
ENABLING OTHERS TO WIN IN A COMPLEX WORLD

Security Force Assistance and the Future of the Regionally Aligned Forces
Mission in the Brigade Combat Team

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KEY FINDINGS

An examination of the US Army's security force assistance efforts during Operation Iraqi Freedom reveals significant issues in advising effective Iraqi Security Forces due to several organizational and personnel shortcomings within the Army's approach to this crucial mission. The merging of the Army's operational and advisory efforts at the its core operational formation—the brigade combat team—occurred with the advent of the Advise and Assist Brigade in 2009 and resolved some of those issues operationally, but did not fix the underlying structural issues in the Army.

In 2013, the Army began to examine a new way of conducting business in the area of conflict prevention, looking to “engage regionally and respond globally.” The tool chosen for this strategy is the Regionally Aligned Forces concept; the idea of aligning brigade combat teams with Geographic Combatant Commands. However, the security force assistance lessons learned in Iraq are currently not operationalized to their maximum level within the brigade combat team. If Regionally Aligned Forces are to be truly effective, several changes must take place in how the Army mans, trains, and equips its formations:

- First, the Army should expand regional alignment to the majority of its brigade combat teams.
- Second, the Army should change its personnel management policies to ensure that soldiers serving in regionally aligned units remain focused on a geographic theater for the majority of their careers.
- Third, the Army should maximize the presence of Special Operations Forces and conventional forces co-located on US bases to optimize regional, language, and security force assistance expertise already present in Special Forces while also continuing the interdependence between Special Forces and conventional forces experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- Fourth, the Army should create a distinct “Army Advisor” functional area for officers and noncommissioned officers to form a cadre of experts in training foreign security forces at the tactical and operational levels.
- Lastly, the Army should modify the organization of the brigade combat team to optimize it for security force assistance by assigning these Army Advisors down to the maneuver battalion level, thus creating a permanent advisory capability in the units most likely to deploy on Regionally Aligned Forces missions.

As this study will examine, the above recommendations are not a cure-all for security force assistance within the brigade combat team, but what they do provide is a possible means to more effectively and efficiently conduct security force assistance with partner and allied nations’ militaries. By maximizing advising potential at the brigade combat team and below within units serving in a Regionally Aligned Forces role, the Army will be able to more effectively build partner capacity, to develop enduring relationships with partner military forces while gaining regional expertise at the tactical and operational levels, to maintain institutional Special Operations Forces and conventional forces interdependence, and most importantly, to attain unity of effort in the operational and advisory components of operations while also getting the best soldiers suited for advisor duty into those roles.

INTRODUCTION

Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 2010, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted: “strategic reality demands that the U.S. government get better at what is called ‘building partner capacity.’”¹ Security Force Assistance (SFA) is a central tenant of the military component of this strategy, which focuses on six tasks with foreign security

¹ Robert M. Gates, “Helping Others Defend Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Assistance,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No.3 (May/June 2010), 2.

forces (FSF): organize, train, equip, rebuild and build, and advise and assist.² Defined as “activities that contribute to unified action by the US government to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions,” SFA enables limited action by US advisors to achieve strategic goals through the efforts of partner nations and allies rather than through direct US action.³ Additionally, as budgets tighten, focus within the DOD, and the Army in particular, centers on the need to build partner capacity *prior* to the onset of conflict. Concentrating on the “Prevent” and “Shape” phases of campaigns, the Army chose in 2013 to begin to regionally align its forces in order to provide conventional forces to Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCCs) through a concept called Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF).

Security force assistance is more relevant in the contemporary environment than ever before. By 2009, Army doctrine recognized that “security force assistance is no longer an ‘additional duty.’ It is now a core competency of our Army.”⁴ Building off this idea, the 2014 revision of the Army Operating Concept, titled *Win in a Complex World*, stated that in order to foster security, “the Army engages regionally and prepares to respond globally to compel enemies and adversaries.”⁵ This central tenant of regional engagement and global responsiveness drives the RAF concept, as it recognizes that “Army forces are uniquely suited to shape security environments through forward

² Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance*, (Washington D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1 May 2009), p.2-2.

³ Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-07: Stability*, (Washington D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, June 2014), p.1-16.

⁴ *Field Manual 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance*, 2.

⁵ US Army Training and Doctrine Command, *The US Army Operating Concept 2020-2040: Win in Complex World*. Pamphlet 525-3-1 (Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, October 7, 2014), 7.

presence and sustained engagements with allied and partnered land forces.”⁶ An underlying principle among these themes is the need for the US to avoid prolonged large-scale conflict and instead focus on building partner capacity for dealing with these issues, exemplified in the recognition that “the diversity of threats to US security and vital interests will increase the need for Army forces to prevent conflict and shape security environments.”⁷

The aim of this study is to examine the role the US Army plays in effectively enabling partner and allied nations to provide for their own security, thus preventing conflict if possible, and shaping it towards US interests if conflict should arise. This paper will focus at the tactical and operational levels of SFA—specifically looking at US Army formations at the brigade combat team (BCT) and below; these units, approximately 3,000-5,000 predominantly combat arms soldiers, are the deployable building block of the Army’s active forces, and thus, the RAF strategy. This study’s chosen case study—Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)—will focus solely on the US Army’s training efforts with the Iraqi Army. Although the Marine Corps, as well as elements of the Navy and Air Force, contributed significantly to the training of the Iraqi Army, Iraqi National Police, Iraqi Border Police, Iraqi Special Operations Forces, and a myriad of other types of units, the scope of this project will be to look at how the US Army attempted to train units most similar to it—the conventional Iraqi Army. This paper will then allocate its remaining efforts to recommend fundamental organizational changes to the BCT to maximize effectiveness at SFA in conflict prevention.

⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁷ Ibid., 14.

Additionally, OIF serves as the chosen case study of SFA in a fully resourced counterinsurgency campaign instead of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) for several reasons. First, Operation Enduring Freedom suffered from chronic shortages of resources until the Iraq War began to draw down in 2009; SFA efforts therefore were correspondingly stunted. Second, the SFA mission in Afghanistan fell under both NATO and US training efforts, thus making a comparison of the two problematic. Third, there is very little data available on SFA in Afghanistan prior to 2009. Lastly, the dire urgency of the situation in Iraq drove the efforts at SFA reform in the Army, with Afghanistan taking a back seat and applying the tactics, techniques, and procedures found in Iraq more often than not.

SFA efforts in Iraq proved that the Army could adapt to conduct SFA at the brigade combat team level, albeit slowly and often inefficiently, in order to develop Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) capable of defending Iraq by the US withdrawal in 2011. As the collapse of the ISF in the summer of 2014 proved, however, the cost in US blood and treasure certainly did not yield a force worthy of the efforts and support put into it by the United States. Additionally, successful SFA depends on more than just tactical advising—institutions and leadership must be reformed as well. If the Army's efforts at SFA in its largest military campaign since Vietnam failed to yield a force capable of repelling a non-state armed group with much less modern equipment or training as the ISF, revisions to Army SFA efforts are needed.

SFA can be a mission wrought with peril. Operation Iraqi Freedom—which included the largest security force assistance mission in recent years—teaches us that there are several major lessons to be learned in order to be effective in this type of

mission. Primary among these lessons is the inherent need to attain unity of effort between the advisory mission and combat mission, the need to specially select, train, and employ soldiers best suited for service as advisors early in the brigade’s cycle for deployment, and the need to adapt the organization to maximize effectiveness for SFA. As it currently stands, the RAF concept fails to address most of these lessons, instead relying on the assumption that soldiers within the brigade combat team will be adequate trainers of foreign security forces. Analyzing strengths and weaknesses of the US Army’s SFA effort with the Iraqi Army allows for best practices to be applied to future SFA efforts the Army may take part in—particularly focused on the Regionally Aligned Forces concept at the brigade level and below.

SECTION I: THE STRATEGIC REASONING BEHIND REGIONALLY ALIGNED FORCES

The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review emphasizes three pillars for DOD’s defense strategy: *protect the homeland; build security globally; project power and win decisively*.⁸ Of the 11 DOD missions the Army has a role in, three can be directly tied to Security Force Assistance: provide a global stabilizing presence; conduct military engagement and security cooperation; conduct stability and counterinsurgency operations.⁹

The 2014 Army Strategic Planning Guidance (ASPG) helps shape how the Army sees the strategic environment in which it is trying to build and carry out the concept of regionally aligned forces. Examining the desired end state of operations—the termination of conflict—the ASPG states “Effective conflict termination must establish

⁸ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014*, (Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, March 14, 2014), 12, V.

⁹ *The Army Operating Concept 2020-2040: Win in a Complex World*, 7.

security and stability among populations, which requires knowledge and influence on their cultural, political and economic relationships.”¹⁰ The key point here, and one learned at great cost during OIF and OEF, is that knowledge of culture and effective relationships are central to successful mission accomplishment in today’s operating environment. This rationale shapes and justifies the Army’s regional alignment of forces in order to meet the basic and enabling roles.

The Army accomplishes its mission through the conduct of two basic roles and four enabling roles. The Army’s basic roles are to *deter/defeat threats on land* and to *control land areas and their populations*.¹¹ The organization, size, and capabilities of the Army make it the only branch of the Joint Force that can achieve these roles over a sustained period on land. The Army’s enabling roles are *support to security cooperation, support to domestic civil authorities, entry operations, and Army support to other services, the Joint Force, and the Department of Defense*.¹² These critical enabling roles round out the capabilities that the Army brings to the Joint Force. The manner in which the Army will conduct this increased engagement is by maintaining a regional presence, building partner capacity and alliances, and providing the Joint Force with essential enablers for rapid contingency response if and when needed. The Army relies on two supporting concepts for this strategy—Regionally Aligned Forces and Mission Tailored Forces (MTF).

The Army defines Regionally Aligned Forces as “[original in bold] **those Army units assigned and allocated to combatant commands, as well as those capabilities**

¹⁰ Raymond T. Odierno and John M. McHugh, *Army Strategic Planning Guidance: 2014*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2014), 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹² *Ibid.*

that are service retained (but aligned to a Combatant Command (CCMD) and prepare by the Army for regional missions.”¹³ RAF includes Total Army organizations (Active Duty, National Guard, Army Reserves) and also capabilities that are forward deployed, operating in a combatant command area of responsibility, supporting the combatant command from outside the area of responsibility, and those prepared to support from outside the area of responsibility.

Key to the RAF concept is that combatant command requirements drive the regional missions, and this will require that RAF have understanding of cultures, geography, languages, and militaries of the countries in which they are most likely to operate, as well as expertise in how to impart military knowledge and skills to others.¹⁴ The goal of regional alignment is to provide the Combatant Commanders with “predictable, task-organized, and responsive capabilities” to achieve their missions and other requirements across the full range of military operations, to include joint task force-capable headquarters, crisis or contingency response, operations support, theater security cooperation, and bilateral or multilateral military exercises.¹⁵

Additionally, the Army cites that regional alignment will provide for more effective approaches for non-traditional threats in an “increasingly interdependent security environment” by training soldiers and growing leaders who can adapt to changing conditions across the range of military operations.¹⁶ Part of this is that the Army sees RAF as a way to build sustainable capacity in partners and allies because forces organized under the concept will support enduring Combatant Commander

¹³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14

¹⁶ Ibid.

requirements for military engagement, thus strengthening relationships and providing “consistent and committed interaction.”¹⁷ Lastly, units organized under the RAF concept provide for an immediate “force-in-being” to assure partners and deter potential adversaries.¹⁸

The other supporting concept outlined in the 2014 ASPG is that of Mission Tailored Forces. Defined as “**those Army units manned, trained, and equipped for the conduct of a specified mission,**” mission tailored forces maintain proficiency in the fundamentals of unified land operations and combined arms warfare, but have “capabilities tailored primarily to their mission.”¹⁹ Mission Tailored Forces complement RAF in meeting Combatant Commander requirements, but have distinctly different and specific roles and missions. While RAF units respond to shifting needs and requirements of the Combatant Commanders, MTF focuses on missions such as the Global Response Force (GRF), defeating anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) threats, countering WMD, Army cyberspace forces, conventional Army habitual support to other services or special operations forces for specified missions, and combat operations to decisively defeat a threat.²⁰

Understanding how the Army sees itself filling its role in accordance with current national security strategy, this paper will next examine a case study of the largest security force assistance mission the Army has undertaken since Vietnam—Operation Iraqi Freedom. By tracing the development of the SFA mission in Iraq from 2003-2011, it is

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

possible to identify institutional and organizational shortcomings in how the Army conducts SFA, especially at the land-owning brigade combat team level.

SECTION II: SFA IN IRAQ, 2003-2011: A CASE STUDY

The catastrophic effects of the early American decision to disband the Iraqi Army were further compounded as Operation Iraqi Freedom progressed by advisory efforts best described as ad hoc, disjointed, inefficient, and lacking proper attention and resources. At the beginning of the war, there were very limited efforts to build the Iraqi Army, as it fell victim to the extreme levels of “de-Baathification” underlying American policy. It was not until February 2005, when the Bush administration developed a strategy contingent on turning security quickly over to the Iraqis, that significant efforts at SFA began. In response, General George Casey, commander of Multinational Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) called to raise the number of American advisors in Iraq to 2,600—more than doubling their presence.²¹ Yet, no consolidated training program for deploying advisors was created until 2006, and even then, no system existed within the Army’s personnel management bureaucracy to ensure selection of the best people suited to serve as advisors. Separate chains of command for advisors and operational units created unity of effort problems, and the focus remained on the conventional Army forces until 2009, when the Army decided to merge the advisory effort into the BCT, creating the Advise and Assist Brigade. This augmented formation fixed many of the inherent issues in the US SFA efforts in Iraq, although recent events and the collapse of the Iraqi Army in the face of opposition in 2014 call into question the effectiveness of this campaign.

²¹ James J. Lovelace, testimony to Congress, House, Armed Services Committee, *U.S. Military Transition Teams in Iraq*, 109th Cong., 2nd sess., 7 December 2006, 65.

Troubled Beginnings: 2003-2006

In June 2003, the operational command in Iraq, Coalition Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF7), created the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT), manned primarily by contractors, to train Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).²² The initial plan called for US Special Operations Forces to train 500 Iraqi commandos and for CMATT to establish nine light brigades for the new Iraqi Army.²³ Concurrently, conventional US units began to train para-military Iraqi Civil Defense Corps units at the company level to assist in providing law and order.²⁴

In June 2004, after a year of “indirection and collapse,” CMATT became incorporated under the newly formed Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), led by then-Lieutenant General David Petraeus.²⁵ The establishment of MNSTC-I coincided with the creation of Multinational Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), which handled tactical matters, while MNSTC-I was responsible for the creation of Iraqi Security Forces. This occurred concurrently with CJTF7 being split into two commands—MNC-I for daily operations, and Multinational Forces-Iraq (MNF-I), which oversaw the strategic direction of the war. While intended to raise the priority of building Iraqi Security Forces, the creation of separate operational and advisor commands also created a split command structure that would make unity of effort difficult to achieve.

²² Peter R. Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 19.

²³ Lovelace, 64.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, (New York: Penguin, 2005), 394.

General Petraeus soon replaced the contractors leading the advisory effort with soldiers; however, many were “inadequately prepared for their role as advisors.”²⁶ At the time, there were only 39 “Advisor Support Teams” (AST) in Iraq to carry out the training of the ISF.²⁷ Of the ASTs, Major General Schwitters, the commander of CMATT, felt that only a third of the teams were effective, noting that “nothing” had been done to prepare them for their duties.²⁸

Indicative of the level of dysfunction in the advisory effort early in the war, one AST leader who deployed to Iraq in March 2004 expecting to set up an Iraqi basic training facility eventually found himself embedded with his Iraqi Army trainees during the first Battle of Fallujah in November 2004.²⁹ Outlining the role that elements of one reserve division played when they deployed to Iraq in 2004, the commander of the US Army Reserve Command stated, “I thought the 98th [Division] would essentially do a training base kind of thing. But what actually happened was that many of these outstanding soldiers found themselves embedded inside Iraqi units.”³⁰

At the time of MNSTC-I’s creation, nine Iraqi battalions existed; General Petraeus’s task was to build ten Iraqi divisions as quickly as possible.³¹ Compounding this daunting challenge, MNSTC-I had to fight for personnel to man its staff, relying

²⁶ Mansoor, 19.

²⁷ Steven E. Clay, *Iroquois Warriors in Iraq*, (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007), 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

²⁹ Pete Fedak, Personal recorded interview, 15 February 2006. [Digital Recording done by Operational Leadership Experiences Project, Combat Studies Institute, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, in possession of Combined Armed Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.], 12.

³⁰ James R. Helmly, Personal recorded interview, 2 December 2006. [Digital Recording done by Operational Leadership Experiences Project, Combat Studies Institute, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, in possession of Combined Armed Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.], 7.

³¹ Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a way out of Iraq*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 73.

heavily on reservists and individuals plucked from units already in Iraq.³² Simultaneously, in June 2004 MNC-I tasked conventional Army units to train the two existing brigades of the Iraqi National Guard to replace the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps.³³ Army conventional forces became increasingly involved in the training of Iraqi Security Forces by creating ad hoc training teams they provided from within their own ranks, while US forces “partnered” with ISF to eventually conduct combined operations together. By November 2004, over 1,100 transition team members—sourced predominantly from the units already on the ground—were serving in Iraq.³⁴ Yet, despite the creation of MNSTC-I, little unity of effort existed, and units essentially developed their own programs and manned their own advisor units to train the Iraqi Army.

During the 2004-2006 period, advisors assigned to Military Transition Teams (MiTT) in Iraq were both sourced internally by operational units already in theater, and sourced externally by officers and noncommissioned officers selected to serve on transition teams by the Army. Disparate training, however, resulted in the teams having great levels of experience, but mostly forged through on the job training, and not institutional training on advising.³⁵ Heavy reliance initially went to Army Reserve and National Guard units, and then the efforts shifted to manpower that land-owning brigade combat teams could provide themselves to the advisory mission. Multiple studies of

³² Ibid., 76.

³³ Lovelace, 64.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Joshua J. Potter, *American Advisors: Security Force Assistance Model in the Long War*. (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2011), 38.

transition teams, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, concluded that these teams were too small for the tasks that they have been assigned.³⁶

Doctrinally, MiTTs were 11-man teams advising Iraqi Army units at the division, brigade, and battalion levels. They were normally attached to US land-owning units, usually at the brigade or battalion—although the size of the teams frequently varied as subordinate elements in the BCT were often reorganized in support of the MiTTs. Administratively, the Iraqi Assistance Group (IAG) controlled the teams, while the conventional land-owning units managed them tactically.³⁷ MiTTs consisted of officers and senior noncommissioned officers from across combat arms and support branches, responsible for not only training and advising the Iraqi forces, but also for ensuring the Iraqi Army had access to American enablers such as fire support and medical evacuation assets. In theory, a brigade-level MiTT was led by a combat arms lieutenant colonel, with a combat arms major as his maneuver trainer, and then an officer and noncommissioned officer team in specialty areas such as intelligence, logistics, fire support, communications, and medical support.³⁸ At the battalion level, the trainers dropped to a corresponding rank—generally led by a captain and made up mostly of company grade officers and staff sergeants through sergeants first class, while at the division, the sourcing went up, as colonels led division MiTTs. Therefore, in theory the

³⁶ John Nagl, “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for an Army Advisor Command,” *Military Review*, September-October 2008, 23.

³⁷ Brennan F. Cook, “Improving Security Force Assistance Capability in the Advise and Assist Brigades,” (School of Advanced Military Studies monograph, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, April 2010), 30.

³⁸ 162nd Infantry Training Brigade, “Advise and Assist Brigade: Augmented Advisor Block A Training,” (PowerPoint presentation, The Modular Brigade Augmented for Security Force Assistance, Ft. Polk, LA, 1 June 2009).

MiTTs had the expertise to train and advise the Iraqi Army, while also possessing the tactical skills needed to bring US enablers to bear in support of the IA.

By 2005, as the situation in Iraq deteriorated, the US plan became to quickly transition security responsibilities to the Iraqis—as President Bush summarized, “as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down.”³⁹ This hopeful strategy was “to keep a lid on Iraq until such time as newly created Iraqi forces could take over the fight.”⁴⁰

Correspondingly, advisory efforts rapidly increased. General Casey requested forces for the advisory effort in 2005, calling for an additional 1,505 dedicated trainers, representing a demand of over five BCTs worth of captains, majors, and lieutenant colonels, as well as a host of senior noncommissioned officers; this came at a time when they Army already had 20 BCTs committed to the fights in Iraq and Afghanistan and another 15 preparing to rotate in.⁴¹ Facing significant demand for officers and senior noncommissioned officers, the Army had to rely on the piecemeal tasking of individuals to cobble together advisor teams, ignoring factors such as cohesion among the teams or an individual’s disposition towards being able to work across cultures with Iraqi counterparts.

The establishment of MNSTC-I did show, however, that the Army was willing to put resources towards organizing, training, and equipping an Iraqi Army, albeit not without flaws. General Casey optimistically set November 30, 2005 as the date to transition security responsibilities to Iraqi control at the provincial level. MNSTC-I became the main effort in Iraq, with US forces taking a back seat to the ISF, instead

³⁹ George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 356.

⁴⁰ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 394.

⁴¹ Lovelace, 65.

focusing mainly on counterterrorism.⁴² The assumption that, only 18 months after its establishment, MNSTC-I could effectively train an Iraqi force capable of assuming responsibility for all of Iraq seems naïve in hindsight. This point was driven home in the failed attempt in July 2006 to implement the first Baghdad Security Plan, Operation Together Forward, when several Iraqi Army units simply did not show up.⁴³ Despite US plans and institutional commitment to turn security over to the Iraqi Security Forces, the Iraqis simply were not prepared.

Transition Teams in the “Surge”: 2007-2008

Recognizing inconsistency in the training of advisors, in June 2006 the Army, Air Force, and Navy consolidated advisory team training at Fort Riley, Kansas, under the command of the Army’s 1st Infantry Division; the Marines established their own transition training center at 29 Palms, California. Seeing the urgency of this mission, the Army allocated the combat power of the 1st Infantry Division’s entire headquarters and the leadership of two of its brigades to oversee the training.⁴⁴ Those selected to MiTTs underwent 60 days of training at Fort Riley, focused on individual skills, advisor skills, collective tasks, culture, as well as 40 hours of language training.⁴⁵ Additionally, the Deputy Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division was made the commander of the Iraqi Assistance Group, responsible for the administrative control of all transition teams deployed to Iraq.⁴⁶ The Army G3, Lieutenant General James Lovelace, testified to Congress in 2006 that he considered resourcing the transition teams to be the Army’s top

⁴² Mansoor, 22.

⁴³ Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, (New York: Penguin, 2009), 50.

⁴⁴ Carter Ham, testimony to Congress, House, Armed Services Committee, *U.S. Military Transition Teams in Iraq*, 109th Cong., 2nd sess., 7 December 2006, 10.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Cook, 30.

manning priority.⁴⁷ There is some credence to this claim, as one class of majors graduating from the Command and General Staff College in late 2006 saw 18% of its graduates assigned directly to transition teams.⁴⁸ However, the demands of the war dictated that many top performers were assigned to combat units, and advisor teams often were assigned those soldiers who had not yet deployed, as the Army had to relieve the stress on those soldiers that had deployed repeatedly to Iraq or Afghanistan.

This is not to say, however, that the Fort Riley training program was a cure-all to fix SFA efforts. Counterinsurgency expert John Nagl, whose last assignment in the Army from 2006-2008 was commanding one of the battalions at Fort Riley tasked with training US advisors, stated he “was furious at the ad-hockery that underlay everything the Army was doing in advisor selection and training.”⁴⁹ Nagl’s criticism’s centered on what amounted to be strategic miscalculations. According to him, the Army was selecting the wrong people to serve as advisors (focusing on those who had not been in combat rather than the most talented who had); additionally, it was conducting training in the wrong place (the prairie of Kansas rather than the desert of Fort Irwin, California). Furthermore, the Army was training advisors with the wrong people (tank drivers instead of Green Berets), and then the Army disbanded the trained, battle-tested advisor teams after their yearlong deployment, only to create new ones from scratch to replace them.⁵⁰

Higher echelon MiTTs (brigade and division) were predominantly filled with senior leaders centrally selected by the Army for advisory duty. These “external” teams

⁴⁷ Lovelace, 68.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ John Nagl, *Knife Fights: A Memoir of Modern War in Theory and Practice*, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2014), 159.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

received formal training—as the teams were formed and trained together at Fort Riley and then trained in Kuwait and Iraq prior to attachment to US forces in theater. While this often resulted in these MiTTs being trained in a focused manner on advising skills and led the teams to have good internal cohesion, they were attached to BCTs with whom they had no prior experience, resulting in the need to develop relationships between the MiTT and the BCT.⁵¹ Additionally, despite the importance of training of Iraqi Security Forces by 2008, only half of the 14 division MiTTs were resourced with a standard MiTT, showing that even as the top manning priority, getting advisors into place remained a challenge.⁵²

The battalion-level MiTTs, those conducting tactical advising, were frequently internally sourced by members of the US battalion responsible for an area of operations. Although this led to good relationships between the transition team and the conventional land-owning unit, it also created several problems. First, these MiTTs often received scant advisor training—usually relegated to a rotation at one of the combat training centers, and then attendance at the Phoenix Academy at Camp Taji upon arrival in Iraq. The Phoenix Academy (later to become the COIN academy) was designed to serve as the transition team “finishing school” for MiTTs that trained together at Fort Riley, not as a stand-alone training program.⁵³ Additionally, internally sourced teams were “created out of hide” and required the sourcing unit to lose a disproportionate number of senior non-commissioned officers and key officers for this mission, making it difficult to replace

⁵¹ Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, “Commander’s Handbook for Security Force Assistance,” (Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 14 July 2008), 25.

⁵² Timothy Deady, “MiTT Advisor: A Year with the Best Division in the Iraqi Army,” *Military Review*, November-December 2009, 44.

⁵³ Lovelace, 67.

those leaders. Battalion MiTTs often conducted combat operations with their ISF partners, creating additional challenges. Conducting assessments of Iraqi Army units in the field required the MiTT to organize itself for a combat patrol—a daunting task for an 11 member team, as the minimum manning requirements for most US patrols was 12 soldiers, and giving credence to the claim that the advisory teams were too small for the tasks they completed.⁵⁴ Many battle-space owning BCTs and battalions therefore had to provide US platoons under operational control of the MiTTs to facilitate their freedom of movement, further exacerbating the ad hoc nature of the MiTTs.⁵⁵

The descent of Iraq into sectarian civil war from 2006-2007 took its toll on the advisory effort, as the focus of MNSTC-I's efforts remained the creation of Iraqi combat units, at the expense of institutional capacity, logistics, and other structural building blocks.⁵⁶ Leader development in the ISF also took a backseat. Despite these challenges, by summer 2007, MNSTC-I had created over 150,000 soldiers in the Iraqi Army, and the units' performance had increased.⁵⁷ Colonel Peter Mansour, General Petraeus's Executive Officer from 2007-2008, highlighted that "Six thousand advisors were embedded in five hundred military and policy advisory teams that were themselves increasingly better trained and able to assist Iraqi units."⁵⁸ It should be noted, however, that this was at a time when over 160,000 US forces were deployed to Iraq; this means that less than four percent of the force was dedicated to training the ISF. The urgency of the "surge" required US units to take on the bulk of securing the Iraqi population, while

⁵⁴ Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation," 23.

⁵⁵ "Commander's Handbook for Security Force Assistance," 25.

⁵⁶ Mansoor, 169.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

the ongoing development of the Iraqi Security Forces did not receive the same level of emphasis and resourcing as the additional five “surge” BCTs sent to Iraq did. While efforts to secure Iraq from 2006-2008 certainly achieved impressive results, the advisory campaign remained relatively ad hoc during this crucial phase of the war.

The Advise and Assist Brigade, 2009-2011

In September 2009, the Army relieved the 1st Infantry Division of its responsibility for training advisors, and the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade at Fort Polk, Louisiana stood up and assumed the mission. For the first time since the war began, an institutional command was dedicated to the training of advisors and transition teams. With this change, the 1st Infantry Division resumed its traditional role, and the 162nd fell in on the resources of the massive Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk.

The 162nd conducted its advisor training program in four blocks: a 10-day Advisor Course for Augmented Advisors, Warrior/Deployment Task Training, a 3-day Tactical Leader Seminar, and a 3-day Advisor/FSF Staff exercise.⁵⁹ This also enabled the 162nd to train and evaluate advisor teams as they conducted their Mission Rehearsal Exercise at Fort Polk or Fort Irwin, certifying the teams prior to their deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. Additionally, this change turned the Iraqi Assistance Group and the advisory effort over to MNC-I on June 3, 2009; finally placing the advisory and operational commands in Iraq under one roof.⁶⁰ The 162nd also formed Mobile Training Teams that could travel to Army installations to train deploying units on a variety of SFA

⁵⁹ Ronald J. Metternich, “Security Force Assistance: Organization for the Long War,” United States Army War College manuscript, Carlisle, PA, March 2010), 18.

⁶⁰ Cook, 29.

functions, including language skills, Islamic culture, roles of the advisor and negotiation techniques, leader engagements, and many other areas relevant to advisors.⁶¹

More importantly, the Army also changed the structure of how it would approach SFA in a significant way—both in the advisor teams and in the brigade combat team. The centerpiece of this change was the publishing of Field Manual (FM) 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, in May 2009. The central operational change in this construct was that MiTTs and other transition teams were no longer to be attached to the brigade combat team. The BCT would now be seen as the Modular Brigade Augmented for Security Force Assistance (MB-SFA, more commonly known as the Advise and Assist Brigade, or AAB). In this concept, the BCT would gain a large component of advisors upon receipt of a SFA mission, therefore shifting the priorities from transition teams supporting BCTs to the BCT itself *becoming* the transition team.

To facilitate this change, an AAB received up to a 48-person augmentation in the form of four colonels, 20 lieutenant colonels, and 24 majors.⁶² These individuals would be temporarily assigned to the BCT upon receipt of an SFA mission and would be task-organized into Stability Transition Teams (S-TTs) that would work hand and hand with the BCT's maneuver battalions. This meant that the S-TTs were embedded in the maneuver units and advised the Iraqi Security Forces, providing them with coalition effects when needed, and providing coalition forces with situational awareness of Iraqi Security Forces operations and progress, while conventional forces at the squad through battalion level partnered with their Iraqi counterparts (see Figure 1).

⁶¹ Potter, 41.

⁶² "Advise and Assist Brigade: Augmented Advisor Block A Training," slide 13.

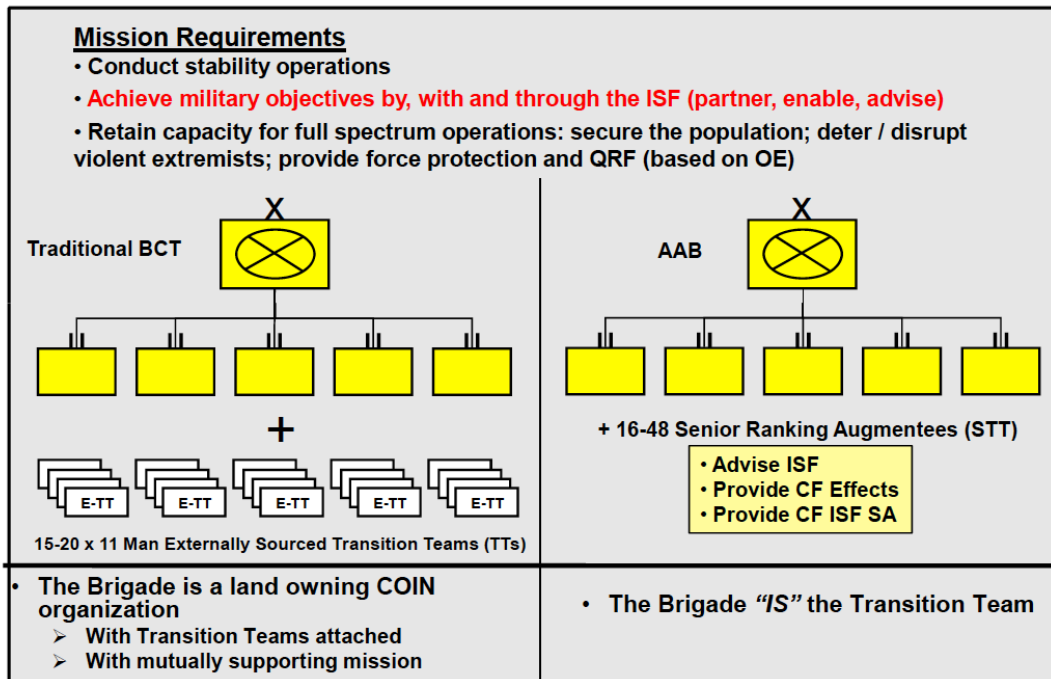


Figure 1: Traditional BCT vs. AAB⁶³

In the spring of 2009, the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division deployed to Iraq, serving as a “proof of concept” for the AABs. By August 2010, seven AAB’s were serving in Iraq as the last “combat” BCT redeployed to the US.⁶⁴

Highlighting the importance of the shift to an advisory capacity within the BCT itself, a former AAB commander commented, “leaders quickly discovered that security force assistance requires a different mind-set and focus from the traditional counterinsurgency mission of previous tours. We could no longer define our success by the number of insurgents we detained...Rather, the quality of the host nations’ security forces we left behind ultimately defined the success of our campaign.”⁶⁵ With the development of the

⁶³ Ibid., slide 15.

⁶⁴ Kate Brannen, “Combat Brigades in Iraq Under Different Name,” *Army Times*, August 19, 2010. Available at: <http://archive.armytimes.com/article/20100819/NEWS/8190324/Combat-brigades-Iraq-under-different-name>. Accessed November 29, 2014.

⁶⁵ Philip Battaglia and Curtis Taylor, “Security Force Assistance Operations: Defining the Advise and Assist Brigade,” *Military Review*, July-August 2010, 3.

AAB, the Army finally achieved unity of effort between its advisory missions and the major unit on the ground, the BCT. By linking the BCT to the transition effort, another AAB commander noted that “mindset shift” occurred within the AAB’s, where the “ISF are our battlespace” and the “entire organization of the brigade is in support of the S-TT.”⁶⁶

ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Reviewing the lessons learned in the Army’s attempts at security force assistance in Iraq from 2003-2011, there are several key takeaways that must be considered in future SFA operations. Primary among these lessons is the imperative to get the right personnel into training and advisory missions, the need to ensure that unity of effort, particularly between the brigade combat team and advisors, is considered in all aspects of operations, and the need to optimize the BCT for SFA missions.

Personnel: Getting the Right People in the Right Place

Army doctrine recognizes that “not every Soldier is well suited to perform advisory functions; even those considered to be the best and most experienced have failed at being an advisor.”⁶⁷ Consequently, Army doctrine for SFA lists 16 personality traits of the advisor, including such subjective traits as tolerance for ambiguity, warmth in human relations, tolerance for differences, and sense of humor, as well as outlining two subcategories of advisor-specific skills: enabling, or working across cultures, building rapport, and negotiation; and developing—teaching, coaching, and advising.⁶⁸

Despite the lessons of Iraq, current Army personnel strategies remain rooted in “an industrial age approach” in which it is impossible to identify relevant talents or

⁶⁶ Potter, vii.

⁶⁷ *Field Manual 3-07.1*, p.7-4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.7-3-7-4.

experiences for advisory duty.⁶⁹ Due to the Army's assignment and evaluation systems, there is no way to identify those who possess the attributes of successful advisors outside of prior service as an advisor. Additionally, it took several years for the Army to ensure that those officers selected as advisors would have the duty seen as a career enhancing assignment. The Army Chief of Staff, General Casey, stated in 2008, "I want to ensure that the officers that lead these teams are recognized and given the credit they deserve."⁷⁰ As John Nagl noted, this decision played a major role in helping ensure the right people filled advisory roles, as majors who led transition teams were given "key and developmental credit" required to advance in rank, and lieutenant colonels and colonels were selected for advisory duty by a centralized board, similar to the process for selection of battalion and brigade command.⁷¹

A question raised by the US SFA effort in Iraq is how detrimental the ad hoc creation of transition teams was on their ability to create effective Iraqi forces. Some have noted that review of the Army's advisory efforts throughout history reveals that the Army's "primary method of selecting advisors for nearly one hundred years has been the 'hey you' system. With the exception of SF [Special Forces] and FAO [Foreign Area Officer] selection, there appears to be no clear method for selecting the best qualified advisors."⁷² Similar to criticisms of the advisory effort in Vietnam being "the Other

⁶⁹ Raven Bukowski, John Childress, Michael J. Colarusso, and David S. Lyle, "Creating an Effective Regional Alignment Strategy for the U.S. Army," Officer Corps Strategy Monograph Series, Vol. 7, (Carlisle, PA: United States Army War College Press, November 2014), 3.

⁷⁰ Yochi Dreazen, "Army to Promote Training As Career Path," *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 June 2008, 3.

⁷¹ Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation," 23.

⁷² John T. Fishel, Rob Thornton, Marc Tyrrell, and Mark Lauber, "SFA Case Study-Mosul, Iraq," Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance White Paper, (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: 2008), 36.

War,” some have come to criticize the Army’s efforts in Iraq in such an ad hoc manner as having repeated some of the same mistakes.⁷³ Additionally, personalities matter when trying to work effectively between transition teams and BCTs, especially at the senior leader level.⁷⁴ However, it was not until the development of the AAB that advisor teams and BCTs trained together (albeit usually only for a short period) prior to deployment. The ad hoc creation and manning of advisor teams impaired not only team internal dynamics, but also relations with the BCT they would be attached to.

The Army must therefore place emphasis on identifying and selecting the right type of people to serve as advisors, ensuring the duty helps advance their career so that advisor duty attracts the best and brightest. Additionally, the Army must get these advisors into the BCT as early as possible to ensure effective relationships exist between the BCT and the advisory teams, if the Army truly wants to ensure that the successes of the AAB will continue in future SFA endeavors.

Organization: Unity of effort

The decision to create specialized elements in the form of an operational command (MNC-I) and an institutional command (MNSTC-I) in Iraq often created stove-piped information chains and disrupted unity of effort between the operational and advisory missions. Similar effects were felt in tactical and operational units, as this bifurcated chain of command required increased command and control requirements,

⁷³ Nagl, “Institutionalizing Adaptation,” 22.

⁷⁴ Potter, 42.

allowed for multiple units operating in the same area of operations, and created competition for resources.⁷⁵

Once deployed to theater, the MiTTs fell under the administrative control of the Iraqi Assistance Group, which oversaw all team training and reporting requirements on ISF progress.⁷⁶ The IAG determined team assignments, oversaw personnel management such as replacements, evaluations and awards, and identified new equipment requirements for the teams and oversaw property accountability.⁷⁷ A problem with this alignment is that, while under the administrative control of the IAG, the MiTTs were attached to conventional BCTs, creating fractured information chains—similar to the examples of MNC-I and MNSTC-I at the theater level. For externally sourced MiTTs, this often led to problems with determining who was to provide them with administrative and logistical support; while a responsibility of the IAG, it became more of a reality that the BCTs took on this task due to their physical proximity with one another.

A bigger issue existed in the fact that the BCTs “owned” the terrain in which the MiTTs operated with their ISF counterpart. This could create tension between advisors and US BCTs about operations conducted with the ISF. Conventional Army units often partnered with Iraqi Army units at the squad and platoon levels, conducting combined operations together, but the land-owning organization retained operational authority over what occurred in an area of operations until the advent of the AAB. MiTT advisors, who were concerned with the effectiveness and development of the Iraqi Army, worked from a separate set of priorities than their land-owning counterparts, whose primary concern

⁷⁵ Curtis B. Hudson, “Security Force Assistance: An Institutional Recommendation for the Army.” (United States Army War College manuscript, Carlisle, PA, March 2013), 19.

⁷⁶ Lovelace, 67.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

was the security of the Iraqi population. Just as information became stove-piped in the division between MNC-I and MNSTC-I, the same occurred at lower levels, as American platoons that were partnered with Iraqi Army platoons often had no real way of reporting the real effectiveness of Iraqi small units in combat, as the 11-man MiTTs were very limited in what they could do operationally. Even under the AAB, challenges existed in assigning a large number of field grade officers to conventional units they had never worked with under just prior to deployment to Iraq. This could lead to personality clashes among brigade and advisor team leaders, and at lower levels, could lead to confusion as to what the main effort was.

The key lesson is that, in order to achieve unity of effort, the advisory effort needs to be completely imbedded at the brigade combat team and below—thus optimizing the organization for SFA. While in theory the AAB achieved this, in reality the addition of a large contingent of field grade officers a few months before deployment was not a total fix. In order to truly achieve unity of effort, advisors would need to work seamlessly with conventional units, down to the company and platoon levels, much earlier in their training cycle for deployment, and leaders at all levels would need to define very early on the relationships and command and support structures between the two mission.

SFA in OIF Conclusions

In diagramming the arc of SFA efforts in Iraq, it is apparent that two themes—getting the right people into advisory roles and achieving unity of effort between the advisory effort and land-owning units—are critical for effective development of foreign security forces. The Army’s SFA effort in Iraq provides three key imperatives to be applied to future operations:

- The brigade combat team is likely to remain the baseline formation for the Army; advisory efforts must therefore be tailored to fit within the BCT structure to improve unity of command and effectiveness. Experience with the AAB in Iraq proved the formation to be adequate to conduct both major operations and SFA.
- Ad hoc creation of advisor teams must be avoided in the future, and advisory teams should be incorporated into the BCT, similar to the AAB model in Iraq. Care should be taken to avoid creating separate commands such as MNC-I and MNSTC-I. Permanently assigning advisors to regionally aligned brigades would be a possible organizational change that could improve SFA efforts at the lowest levels.
- Army personnel management processes must be modified to better identify service members possessing the skills and attributes for SFA outlined in FM 3-07.1. Service as an advisor must be incentivized and not be seen as a competitive assignment that will lead to future command opportunities.

These lessons will drive the following sections of this paper as it examines how the Army can best apply the lessons from SFA in Iraq to its new Regionally Aligned Forces concept while recognizing that future SFA efforts are very likely to occur in circumstances much different than those of Iraq. As the Army looks to “Prevent” and “Shape” the future conflict environment, it must get better at SFA at the lowest level if small teams deployed in support of RAF missions are to be effective and to avoid the hard-learned lessons of training foreign security forces that we can draw from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

SECTION III: IS RAF THE SOLUTION TO SFA?

Even in its nascent stages, the Army is implementing RAF whole-heartedly as it looks to be a globally responsive and regionally engaged force. Speaking in October 2014, General Vincent Brooks, commander of US Army Pacific, highlighted that just in that current week, US Northern Command established a 30-man medical support element to be prepared to assist civilian medical facilities if necessary in the United States, the

101st Airborne Division Headquarters deployed to West Africa to coordinate the fight against Ebola, the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team conducted training exercises with the Romanian Army, elements of the 1st Cavalry Division deployed to South Korea to bolster standing operations on the peninsula, and elements of the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division were conducting training exercises with the Japanese Defense Force.⁷⁸

Illustrating the potential that Regionally Aligned Forces can play for Combatant Commanders, General David Rodriguez, Commander of US Africa Command (AFRICOM), noted how diverse of a mission set RAF units could expect, as displayed by the Army's first regionally aligned brigade, the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), 1st Infantry Division. That RAF unit had elements train a battalion from Malawi to serve in Congo, trained Chadian and Guinean peacekeepers to serve in Mali, conducted first aid training with Rwandan Defense Forces, trained Burundi forces in counter-IED skills, and trained Kenyan Defense forces in unmanned aerial vehicle operations.⁷⁹ Additionally, an infantry company from the brigade served as the East African Response Force and was ready to respond to the terror attack on the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, but was ultimately not deployed.⁸⁰ At the end of the

⁷⁸ David Vergun, "Regionally Aligned Forces Getting Global Workout," Army News Service, October 23, 2014, available at http://www.army.mil/article/136840/Regionally_aligned_forces_getting_global_workout/., accessed March 30, 2015.

⁷⁹ Michelle Tan, "AFRICOM: Regionally Aligned Forces Find Their Anti-terror Mission," DefenseNews, October 20, 2013, available at <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20131020/SHOWSCOUT04/310200014/AFRICOM-Regionally-Aligned-Forces-Find-Their-Anti-terror-Mission>, accessed March 30, 2015.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

first RAF deployment, elements of the brigade had conducted over 160 missions in 30 countries.⁸¹

The merits of the Army deploying a RAF concept for its BCTs is therefore not in question—being able to provide forces to Combatant Commanders to meet their mission needs also coincides with the missions asked of the Army via the various national security documents that make up US strategy. As Rosa Brooks pointed out in *Foreign Policy*, the RAF concept suggests “it’s always Phase Zero somewhere.”⁸² The crux of the RAF concept is getting the BCT involved in the “Prevent” and “Shape” phases of it’s “Prevent-Shape-Win” strategy.

The issue, therefore, becomes one of how the Army can most effectively man, train, and equip its forces to meet the RAF mission. In this area, there currently exists much ambiguity about what exactly it is that RAF can achieve. Coupled with the experiences and lessons learned conducting security force assistance in Iraq, it becomes apparent that the Army still has a long way to go into institutionalizing RAF at the BCT and below if it wants this force construct to be effective.

The US Army Special Operations Command’s (ARSOC) *Operating Concept 2022* provides an interesting snapshot into the role of RAF in the spectrum of conflict, highlighting the political primacy in the early stages and military primacy in war (See Figure 2). Not surprisingly, ARSOC envisions itself in the lead in most operations to the

⁸¹ Martin L. O’Donnell, “Army’s 1st RAF Brigade Briefs Congress in DC,” June 11, 2014, 1st Infantry Division Public Affairs Office, available at <http://www.riley.army.mil/News/ArticleDisplay/tabid/98/Article/485481/armys-1st-raf-brigade-briefs-congress-in-dc.aspx>, accessed March 30, 2015.

⁸² Rosa Brooks, “Portrait of the Army as a Work in Progress,” *Foreign Policy*, May 8, 2014, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/08/portrait-of-the-army-as-a-work-in-progress/>, accessed March 30, 2015.

left of conventional military operations, such as foreign internal defense (FID), unconventional warfare and counterterrorism. Where this study, and RAF, is truly interested is in the middle ground, where ARSOC highlights the role of counterinsurgency, SFA, and FID and the interplay of SOF and conventional forces (CF).

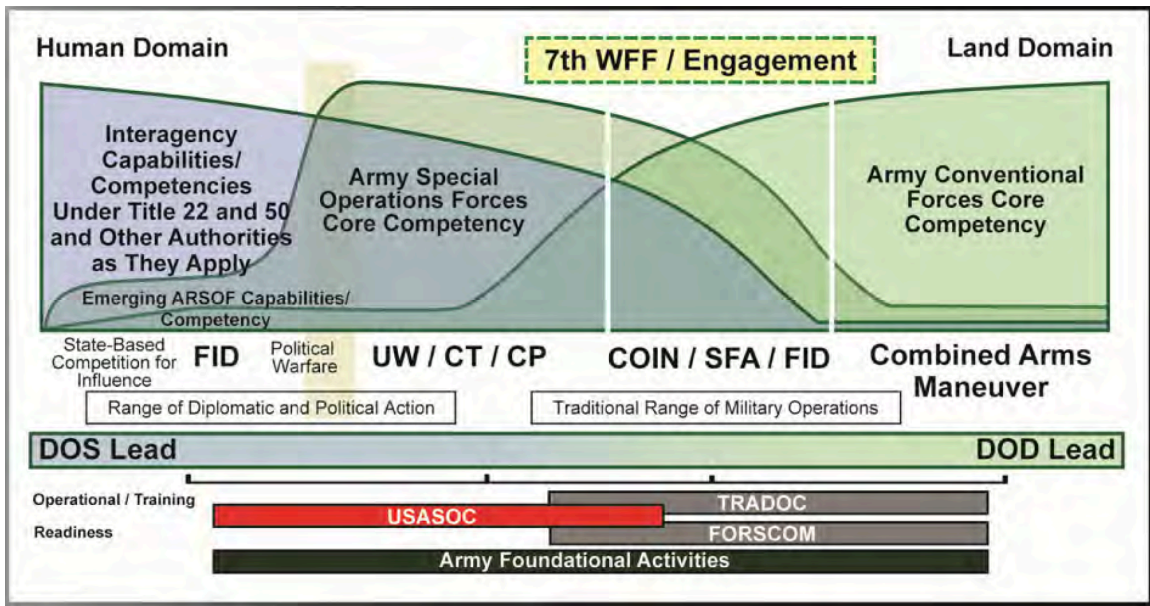


FIGURE 2: USASOC Future Force Development Process⁸³

While this Operating Concept provides an excellent model for envisioning future campaigns, and highlights the absolute necessity of SOF and CF interdependence, it is not without flaws. First, it overemphasizes the role that SOF can play, given the size and nature of SOF. One of the SOF fundamentals is that “SOF cannot be mass produced.”⁸⁴ Therefore, a breaking point will be reached if SOF alone conducts SFA, thus necessitating the role of CF in this mission. ARSOC also envisions SOF pulling critical enablers from the BCTs such as medical experts, intelligence assets, transportation assets,

⁸³ US Army Special Operations Command, *ARSOF Operating Concept 2022*, (Fort Bragg, NC, US Army Special Operations Command, September 26, 2014), 1.

⁸⁴ US Special Operations Command, “USSOCOM 101,” PowerPoint presentation at Tufts University, Medford, MA; December 17, 2014, slide 27.

and others, which would critically degrade the BCT's ability to conduct its own operations. This hits at the heart of the lessons learned conducting SFA in Iraq—Army BCTs must get better at conducting SFA so that they can conduct effective building of foreign security forces without being dependent on SOF. Lastly, there is a legitimate concern that the levels of SOF/CF interdependence experienced in OIF and OEF could atrophy because “security cooperation and security force assistance lack the forcing functions of combat that occurred consistently over the past decade.”⁸⁵

The problem for RAF is in the need to get “left” of the Joint Task Force (JTF); the two-star general-led division headquarters. The Army is very good when it commits forces at the JTF level to a contingency operation. However, under the new RAF concept, much grey area exists about how to best employ these “tailorable, scalable” force packages that the BCTs provide to Combatant Commanders. The Army can undoubtedly send force packages to support Combatant Commanders, as it did with the RAF BCT in AFRICOM, but what is lacking at the BCT is the ability to make units at the ground level—the infantry squads, platoons, and companies—effective as advisors. One needs to look no further than the Iraq example of ad hoc development of SFA capability to see that this is a problem for the BCT.

As the Army goes forward with Regionally Aligned Forces, it is worthwhile to examine existing programs in the Army focused on SFA and to draw lessons from those operations as well as the lessons of Iraq. A well known case study at the tactical level exists in Army Special Forces conducting Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions—a

⁸⁵ Russell J. Ames, “Interdependence Between Army Conventional Forces and Special Operations Forces: Changing Institutional Mental Models,” (School of Advanced Military Studies monograph, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2013), 3.

core competency of the Green Berets since their founding in the earliest stages of the Vietnam War, but other examples exist in the National Guard's State Sponsorship Program (SSP), formed in the 1990's at both the tactical and operational levels, as well as DOD's Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDA) mission in Afghanistan at the strategic level.

Foreign Internal Defense has long been a core competency of Army Special Operations Forces. Yet it is important to note that FID and SFA are not one in the same, as "SFA and DOD FID are both subsets of SC [Security Cooperation], but neither SFA nor FID are subsets of one another, because SFA activities serve purposes beyond internal defense."⁸⁶ The focus on all US FID efforts is to support the host nation's Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) strategy, which is ideally a preemptive plan of action.⁸⁷ A more significant difference in FID and SFA is their scale. Forces conducting SFA can theoretically build FSF from the ground up, whereas FID focuses on existing forces defending against an internal threat.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, while not the same doctrinally, SOF's approach to FID can provide valuable lessons into how conventional forces can conduct SFA.

An important factor when addressing Army Special Forces is that they possess unique functional skills inherent in their organization from the 12-man Special Forces

⁸⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine Note 1-13: Security Force Assistance*, (Washington D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 29, 2013), viii.

⁸⁷ Derek C. Jenkins, "Distinguishing Between Security Force Assistance & Foreign Internal Defense: Determining A Doctrine Road-Ahead," *Small Wars Journal* (December 10, 2008), available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/distinguishing-between-sfa-and-fid> , accessed March 30, 2015, 2.

⁸⁸ Jeffery N. James, "Understanding Contemporary Foreign Internal Defense and Military Advisement: Not Just a Semantic Exercise," (School of Advanced Military Studies monograph, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2008), 3.

Operational Detachment-Alpha level up, including cultural understanding and language skills, regional focus, and perhaps most important, core advising skills in working with other militaries. These factors made SOF the de facto forces for FID dating back to the Nixon Doctrine of US military assistance to host nations on the caveat that they provide the preponderance of forces for its own self defense.⁸⁹ This role was further solidified in the Nunn-Cohen amendment to the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which legislatively dictated FID as a core task for US SOF.⁹⁰

As will also be noted in the examination of the State Sponsorship Program, SOF FID operations are not a panacea for SFA. FID is inherently much more limited than SFA in the scale of the operation—based on the precondition that a host nation must have or be capable of producing an IDAD strategy, both OIF and OEF were not candidates for FID.⁹¹ This limited scale enables SOF to conduct FID given the finite number of Special Operations Forces, but as highlighted in the previous section’s discussions of the ARSOC Operating Concept, implies that there will never be enough SOF to act everywhere, thus necessitating the need for CF to take on the SFA mission. However, the value in examining the SOF role in FID is to highlight the importance of advisor expertise and cultural understanding in an existing Army structure for SFA.

Another example of Army efforts at SFA is the National Guard’s State Sponsorship Program. Created as a US national initiative for NATO’s Partnership for Peace program in 1994, SSP initially sought to “provide opportunities for non-NATO countries to create a foundation for full participation in a shared environment of regional

⁸⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁰ Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Public Law 99-433, 99th Cong., (October 1, 1986).

⁹¹ James, 6-7.

and international military, political, and economic activities.”⁹² With the focus of operations shifting to US Central Command (CENTCOM) after 9/11, the SSP mission remained relatively unchanged as US European Command (EUCOM) was able still call upon National Guard forces despite losing many of its assigned forces to the fights in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁹³ By 2010, SSP had expanded to partner 62 countries with 47 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia.⁹⁴

One reason for the success of SSP missions is that, because they draw from National Guard units, they have much greater personnel stability in their ranks compared to their Active Duty counterparts. This means the same soldiers often return to work with their host nation on multiple occasions—one extreme example is that of Major General William Enyart, the former Adjutant General in Illinois, who worked with Polish security forces in the SSP from the time he was a junior lieutenant colonel and went on to maintain relationships with many Polish senior leaders military as a General Officer.⁹⁵

These military-to-military exchanges in the SSP almost always included people on both sides who had participated before, allowing for a degree of continuity but also enhancing understanding of culture, capabilities, and the importance of long-term relationships.⁹⁶ As the program expanded beyond must military to military partnerships, SSP was able to fund and train nonmilitary events, drawing on the significant experience

⁹² John R. Groves, Jr., “PfP and the State Sponsorship Program: Fostering Engagement and Progress,” *Parameters*, Spring, 1999, 45.

⁹³ Charles F. Wald, “New Thinking at USEUCOM: The Phase Zero Campaign,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, (National Defense University Press, Washington D.C., issue 43, 4th quarter 2006), 73.

⁹⁴ John J. Jansen, “National Guard State Partnership Program: A Whole-of-Government Approach,” (U.S. Army War College manuscript, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 23 March 2010), 2.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁶ Peter Howard, “The Growing Role of States in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Case of the State Partnership Program,” *International Studies Perspectives*, Issue 5, 2004, 192.

in the National Guard on disaster relief and cooperation with civilian authorities, expertise not generally present in the active duty Army.⁹⁷ Maryland eventually expanded the program to include sister cities, where mayors of ten towns in Maryland worked with Estonian mayors to talk about provision of services.⁹⁸

The SSP is also not a cure-all model for SFA. For instance, Ohio was partnered with Hungary in large part due to a large Hungarian population residing in Ohio; this type of situation is not transferable to the Active Army.⁹⁹ Additionally, funding for civilian security cooperation is complicated as it is executed under Title 22 USC, whereas military-to-military is executed under Title 10 USC. SSP gets approval from US Ambassadors, the National Guard Bureau, and the National Guard Annual SSP plan and resources come from a variety of sources to include government agencies, NGOs, federal and state grants, private sector organizations, and international agencies.¹⁰⁰ The obstacles to Active Duty units conducting military-to-civilian, and even military-to-military, operations under Title 10 USC are more complicated and restrictive. What the SSP does is highlight the need for enduring relationships between partner nations if RAF is to be successful.

While Army SOF and the State Sponsorship Program provide examples of effective advising at the tactical and operational levels, the Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDA) program in Afghanistan provides an example of an effective advising mission at the strategic level. Launched in 2010 by DOD, the MoDA program sought to train high-level advisors to the Afghan Ministry of Defense to reform that institution. Made up of

⁹⁷ Ibid., 183

⁹⁸ Ibid., 193.

⁹⁹ Groves, 47.

¹⁰⁰ Jensen, 34.

active-duty field grade officers, private military contractors, and civilians from ministries outside the security sector such as the US Departments of Justice, Agriculture, and Treasury, MoDA advisors sought to work towards reforming the Afghan Ministry of Defense through Security Cooperation.

The greatest lessons of the MoDA program is its defining of four principles of effective advisors: support local ownership, design for sustainability, doing no harm, and demonstrating respect, humility, and empathy.¹⁰¹ These principles hit at the crux of what all advisors, regardless of what level of foreign security forces they are advising, must do to be effective. Rather than listing intangible “personality traits” required of advisors, the MoDA design focuses on a permanent ethos that is transferable to any culture or region. One need look no further than the difficulties the US had in SFA in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan with creating sustainable security forces that had local ownership and did not harm in the long run to realize that MoDA provides some truisms.

The Central Question: Can the BCT conduct effective SFA?

John Nagl argued in 2008 “the Army should create a permanent standing advisory command with responsibilities for all aspects of the advisor mission—from doctrine through facilities.”¹⁰² Nagl’s vision called for an Army advisory command led by a lieutenant general that would oversee the training and deployment of 25-soldier advisory teams organized into three 200-team advisor divisions.¹⁰³ This new command would have primacy in all Army SFA missions, allowing it to focus all of their efforts on building foreign security forces. A similar proposal is found in Colonel Scott Wuestner’s

¹⁰¹ Nadia Gerspacher, “Preparing Advisors for Capacity-Building Missions,” (United States Institute of Peace Special Report, Washington, D.C., August 2012), 1.

¹⁰² Nagl, “Institutional Adaptation,” 21.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 25.

argument for the creation of a two-star “Security Advisory and Assistance Command,” which would implement all Army SFA programs. Similar to Nagl’s concept, Wuestner called for a 47-person advisory teams team at the division level and 25-person teams at the brigade and battalion levels.¹⁰⁴

Others contend that the BCT is the correct structure for SFA, however. Colonel Philip Battaglia, commander of a prototype AAB in Southern Iraq from 2008-2009, argued, “the BCT structure has the built-in flexibility to perform any assigned mission. There is no need for wholesale force structure redesign.”¹⁰⁵ Citing the inherent agility and flexibility of the BCT, Colonel Battaglia’s experience led him to believe that “the modular BCT is the right organization to form of security force assistance operations in Iraq.”¹⁰⁶ This is in line with the 2008 claim of then-Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli that “I don’t believe it is in the military’s best interest to establish a permanent ‘Training Corps’ in the conventional military to develop other countries’ indigenous security forces.”¹⁰⁷ Instead, General Chiarelli felt that Special Operations Forces could continue with the FID mission, although noting that conventional forces should have the inherent flexibility to transition to that mission, should it become too large for Special Forces.

Other arguments are that the modular BCT is the right formation for SFA, albeit with organizational and cultural change within the organization. One major lesson, evident in the Iraq example, is for a culture change to occur within the BCT so that it

¹⁰⁴ Scott G. Wuestner, “Building Partner Capacity/Security Force Assistance: A New Structural Paradigm,” (Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA: Army War College Press, February 2009), 50.

¹⁰⁵ Battaglia, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Peter W. Chiarelli, “Learning From Our Modern Wars: The Imperatives of Preparing for a Dangerous Future,” *Military Review*, September-October 2007, 7-8.

supports the advisor teams, not to “fight” them on the battlefield.¹⁰⁸ Another criticism of the current model is that it provides inadequate doctrinal guidance to conduct SFA, units tasked with SFA missions have insufficient dwell time between deployments to organize, equip, and train effectively, and that several manning and training capability gaps exist in the AAB despite the approved augmentation package.¹⁰⁹ The next section of this paper will provide recommendations based on these arguments, the lessons from Iraq, and likely future missions that the Army will find itself in, so that it can best optimize the brigade combat team to effectively conduct security force assistance.

SECTION IV: RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the examination of the key lessons learned regarding SFA in Iraq—the need to get the right people into advisory missions and the need to achieve unity of command—as well as the above examination of current SFA models and the likely future operating environment, the next section of this paper will provide recommendations as how to best achieve efficiency within RAF units. These recommendations are based on the assumptions that the Army will continue to pursue the RAF model and attempt to conduct SFA missions in partner nations in the “Prevent” and “Shape” phases of conflict, that the brigade combat team will remain the core formation for Army operations, that the Army’s end strength does not drop below 450,000 soldiers and 33 brigade combat teams in the Active Army, and that the vast majority of BCTs will remain stationed in the United States. Any changes to these assumptions would require a new analysis and likely prompt new recommendations.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Escandon, “The Future of Security Force Assistance: Is the Modular Brigade Combat Team the Right Organization?” (Masters of Military Art and Science thesis, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, Command and General Staff College, 2008), 104.

¹⁰⁹ Metternich, 21.

Considering this paper's earlier findings and the above assumptions, the following recommendations are proposed, in order of importance, to maximize efficiency and effectiveness within the brigade combat team for conducting SFA:

1. Expand regional alignment to more BCTs.
2. Revise the Army's personnel system to stabilize soldiers to units aligned to a combatant command with which they have experience.
3. Where possible, align RAF with Army Special Forces as well as combatant commands.
4. Create an Army Advisor Functional Area/Military Occupational Specialty.
5. Modify BCT structure to increase SFA capacity at BCT and below.

Recommendation 1: Expand regional alignment to more BCTs

To truly make regional alignment of BCTs effective and efficient, the Army should consider regionally aligning the vast majority of its brigades with a combatant command. While these alignments need not be sacrosanct to operational demand in crisis, the alignment would nevertheless serve multiple purposes in making RAF a more effective product for the Combatant Commanders. The benefits of this recommendation are numerous, but most important is that this proposal would build focused regional expertise at the individual and organizational level within aligned units while also providing the potential for lasting relationships between aligned units, their host nation partners, and the combatant command headquarters.

First, aligning the majority of its active brigade combat teams with a combatant command provides the brigade with an region for which it can focus its training, not just language and culture, but also on operations and tactics. For instance, whereas a "light" infantry brigade combat team (IBCT), aligned with US Pacific Command (PACOM) or US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), might focus small unit training on jungle operations, a more heavy, wheeled vehicle-based Stryker brigade combat team (SBCT)

aligned with EUCOM or AFRICOM could focus on operations in built up urban areas or open terrain. These units must still train to “Decisive Action” standards, the execution of a full range of mission sets across the warfighting spectrum from insurgents and criminal networks to near-peer heavy forces. However, regional focus could help develop specialized capabilities for the areas they are most likely to deploy. The Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division’s recent re-establishment of a “Jungle Operations Training Course” represents some of the possibilities presented by alignment with PACOM with regards to training focus.¹¹⁰

More importantly, expanded alignment presents the conditions for establishing permanent relationships with host nation security forces in partner nations. While these relations will never be fully realized at the tactical level due to personnel turn over, at the operational and senior leader levels there is a real possibility that, through rotating brigade staff level field grade officers and senior noncommissioned officers to joint exercises with partners, personal relationships can develop, as was the case in the National Guard’s State Sponsorship Program. At the squad through battalion level, continued focus on a region will at least develop regional understanding of allies, their armed forces’ capabilities, terrain, and operations, even if it is never possible to reach cultural and language proficiency across the broad spectrum of nations that make up a combatant command’s area of operations. An expansion of regional alignment meshes with General Odierno’s 2012 remarks that “the approach to accomplishing operational tasks is by organizing around highly trained Squads and Platoons that are the foundation

¹¹⁰ Brian S. Eifler, “Welcome (Back) to the Jungle,” *Infantry Magazine*, January-March 2014, 43-45.

for our Company, Battalion and Brigade Combat Teams, organized for specific mission sets and regional conditions.”¹¹¹

Ideally, the expansion of regional alignment would include providing Combatant Commanders with a mix of the three types of brigade combat teams—infantry, Stryker, and armored. Ultimately, the unit’s doctrinal mission should “be foremost taken into consideration” when aligning forces to a combatant command.¹¹² For example, in PACOM, operations in jungle environments with small elements are more likely to be the norm than combined arms maneuver with tanks and other heavy vehicles (with Korea being the exception), necessitating a larger preponderance of aligned light IBCTs. The same goes for a larger alignment of ABCTs or SBCTs in AFRICOM, CENTCOM, or EUCOM. While Combatant Commanders should be provided with a mix of the three types of brigade combat teams for regional alignment, the realities of physical geography, the composition of host nation security forces, and a realist analysis of the composition and disposition of potential adversaries in the area of operations must all inform the right “mix” of brigades aligned to a Combatant Command.

To maximize alignment of BCTs with combatant commands, it is important to understand how the Army manages its personnel and units under the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model. Active Army units are managed on a 36-month rotational cycle in three force pools: six months in the RESET pool, focused on unit reconstitution after a deployment and on limited individual training; 18 months in the

¹¹¹ Raymond T. Odierno, CSA Remarks at AUSA Eisenhower Luncheon, October 23, 2012, Washington DC, available at http://www.army.mil/article/89823/October_23_2012_CSA_Remarks_at_AUSA_Eisenhower_Luncheon_As_Delivered/, accessed March 30, 2015.

¹¹² John R. Bray, “Strategic Analysis of Regional Alignment of United States Army Forces,” (US Army War College monograph, Carlisle Barracks, PA, March 2013), 13.

Train/Ready pool, focused on increasing readiness and capabilities in preparation for moving to the Available pool; and nine months in the Available force pool, where units are at the highest state of readiness and are available for sourcing operational requirements.¹¹³ This 1:3 ratio of “boots the on ground” time deployed to non-deployed, or “Dwell” time exists in “steady-state” rotation where supply of forces in the Available Force Pool exceeds mission demands; in a “surge rotation,” the rotation drops to 1:2.¹¹⁴

Given other operational demands, not all BCTs can, or should, be continuously regionally aligned. With the de-activation of the Army’s last standing brigade combat team stationed in South Korea in the summer of 2015, the Army will begin to fill that requirement with a rotational Armored BCT. Additionally, in 2012 the Army agreed to allocate a rotational US based Armored BCT to the NATO Response Force.¹¹⁵ The Army also fills the Global Response Force mission, a brigade-sized element capable of achieving forcible entry into a contested area within 96 hours of notice as part of the Joint Operational Access Concept.¹¹⁶ Traditionally the purview of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the GRF is now augmented with a Stryker and armor companies, combat aviation elements, and other additional assets.¹¹⁷ Given the need for rapid deployment within the GRF, it is a mission best suited for the 82nd Airborne and it is critical to identify these augmenting elements and get them to train with them prior to assuming this mission.

¹¹³ Department of the Army, *Army Regulation 525-29: Army Force Generation*, (Department of the Army, Washington D.C., March 14, 2011), 3-4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Feickert, “Army Drawdown and Restructuring: Back and Issues for Congress,” *Congressional Research Service* Report, February 28, 2014, 6.

¹¹⁶ Charles Flynn and Joshua Richardson, “Joint Operational Access and The Global Response Force: Redefining Readiness,” *Military Review*, July-August 2013, 38-39.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

Another factor to be considered in this proposal accepting the reality of resources and threats, and thus treating some combatant commands as economy of force missions. National security strategy dictates that PACOM and CENTCOM will remain high emphasis areas requiring continued presence of rotational forces. Those two combatant commands should be prioritized for alignment of conventional forces. One potential solution is to draw upon the National Guard and its already existing State Sponsorship Program in many of the nations in SOUTHCOM and EUCOM rather than aligning a large number of Active Army brigades with them. The purview of this paper is on the Active Army, so an in-depth analysis of the National Guard and Army Reserve's role in RAF is beyond the scope of this study, but this is an option to be considered, given limited resources and funding.

Lastly, it is important to note that this proposal is based on the current operational requirements facing the Army and on the 2014 QDR's guidance that the Army will no longer be sized to conduct long-duration stability operations. The onset of a major conflict in any of the combatant commands would therefore necessitate pulling units from outside the regionally aligned pool of brigades to meet the force requirement demands of the Combatant Commander. Therefore, the intent is not for these regional alignments to be inviolable; the Army must retain the flexibility to deploy forces to deter and defeat enemies on land—its principle goal.

Recommendation 2: Revise the Army's personnel system to stabilize soldiers to units aligned to a Combatant Command with which they have experience

A 2014 Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) monograph, *Creating an Effective Regional Alignment Strategy for the U.S. Army*, cites both SOF and the SSP as being examples of building enduring relationships due to their regional alignment and

personnel stability. The report hints that peacetime conditions “afford the Army with opportunities to increase soldier assignment length, reducing the personnel churn so destructive to establishing and maintaining enduring human relationships.”¹¹⁸ Building off of Recommendation 1, an Army policy shift to increase personnel stability at combatant command aligned units whenever possible could yield great dividends. A new assignment policy that attempts to reassign most soldiers within units aligned with the same combatant command would enable soldiers to better achieve knowledge and understanding of their assigned region of operations, and at higher echelons, could even enable some of the lasting relationships with partners that the SSP enjoys. Therefore, soldiers need not stay in the same unit per se, but could at least focus the majority of their career “home based” or aligned with a specific region, yielding many of the benefits mentioned at the unit level in Recommendation 1.

Currently, Army policy requires a maximum four-year tour at a duty station in the United States, with exceptions that occur based on professional education windows and other factors.¹¹⁹ While certainly a degree of personnel turn over is inherent in all military organizations to ensure personal and professional development, it also degrades the ability of regionally aligned units to gain actual regional expertise, and more importantly, to build enduring relationships. A preferred course of action would be to do away with “time on station” requirements and instead focus on “time in unit.” This would enable all regionally aligned soldiers to increase their expertise in the region, while still ensuring

¹¹⁸ Bukowski et al., 13.

¹¹⁹ Department of the Army, *Army Regulation 614-200: Enlisted Assignments and Utilization Management*, October 11, 2011, and *Army Regulation 614-100: Officer Assignment, Policies, Details, and Transfers*, January 10, 2006 (Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington D.C.).

the soldiers meet their professional development windows. There are several other benefits of this recommendation, as it could possibly increase retention of the best soldiers as they no longer have to move their families every two to four years, while also potentially saving the government millions of dollars in not having to fund soldier moves as frequently. However, none of this can be achieved unless the Army revises its reenlistment and retention programs to encourage “home-steading” without damaging soldiers’ careers.¹²⁰

The SSI paper also calls for the Army to redesign its Force Generation Model, accurately noting that “Instead of the incremental personal churn that allows units to retain a modicum of institutional memory and regional expertise, current ARFORGEN practices create ‘all or nothing’ units whipsawing in and out of the proverbial ‘band of excellence.’”¹²¹ The lessons the authors draw from this are that the brigade combat team should no longer be the centerpiece of the force generation model and that certain sub-units require a higher level of regional expertise than others, with these sub-units needing deeper expertise as well.¹²² This conclusion is flawed, and by stabilizing personnel in aligned units, new soldiers arriving to units would have a baseline cultural understanding from their recent assignments within the region, while still keeping brigade combat teams on the ARFORGEN cycle of 9 months deployed and 27 months training.

The study’s authors accurately note that entire brigade combat teams are not likely to deploy, but rather “certain sub-units,” however, by limiting stabilization in an aligned unit to these sub-units, they recommend undermining the potential of regional

¹²⁰ Jeffrey W. French, “Fighting With One Arm Behind Our Back: Cultural Capability in the 21st Century,” (U.S. Army War College manuscript, Carlisle, PA, March 2013), 25.

¹²¹ Bukowski et al., 13.

¹²² Ibid., 14.

alignment. As displayed by the RAF brigades deployed in AFRICOM, and units participating in “Pacific Pathways” program in PACOM, it is not just specialized “sub-units” that are deploying to RAF missions, but rather companies, platoons, and squads. Therefore, a more effective course of action would be the combining of Recommendation 1, align more brigades with combatant commands, and Recommendation 2, stabilize soldiers in units aligned with a combatant command whenever possible.

As General Odierno stated, well-trained squads and platoons are the formation on which the Army is based. In order for regional alignment to truly work, more brigades must align with combatant commands, and those soldiers in those aligned units must remain in other similar aligned units to the greatest extent possible if the Army is to maximize the potential of RAF.

Recommendation 3: Where possible, align RAF with Army Special Forces as well as Combatant Commands

With the exception of PACOM and brigade combat teams currently stationed in Alaska, Hawaii, and Washington State, and the two BCTs currently stationed in Europe, there exists little natural geographic linkage between Army units and combatant commands. Lacking any physical imperative to align units based on physical geography, one potentially efficient method of regional alignment would be to align co-located Special Forces Groups (SFGs) with conventional Army units. Not only would this drive direction for regional alignment away from arbitrary assignment, but also the BCTs could gain regional expertise from the already-aligned Special Forces units. Additionally, based on FID being one of their core competencies, regionally aligned units could draw advisor lessons from the Special Forces units before these RAF units deployed to a combatant command to conduct SFA. Lastly, pairing SFGs with units designated for

RAF would help ensure that SOF/CF interdependence, a hard earned lesson of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, becomes institutionalized, not just in combat, but also in training.¹²³

Active Duty Special Forces groups are currently aligned with all combatant commands except for Northern Command (NORTHCOM), responsible for North America. With the exception of the 7th Special Forces Group at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, all SFGs are co-located on an installation with at least an Army division headquarters and two brigade combat teams. The case of Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) in Washington provides an ideal example of the potential of this proposal. Home to the Army's three-star I Corps, two-star 7th Infantry Division, two Stryker Brigade Combat Teams, and multiple enabler units, JBLM is also home to the 1st Special Forces Group. Both I Corps and 1st SFG are aligned with PACOM, and elements of the 2nd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division have participated in recent "Pacific Pathways" exercises in the Asia-Pacific, a sort of "unofficial RAF" mission. This model could be extended to multiple other Army installations possessing division headquarters, brigade combat teams, and Special Forces Groups, with several exceptions.

While 3rd SFG and the 82nd Airborne Division and corresponding BCTs are co-located at Fort Bragg, the Global Response Force discussed in the last section could prevent the 82nd Airborne from filling the AFRICOM RAF requirement. Additionally,

¹²³ In the author's experience, current relationships between CF and SOF are co-located installations do occur, but are based entirely on personal relationships or compatible resource requirements rather than organizational effort. For instance, combined training between small units of the 101st Airborne and 5th Special Forces Group occurred occasionally during the author's time there from 2007-2009, but the same type of working relationship was non-existent between CF units at JBLM and 1st Special Forces Group from 2010-2013. For more on this topic, see Michael R. Fenzel and Joseph G. Lock, "A Strategy for Future Victory: Institutionalizing SOF-CF Interdependence," *Infantry Magazine* (October 2014-March 2015), 28-32.

the 7th SFG, responsible for SOUTHCOM, has no co-located major Army unit at its post at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. A potential solution could be to align units that currently are not co-located with these SFGs but are in geographical proximity to their installations in order to keep with the intent of this recommendation.

This recommendation is not perfect, but could help to provide focus to brigades while furthering SOF/CF interdependence. It also provides the potential to pair each combatant command with a habitually aligned division headquarters, capable of functioning as a Joint Task Force, while still leaving four division headquarters available to either backfill aligned headquarters for longer-duration operations, or to “surge” in the event of unforeseen events. It provides a mix of brigades to the combatant commands, albeit with some shortages that would have to be addressed, particularly in heavier forces in CENTCOM and the disproportional presence of Stryker brigades in PACOM.

The fundamental point of this proposal is that it aligns Special Forces Groups with conventional forces already co-located on most US bases. This will help facilitate habitual relationships between SOF and CF, which could have the added benefit of drawing on Special Forces soldiers’ regional and language expertise in their assigned area of operation, as well as helping train tactical level units in the BCTs at advisor skills necessary for SFA.

Recommendation 4: Create an Army Advisor Functional Area/Military Occupational Specialty

Currently, the only dedicated career path in the Army that regularly deals with interactions with foreign militaries is the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) functional area. Made up primarily of field grade officers, FAO’s are the Army’s primary method of

achieving Security Cooperation missions, central to the “Prevent, Shape, Win” strategy.¹²⁴ Specializing in cross-cultural capabilities, interpersonal communications, and foreign-language skills, FAOs serve most frequently as Attaches, Security Cooperation officers in US embassies, political-military advisors to deployed US commanders, and liaison officers to foreign militaries.¹²⁵ In this role, FAOs focus at the strategic levels of advising to foreign militaries and governments and are regional experts on military capabilities that help the US in building partner capacity. What they are not is advisors to tactical and operational foreign security forces.

Therefore, the Army should consider creating a specialized career path for “Army Advisors,” separate from the FAO functional area. Focused on tactical and operational advising, this proposed functional area would be that that advisor selection and training must be based on more malleable traits of human cognitive ability.¹²⁶ The focus for Army Advisors should be on expertise in imparting military knowledge onto members of foreign military members, not necessarily on regional expertise—the mission of FAOs. Rather than Nagl’s recommendation to create an entire advisory command, this recommendation would create a cadre of expert advisors would should be permanently assigned to brigade combat teams to assist in both training and operations, as will be discussed in Recommendation 5. Army Advisors could form the majority of RAF missions, based on Combatant Commander mission requirements, or could serve as pre-

¹²⁴ Department of the Army, *DA Pamphlet 600-3: Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, (Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1 February 2010), 277.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Cook, 34.

deployment training advisors to squads and platoons task with training foreign security forces on RAF missions.

This functional area must be highly incentivized to ensure that it draws top-notch talent for service as advisors. As highlighted in the Iraq case study, a major issue with the early advisory effort in Iraq was that the Army did not treat service as an advisor as a career-enhancing opportunity. In order for this proposal to be successful, service as an advisor must heavily recruit from top Army junior leaders, should enable advisors to shift between advisor and competitive operational command opportunities to ensure promotion, and should likely include additional incentives, such as advanced schooling, for those selected. A elite cadre of advisors will only be successful if the functional area is able to bring in the Army's best young leaders, ensure solid performance is rewarded with career opportunities, and provides incentive for the best to leave their current branch temporarily.

The Army must not limit this career path to only officers, but should strongly consider also creating a new Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) for enlisted soldiers that adds to the Army's advising capabilities. Given that tactical advising is inherently the business of noncommissioned officers, any new Army Advisor branch should heavily recruit senior noncommissioned officers, particularly those from combat branches, to form the bulk of its cadre. While officers are well suited for advising staffs at the battalion level and above, the Army would miss a significant opportunity if it did not seek out noncommissioned officers in this effort. A major benefit of this proposal would be that these noncommissioned officers could help train units deploying on RAF missions on how to best transfer expertise on basic soldiering skills to foreign security forces. The

advisory effort in Iraq proved, and Army doctrine recognizes, that even the best soldiers don't always make the best advisors. With pre-deployment training on how to best train foreign security forces by an expert cadre of Army Advisors, RAF units could potentially be much more effective than if they just attempted to transplant US training models onto foreign forces.

The capacity to begin to form an Army Advisor functional area is already present in the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade at Fort Polk. Currently, the 162nd Infantry Brigade “trains Advisor Skills, Combat Skills, and Security Force Assistance Skills to provide Army and Joint Force Commanders with trained personnel and units to build partner nation security capacity.”¹²⁷ The 162nd now includes a RAF course into its training program and also possesses the ability to send teams to train deploying RAF units. A feasible solution for an Army Advisor functional area would be to institutionalize the 162nd as the advanced training center for advisors, building their baseline expertise in advising skills and security force assistance, as well as cross-cultural capability, before assigning advisors the Army units.

The Army has routinely proved capable of modernizing its forces to meet the advent of new challenges. One needs look no further than the Army's September 2014 creation of a Cyber branch to counter that rising threat to realize that the Army can adapt to changes. The Army already possesses much of the institutional knowledge in security force assistance necessary to begin to stand up an Advisor branch in the 162nd Infantry Brigade at Fort Polk. By creating a full time career path for advisors—and thus ending the decades long practice of “hey you” selections of advisors—the Army could go a long

¹²⁷ 162nd Infantry Brigade mission statement, available at www.jrtc-polk.army.mil/Transition_Team/. Accessed March 12, 2015.

way to developing a professional cadre of advisors whose full time job would be advising security forces at the tactical and operational levels. The next recommendation will examine the best employment of these assets at the brigade combat team level.

Recommendation 5: Modify BCT structure to increase SFA capacity at BCT and below

This paper’s most far-reaching recommendation is for the Army to modify the structure of the brigade combat team to permanently optimize it for conducting security force assistance. Even the development of the AAB in Iraq, while fixing many of the issues of unity of command between the advisory effort and brigade combat team, failed to achieve what is truly necessary to ensure the RAF concept is effective—tie SFA down to those who have the most contact with foreign security forces, the squad and platoon levels. If RAF is to be successful, the Army needs the ability to get advisors to work with squads and platoons well before their assumption of a RAF mission, teaching soldier at the lowest levels advising skills.

The principal reason for any restructure would be to create more efficiency between advisory efforts and partnered units. Although the advent of the AAB placed both organizations under the same roof, issues with unity of effort constrained the ability of American forces to reach maximum effectiveness. Army doctrine on security force assistance defines advising as “the use of influence to teach, coach, and advise while working by, with, and through [foreign security forces].”¹²⁸ Partnering, on the other hand, “attaches units at various levels to leverage the strengths of both U.S. and foreign security forces.”¹²⁹ However, as RAF is currently structured, small units that would be

¹²⁸ *Field Manual 3-07.1*, p.2-9.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2-10.

considered “partnered” forces are receiving cultural training and then assuming an advisor/trainer mission. Unlike Operation Iraqi Freedom, where large amounts of both advisors and conventional forces were present, the envisioned RAF missions place small units in direct contact with foreign security forces as their only point of contact with US forces. It is therefore imperative that units selected for RAF missions are given adequate training in advising foreign security forces, and that the right soldiers are selected for these missions.

A potential solution would be to expand on Recommendation 4 and assign specially selected and trained Army Advisors down not only to the brigade level, but also to the battalion. While a cadre of field grade officers and senior noncommissioned officers is absolutely necessary at the brigade to ensure the ability to effectively advise foreign security force commanders and staffs at the battalion, brigade, and division levels, it is also imperative to get advisors down to the battalion level. The presence of senior captains and senior noncommissioned officers, selected and trained specifically as advisors, assigned to the battalion headquarters with the mission of assisting company commanders prepare their small units for RAF deployments, would go a long way in ensuring effectiveness in training foreign security forces. These advisors would work with, not replace, company level leadership to ensure their soldiers are best prepared for their RAF missions by providing advice and training as to methods to best impart military training to foreign security forces.

Additionally, these advisors could deploy as stand-alone force packages to RAF missions based on Combatant Commander requirements, or could augment conventional forces tasked with RAF missions and provided them with in-house expertise on security

force assistance, training foreign security forces, and general advising principles. In a way, they would serve as advisors to the advisors. A benefit to this is that, unlike SFA structures proposed in FM 3-07.1 that place conventional companies under the operational control of advisor teams, embedding advisors with RAF units before and during deployment will help ensure that these smaller teams—company-sized elements and below—are able to draw upon the expertise of subject matter experts.

This proposal builds off of the previous four recommendations, institutionalizing advisors down to the lowest level while maintaining focus in a geographic region in order to best prepare conventional units to conduct security force assistance missions. The key difference here from the AAB model is that, rather than receiving advisors upon receipt of an SFA mission, the brigade combat team would have a cadre of advisors permanently attached to it. Some might argue that this is an unnecessary permanent change to the organization of the brigade combat team and that augmented advisors are only necessary when a unit receives an SFA mission. This contention runs counter to US national security policy, however, which emphasizes the role of the US military in conflict prevention. Assigning Army Advisors down to the lowest levels would provide the flexibility and expertise inherently necessary to maximize SFA missions within RAF units and ensure that both tactical and operational advising by Army units are conducted to their maximum capability.

CONCLUSIONS

In a 2014 interview, John Nagl stated, “Regionally Aligned Forces are a poor man’s Advisor Corps, but they’re better than nothing.”¹³⁰ His central idea is that, while the Army remains institutionally fixated on defeating any ground force in conventional combat, it also has a “responsibility” to advise friends and allies around the globe.¹³¹ In reality, the Army will not massively restructure to optimize for SFA, nor should it, as its core mission remains to fight and win America’s wars. This does not mean, however, that the US can wish away the ugly wars of the past decade. Strategic reality dictates that the US will have to increasingly rely on its partners and allies to fight on their own to help achieve US objectives, and therefore the Army must be better postured to help others win in a complex world. This is where the central question this paper attempted to answer comes into play: how can the Army best organize, train, and equip itself to ensure it is more effective at security force assistance?

What this paper has outlined is that examining the development of SFA in Operation Iraqi Freedom provides several key lessons in what to do—and not do—to achieve effective results in security force assistance. Primary among these lessons in the imperative to get the right people assigned to advisor duty, avoid ad hoc creation of advisor teams, and to ensure that those most talented are brought into this mission. Additionally, unity of effort must be achieved between the advisory effort and the land-owning maneuver elements responsible for combat operations. The Army’s eventual shift to centrally-selected advisors who were given key and developmental credit for their

¹³⁰ “Learning to Drink Beer through a Straw: 20 Questions With Dr. John Nagl,” blog post, November 3, 2014, available at: https://medium.com/@Doctrine_Man/learning-to-drink-beer-with-a-straw-93308b1649d6, accessed March 25, 2015.

¹³¹ Ibid.

advising duties, coupled with the combination of the tactical and advisory effort under the Advise and Assist Brigade in Iraq provide a model in adapting the organization to meet the challenges of SFA.

As the Army looks to the future, its Regionally Aligned Forces concept, carried out principally in conventional brigade combat teams, is likely to be the tool it uses to conduct SFA. The Army cannot afford to repeat the same mistakes of Iraq in future advisory efforts. Upcoming assistance to foreign security forces will likely not have the benefit of the more than one hundred thousand American troops present in Operation Iraqi Freedom, therefore RAF missions will have to be more efficient and effective at training partner and allied security forces.

There are several ways the Army can ensure that RAF succeeds. First, it should align as many brigade combat teams as possible with combatant commands, giving commanders regional focus for culture, capabilities, tactics, and potential operating environments, while also creating the potential for recurring relationship with foreign security forces while providing Geographic Combatant Commanders with a predictable, tailorable pool of forces to draw from. Second, it should change its personnel management policies to enable soldiers to remain in units aligned with a particular combatant command. This would allow for greater regional expertise at both the individual and organizational levels while also enabling enduring relationships with foreign security forces. It would also have the benefit of greater stability for soldiers and their families. Third, the Army should draw on already existent co-located Special Forces and conventional forces on US bases and formalize alignment between the two as well as combatant command regions. This would build off of the first two

recommendations while also having the benefit of drawing from Special Forces' expertise in training foreign security forces based on their inherent Foreign Internal Defense mission as well as ensuring the degree of SOF/CF interdependence gained during OIF and OEF does not disappear. Fourth, the Army should create a new "Army Advisor" officer Functional Area and enlisted Military Occupational Specialty. Different than Foreign Area Officers, Army Advisors would be experts in SFA at the tactical and operational level and would be skilled in imparting military knowledge to foreign security forces. Lastly, the Army should optimize the BCT for security force assistance by assigning these Army Advisors down to the battalion and brigade combat team levels. This would enable a RAF BCT to have its own in-house experts on training foreign security forces at the tactical and operational level and would help commanders train small US units in how to better train and advise partner and allied militaries.

Taking all these factors into consideration, it is important to note that SFA is not a cure-all for building partner capacity. Writing in 2009, former managing editor of *Small Wars Journal* Robert Haddick outlined the "promise and perils" of SFA, asking several important questions regarding any potential SFA mission the US will undertake in the future. First, will the partner receiving US assistance help the US with its objectives? One needs to look no further than the troubles experienced with the Karzai and Maliki governments to recognize challenge. Second, can foreign military forces do the job? The collapse of the Iraqi Army in the face of ISIS in 2014, despite years of training and billions of US dollars spent in SFA serves as a timely reminder of this fact. Closely related is the question of whether the foreign partner can sustain the military capabilities created by US security assistance. Questions about the Afghan National Army's ability

to maintain US equipment after the American withdrawal serve as a prudent warning here. Lastly, Haddick asks might a US security assistance mission create a “Frankenstein monster” that will later haunt the US? Examples too numerous to name come to mind in this respect.¹³² While these are strategic level questions that must be considered at the National Command Authority level, they bear continued relevance to advisors and trainers on the ground conducting SFA.

There is another major factor to keep in mind with SFA that tie directly to the long-term success of RAF—effectiveness vs. accountability. US forces have historically been successful at creating tactically effective foreign security forces. However, security force accountability to host nation governmental control is a strategic issue that must be implemented into tactical level advising. Therefore, SFA can be made more powerful by encompassing military effectiveness, accountability, reform as well as rule of law and integrity training, ultimately seeking to form norms and standards of the legal framework that regulates civil-military relations in a democratic system.¹³³ If RAF is to be truly a means for building partner capacity in the prevention of conflict, the issue of accountability must be incorporated into how we train RAF units and advisors.

What is certain is that the Army will again find itself in conflict in the future. Given manning and budget constraints, it becomes imperative that the Army therefore gets better at helping others, as the Army’s Operating Concept puts it, “win in a complex world”—RAF can be a sound means of achieving this if done correctly. Operation Iraqi

¹³² Robert Haddick, “The Promise and Perils of Security Force Assistance,” Stimson Center *Budget Insight* blog post, 1 September 2009, available at <https://budgetinsight.wordpress.com/2009/09/01/the-promise-and-perils-of-security-force-assistance/#more-1332>, accessed March 25, 2015.

¹³³ Richard Shultz Jr., *Security Force Assistance and Security Sector Reform*. Joint Special Operations University Report 13-5, (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: The JSOU Press, 2013), 60.

Freedom proved that the Army could conduct institutional change to carry out effective security force assistance, but only after years of inattention. The Army will not have the luxury of the manning or budget it did in OIF for future SFA missions, so it must be smart about how it takes on the RAF mission. RAF cannot just be another mandatory task that gets thrown onto BCTs and their already overbooked training calendars. In order to get better at helping others secure themselves, the Army must get better at SFA capability within its core formation.

The recommendations outlined in this study are one method to help ensure that the organizations inside the BCT are best manned, trained, and equipped to conduct effective SFA at the tactical and operational levels. While not meant to serve as the comprehensive list or a “how to” for security force assistance, what this paper has aimed to do is to institutionalize SFA lessons from Iraq and apply them to RAF units going forward. If RAF is going to work, SFA principles and expertise must be institutionalized within the BCT for these missions to be as effective and efficient as the Army will need them to be.

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