



INTRODUCTION TO FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE

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Foreign Internal Defense (FID) doctrine is constantly evolving. It should guide us to effectively organize and employ through the complexities of counterinsurgency and steady-state operations, and help us re-learn the lessons of large-scale peer and near-peer conflict and competition in contested environments. As we continuously improve our airpower capabilities and capacities in air, space, and cyberspace, our ability to revolutionize FID and incorporate new concepts and technologies will identify the new best practices that shape future FID doctrine. The competition continuum that encompasses the range of military operations, from peacetime through large-scale combat, is always a consideration when determining the best practices for our Air Force. Consideration of peer and near-peer competition is a continuing necessity for doctrine as the Air Force supports the joint fight. Every Airman is an innovator and is integral to this continuous development process—we should all connect, share, and learn together to succeed. FID in a contested environment against a peer adversary requires the air component to be more adaptive, resilient, and agile in its deployment and employment plans and leadership philosophies.

FID is defined as **participation by civilian agencies and military forces of a government or international organizations in any of the programs or activities undertaken by a host nation (HN) government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, violent extremism, terrorism, and other threats to its security** (Joint Publication [JP] 3-22, [FID](#)). The US Army devised the term FID in 1976 as a euphemism for “support for [counterinsurgency](#).” In reality, FID is a broad mission involving the total political, economic, informational, and military support the US provides to enable other governments to field viable [internal defense and development](#) (IDAD) programs for counterinsurgency, combating terrorism, counter-narcotics, and other threats to its security. FID is a component of irregular warfare (IW), defined as a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over relevant populations. For more information on IW, see Air Force doctrine publication (AFDP) 3-2, [Irregular Warfare](#).

The National Security Council provides planning guidance for FID at the strategic level. The Department of State (DOS) is normally designated the lead agency for execution, while the Department of Defense (DOD) provides personnel and equipment to help

achieve military FID objectives. The strategic end state is a HN capable of successfully integrating military force with other instruments of national power to address [subversion, insurgency, lawlessness, terrorism and other threats to its security](#). The goal of FID activities during [stability operations](#) is to preclude future major US combat involvement.

Incorporating all elements of national power, FID applies across the [continuum of conflict and competition](#). Moving across the thresholds that separate one level of engagement from the next carries serious legal and policy implications for the United States. The preferred methods of helping another country are through education and developmental assistance programs. **Most Air Force FID actions entail working by, with, and through foreign aviation forces, foreign law enforcement, counterintelligence and security agencies to achieve US strategic and operational objectives.**

FID can entail the use of US combat units and advisors in roles aimed at stabilizing the security and survival of a HN and vital institutions under siege by insurgents. FID includes military training and equipping, technical assistance, advisory support, aviation enterprise development, and tactical operations, counterintelligence cooperation and threat information exchanges. Military assistance should be closely coordinated with diplomatic, economic, and informational initiatives.

Air Force FID actions should be designed to support and reinforce the HN's formal or informal IDAD strategy, its overarching strategy that focuses the full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and to protect itself from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security. The Air Force provides FID assistance to the HN's air forces, but it may assist other military Services and civil agencies, depending on how air support responsibilities are assigned within the HN and on the types of airpower assets employed.

Air Force FID incorporates a broad range of airpower. FID operations are usually conducted jointly with other US Service components and government agencies and combined with the activities of foreign military forces in the HN. The Air Force can conduct operations in support of nation-assistance programs or specific FID activities of other US Government agencies.

The Air Force uses combat support (CS) capabilities to create, prepare, deploy, employ, sustain, protect, and redeploy Air Forces to conduct FID operations. Failure to incorporate combat support early in any operation may result in the inability of Air Force capabilities to create the desired effects in a given conflict. For more information, see AFDP 4-0, [Combat Support](#).

Air Force FID operations fall under the broad category of nation assistance. Nation assistance is comprised of four separate but complementary programs: [humanitarian and civic assistance](#) (HCA), [security assistance](#) (SA), FID and [security force assistance](#) (SFA). Security assistance, though having much broader application than FID, can be integrated with FID strategies and operations. Security assistance may be designed to

help select countries meet their internal defense needs, to promote sustainable development and growth of responsive institutions. There is a distinction between personnel performing mission activities under the command and control of a combatant commander and personnel performing those activities under the laws, regulations, and funding applicable to Title 22, United States Code, *Foreign Relations and Intercourse*, Chapter 32 (§2151), "[Foreign Assistance](#)." This legal distinction profoundly influences many aspects of the operation. See JP 3-22, Appendix A, "[Legal Considerations](#)," for more information.

FID operations may be conducted in the HN, in other friendly foreign countries, or in the United States. Air Force regional area specialists proficient in foreign languages and cultures help geographic combatant commanders sustain coalitions, achieve regional stability, and contribute to multinational operations and FID efforts. Language capabilities and international skills are a force multiplier and essential to the Air Force's ability to operate globally.

Air Force FID has a strong potential to reinforce the HN government's security, removing the threat, but it also has the potential to undermine the democratization sought in US policy. Further, airpower may concentrate the use of force into a small number of government officials, who can use it to attack the civilian government or civil society and reform organizations that promote democratization. AF FID efforts should always support the larger process of political reform necessary to address the underlying threats to internal security.
