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Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World: Maximizing Security Force Assistance Potential in the Regionally Aligned Brigade Combat Team

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STRENGTH AND WISDOM

ENABLING OTHERS TO WIN IN A COMPLEX WORLD: MAXIMIZING SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE POTENTIAL IN THE REGIONALLY ALIGNED BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

Liam Walsh

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FOREWORD

As the Army downsizes its personnel while still being asked to conduct a wide variety of missions globally, the need for increased effectiveness is paramount. Those interested in the possibilities presented by the Army's recently developed regionally aligned forces (RAF) concept will find this monograph thought-provoking and of particular interest. While the United States has long recognized the importance of "helping others help themselves," the author contends that, as Operation IRAQI FREEDOM demonstrated, U.S. Army conventional forces continue to falter in the realm of security force assistance. In a personnel and budgetary constrained environment, doing more with less will become more important, as will the need to build partner capacity.

In this monograph, Captain (Promotable) Liam Walsh, an infantry officer and veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan, seeks to answer how the Army's principal tactical formation—the brigade combat team—can best respond to this challenge and opportunity. Drawing upon extensive research into the Army's advisory efforts in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, Captain Walsh concludes that the Army must learn several key lessons in how it conducts security force assistance. Primary among these lessons is the imperative to get the right personnel into advisory roles, the need to ensure unity of effort between the operational and advisory missions, and the need to optimize the brigade combat team for security force assistance if it is to conduct that mission.

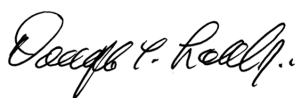
Captain Walsh examines the opportunities that the brigade combat team currently has in conducting security force assistance in today's operating environ-

ment. Drawing from the lessons of Iraq and current national security strategy, the author advocates that the brigade combat team can be a powerful force for the combatant commanders in the realm of conflict prevention, but that many of the lessons of Iraq are at risk of being lost. He further argues that changes should be made within the Army to make the brigade combat team more effective at security force assistance if tasked to conduct that mission.

The author provides five recommendations for the Army to increase the effectiveness of brigade combat teams when they are providing security force assistance. First, he calls for the Army to align the majority of its brigade combat teams with geographic combatant commands, thereby allowing the brigades to focus their training on a specific area of operations, while providing the combatant commanders with a more effective product. Next, he suggests the Army should reform its personnel policies to allow Soldiers to stay primarily aligned with units in the combatant command with which they have experience, creating more regional expertise and enabling enduring relationships with partner militaries. Third, he advocates for aligning conventional forces with collocated Special Forces Groups on military installations, creating the conditions for continued interdependence between the two, but also drawing on the inherent advisory capabilities found in Special Forces to help conventional forces prepare for this mission. Fourth, he calls for the creation of an “army advisor” corps, whose mission would be to conduct tactical and operational advising to host nation security forces, while also providing the ability to embed in conventional units tasked to conduct security force assistance to increase their capacity for that mission. Finally, he calls for the permanent

assignment of those “Army advisors” down to the battalion level as a means to assist unit commanders to train host nation security forces, or to provide stand-alone advisory packages if needed.

Captain Walsh’s work is timely and relevant and provides an excellent example of a young officer looking at a strategic issue and drawing upon his or her operational experience to try to provide recommendations to the U.S. Army as an institution. Those interested in the possibilities presented by the Army’s recently developed regionally aligned forces concept will find this monograph thought-provoking and of particular interest. The Strategic Studies Institute welcomes Captain Walsh’s contribution to the body of literature on security force assistance and regional alignment and highly recommends this work to those interested in the advisory mission in Iraq, brigade structure, and the regionally aligned forces concept.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr." in a cursive script.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute and
U.S. Army War College Press

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LIAM WALSH is currently a student at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS. He was commissioned as an infantry officer after graduating from the U.S. Military Academy in 2006. His first assignment was at Fort Campbell, KY, from where he deployed as a platoon leader to north-west Baghdad for 14 months in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM during the “surge.” After completion of the Maneuver Captains Career Course in 2010, he was assigned to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, where he twice deployed in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM to southern Afghanistan; in 2010 as an assistant operations officer and in 2012 as both a Stryker rifle company and headquarters and headquarters company commander. From 2013 to 2015, Captain Walsh attended graduate school at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He holds a bachelor’s degree in military history from West Point and a master’s degree in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School.

SUMMARY

An examination of the U.S. Army's security force assistance efforts during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM reveals significant issues in effectively advising 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 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 (RAF) concept, which aligns various units with the geographic combatant commands. One potential mission for regionally aligned forces that has the possibility of yielding substantial dividends is security force assistance. By aligning units regionally, particularly the brigade combat team, the Army could greatly increase its ability to conduct security force assistance through building enduring relationships with partner militaries and in gaining genuine regional expertise in potential areas of conflict.

However, the security force assistance lessons learned in Iraq currently are not operationalized to their maximum level within the brigade combat team. If regionally aligned brigade combat teams are to be truly effective in future security force assistance missions, 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 institutionalize relations between regionally aligned Special Forces Groups and conventional forces co-located on installations.
- 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.
- Fifth, the Army should modify the organization of the brigade combat team to increase its security force assistance capacity by assigning these Army Advisors down to the maneuver battalion level.

As this monograph demonstrates, the previous recommendations are not a cure-all for security force assistance within the brigade combat team, but what they do provide are possible means to develop more effectively and efficiently the militaries of partner and allied nations. By maximizing advising potential at the brigade combat team and below, 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 institutionalize Special Operations Forces and conventional forces interdepen-

dence, 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.

ENABLING OTHERS TO WIN IN A COMPLEX WORLD: MAXIMIZING SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE POTENTIAL IN THE REGIONALLY ALIGNED BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

Liam Walsh

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 tenet of the military component of this strategy, which focuses on the tasks associated with SFA: organize, train, equip, rebuild and build, and advise and assist.² Defined as “activities that contribute to unified action by the U.S. Government to support the development of the capacity and capability of FSF [foreign security forces] and their supporting institutions,” SFA enables U.S. advisors to achieve strategic goals through the efforts of partner nations and allies rather than through direct U.S. intervention.³ Additionally, as budgets tighten, focus within the Department of Defense (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, in 2013 the Army chose 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 edition 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 tenet 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 presence and sustained engagements with allied and partnered land forces.”⁶ An underlying principle among these themes is the need for the United States 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 monograph is to examine the role the U.S. Army plays in effectively enabling partner and allied nations to provide for their own security, thus preventing conflict if possible, and shaping it toward toward U.S. interests if conflict should arise. This monograph will focus at the tactical and operational levels of SFA – specifically looking at U.S. Army formations at the brigade combat team (BCT) and below; these units of approximately 4,500 soldiers are the deployable building block of the Army’s active forces. Optimizing the ability of the BCTs to conduct SFA while still retaining the warfighting capabilities inherent to the organization is crucial if the Army is to take on a larger role in building partner capacity and conflict prevention. SFA efforts in Iraq proved that the

Army could adapt to conduct SFA at the BCT level, albeit slowly and often inefficiently, in order to develop Iraqi security forces (ISF) capable of defending Iraq after Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) transitioned to Operation NEW DAWN (OND) in September 2010.

This monograph's chosen case study—OIF—will focus solely on the U.S. Army's training efforts with the Iraqi army. Although the U.S. Marine Corps, as well as elements of the U.S. Navy and U.S. 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 U.S. Army attempted to train units most similar to it—the conventional Iraqi army.

Additionally, this analysis recognizes there are inherent contextual differences present in the OIF example and those of potential future SFA missions in conditions other than major combat operations. However, these differences do not negate the importance of understanding the institutional SFA shortcomings and associated remedies that the situation in Iraq dictated the Army undertake. Army units train for decisive action through the simultaneous combination of offensive, defensive, stability (or defense support of civil authorities) operations and then begin focused training upon receipt of a specific mission.⁸ Similarly, there is great value in learning from the lessons of SFA development and execution during OIF, an effort that saw continuous changes to the mix of offensive, defensive, and security operations, despite the fact that the Army is not likely to undertake another large-scale stability operation in the future. Even if future operating environments are not replications of the conditions found in OIF, there is value institutionally in looking

at how the Army adapted to SFA in Iraq, and in noting that shortcomings still exist in the BCT for this crucial mission.

SFA efforts during OIF teach us several major lessons about how 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. Yet, current Army policy continues to treat SFA as an "add-on" mission for the BCT, negating the fact that, as Army policy states, conflict prevention is the area the Army will focus on in the future. Analyzing strengths and weaknesses of the U.S. 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 should RAF at the brigade level and below find themselves ordered to conduct security force assistance.

THE RELEVANCE OF SFA IN THE CONTEMPORARY OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) emphasizes three pillars for DoD's defense strategy: **protect the homeland; build security globally; project power and win decisively.**⁹ Of the 11 DoD missions the Army has a role in, SFA is directly tied to three: provide a global stabilizing presence; conduct military engagement and security cooperation; and conduct stability and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.¹⁰

The 2014 *Army Strategic Planning Guidance* (ASPG) helps shape how the Army sees the strategic environment that drove the decision to turn toward RAF. Examining the desired end state of operations—the termination of conflict—the ASPG states, “Effective conflict termination must establish security and stability among populations, which requires knowledge and influence on their cultural, political and economic relationships.”¹¹ The key point here, and one learned at great cost during OIF, OND, and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (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**.¹² 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 DoD**.¹³ SFA falls primarily under support to security cooperation. 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—RAF and mission tailored forces (MTF).

The Army defines RAF as:

[original in bold] **those Army units assigned and allocated to combatant commands, as well as those capabilities that are service retained (but aligned to a Combatant Command (CCMD) and prepared by the Army for regional missions.**¹⁴

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 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ A byproduct of increasing regional knowledge within units is that Army units tasked to conduct SFA under the RAF concept will have a greater knowledge of their counterparts, their language, customs, and region, and thus can be expected to serve more effectively in an advisory role.

Additionally, the Army cites that regional alignment will provide for more effective approaches for nontraditional 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.¹⁷ Part of this is that the Army sees RAF as one way to build sustainable capacity in partners and allies because forces organized under the concept will support enduring combatant commander requirements for military engagement, thus strengthening relationships and providing “consistent and committed interaction.”¹⁸ As will be examined later, the importance of enduring relationships is key in working with partner nations.

The other supporting concept outlined in the 2014 ASPG is that of mission tailored forces (MTF). MTF complement RAF in meeting combatant commander requirements, but have distinctly different and specific roles and missions such as the global response force (GRF), defeating anti-access/area denial threats, countering weapons of mass destruction, 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.¹⁹

With this understanding of how the Army sees itself filling its role within current national security strategy, this monograph will next examine a case study of the largest SFA mission the Army has undertaken since Vietnam—OIF. By tracing the development of the SFA mission in Iraq from 2003-10, it is possible to identify institutional and organizational shortcomings in how the Army conducts SFA, especially at the brigade combat team level.

SFA IN IRAQ 2003-10

The catastrophic effects of the early American decision to disband the Iraqi army were further compounded as OIF 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 George W. 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.²⁰ 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 SFA efforts in Iraq and led to continued success under OND, with the United States taking a back seat to the Iraqi military, although recent events and the collapse of the Iraqi army in the face of opposition in 2014 call into question the long-term effectiveness of this campaign.

Although there are many lessons to be learned in examining the Army's SFA efforts in OIF, it must be noted that this example occurred in a war-torn country that the United States had invaded and defeated. With this, the United States deployed significant amounts to troops and spent billions of dollars working to rebuild Iraq. Therefore, the OIF SFA model is not readily transportable to assisting U.S. partners that are not in the middle of a war. Additionally, much of the contemporary turmoil in Iraq must be attributed to forces well outside the Army's purview — principally the Iraqi government's inability to reconcile with its Sunni population. However, there are many lessons of the SFA experience in OIF, particularly focusing on BCT structure, that are worth examining in depth and provide ample opportunities for application in environments more permissive than that of war-torn Iraq.

Troubled Beginnings: 2003-06.

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 ISF.²¹ The initial plan called for U.S. Special Operations Forces to train 500 Iraqi commandos and for CMATT to establish nine light brigades for the new Iraqi army.²² Concurrently, conventional U.S. units began to train paramilitary Iraqi Civil Defense Corps units at the company level to assist in providing law and order.²³

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.²⁴ 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 MNF-I, which oversaw the strategic direction of the war. While intended to raise the priority of building ISF, the creation of separate operational and advisor commands also created a split command structure that would make unity of effort difficult to achieve.

Petraeus soon replaced the contractors leading the advisory effort with soldiers; however, many were “inadequately prepared for their role as advisors.”²⁵ At the time, there were only 39 “advisor support teams” (AST) in Iraq to carry out the training of the ISF.²⁶ 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.²⁷

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 2004.²⁸ Outlining the role that elements of one reserve division played when they deployed to Iraq in 2004, the commander of the U.S. 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.”²⁹

At the time of MNSTC-I's creation, nine Iraqi battalions existed; Petraeus's task was to build 10 Iraqi divisions as quickly as possible.³⁰ Compounding this daunting challenge, MNSTC-I had to fight for personnel to man its staff, relying heavily on reservists and individuals plucked from units already in Iraq.³¹ 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.³² Army units became increasingly involved in the training of ISF by creating ad hoc training teams they provided from within their own ranks, while also "partnering" 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.³³ 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 2004-06 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 (NCOs) 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, rather than institutional training on advising.³⁴ Heavy reliance initially went to Army Reserve and National Guard units, and then the efforts shifted to manpower that land-owning BCTs could provide themselves for the advisory mission. Multiple studies of transition teams, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, concluded that these teams were too small for the tasks that they have been assigned.³⁵

Doctrinally, MiTTs were 11-man teams advising Iraqi army units at the division, brigade, and battalion levels. They were normally attached to U.S. 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.³⁶ MiTTs consisted of officers and senior NCOs 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 NCO team in specialty areas such as intelligence, logistics, fire support, communications, and medical support.³⁷ 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 MiTTs had the expertise to train and advise the Iraqi army, while also possessing the tactical skills needed to bring U.S. enablers to bear in support of the Iraqi army.

By 2005, as the situation in Iraq deteriorated, the U.S. plan became to transition security responsibilities quickly to the Iraqis – as President Bush summarized, “as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down.”³⁸ This hopeful strategy was designed “to keep a lid on Iraq until such time as newly created Iraqi forces could take over the fight.”³⁹ Correspondingly, advisory

efforts rapidly increased. 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 NCOs; this came at a time when the Army already had 20 BCTs committed to the fights in Iraq and Afghanistan and another 15 preparing to rotate in.⁴⁰ Facing significant demand for officers and senior NCOs, 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 toward 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 toward organizing, training, and equipping an Iraqi army, albeit not without flaws. 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 U.S. forces taking a back seat to the ISF, instead focusing mainly on counterterrorism.⁴¹ 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.⁴² Despite U.S. plans and institutional commitment to turn security over to the ISF, the Iraqis simply were not prepared.

Transition Teams in the “Surge”: 2007-08.

Recognizing inconsistency in the training of advisors, in June 2006 the Army, Air Force, and Navy consolidated advisory team training at Fort Riley, KS, under the command of the Army’s 1st Infantry Division; the Marines established their own transition training center at 29 Palms, CA. Sensing 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.⁴³ Those selected to MiTTs underwent 60 days of training at Fort Riley, focused on individual skills, advisor skills, collective tasks, and culture, as well as 40 hours of language training.⁴⁴ Additionally, the Deputy Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division was made the commander of the IAG, responsible for the administrative control of all transition teams deployed to Iraq.⁴⁵ 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 manning priority.⁴⁶ There is some credence to this claim, as one class of majors graduating from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in late-2006 saw 18 percent of its graduates assigned directly to transition teams.⁴⁷ 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. COIN expert Dr. John Nagl, whose last assignment in the Army from 2006-08 was commanding one of the battalions at Fort Riley tasked with training U.S.

advisors, stated he “was furious at the ad-hockery that underlay everything the Army was doing in advisor selection and training.”⁴⁸ Nagl’s criticism’s centered on what amounted to 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, CA). Furthermore, the Army was training advisors with the wrong people (tank drivers instead of Green Berets). Then the Army disbanded the trained, battle-tested advisor teams after their year-long deployment, only to create new ones from scratch to replace them.⁴⁹

Higher echelon MiTTs (brigade and division) were predominantly filled with senior leaders centrally selected by the Army for advisory duty. These “external” teams 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 U.S. forces in theater. While these MiTTs often trained in a focused manner on advising skills and had 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.⁵⁰ Additionally, despite the importance of training the ISF by 2008, only half of the 14 division MiTTs were augmented with a standard MiTT, showing that even though these teams had the top manning priority, getting advisors into place remained a challenge.⁵¹

The battalion-level MiTTs, those conducting tactical advising, were frequently internally sourced by members of the U.S. 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 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.⁵² Additionally, internally sourced teams were “created out of hide” and required the sourcing unit to lose a disproportionate number of senior NCOs and key officers for this mission, making it difficult to replace 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 U.S. patrols was 12 soldiers, and giving credence to the claim that the advisory teams were too small for the tasks they completed.⁵³ Many battlespace owning BCTs and battalions therefore had to provide U.S. platoons under operational control of the MiTTs to facilitate their freedom of movement, further exacerbating the ad hoc nature of the MiTTs.⁵⁴

The descent of Iraq into sectarian civil war from 2006-07 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.⁵⁵ Leader development in the ISF also took a back seat. Despite these challenges, by summer 2007, MNSTC-I

had created over 150,000 soldiers in the Iraqi army, and the units' performance had increased.⁵⁶ Colonel Peter Mansoor, Executive Officer for General Petraeus from 2007-08, 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."⁵⁷ It should be noted, however, that this was at a time when over 160,000 U.S. forces were deployed to Iraq; this means that less than 4 percent of the force was dedicated to training the ISF. The urgency of the "surge" required U.S. units to take on the bulk of securing the Iraqi population, while the ongoing development of the ISF did not receive the same level of emphasis and resourcing as did the additional five "surge" BCTs sent to Iraq. While efforts to secure Iraq from 2006-08 certainly achieved impressive results, the advisory campaign remained relatively ad hoc during this crucial phase of the war.

The Advise and Assist Brigade, 2009-10.

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, LA, was activated 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.⁵⁸ This also enabled the 162nd to train and evaluate advisor teams as they conducted their Mission Rehearsal Exercise at Fort Polk or Fort Irwin, CA, 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.⁵⁹ The 162nd also formed Mobile Training Teams that could travel to Army installations to train deploying units on a variety of SFA functions, including language skills, Islamic culture, roles of the advisor and negotiation techniques, leader engagements, and many other areas relevant to advisors.⁶⁰

More importantly, the Army changed its approach to SFA in a significant way – both in the advisor teams and in the BCTs. 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 BCT. 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). Under this concept, the BCT would gain a large component of advisors upon receipt of an 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.⁶¹ These individuals would be assigned temporarily 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 ISF, providing them with coalition support when needed, and providing coalition forces with situational awareness of ISF operations and progress, while conventional forces at the squad through battalion level partnered with their Iraqi counterparts (see Figure 1).

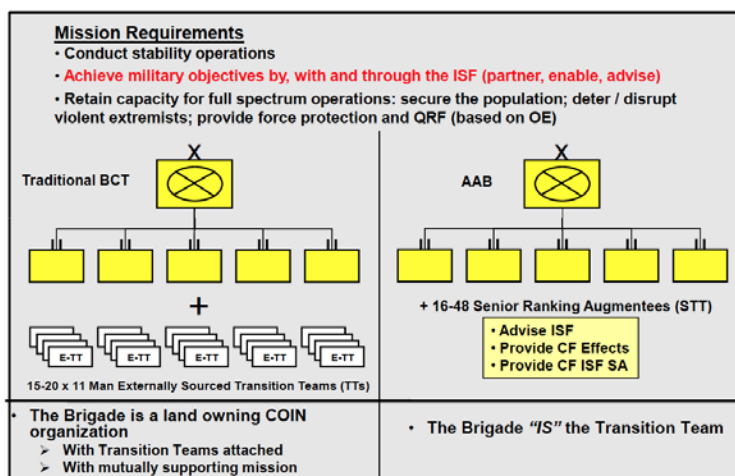


Figure 1. Traditional BCT vs. AAB.⁶²

In the spring of 2009, the 4th BCT, 1st Armored Division deployed to Iraq, serving as a "proof of concept" for the AABs. By August 2010, seven AABs were serving in Iraq as the last "combat" BCT redeployed to the United States.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴

With the development of the 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."⁶⁵

On September 1, 2010, OIF transitioned to OND, marking the official end of combat operations by U.S. forces in Iraq. Under OND, six AABs remained in Iraq to conduct stability operations, focusing on advising, assisting, and training the ISF.⁶⁶ This became the U.S. military mission in Iraq until the end of 2011, when the United States, unable to negotiate a new status of forces agreement with Baghdad, withdrew the last of its military forces from Iraq. The hard-learned lessons of SFA within the BCT learned during the 2003-10 period became, at least temporarily, institutionalized within the AAB. As focus within the U.S. Government shifted to the war in Afghanistan, the AAB structure changes eventually found themselves present in the SFA Transition Team (SFATT). Yet, once units redeployed to the United States, training focus and organization completely shifted away from SFA, running the risk of failing to institutionalize the lessons learned in training FSF.

ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Reviewing the lessons learned in the Army's attempts at SFA in Iraq from 2003-10, 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 BCT 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, the Army lists 16 personality traits of the advisor, including such subjective traits such as tolerance for ambiguity, warmth in human relations, tolerance for differences, and a sense of humor, as well as outlining two sub-categories 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 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. Casey, then the Army Chief of Staff, stated in 2008, "I want to ensure that the officers that lead these teams are recognized and given the credit they deserve."⁷⁰ As 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 U.S. SFA effort in Iraq is how detrimental the ad hoc creation of transition teams was to 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 100 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 War," some have come to criticize the Army's efforts in Iraq 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 careers 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, 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 IAG, 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; 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 should take on this task due to their physical proximity with one another.

A bigger issue existed in the fact that the BCTs, with their ISF counterpart, “owned” the terrain in which the MiTTs operated. This could create tension between advisors and U.S. BCTs about operations conducted with the ISF. Conventional U.S. Army units often partnered with Iraqi army units at the squad, platoon, and company 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, concerned with the effectiveness and development of the Iraqi Army, worked from a separate set of priorities from their land-owning counterparts, whose primary concern 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 partnered with Iraqi platoons often had no real way of reporting the real effectiveness of Iraqi small units in combat, since 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 until just prior to deployment to Iraq. This led to the potential for personality clashes among brigade and advisor team leaders, and at lower levels could lead to confusion as to what was the main effort.

The key lesson is that, in order to achieve unity of effort, the advisory effort needs to be completely

imbedded at the BCT 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 very early on would need to define the relationships and command and support structures between the two missions.

SFA in OIF Conclusions.

In diagramming the arc of SFA efforts in OIF, 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 FSF. The Army's SFA effort in Iraq provides three key imperatives to be applied to future operations:

1. The BCT 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.

2. 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 brigades would be a possible organizational change that could improve SFA efforts at the lowest levels.

3. 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 not detract from future command opportunities.

These lessons will drive the following sections of this monograph as it examines how the Army can best apply the lessons from SFA in Iraq to future operations while recognizing that future SFA efforts are very likely to occur in circumstances much different from those of Iraq. As the Army seeks to “Prevent” and “Shape” the future conflict environment, it must get better at SFA at the lowest level if units deployed in support of RAF missions are to be effective and to apply the hard-learned lessons of training FSF that we can draw from OIF.

THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT, RAF, AND THE BCT

Illustrating the potential that RAF can play in SFA for combatant commanders, General David Rodriguez, Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), noted how the Army’s first regionally aligned brigade, the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), 1st Infantry Division, took part in multiple missions to train FSF. 2/1 ABCT elements trained 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-improvised explosive device (IED) skills, and trained Kenyan Defense forces in unmanned aerial vehicle operations.⁷⁸

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, although was ultimately not deployed.⁷⁹ At the end of the first RAF deployment, elements of the brigade had conducted over 160 missions in 30 countries.⁸⁰

The merits of the Army using aligned BCTs in SFA 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 U.S. strategy. As noted in *Foreign Policy*, “it’s always Phase Zero somewhere,” and thus, regionally aligned Army forces have a role to play.⁸¹ The crux of the RAF concept is getting the BCT involved in the “Prevent” and “Shape” phases of its “Prevent-Shape-Win” strategy. One key mission the BCT can bring to combatant commanders is SFA.

One helpful model to view the role of the BCT in conducting SFA is found in the U.S. Army Special Operations Command’s (USASOC) *Operating Concept 2022* (See Figure 2). Not surprisingly, USASOC envisions itself in the lead in most operations to the left of conventional military operations, such as foreign internal defense (FID), unconventional warfare, and counterterrorism. Where this analysis is truly interested is in the middle ground, where USASOC highlights the role of counterinsurgency, SFA and FID, and the interplay of SOF and conventional forces (CF). In this “engagement” phase, there is clearly a role for both conventional BCTs and SOF to play, especially given that it aligns with national security strategy emphasizing the military’s role in conflict prevention. The question, therefore, becomes one of how conventional

forces, particularly at the BCT level and below, can become more adept at these types of missions.

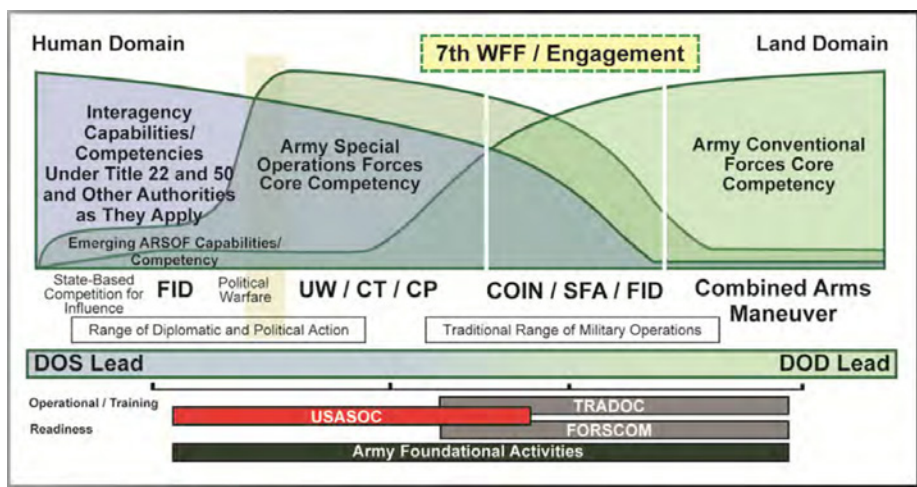


Figure 2. USASOC Future Force Development Process.⁸²

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 over-emphasizes 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.”⁸³ Therefore, a breaking point will be reached if SOF alone conducts SFA, thus necessitating the role of CF in this mission. USASOC also envisions SOF pulling critical enablers from the BCTs such as medical experts, intelligence assets, transportation assets, 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 FSF without depending on SOF. Finally, 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.”⁸⁴

It is also necessary to examine existing programs in the Army focused on SFA and Security Cooperation 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 FID missions—a core competency of the Green Berets since their founding in the earliest stages of the Vietnam War, while the National Guard’s State Partnership Program, formed in the 1990s to develop cooperative, mutually beneficial relationships with partner nations also provides an excellent example of effective relationship building and the importance that plays in working with partner militaries.

FID has long been a core competency of Army SOF. Yet, it is important to note that FID and SFA are not one and 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.”⁸⁵ The focus on all U.S. FID efforts is to support the host nation’s Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) strategy, which is ideally a preemptive plan of action.⁸⁶ A more significant difference in FID and SFA is their scale. Forces conducting SFA theoretically can build FSF from the ground up, whereas FID focuses on existing forces defending against an internal threat.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, while not the same doctrinally, a SOF

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 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 Richard Nixon Doctrine of U.S. military assistance to host nations with the caveat that they provide the preponderance of forces for their own self-defense.⁸⁸ This role was further solidified in the Sam Nunn-William Cohen amendment to the Barry Goldwater-William Nichols Act, which legislatively dictated FID as a core task for U.S. SOF.⁸⁹

As will be noted in the examination of the State Partnership 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.⁹⁰ This limited scale enables SOF to conduct FID given the finite number of SOF, but as highlighted in the earlier section's discussions of the USASOC 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.

Demonstrating the critical role that enduring relationships can have in working with partner militaries,

the National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP) is another existing program deserving of examination. Created as a U.S. national initiative for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace program in 1994, SPP initially sought to "provide opportunities for non-NATO countries to create a foundation for full participation in a shared environment of regional and international military, political, and economic activities."⁹¹ With the focus of operations shifting to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) after September 11, 2001, the SPP mission remained relatively unchanged as U.S. European Command (EUCOM) was able to call upon National Guard forces despite losing many of its assigned forces to the fights in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁹² By 2010, SPP had expanded to partner 62 countries with 47 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia.⁹³

A central reason for the success of SPP 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 former Adjutant General in Illinois Major General William Enyart who worked with Polish security forces in the SPP 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.⁹⁴

These military-to-military exchanges in the SPP 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.⁹⁵ As the program expanded beyond military-to-military

partnerships, SPP was able to fund and train nonmilitary events, drawing on the significant experience in the National Guard on disaster relief and cooperation with civilian authorities, expertise not generally present in the active duty Army.⁹⁶ Maryland eventually expanded the program to include sister cities, where mayors of 10 towns in Maryland worked with Estonian mayors to talk about provision of services.⁹⁷ The key lesson relevant to the Army in conducting SFA missions is the importance of enduring relationships with partner and allied nations.

The SPP is also not a cure-all model for working with FSF. 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.⁹⁸ 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. SPP gets approval from U.S. ambassadors, the National Guard Bureau, and the National Guard Annual SPP plan, and resources come from a variety of sources to include government agencies, NGOs, federal and state grants, private sector organizations, and international agencies.⁹⁹ 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. SPP does provide, however, an example of the value of enduring relationships between U.S. forces and partner nations, a central goal of the new RAF policy.

The Central Question: Can the BCT Conduct Effective SFA?

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.”¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹ This new command would have primacy in all Army SFA missions, allowing it to focus all of its efforts on building FSF. A similar proposal is found in Colonel Scott Wuestner’s 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, Scott Wuestner called for a 47-person advisory teams at the division level and 25-person teams at the brigade and battalion levels.¹⁰²

Others contend that the BCT is the correct structure for SFA, however. Colonel Philip Battaglia, commander of a prototype AAB in Southern Iraq from 2008-09, argued, “the BCT structure has the built-in flexibility to perform any assigned mission. There is no need for wholesale force structure redesign.”¹⁰³ Citing the inherent agility and flexibility of the BCT, Battaglia’s experience led him to believe that “the modular BCT is the right organization to form the core of security force assistance operations in Iraq.”¹⁰⁴ 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.”¹⁰⁵ Instead, Chiarelli felt

that SOF 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 contend 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 supports the advisor teams, not to “fight” them on the battlefield.¹⁰⁶ 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.¹⁰⁷ The next section provides recommendations based on these arguments, the lessons from Iraq, and likely future missions that the Army will find itself tasked with so that it can best optimize the BCT to effectively conduct SFA.

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 previous examination of current SFA models and the likely future operating environment, this section of this monograph will provide recommendations for how the BCT can best adjust to SFA missions. These recommendations are based on the assumptions that the Army will be called upon to conduct SFA missions in partner nations in the “Prevent” and “Shape” phases of conflict,

that the BCT will remain the core formation for Army operations, that the Army's end strength does not drop below 450,000 soldiers 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.

Considering this monograph's earlier findings and the earlier assumptions, the following recommendations are proposed, in order of importance, to maximize effectiveness within the brigade combat team tasked with 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 BCTs with Army Special Forces Groups as well as combatant commands.
4. Create an Army Advisor Functional Area/Military Occupational Specialty.
5. Modify BCT structure by assigning "Army advisors" to increase SFA capacity at BCT and below.

Recommendation 1: Expand regional alignment to more BCTs.

To truly make regional alignment of BCTs effective in the realm of security cooperation, the Army should consider regionally aligning the majority of its brigades with a combatant command. While these alignments are not sacrosanct to operational demand in crisis, the alignment would nevertheless serve multiple purposes in making the BCT 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 BCTs with a combatant command provides the brigade with a 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 U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) or U.S. 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.¹⁰⁸

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 turnover, at the operational and senior leader levels, there is a real possibility that, through rotating brigade staff level offi-

cers and senior NCOs to joint exercises with partners, personal relationships can develop, as was the case in the National Guard's State Partnership Program. At the squad through battalion level, continued focus on a region will at least develop regional understanding of allies and 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 Raymond Odierno's 2012 remarks that:

the approach to accomplishing operational tasks is by organizing around highly trained Squads and Platoons that are the foundation for our Company, Battalion and Brigade Combat Teams, organized for specific mission sets and regional conditions.¹⁰⁹

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.¹¹⁰ 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 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 BCTs 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: 6 months in the RESET pool, focused on unit reconstitution after a deployment and on limited individual training; 18 months in the Train/Ready pool, focused on increasing readiness and capabilities in preparation for moving to the Available pool; and 9 months in the Available Force pool, where units are at the highest state of readiness and are available for sourcing operational requirements.¹¹¹ This 1:3 ratio of “boots the on ground” time deployed to nondeployed, 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 1:2.¹¹²

Given other operational demands, not all BCTs can, or should, be continuously regionally aligned. With the deactivation of the Army’s last standing BCT 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 U.S.-based Armored BCT to the NATO Response Force.¹¹³ 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.¹¹⁴ Traditionally the purview of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg,

NC, the GRF is now augmented with stryker and armor companies, combat aviation elements, and other additional assets.¹¹⁵ 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.

Another factor to be considered in this proposal is 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 Partnership Program in many of the nations in SOUTHCOM and EUCOM rather than aligning a large number of Active Army brigades with them, although continued Russian aggressiveness is likely to necessitate a larger continued Active Duty presence in EUCOM.

Finally, 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 principal 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 SPP as being examples of building enduring relationships due to their regional alignment and personnel stability. The report contends 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.”¹¹⁶ Building on Recommendation 1, an Army policy shift to increase personnel stability in 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 SPP 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 4-year tour at a duty station in the United States, with exceptions that occur based on professional education windows and other factors.¹¹⁷ While certainly a degree of personnel turnover 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 soldiers to increase their expertise in a region, while still ensuring they 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 2 to 4 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.¹¹⁸

Creating an Effective Regional Alignment Strategy for the U.S. Army 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.’¹¹⁹

The lessons the authors draw from this are that the BCT 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.¹²⁰ However, stabilizing personnel to an aligned region would allow units to have a baseline cultural understanding from their recent assignments within the region, while still keeping BCTs on the ARFOR-

GEN cycle of 9 months deployed and 27 months training, thus keeping the BCT as the foundation of force generation.

The SSI monograph's authors accurately note that entire BCTs are not likely to deploy under the RAF model, but rather "certain sub-units." However, by limiting stabilization in an aligned unit to these sub-units, they undermine the potential of regional alignment within the BCT. As displayed by the RAF brigades deployed in AFRICOM and units participating in the "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 formations on which the Army is based. In order for regional alignment to truly work, more brigades must align with combatant commands, and the 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 BCTs with Army Special Forces Groups as well as Combatant Commands.

With the exception of PACOM and BCTs currently stationed in Alaska, Hawaii, and Washington State, and the two BCTs currently stationed in Europe, there exists little natural geographic linkage between BCTs and combatant commands. Lacking any physi-

cal imperative to align units based on physical geography, one potential method of regional alignment would be to align co-located 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, partnered BCTs could draw advisor lessons from the Special Forces units before these units deployed to a combatant command to conduct SFA. Lastly, pairing SFGs with BCTs 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.¹²¹

Active Duty Army SFGs 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, FL, all SFGs are co-located on an installation with at least an Army division headquarters and two BCTs. 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 BCTs, and multiple enabler units, JBLM is also home to the 1st SFG. 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, BCTs, and SFGs, with several exceptions.

While 3rd SFG and the 82nd Airborne Division and corresponding BCTs are co-located at Fort Bragg, the Global Response Force mission discussed earlier could prevent the 82nd Airborne aligning with AF-RICOM. Additionally, the 7th SFG, responsible for SOUTHCOM, has no co-located major Army unit at its post at Eglin Air Force Base. 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 regional training 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 SFGs with conventional forces already co-located on most U.S. 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 FAO functional area. Made up primarily of field grade officers, FAOs are the Army's primary method of achieving security cooperation missions, central to the "Prevent, Shape, Win" strategy.¹²² Specializing in cross-cultural capabilities, interpersonal communications, and foreign-language skills, FAOs serve most frequently as attaches, security cooperation officers in U.S. embassies, political-military advisors to deployed U.S. commanders, and liaison officers to foreign militaries.¹²³ 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 United States in building partner capacity. What they are not is advisors to tactical and operational FSF.

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 specialized advisor career path would ensure that advisor selection and training would be based on more malleable traits of human cognitive ability.¹²⁴ The focus for Army advisors should be on expertise in imparting military knowledge to members of foreign military force, 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 who would be permanently assigned to BCTs to assist in both training and operations, as will be discussed in Recommendation 5.

This functional area must be 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, advisors must be recruited from top Army junior leaders. They should be able to shift between advisor and competitive operational command opportunities to ensure promotion and, potential advisors should be offered additional incentives, such as advanced civilian schooling, for those selected. An 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 should also create a new Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) for NCOs that adds to the Army's advising capabilities. Given that tactical advising is inherently the business of NCOs, any new Army advisor branch should heavily recruit senior NCOs, 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 NCOs to contribute to this effort. A major benefit of this proposal would be that these NCOs could help train units deploying on SFA missions on how to best transfer expertise on basic soldiering skills to FSF. The advisory effort in Iraq proved, and Army doctrine recognizes, that even the best soldiers do not always make the best advisors. With pre-deployment training on the best way to train FSF by an expert cadre of Army advisors, regionally aligned BCTs tasked to conduct SFA could potentially be much more effective

than if they just attempted to transplant U.S. training models onto foreign forces.

The infrastructure to begin to form an Army advisor functional area is already present in the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade at Fort Polk. Currently, the 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.”¹²⁵ 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 SFA, as well as cross-cultural capability, before assigning advisors to the Army units.

The Army routinely has 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 threat as an example of the Army adapting to changes. The Army already possesses much of the institutional knowledge in SFA necessary to begin to stand up an advisor branch in the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade. 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 way to developing a professional cadre of advisors whose full-time job would be advising security forces at the tactical and operational levels.

Recommendation 5: Modify BCT structure to increase SFA capacity.

This monograph’s most far-reaching recommendation is for the Army to modify the structure of the BCT to increase permanently its capacity for conduct-

ing SFA. Even the development of the AAB in Iraq, while fixing many of the issues of unity of command between the advisory effort and BCT, failed to achieve what is truly necessary to ensure the BCT is effective at SFA – tie advising to those who have the most contact with FSF, the squad and platoon levels. If the Army is to be effective at conflict prevention via SFA, the Army needs the ability to get advisors to work with squads and platoons well before their assumption of an SFA mission, teaching soldiers at the lowest levels advising skills.

The principal reason for any restructure would be to create more effectiveness between advisory efforts and partnered units. Although 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 SFA defines advising as “the use of influence to teach, coach, and advise while working by, with, and through FSF.”¹²⁶ Partnering, on the other hand, “attaches units at various levels to leverage the strengths of both U.S and [FSF].”¹²⁷ However, small units that would be considered “partnered” forces are receiving cultural training and then assuming an advisor/trainer mission. Unlike OIF, where large amounts of both advisors and conventional forces were present, future SFA missions will likely place small units in direct contact with FSF as their only point of contact with U.S. forces. It is therefore imperative that elements within the BCT selected for SFA missions are given adequate training in advising FSF 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 not only to the brigade level,

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

Additionally, these advisors could deploy as stand-alone force packages to SFA missions based on combatant commander requirements, or could augment conventional forces and provide them with in-house expertise on SFA, training FSF, 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 within the BCT 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 on the previous four recommendations, institutionalizing advisors down to the lowest level while maintaining focus on a geographic region in order to best prepare conventional units to conduct SFA missions. The key difference from the AAB model is that, rather than receiving advisors upon

receipt of an SFA mission, the BCT would have a cadre of advisors permanently assigned to it. Some might argue that this is an unnecessary permanent change to the organization of the BCT and that augmented advisors are only necessary when a unit receives an SFA mission. This contention runs counter to U.S. national security policy, however, which emphasizes the role of the U.S. military in building partner capacity. Assigning Army advisors down to the lowest levels would provide the flexibility and expertise inherently necessary to maximize SFA missions within BCTs and could ensure that both tactical and operational advising by Army units are conducted to their maximum capability, while still enabling the primary focus of the BCTs to be that of fighting and winning in the land domain.

CONCLUSIONS

In a 2014 interview, Nagl stated, “Regionally Aligned Forces are a poor man’s Advisor Corps, but they’re better than nothing.”¹²⁸ 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.¹²⁹ In reality, the Army cannot restructure itself as an advisory force, nor should it, as its core mission remains to fight and win America’s wars. This does not mean, however, that the United States can wish away the ugly wars of the past decade. Strategic reality dictates that the United States will have to rely increasingly on its partners and allies to fight on their own to help achieve U.S. objectives. Therefore, the Army must be better postured to help others win in a complex world. This is where the central question

this monograph attempted to answer comes into play: How can the Army best organize, train, and equip itself to ensure it is more effective at SFA?

There are many lessons to be drawn from recent experience. Examining the development of SFA in OIF provides several key lessons in what to do—and not to do—to achieve effective results in SFA. Primary among these lessons is the imperative to get the right people assigned to advisor duty, avoidance of ad hoc creation of advisor teams, and ensuring 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 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 RAF concept, carried out principally in conventional BCTs, 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 FSF will likely not have the benefit of the more than 100,000 American troops present as in OIF, therefore SFA 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 units tasked to conduct SFA succeed. First, it should align as many BCTs as possible with combatant commands, giving commanders a regional focus for culture, capabilities, tactics, and potential operating environments, while also creating the potential

for recurring relationships with FSF while providing GCCs 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 FSF. It could also have the benefit of greater stability for soldiers and their families. Third, the Army should draw on already existent co-located SFGs and conventional forces on U.S. bases and formalize alignment between the two as well as with combatant command regions. This would build on the first two recommendations while also having the benefit of drawing from Special Forces' expertise in training FSF 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 MOS. Different from FAOs, Army advisors would be experts in SFA at the tactical and operational level and would be skilled in imparting military knowledge to FSF. Finally, the Army should institutionalize and improve BCT capacity for SFA by assigning these Army advisors down to the battalion and BCT levels. This would enable a BCT to have its own in-house experts on training FSFs at the tactical and operational level and would help commanders train small U.S. 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 United States will undertake in the future. First, will the partner receiving U.S. assistance help the United States with its objectives? One needs to look no further than the troubles experienced with the Hamid Karzai and Nouri al-Maliki governments to recognize the challenge. Second, can foreign military forces do the job? The collapse of the Iraqi army in the face of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in 2014, despite years of training and billions of U.S. 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 U.S. security assistance. Questions about the Afghan National Army’s ability to maintain U.S. equipment after the American withdrawal serve as a prudent warning here. Finally, Haddick asks if a U.S. security assistance mission might create a “Frankenstein monster” that will later haunt the United States? Examples too numerous to name come to mind in this respect.¹³⁰ While these are strategic level questions that must be considered at the president and secretary of defense 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 – effectiveness vs. accountability. U.S. forces historically have been successful at creating tactically effective FSF. However, security force accountability to host nation governmental control is a strategic issue that must be incorporated into tactical level advising; long-term successful SFA depends on more than just tactical advising. Therefore, SFA can be made more powerful by encompassing military effectiveness, accountability, and 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.¹³¹ If the Army is to have a role in building partner capacity in the prevention of conflict, the issue of accountability must be incorporated into how we train units and advisors.

Finally, it is unlikely that any near-term SFA missions involving the BCT will resemble the scope of OIF. The Iraq example was that of a defeated nation that the United States was initially rebuilding, and then became entangled in a civil war. Future SFA missions, if conducted properly, will occur before the onset of major combat. That does not mean, however, there is no value in the SFA lessons from Iraq. The Army consistently trains its forces for full-scale warfare, recognizing that if it trains to that standard, less intense missions, such as COIN or SFA, will be achievable with focused mission-specific training prior to deployment. This same logic can be applied when looking at the SFA lessons found in OIF, and then at how to apply them to more permissive environments in the realm of conflict prevention.

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 get better at helping others, as the Army's operating concept puts it, "win in a complex world" —SFA can be a sound means of achieving this if done correctly. OIF proved that the Army could conduct institutional change to carry out effective security force assistance, but only after years of inattention. The U.S. Army will not have the luxury of the manning or budget it had in OIF for future SFA missions, so it must be smart about how it takes on this task, particularly in region-

ally aligned brigades. 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 monograph 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 SFA, what this monograph has aimed to do is to institutionalize SFA lessons from Iraq and apply them to potential future missions. If the BCT is to have a role in conflict prevention, 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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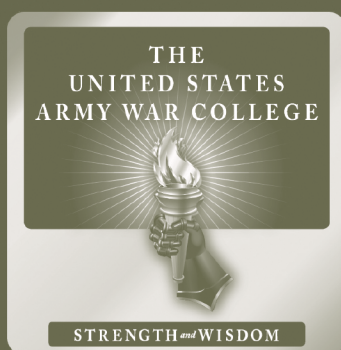
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