

CONCEPT PAPER

ASEAN Regional Forum

Establishment of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)
Transnational Threat Information-sharing Center (ATTIC)

Proposal

The United States proposes establishing an ARF Transnational Threat Information-sharing Center (ATTIC) that will capitalize on existing regional mechanisms and centers to enhance information-sharing capability among ARF member countries. During the initial operating capacity, ATTIC will primarily focus on drug-related transnational crime while developing a framework that could expand the capacity of ATTIC to address other areas of mutual interests.

Background

The U.S. delegation has presented the idea of ATTIC during the Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM-MS) in New Zealand on March 29-30, 2010.

The U.S. delegation also raised the ATTIC proposal at the Inter-Sessional Support Group (ISG) meeting in Vietnam on March 29-30, 2010 and during the Inter-Sessional Meeting on CTTC in Brunei on April 28-30, 2010, where ARF members generally agreed on the necessity for greater information-sharing and were positive about the ATTIC's potential.

The concept was again discussed at the Inter-Sessional Support Group meeting in Bali, Indonesia on November 29-December 2, 2010. A presentation on ATTIC was also given at the Defense Officials Dialogue in Sydney, Australia on April 6, 2011.

According to the 2010 Hanoi Plan of Action (POA), the ARF should develop an "effective network for regional law enforcement and military agencies to build regional capacity, share information, and respond in a timely and effective manner to the threats posed by transnational crime in the region. It includes work towards the establishment of an ARF Transnational Threat Information-sharing Center (ATTIC) that would utilize and deepen existing regional mechanisms and centers specializing in information-sharing and capacity building."

This concept paper will be discussed at the ARF SOM in June 2011.

Objectives

Working among ARF members, the Center's objectives should include, but not be limited to:

1. To develop a new information-sharing arrangement that link regional law enforcement agencies and synchronize existing networks of information-sharing arrangements covering the region while identifying and avoiding duplication;
2. To create, broaden, and deepen already existing relationships and arrangements among organizations such as:
 - Interpol and the Interpol-ASEANAPOL Information Sharing Agreement

- Information Fusion Centre
 - ReCAAP (The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia)
3. To share that information equally with all ARF members who have signed these agreements (Sub-groups of ARF that could become larger and more inclusive over time);
 4. To maintain strong linkages with already-existing training centers in the region so that the efforts of those organizations are not duplicated.

Participation

Participation will be on a voluntary basis, and all ARF members are encouraged to participate. The information will be shared only with the consent of those ARF members to specific information-sharing as part of those agreements.

Administrative Arrangements

Location: TBC

Funding: The U.S. government is consulting internally to explore our funding options and we anticipate additional funding support from ARF members, on a voluntary basis, will be needed. We look forward to discussions on this issue during the next ISGs and appropriate ISMs. The ARF Fund could be utilized among contributors for financial-sharing arrangements. More specific terms of funding modalities will be developed during the next inter-sessional year.

The funding for the ATTIC could come from ARF members (for center and independent staff) with larger, initial contributions and smaller, ongoing assistance.

Staff: Detailed staffing requirements will be worked out at a future concept development conference. Initially there may be a team of 3 or 5 legal experts under the authority of the ASEAN Secretariat and ARF Chair. They would be charged to formulate, develop, and negotiate agreements with the interested parties. Once these agreements are negotiated, staff requirements will be considered on a case by case basis.

Eventually, the Center's activities will be supported by a core operational staff, which will be selected on a competitive basis from the law enforcement agencies of the participating countries, and by the liaison officers attached to it. Any necessary administrative staff will be local citizens of the host nation.

In addition to the liaison officers from the member countries, other interested parties and competent international organizations such as Interpol may consider posting liaison officers at ATTIC to facilitate cooperation and information flow.

Concept Development

The United States and an ASEAN dialogue partner will host a series of two concept development and planning conferences to further refine the concept and plan for implementation. The objectives of the first conference will be to examine the existing information-sharing architecture in the region, identify gaps in that architecture, and determine how ATTIC will fit into it in a way that adds value and avoids duplication. Best practices and lessons learned from the establishment and operation of existing centers such as ReCAAP and the Information Fusion Center will be studied and incorporated into the ATTIC concept. The second conference will define in detail the structure of the center, identify staffing and equipment requirements, and draft budget projections for initial start-up and the first two years of operation. There will also be a site-survey of possible locations for the center during the second conference. If possible, these conferences should be held in conjunction with other ARF meetings in order to reduce travel and budget concerns.

Initial Operating Capability

Upon completion of concept development, the center will enter a two-year trial period at initial operating capability. The trial period will allow the center to develop a full program of work and begin integration into existing information sharing schemes. During this time, the center will grow liaison relationships with the appropriate ARF member law enforcement agencies and other existing information-sharing centers in the region.

ARF Approval and Full Operating Capability

Upon completion of the trial period, ATTIC will present an evaluation of performance to the ARF. If the evaluation shows that it can operate in a way that is useful to the region and enhances transnational crime-related information-sharing while avoiding duplications, ARF members will recommend that it be sent to the ARF ministers for full endorsement for permanent operations.

Timeline for the ARF endorsement of ATTIC:

May 2011	U.S. delegation will distribute the consolidated draft of the ATTIC Concept Paper.
June 2011 SOM	ATTIC Concept will be presented for endorsement to ARF Senior Officials.
July/August 2011	Approval of ATTIC by ARF Foreign Ministers
2011-2012	Finalize funding contributions; hold concept development conferences to draft and approve detailed terms of reference for funding and operation of ATTIC.
2012-2013	Begin staffing and operation of the center.