



Learning from the Past to Shape the Future

Fourth Annual Security Cooperation Virtual Conference
January 12–15, 2026

Agenda

Please note: All times listed are in Eastern Standard Time (EST).

Monday, January 12, 2026

Opening Ceremony & Welcome Remarks (8:30–9:30 a.m.)

Mr. Michael Miller, Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and Dr. Jason Fritz, President of Defense Security Cooperation University, open the conference, introduce the conference theme, and discuss the importance of history to national security and security cooperation.

Break (09:30–10:00 a.m.)

Panel Session 1 (10:00–11:30 a.m.)

Panel 1: From Classroom to Collaboration: Professional Military Education and Security Cooperation

This panel explores the power of human connection in producing positive security cooperation outcomes. From the Cold War defection of a Soviet bioweapons expert to the strategic advantages gained through professional military education and training, the panelists will discuss how fostering interpersonal relationships and cultural understanding can be a force multiplier for U.S. influence and global stability. Topics include the impact of international PME, the potential limits of PME, and the benefits of IMET in building collaborative relationships.

Panel 2: Getting Interoperability Right

This panel examines innovative strategies for enhancing security cooperation with allies and partners, focusing on interoperability as a key enabler of collective defense. From the strategic advantages of Regional Centers and the theoretical underpinnings of "intellectual interoperability," to maximizing the impact of military personnel exchange programs and leveraging the lessons learned from Combat Aviation Advising, the panelists will discuss how to foster stronger relationships, build trust, and improve multinational defense effectiveness and lethality.

Panel 3: Forging the Future: Industrial Opportunities and Challenges

This panel covers the evolving relationship between the U.S. defense industrial base and its international partners, as well as the strategic implications for security cooperation. Panelists will address challenges facing the U.S. defense industry, the history and importance of foreign investment and collaboration in the U.S. defense sector, and the often-overlooked role of defense offsets in fostering strong alliances and mutually beneficial partnerships. The panel will offer insights for practitioners in security cooperation policy, FMS, and institutional capacity building.

Workshop: Case Study Handbook

Dr. Angela Riotto will present the *DSCU Case Study Handbook* as a comprehensive guide for using case studies in security cooperation education and workforce development. The handbook provides guidance on designing case studies, facilitating engaging discussions through proven techniques, and applying analytical frameworks to extract valuable lessons. In the workshop, she will walk participants through the handbook, the process of writing a case study, and its use in the classroom.

Lunch (11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.)

Panel Session 2 (12:30–2:00 p.m.)

Panel 1: Unlocking Potential: How AI Can Enhance Security Cooperation

This panel examines the strategic imperative of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into all aspects of security cooperation, from improving mission success to workforce professionalization. Panelists will discuss how AI can address the benefits of AI for predictive threat and risk analysis, AI-assisted decision support, and enhanced design and planning of security cooperation activities. Crucially, the panel will also discuss the challenges associated with AI adoption, including data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the need for a comprehensive AI strategy to guide implementation.

Panel 2: Beyond “Check the Box”: Transforming AME in Security Cooperation

This panel will trace the historical evolution of assessment, monitoring, and evaluation (AME) within U.S. security cooperation programs, from its origins in tracking material aid during the Cold War to its current focus on data-driven metrics and sustainability. Panelists will delve into the challenges of implementing effective AME frameworks in complex operational environments. The panel will also investigate the importance of AME efforts in light of geopolitical shifts and the critical need for robust frameworks that can adapt to these changes.

Panel 3: Long History of Security Cooperation

This panel delves into the historical evolution of security cooperation. From the institutional capacity building contribution of Casimir Pulaski in the American Revolution to the challenges of supporting the Soviet Union during World War II and the development of Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) through the U.S.-Japan alliance, panelists will examine key factors influencing the success and sustainability of security partnerships. The discussion will also consider the impact of shared ideology, cultural and language barriers, and technological innovation on security cooperation outcomes.

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

Fireside Chat—China’s Use of Security Cooperation: Beyond the Belt and Road (10:00–11:00 a.m.)

Panel Session 3 (11:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.)

Panel 1: Leveraging Opportunities, Overcoming Challenges: The Future of the Indo-Pacific

This panel delves into the past and current complexities of security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Presenters will present research on China’s diverse approaches to security cooperation, insights into the U.S.-Philippines Balikatan Exercises as a model for bilateral defense collaboration and operational readiness, and the historical context and lessons for security cooperation in this critical region. Together, the papers address the importance of these collaborations in navigating challenges and fostering a stable, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific.

Panel 2: The Security Cooperation Gamble: Why We Win Some and Lose Others

This panel examines the complex landscape of security cooperation, exploring both successes and failures in U.S. efforts to build partner capacity and effective partnerships. Drawing on case studies ranging from Afghanistan and Iraq to El Salvador, Colombia, and Jordan, the panel investigates key factors influencing the effectiveness of security

cooperation efforts. Ultimately, this panel aims to glean valuable lessons from past experiences to inform future strategies and improve the odds of success in future security cooperation endeavors.

Panel 3: Historical Insights for Effective Security Cooperation

This panel explores the complexities and challenges facing U.S. security cooperation efforts in a world marked by rising geopolitical tensions, non-state actors, and evolving threats. Presenters will examine case studies from the Western Balkans, the Baltics, and Mexico, analyzing the impact of U.S. security cooperation on regional stability, partner nation military posture, and adversarial responses. The panel will critically assess the definition of "security cooperation success," considering factors beyond partner alignment with U.S. interests, and offer insights for navigating the future of security partnerships in a complex and contested global environment.

Panel 4: Roundtable Discussion—Building Advisors: Lessons learned from the Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDA) Program

The Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDA) program was established by the Office of the Secretary of War for Policy in 2009 to provide ministerial level, civilian advisors for functions that are typically performed by U.S. Government civilians in the Department of War. The first MoDAs deployed to Afghanistan in July 2010. Since then, the program has trained and deployed over 1000 advisors in support of security cooperation, operational missions, and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) cases worldwide. This panel will review the establishment and evolution of the MoDA program, its management approaches and training, as well its partnerships and expansion into FMS. Panelists will draw out and highlight MoDA lessons learned and their application to future advisor training and employment.

Lunch (12:30–1:30 p.m.)

Fireside Chat—FMS Reform: Strengthening Security Cooperation to Achieve National Security Goals (1:30–2:30 p.m.)

Wednesday, January 14, 2026

Panel Session 4 (10:00–11:30 a.m.)

Panel 1: From Piracy to Geopolitics: Historical Lessons from Maritime Security Cooperation

This panel examines the history of maritime security, exploring the challenges posed by rising powers, non-traditional threats, and the need for innovative strategies. Presentations will analyze the deepening Indo-U.S. maritime security cooperation in the face of China's naval expansion, drawing lessons from historical examples of naval containment. The panel will also delve into the historical role of privateering and its potential relevance for modern maritime security cooperation, particularly in protecting global trade routes. Ultimately, this panel seeks to identify ways to strengthen maritime deterrence, enhance regional resilience, and maintain stability in a complex and contested maritime domain.

Panel 2: Cyber and Space: New Frontiers of Security Cooperation

This panel examines cyber and space and how security cooperation efforts need to adapt to these emerging domains. Panelists will present research on cybersecurity capacity building, the strategic importance of space partnerships in Africa, how insider threats impact cooperation, and the innovative ways the National Guard is expanding space security initiatives through unique partnerships.

Panel 3: Building Durable Partnerships to Deter Aggression

This panel offers practical insights for security cooperation practitioners and policymakers when building sustainable and effective partnerships. Experts will analyze the successes and failures of different approaches in diverse contexts—exploring the role of sustained commitment in Somalia, the impact of institutional trust in Latin America, the National Guard's ability to address gaps left by traditional aid, and lessons from the inactivation of the 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade. The goal is to extract actionable lessons for building stronger, more resilient partnerships to realize the mission of peace through strength.

Panel 4: Security Cooperation Reimagined: New Approaches to Security Cooperation

This panel challenges conventional U.S. approaches to security cooperation. Panelists will explore innovative strategies for learning from partners, adapting to evolving threats, and fostering sustainable, context-aware solutions. They will address the need to move beyond American-centric approaches, the pitfalls of relying solely on crisis-driven funding, and the importance of adopting long-term perspectives and comprehensive metrics for evaluating the success and failure of security cooperation initiatives.

Lunch (11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.)

Fireside Chat—Strengthening Security Cooperation: Processes, People, and Priorities (12:30–1:30 p.m.)

Break (1:30–1:45 p.m.)

Panel Session 5 (1:45–3:15 p.m.)

Panel 1: From the Cold War to Great Power Competition: Foreign Military Sales and Lessons from History

This panel examines the historical interdependencies between U.S. security cooperation and its ability to project power, focusing on lessons learned from past challenges to optimize current and future strategies. Experts will analyze persistent issues with equipment delivery through Foreign Military Sales as well as the crucial link between security cooperation programs and host nation willingness to grant access to overseas bases. By assessing how past decisions shaped present realities and what this means for the future of U.S. global presence and influence, this panel seeks to provide actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners alike.

Panel 2: Lessons from the Cold War

This panel examines the historical evolution of security cooperation during the Cold War. From the U.S.-Canadian alliance forged in World War II to the complex intelligence relationships of the Cold War, panelists will explore the diverse forms of collaboration and the enduring tensions that have shaped the security landscape. Topics include the drivers and implications of Arctic militarization, the role of trust and interoperability in partnerships, and the potential for historical precedents to inform current responses to a changing geopolitical environment marked by renewed great power competition.

Panel 3: Critical Lessons from Recent Security Cooperation Efforts

This panel dives into the practical realities of recent security cooperation efforts in Europe. Drawing on their diverse experiences from across the EUCOM AOR, panelists will discuss key success factors, best practices for advising at tactical and operational levels, and strategies to overcome common pitfalls and ensure positive security cooperation outcomes.

Workshop: Knowledge Portal (CUI; CAC-holders only)

Dr. Nathan Toronto, Defense Security Cooperation University, will discuss DSCU's Knowledge Portal (CUI) as a useful tool for both security cooperation scholars and practitioners. He will walk pre-registered, CAC-holding participants through the platform and allow participants to try the portal during the session.

Thursday, January 15, 2026

Poster Session (10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.)

10:00–11:00 a.m.

- DSCU Digital Transformation: Making Strides Toward Enhanced Collaboration
- Certification 2.0/Human Capital Initiative
- Partnership for Peace Consortium
- Defense Security Cooperation Service

11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

- Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies
- Center for Naval Analyses
- Security Cooperation Lessons Learned Program
- Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance
- Foreign Disclosure Officer

Lunch (12:00–1:00 p.m.)

Panel Session 6 (1:00–2:30 p.m.)

Panel 1: Building on Experience: Insights for Effective Security Cooperation in Africa

This panel explores the multifaceted nature of security cooperation in Africa through a range of case studies. Panelists will analyze the factors that contribute to successful partnerships, the challenges of navigating local socio-political contexts, and the importance of understanding partner agency. The discussion will highlight lessons learned for improving the design and implementation of security cooperation programs, while also considering the broader implications for U.S. strategic influence and regional stability in a context of great power competition.

Panel 2: Evolving Arsenals: Arms and Tech Transfers Through History

This panel examines the complex relationship between arms and technology transfers, security cooperation, and political influence. Spanning historical case studies from nineteenth-century China to modern AI advancements, panelists will explore how states leverage technology to build alliances, project power, and achieve strategic objectives. Discussions will address the challenges of cultural integration, the pitfalls of mismatched interests, and the unique dynamics of the "value arms" market, offering insights into the evolving landscape of security in a world shaped by rapid technological change.

Panel 3: Capturing History of Security Cooperation

This panel delves into the challenges and opportunities of researching and documenting the history of security cooperation. Panelists will discuss innovative approaches to

accessing and analyzing neglected archival sources, the importance of multinational perspectives in research methodologies, and the skills necessary for effectively capturing lessons learned within the security cooperation enterprise. Examining topics from U.S.-Australian cooperation during the Cold War to recent reforms within the Department of War, this panel offers insights into how historical research can inform and improve security cooperation practice.

Break (2:30–2:45 p.m.)

Plenary: Key Takeaways and Closing Remarks (2:45–3:30 p.m.)

The conference co-chairs, Dr. Angela Riotto and Dr. Nathan Toronto, discuss the key takeaways of the conference alongside Dr. Jason Fritz and Mr. Kareem Oweiss to close the conference.