networks (e.g., traffickers in arms, humans, drugs, finances) present in this area?
  - 2.4. Do any transnational terrorist, insurgent, or criminal groups in this area have the capability to project force against U.S. interests?
  - 2.5. Does this area have the potential to provide a nexus among terrorist, insurgent, and criminal activity?
  - 2.6. Does foreign influence interfere with the internal affairs of this area, especially by governments opposed to U.S. interests?
  - 2.7. Does the this area's proximity to the U.S. homeland facilitate the migration of terrorist, insurgent, or criminal activity into the U.S.?
3. *To what degree are the problems in this area susceptible to U.S. action or influence?*