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Military-led Agribusiness Development Teams: An Agricultural Development and Stability Strategy

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Introduction

Despite decades of efforts by government and non-governmental aid organizations, economic development in the poorest and most unstable regions of the world remains a challenge. The ADT Project is a collaborative effort of the Network Science Center at West Point and National Guard units to enhance the success of reconstruction and economic development missions through improved mission planning and improved civil-military collaboration.



Background

For the past two decades, National Guardsmen – America's citizen-soldiers – have volunteered for missions in developing nations around the world as part of the Guard's State Partnership program. Under the program, various state Guards form partnerships with other nations in order to provide assistance in disaster preparedness, reconstruction and economic development. This assistance comes in many forms, including shared training in search and rescue techniques and joint training in emergency response and in security and anti-terrorism techniques. More recently, these Guard teams have also begun to provide economic development assistance, particularly agricultural development assistance.

Five years ago, state National Guards took this partnership concept to Afghanistan and created the Guard Agribusiness Development Teams (ADTs). ADTs are company-sized units of 55-70 Guard members who bring to the team both their civilian skills in reconstruction and economics and their military training. This makes it possible for ADTs to engage in economic development work in areas where security risks are too great for staff from non-governmental aid organizations or for staff from civilian governmental aid organizations. As a result, the ADT is an ideal model for the initial stage of post-conflict/post-disaster reconstruction and economic development in unstable regions.



Mission

1. Development of strategies to improve coordination of efforts and information sharing among military units and civilian government and non-governmental entities operating on the ground.

2. Development of partnerships between military units and the private sector in order to improve the process of transitioning reconstruction/economic development efforts from military-led to civilian private sector-led.

3. Creation of an economic development research agenda with a particular focus on community recovery and economic development in post-conflict/post-disaster situations during times of instability. This research seeks to apply a network approach to understanding economic systems, particularly the local economic systems of under-developed regions. The goal of this research agenda is development of a model for community recovery and economic development in which military units, in coordination with civilian entities, can first identify and then help build the critical nodes and links necessary for a well-functioning economic system.



Current Efforts

The ADT Project's initial support came from NSC, which made it possible for project researchers to undertake the first stage of research, which involved surveying ADTs to develop a project agenda that most meets their needs. The three-part agenda described above is based on that survey and follow-up discussions with ADT commanders.

The current work of the project has involved the collection of data and "lessons learned" from ADTs in their missions. This information guides the research agenda and is being shared among ADTs. Project researchers are also now working to collect information from other economic development research projects that could be useful in providing guidance to ADTs in overcoming some of the challenges they face.

In addition, the ADT Project is working with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) on the development of a technology that would assist ADTs and other military units when they plan community recovery and economic development projects. DARPA is focused on development of this technology for use by units operating in Afghanistan.

However, the ADT Project is hoping to secure funding in future years that would make it possible to expand the use of this technology by military units responding to any future conflict or disaster in which the unit must plan, execute or support community recovery projects. The long-term vision is to expand development of this technology so that it can be used by military units to collect data on regional economic systems. This data would then allow units to identify more quickly the critical nodes and links in those systems that must be built or repaired in order to establish a functioning economic system. A similar research approach is already underway at NSC by the Frontier Markets research team, which is studying capital market systems in least-developed nations.



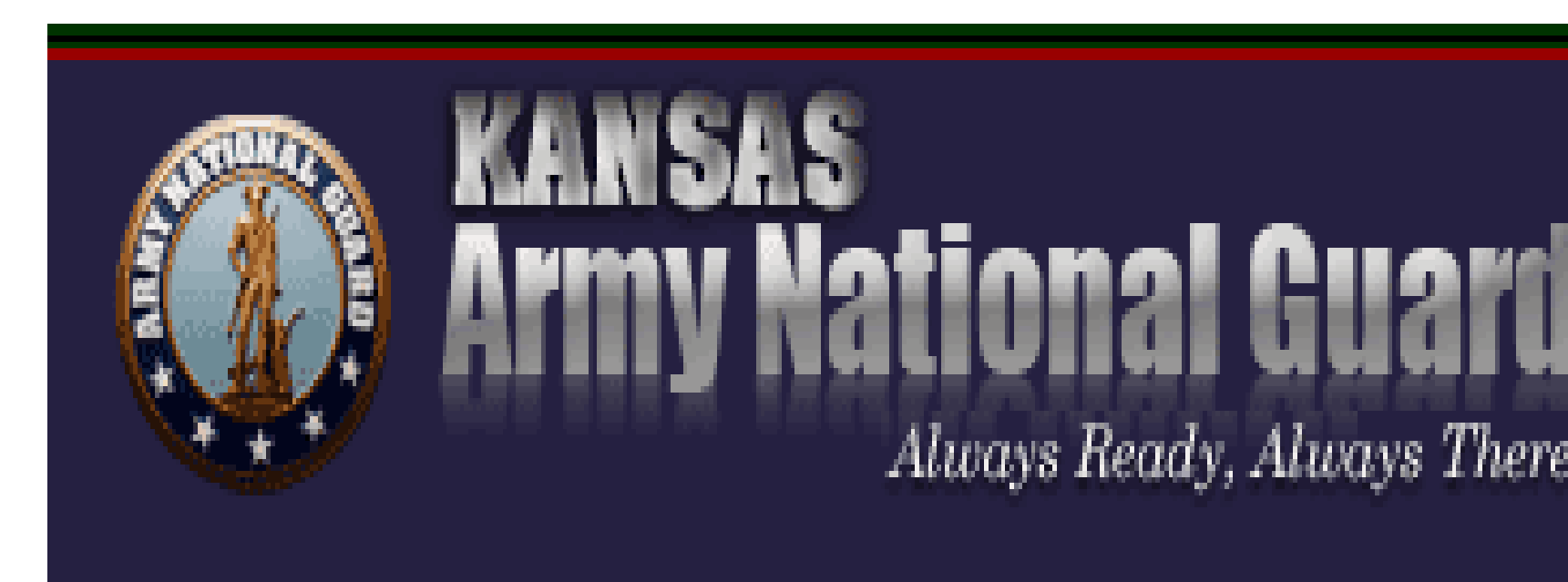
Approach

Network science analysis is being used by ADT Project researchers to develop a model and technology tools that will allow military units engaged in post-conflict/post-disaster response and recovery to identify critical nodes in economic systems – individuals, organizations or resources – the protection and reconstruction of which are key to economic development and stability.

ADTs make wide use of, and have a need for additional assistance, in the use of economic analysis for the following purposes:

Market assessments
Strategies for coordinated development.
Improved analysis of food system networks
Economic incentives for private sector partnerships

Network Science Center
West Point



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For further information

www.adtproject.org