

**THE UNITED STATES ARMY AND SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE:  
THE SHORTCOMINGS OF ADVISORS CONDUCTING SECURITY  
FORCE ASSISTANCE AND THE FUTURE**

BY

**MAJOR BURTON H. MILNOR, JR.**

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**APPROVAL**

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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COL STEPHEN L. RENNER (Date)

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DAVID C. BENSON, PhD (Date)



## **DISCLAIMER**

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US government, Department of Defense, the United States Army, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Burton H. Milnor, Jr. is a United States Army logistics officer, with advisory experience in Afghanistan. He completed this study as part of the graduation requirements for the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS), Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Major Milnor was commissioned from Officer Candidate School in July 2007, where he was a Distinguished Military Graduate and the Distinguished Leadership Graduate of Class 05-007. Major Milnor is a 1997 graduate of Anderson University with a degree in Business Marketing. Major Milnor also holds a Master's of Science in Business Analytics from the The College of William and Mary and a Master's of Military Arts and Sciences from Air Command and Staff College.

Major Milnor deployed to Afghanistan in 2010-2011, where he was a Security Forces Assistance Team Chief, advising elements of the Afghan National Army on their logistics systems. He took command of Delta Forward Support Company, 125th BSB in October 2011 where he would remain for 27 months, deploying to Afghanistan in direct support of Village Stability Operations for the Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force from January to October 2014. During this time, he also assumed positions of Camp Vance Commandant and Base Defense Operations Center Commander. Upon redeployment he was assigned to the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, LA where he performed Observer, Coach, Trainer duties for 18 rotations.

Air University—Maxwell AFB, AL

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## **ABSTRACT**

The United States government, the Department of Defense and other entities have a long history of providing advisory aid to foreign governments and militaries. Aid has been accompanied by advisors used for Foreign Internal Defense and Security Force Assistance missions for militaries and governments struggling against domestic unrest. Military advisors, however, have often been assigned to advising on an ad hoc basis or haphazard manner and deployed with little or no relevant training. The Army has recently recognized the need for more advisors as this type of aid is growing in importance within the U.S. government and Department of Defense. The Army has designed a program to institute six new brigades called Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFAB). Do the SFABs point to the future of Army advising and has the program learned from past mistakes? Empirical case studies of Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq provide a benchmark against which the new SFABs can be compared and contrasted.

The central argument of this thesis is that the United States has not put an emphasis on Security Force Assistance, particularly as it pertains to conventional forces executing the mission. This will be established by examining the advisory efforts in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq. By identifying the good and bad from each theater, it will provide a baseline to examine the new SFABs. In examining the new SFABs, it will look at where they have learned from past mistakes and where they are making the same mistakes.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Consolidating [the Cold War] victory requires a continuing U.S. role and new strategies to strengthen democratic institutions. Military civic action can, in concert with other elements of U.S. strategy, be an effective means of achieving U.S. objectives around the globe.

General Fred F. Woerner, Jr. U.S. Army, Retired

Security force assistance is not new for the Army. In fact, General George Washington's Inspector General of the Army acted as an advisor for the Army. Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben instilled discipline and professionalism into an army that previously lacked formalized training. His 1779 Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, adapted from the Prussian army, formed the doctrinal backbone of the Continental Army throughout the Revolutionary War. Additionally, the lineage of the Army's operations field manual, FM 3-0, can be traced to this document. As a benefactor of advisors such as von Steuben, the Army has since undertaken what is called security force assistance on numerous occasions throughout its history.

FM 3-07.1, SFA Chapter 4

### **The Central Question and its Significance**

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has a long history of conducting nation assistance activities. During World War II, advisors were used to assist the resistance groups against the Axis powers. In more recent periods, advisors have been used to aid friendly governments battling insurgencies. "Nation assistance is civil or military assistance (other than humanitarian aid/assistance) rendered to a nation by U.S. forces within that nation's territory during peacetime, crises or emergencies, or war, based on agreements mutually concluded between the United States and that nation."<sup>1</sup> These activities were primarily

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Pub (JP) 3-07, *Stability*, 03 August 2016, III-9



focused on gaining access and influence to partner nations (PN)<sup>2</sup> and include security assistance, foreign internal defense (FID), and humanitarian and civic assistance (HCA), but are not bound by those alone.<sup>3</sup> The overall purpose of SFA has evolved from its original beginnings. Assisting foreign security forces (FSF) has always been the underlying purpose but today SFA enables and develops the sustainable capabilities of foreign security forces to a sufficient capacity in order to provide regional stability. According to Army Training Publication (ATP) 3-96.1, “Security force assistance has always played a vital role in the U.S. Army’s history. The background nature of the SFA operations relegates them to obscurity behind the large conventional military battles throughout history. However, the Army’s history is full of security force assistance ranging from training police in Bosnia to large scale operations in Vietnam and Iraq, all of which provided vital contributions to achieving our nation’s goals.”<sup>4</sup> SFA is a way to meet political ends; advisors are the means to accomplish it.

Military advisors are generally officers and enlisted personnel who have the tactical knowledge to advise FSF and preferably have held positions in the U.S. armed forces for which they are advising. They deploy to a host nation (HN) and advise from the tactical level and up. “Advisors are the most prominent group of U.S. personnel that serve with foreign security forces (FSF). They live, work, and fight with their FSF. The relationship between advisors and FSF is vital. Advisors are not liaison officers, nor do they command FSF units.”<sup>5</sup>

The United States has not had a very good track record conducting SFA. There are numerous reasons for this lack of success. The main

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<sup>2</sup> United States Special Operations Command, *Security Force Assistance Guide*, 28 July 2011, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Joint Pub 3-07, III-9.

<sup>4</sup> Army Training Publication (ATP) 3-96.1, *Security Force Assistance Brigade*, 2 May 2018, 1-1.

<sup>5</sup> Field Manual (FM) 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, May 2009, 7-1.

reasons are the improper selection of advisors, a lack of formal training on how to be an advisor, a lack of cultural knowledge, and the mirror imaging of FSF and governments in an American fashion. American SFA forces have neglected to study and learn the cultures for which they will be working with. Cultures of differing countries view things differently, particularly authority, bureaucracy, creativity, good fellowship, verification, and accountability.<sup>6</sup> This lack of cultural knowledge has in some cases led to rifts between host nation forces and advisors that impeded the efforts. Some of this cultural knowledge could be learned in a more robust training environment that actually trains advisors how to advise successfully. As will be shown, advisors have historically been chosen in an ad hoc manner that has led to poor advising. In line with the lack of cultural knowledge is the attempt to “mirror image” host nation forces in an American way, also called Americanization. This is not to say that the U.S. has not had some success.

With a baseline understanding of SFA and FID, one can study empirical evidence to see where U.S. advisors did succeed, and to assess the nature of their failures. This paper will examine advisors’ selection and training, and the execution of advisory missions in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq, and will conclude with an analysis of the U.S. Army’s new Security Force Assistance Brigades to ascertain the degree to which the SFABs are learning from past mistakes, attempting to correct those mistakes, or repeating history.

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<sup>6</sup> Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture, Understanding Diversity in Global Business* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 3.

## **FID vs SFA**

Before we go any further, the reader should understand the doctrinal definitions of FID and SFA, see how closely they are related, but also see the differences.

### **Foreign Internal Defense:**

Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-05.2 defines FID this way:

FID is a comprehensive approach, involving the interaction of multinational, joint, Army, and interagency efforts. Military efforts may involve multiple Services and conventional forces. Army efforts, in general, include Army special operations forces (ARSOF) units, particularly Civil Affairs (CA), military information support operations (MISO), and Special Forces (SF), because they are well suited to conduct or support FID operations. Army and ARSOF units possess the capability to support an HN in creating a military shield (through FID) in which interagency efforts can comprehensively operate to remove the root causes behind problems of subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security. The Army critical tasks and resultant military occupational specialties (MOSs) provide the foundation for FID operations through a diverse offering of training (individual and collective) to assist an HN in achieving its IDAD military objectives and goals. Army cultural and language training enable and enhance the conduct of these operations.<sup>7</sup>

FID should be a multinational and interagency endeavor, consisting of integration and synchronization of all instruments of national power.<sup>8</sup> FID is the basis for Special Forces in conjunction with unconventional warfare (UW). FID requires building rapport with HN forces as does SFA. One of the main differences is those conducting FID often have the training to speak the native language and have extensive knowledge of the culture. The ultimate goal of FID is to stop wars from

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<sup>7</sup> Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-05.2: Foreign Internal Defense (FID), August 2015, 1-1.

<sup>8</sup> Joint Publication 3-22: *Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*, 17 August 2018, x.

happening and prevent the U.S. from committing conventional combat forces in the future.

### **Security Force Assistance**

Security force assistance is the unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority (FM 3-07). Security force assistance (SFA) improves the capability and capacity of host-nation or regional security organization's security forces. These forces are collectively referred to as foreign security forces. Foreign security forces are forces—including but not limited to military, paramilitary, police, and intelligence forces; border police, coast guard, and customs officials; and prison guards and correctional personnel—that provide security for a host nation and its relevant population or support a regional security organization's mission.<sup>9</sup>

These actions occur within the framework of full spectrum operations. From a U.S. vantage point, very little of the actual fighting falls on U.S. forces. The use of advisors in combat can be adopted based on the FSF's needs and efforts. SFA is not just a stability operation, it can be executed throughout the full spectrum of conflict, including peace and war. Assistance can be geared toward simply improving an ally's military for future conflicts, to aid the host nation security force (HSF) in fighting an insurgency, or in a total war situation where the FSF face a real external threat.<sup>10</sup>

SFA can occur in any aspect of warfare or operations to include “peacetime limited engagement, limited intervention, peace operations, irregular warfare, and major combat operations.”<sup>11</sup> SFA is most common during “peacetime military engagement, peace

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<sup>9</sup> Field Manual (FM) 3-07.1: *Security Force Assistance*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, May 2009, 1-1.

<sup>10</sup> FM 3-07.1, *Security*, 1-1.

<sup>11</sup> FM 3-07.1, *Security*, 1-1.

operations, and irregular warfare.”<sup>12</sup> When irregular warfare is the focus of the operation SFA will most likely be limited to the unconventional side of the operational theme.<sup>13</sup>

Typically, the U.S. Army takes the lead but it is important to take a comprehensive approach. Close working relationships with military and civilian joint and multinational forces will assist the mission in being more successful. Key to these types of operations are the host-nation or regional security organization. Assessing the organization, training, equipment, rebuilding, and advising of the forces involved is an essential element.<sup>14</sup> This will encompass law enforcement, military, intelligence, and border forces operating and cooperating within the security area of operations. Critical to success is that U.S. forces understand how FSF units are supposed to operate in their own way, not in an American image. If successful, SFA advisors will have developed partner capabilities so that these FSF units can execute unilateral missions to provide security functions.<sup>15</sup>

SFA is not a one-level function; it is executed at all the appropriate levels. U.S. forces must include SFA in the planning and operations process at every level. The purpose of these actions is to work seamlessly with the host-nation government at all levels, from ministries addressing the security sector to initial entry-level FSF training.<sup>16</sup> Within this goal is the host nation’s ability to plan, execute, and maintain security operations without U.S. or coalition assistance.

The lines between security force assistance and foreign internal defense are often blurred. The definitions above are very similar and do

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<sup>12</sup> FM 3-07.1, *Security*, 1-1.

<sup>13</sup> FM 3-07.1, *Security*, 1-1, 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> FM 3-07.1, *Security*, 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> FM 3-07.1, *Security*, 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> FM 3-07.1, *Security*, 1-2.

little to separate them as SFA is often considered a subset of FID. The basic techniques used by coalition forces to train, advise, assist, and equip foreign forces are similar to those defined in FID doctrine but the operations have a different focal point and differing political goals. SFA and FID are different in that FID is primarily focused only on internal threats and SFA is focused on internal and external threats that are often intertwined. SFA assists security forces that deal with both threats.<sup>17</sup>

### **Why is FID/SFA conducted?**

National powers are interested in protecting and enhancing their national security interests and deterring conflict.<sup>18</sup> The U.S. does this in a number of ways but one is certainly through advising FSF. The advisor mission is important in accomplishing U.S. national security objectives and remains an integral implement in working with FSF to further their capabilities and capacities to focus on mutual U.S. and partner security concerns. To protect U.S. national interests, the U.S. provides nation assistance (NA) which can be civil or military assistance (other than humanitarian assistance disaster relief) given to another country by U.S. forces, taking place within the HN's borders during times of peace, crisis or emergencies, and war contingent on accords concluded mutually between the U.S. and the HN. NA operations assist the HN by instilling supportable development and growth of receptive entities and governments. The goal of nation assistance is security assistance, humanitarian assistance, civic assistance and FID. In this context we will focus on FID. The concept of FID helps the U.S. military focus on aiding the HN in anticipating, precluding, and countering threats or

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<sup>17</sup> Derick C. Jenkins, "Distinguishing Between Security Force Assistance & Foreign Internal Defense: Determining A Doctrine Road-Ahead," Small Wars Journal, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/146-jenkins.pdf>,

<sup>18</sup> JP 3-22, *FID*, 17 August 2018, 1-7.

potential threats and addressing the root causes of instability that are a threat to U.S. security interests and our allies. This should be executed through programs that address internal development of host nation infrastructure such as agriculture, medicine, schools, and other aspects that improve daily life of the local populace as well developing the HN's organic internal defense to combat the threat. The Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949 summarized the broad ideology behind the Military Assistance Program (MAP) and its importance. President Eisenhower wanted to learn the applicability and effectiveness of military assistance programs and authorized a committee, led by retired Gen William H. Draper Jr. The committee concluded with two observations: "the Mutual Security Program is and will continue to be an effective and essential tool in carrying out our national security interests and in promoting free world defense" and "there will be a need for selective military assistance to preserve and strengthen the capacity of other free world nations to resist communist pressures and participate in the common defense."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> William H. Draper, Jr. et al., *Composite Report of the President's Committee to Study the United States Military Assistance Program*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1959), 18, 26.

## Chapter 2

### Korea and the Korean Military Advisory Group

The Korean War is a prime example where the selection and training of advisors and their execution of the advisory mission was lacking. In October 1945 an eleven-man Korean Advisory Council was formed to advise the military governor. It was purported to be representative of the South Korean political system but only one person on the council was Korean which caused the first of many difficulties between the U.S. advisors and Korean advisees.<sup>1</sup> It was viewed by the Koreans as an extension of their recent colonial experience.

Following World War II, Korean internal security fell on the National Police Force (NPF). With the help of the U.S., a Korean Constabulary was also formed to aid the NPF and provide additional manpower. The Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG) was established by the U.S. State Department to facilitate the organization, administration, training, and equipping of the security forces for the new Korean government. In October 1948, the initial accord between the U.S. and Korea was for the U.S. “to provide sufficient equipment for (Korean) security forces numbering 104,000.”<sup>2</sup> At this point the PMAG had increased to 90 personnel but was still woefully undermanned as they attempted to accomplish their mission.<sup>3</sup> These 90 men were committed to the advisory mission and some had experienced combat but with no training they knew nothing of advising a foreign force.<sup>4</sup>

In 1949, PMAG became the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG). The new direction of KMAG was “to develop the security forces

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<sup>1</sup> Max Hastings, *The Korean War*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred H. Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor; Role and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*, (Chevy Chase, Maryland: Operations Research Office, The Johns Hopkins University, 1957), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Bryan R. Gibby, “American advisors to the Republic of Korea.” In *Military Advising and Assistance; From mercenaries to privatization, 1815-2007*, ed. Donald Stoker, (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group), 87.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan R. Gibby, *The Will to Win: American Military Advisors in Korea, 1946-1953*, (University of Alabama Press, 2012), 95.



of the Republic of Korea within the limitations of the Korean economy by advising and assisting the Republic of Korea in the organization, administration, and training of such forces, including Army, Coast Guard, and the National Civil Police Force, and insuring the effective utilization of any United States military assistance by those forces.”<sup>5</sup> Under this agreement, KMAG personnel were limited to 500 and they would fall under the Embassy of the United States for accountability and supervision.<sup>6</sup>

The make-up of the aforementioned personnel was 184 officers, 4 warrant officers, a nurse, and 309 enlisted men.<sup>7</sup> Manning the new group had its difficulties. Enlisted men were easy to come by for the advisory duty but officers were not. The initial requirements were a rank of captain or higher with at least a year left on the officer’s tour. Due to the lack of personnel meeting the prerequisites, officers in the rank of first lieutenant were added to the list and even the time left to serve was reduced to six months.<sup>8</sup> This created a situation where junior officers were advising high ranking Korean officers. Those officers were tactfully sound but culturally they struggled to overcome the age and rank differences when advising their Korean counterparts. In an effort to avoid an extended timeline of the arrival of American advisors, units were chosen for occupational duties on the availability of troops and transportation resulting in them arriving with little awareness of the environment.<sup>9</sup> Advisors received little to no pre-deployment training, were a few ranks junior to their Korean counterparts, and were much younger.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Alfred H. Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor*, in “Agreement between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Republic of Korea”, 26 Jan 50; Article 1, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Hausrath, 8

<sup>7</sup> Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*, Center of Military History, United States Army, (Washington, D.C., 1988), 43-44.

<sup>8</sup> Sawyer, *Military*, 44.

<sup>9</sup> Sawyer, *Military*, 3.

With this lack of training and less maturity, some of the American advisors lacked key attributes that were thought to make good advisors.

First and foremost, to be a good advisor one must be a good officer in the U.S. military. If an officer cannot lead troops or command a U.S. formation then he probably cannot be an effective advisor. Not only were advisors teaching military tactics but they were also attempting a cultural transformation. Advisors needed to show American military traits like direct and honest communication, flexibility, and initiative. The difficulty laid in the fact that there were no commensurate traits in Korean culture.<sup>10</sup> The number of junior officers in the early days certainly impacted the advisor's mission because those officers had not commanded or led troops above the platoon level. One advisor, a first lieutenant with only one-year time in service, was asked to advise a company commander. To compound the issue, he was an infantry officer and would be advising a cavalry troop consisting of two officers and 200 enlisted men. Although he was ultimately successful, it took more time than necessary due to his background.<sup>11</sup>

Experience, by far, was the most desired attribute of advisors. When polled, members of KMAG listed types of experience in the following order: extensive combat experience, command experience above the company level, experience in a training command, experience in dealing with National Guard, Reserve Officer Training Corps, Reserve, or other civilian components, attendance of Command and General Staff College, experience in other military advisory groups, and Foreign military missions. The leaders of KMAG recognized the need for stellar officers. In the beginning the best officers were assigned to combat units leaving the second best to fill advisor positions but as the advisory mission wore on the emphasis was increased and KMAG started to

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<sup>10</sup> Gibby, *The Will to Win*, 98.

<sup>11</sup> Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor*, 25.

receive officers with more rank, combat experience, and command time.<sup>12</sup> Experience was not the only qualifier for advisors. Personal traits also played a role in an advisor's success.

At the top of the list for personal traits were patience and tact. Followed by emotional stability, friendliness or good humor, perseverance, thoroughness, good personal appearance, dignity and reserve, self-reliance, liking for foreign nationals and incorruptibility.<sup>13</sup> Those who lacked these often were thought to be arrogant and prejudiced towards the Koreans. The Americans came from an industrialized world and were taken aback by the social norms and the lack of infrastructure within the Republic of Korea. This led American advisors to view the culture as archaic and ridden with superstitions.<sup>14</sup> This view and a failure to learn and know the culture in which they were trying to advise often resulted in rifts that impacted the overall effectiveness of the advisory mission or at the least made it more difficult. Concerns about social prestige and correctness, a concept Westerners most conveniently abbreviated as face, often interfered with the American business-like approach to military organization, training and management.

An officer that had patience and tact probably possessed emotional stability, friendliness, and a good sense of humor. Having these traits would help the officer understand what the Koreans had been through and see past the third world environment.<sup>15</sup> Those who did not possess these traits were often unsuccessful in their advisory mission. A lack of emotional stability would be outwardly shown as frustrations with the Koreans would surface. The American military norm of admonishing soldiers publicly tended to embarrass the advisees in front of their counterparts or peers. If a Korean lost face in front of his peers or

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<sup>12</sup> Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor*, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Robert D. Ramsey III, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Institute Press), 14.

<sup>15</sup> Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor*, 31.

subordinates, particularly at the hands of an advisor, one could be assured that a proverbial wall would be erected and advising efforts would become even more difficult.<sup>16</sup>

Perseverance, thoroughness, good personal appearance, dignity and reserve, self-reliance, liking for foreign nationals and incorruptibility were also important traits but not as high on the list as the ones already covered. Perseverance allowed the advisors to endure the daily hardships of advising duties. This included being isolated from other U.S. personnel and frustrations with the advising mission. Thoroughness meant the advisor covered all basis both for himself and for his advisees. By being thorough, the advisor increased his likelihood of success. Good personal appearance projected a sense of professionalism to the advisees. Dignity and reserve showed a sense of pride in oneself and in the mission. Self-reliance showed the advisees that the advisor was a capable person. Liking of foreign nationals, or at least the appearance it, fostered a mutual relationship. Finally, incorruptibility showed the steadfastness of the advisors and that they were not in it for themselves.

Throughout the advising mission, Koreans looked at the advisors for some of these traits if not all of them. Advisors that possessed few of them had difficulties accomplishing their mission. Advisors that held a view of cultural and military superiority and did not make efforts to embrace the Korean language, manners, and food were ineffective.<sup>17</sup> They struggled with the advising mission and were viewed as rude or impatient. Those that possessed the desired traits as well as a propensity for professional courtesy, genuine friendship, and a willingness to appreciate his counterpart's judgement were very successful when giving hard or uncomfortable advice.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Gibby, *The Will to Win*, 99.

<sup>17</sup> Gibby, *The Will to Win*, 102.

<sup>18</sup> Gibby, *The Will to Win*, 102.

Minor Kelso had to embody all of these traits when he was advising a Korean formation. He found that the Koreans lacked the basic foundations for training, equipment was in disrepair, soldiers did not have all of their necessary equipment, the firearms were a mixture of American and Japanese, and the amount of ammunition on hand was minimal.<sup>19</sup> It would have been easy for him to throw his hands up and walk away, but he persevered and was successful. An advisor without these traits would have made a bad situation worse. Despite the fact that some of the advisors possessed these inherent traits others did not. Training before assuming advisory duties might have helped.

The American advisors received little to no actual training prior to assuming their advisory missions. Towards the beginning, briefs were given but they varied in length and depth because there was no set method of instruction (MOI). They consisted of a one to four-hour brief given by the chief of KMAG or his chief of staff followed by meetings with key officers within KMAG headquarters.<sup>20</sup> These briefings were primarily designed to orient new advisors to the terrain but did little to actually explain how to be an effective advisor or provide additional information. As the war led on, the briefing became more regimented. and evolved into a one-week process that was deemed adequate covering such topics as the responsibilities of advisors, their conduct, their relationship with their counterpart, organization of KMAG and ROK Army, the KMAG supply system, logistics problems.<sup>21</sup>

Due to the fact that the advisory mission was hastily put together and that advisors were drawn from varied units and backgrounds, no formal training was able to be conducted. Some advisors lobbied for a training program that could last up to a year. This would have allowed the advisors to have a greater understanding of the area, culture, and

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<sup>19</sup> Gibby, *The Will to Win*, 109.

<sup>20</sup> Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor*, 37.

<sup>21</sup> Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor*, 38.

language thus making it easier to bridge the initial gaps and possibly decrease the amount of time necessary to build rapport and achieve effectiveness. Others felt that the current briefs were adequate and a longer training period was not needed. In a 1953 study of the advisory mission in Korea, 255 participants were asked what they thought was the most important information to receive in the briefings. The overwhelming majority, 87%, said there were two key aspects that every advisor needed to receive in the briefs: the customs and habits of the Korean people and the structure, organization, and functions of ROKA. I postulate that that to truly comprehend Korean nuances and ROKA, one needs more than a brief. The author's experience advising elements of the Afghan National Army (ANA) confirms the importance of basic organizational knowledge over detailed cultural insights. The latter can be developed over the course of the advisory mission while the former is a crucial to advisor success.

To this point we have covered manning of the mission, selection of advisors, training of advisors, and traits that make a good advisor which all lead into a successful mission. If an advisor has the proper training and necessary traits, he will be more likely to build rapport with his counterpart. Without rapport, the advising mission becomes increasingly difficult. Primary of these was face. This phenomenon encompassed personal prestige, honor, and reputation and impacted feelings of self-worth, self-respect, and morale.<sup>22</sup> By building rapport and respecting face, American advisors would increase the likelihood of a successful mission. Advisors had to earn the respect and trust of their counterparts which meant taking into account cultural differences, overcoming the language barrier, not demeaning the individual or the ROKA. Good advisors knew what their counterparts needed to hear and how to say it.

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<sup>22</sup> Gibby, *The Will to Win*, 110-111.

In summary, the manning of the advisory mission in Korean grew substantially over the course of the mission. The rapid expansion and negative view of the advisory mission resulted in young and inexperienced officers being assigned to advise Korean personnel much senior in rank and position which caused difficulties. Specific traits were identified as to what makes a good advisor but the screening process was not always streamlined to identify personnel with those traits. The training received by new advisors was nothing more than briefs that started out as one to briefs and morphed into one week of training but even that has been deemed as inadequate. Many advocated for a three-month to one-year school to adequately prepare advisors for the mission. This was not possible given the timeline in Korea but is food for thought as the U.S. carries the advisory mission into other theaters of operation.



### **Chapter 3**

#### **Vietnam, MAAG/MACV**

The U.S. first provided support to Vietnam in the form of \$100 million given to the French to aid in the defeat of the Viet Minh.<sup>1</sup> In September 1950, the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam (MAAG-V) was stood up to assist the French. The role of MAAG-V was not as combat troops but to oversee the “requisitioning, procurement, and receipt of supplies” to support the French in their effort to fight the Viet Minh forces.<sup>2</sup> The French, due to their colonial aspirations and aversion to a Vietnamese army, were reluctant to take MAAG-V advice and did not permit the Vietnamese army to be trained to use the U.S. equipment. Ultimately the French failed in their colonial aspirations. The French high command in Indochina was officially terminated on 26 April 1956.<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. government viewed the de-colonization process as creating a leadership vacuum, ripe for communist infiltration.<sup>4</sup> As a global power, the U.S. wanted to secure its place and security in the Third World. Assistance to foreign police and paramilitary forces was an integral part of the U.S.’s Cold War strategy.<sup>5</sup> During the Truman and Eisenhower administrations the number of advisors started off small but grew to over 300. The Kennedy administrations picked up where Eisenhower left off and military personnel swelled to over sixteen thousand.<sup>6</sup> The strategy was to destroy the insurgency’s political base through non-military means such as foreign aid, intelligence operations, propaganda, and aid to the police and paramilitary forces of the host

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<sup>1</sup> Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 1981), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *United States Army in Vietnam. the Early Years, 1941-1960*, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1983), 115.

<sup>3</sup> Spector, *United States Army in Vietnam*, 254.

<sup>4</sup> William Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security Assistance to South Vietnam: Insurgency, Subversion and Public Order*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and assistance*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. P., 1986), 3.



nation.<sup>7</sup> Helping friendly Third World regimes resist communism was a key element in America's containment policy of communism, particularly in Vietnam. Mainland Southeast Asia was seen as "vulnerable to military attacks despite important terrain barriers" and "was politically and psychologically susceptible to Communist subversion."<sup>8</sup>

Under Eisenhower, the purpose of foreign aid was three-fold. First, it was a widespread campaign of psychological, political, and economic warfare against the communist bloc. Second, it was to provide economic assistance to eradicate poverty in an effort to minimize the Soviet exploitation of these Third World countries. Eisenhower warned that, "unless these people can hope for reasonable economic advance, the danger will be acute that their governments will be subverted by communism."<sup>9</sup> Finally, "it showed the Third World the superiority of western politics and economies."<sup>10</sup> There were also attempts to aid South Vietnam in building a functional army.

From 1950 to 1960, MAAG-V, which became the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) in February 1962, advised the government of President Ngo Dinh Diem to build the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). The end result was a military organization consisting of seven infantry divisions, four armor battalions, one airborne brigade, a marine group, a coastal naval force consisting of 10 small ships and 18 amphibious craft, and an air force having one fighter-bomber, two transport aircraft, and two observation squadrons.<sup>11</sup> The advisory mission of MACV to aid in the building of the South Vietnamese Army was full of challenges.

The U.S. was garnering additional ideas for meeting the security concerns of South Vietnam when faced with the continuing threat of

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<sup>7</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Spector, *United States Army in Vietnam*, 100.

<sup>9</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Robert D. Ramsey III, *Advising Indigenous Forces*. 27.

aggression and subversion.<sup>12</sup> There was much derision within the U.S. agencies responsible for improving the security of South Vietnam. Along with U.S. government organizations providing advisory duties in South Vietnam, the Michigan State University Advisory Group (MSUG) provided advisory assistance to the Diem's government as a state-building effort.

Clashes of ideologies between government agencies, military, Diem, and MSUG lead to numerous paths attempting to establish security. Diem, bolstered by his win over the French, was adamantly opposed to any security model that resembled colonial control.<sup>13</sup> The U.S. recognized this and sought to diminish this association by "careful maneuvering and determined handling of the psychological factors."<sup>14</sup> Rampant failures by U.S. entities to recognize South Vietnam's complex political arena led to mismanaged advising and different goals of each entity. Robert S. McNamara, secretary of defense from 1961-1968, was quoted as saying, "when it came to Vietnam, we found ourselves setting policy for a region that was terra incognita."<sup>15</sup>

From 1956-58, the major struggle of U.S. advisors was standing up forces prepared to support the Government of South Vietnam, particularly internal security forces such as the Sûreté and the Self-Defense Corps (SDC).<sup>16</sup> One of the major areas of failure by U.S. policy makers was the employment of MSUG civilians to participate in the advisory roles as well as write the script on how to advise the South Vietnamese government and military. MSUG failed to recognize Diem's

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<sup>12</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 46.

<sup>13</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 43, 'Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Recommendations Relative to a Mutual Security Program', 20 April 1955, reprinted in U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series)*, Vol. VII, 84<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1st sess., 1955, Washington: USGPO, 1978, 32.

<sup>14</sup> Spector, *United States Army in Vietnam*, 101.

<sup>15</sup> Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, (New York, NY: Times Books, 1995), 46.

<sup>16</sup> The Sûreté is the name for the civil police force, especially the investigative branch, in former French colonies.

political requirements or see the big picture.<sup>17</sup> The Michigan State advisors wanted to re-organize, modernize, and train the police and paramilitary forces but this involved centralizing and strengthening command and control, and particularly removing political influence from police operations that met significant resistance from Diem.<sup>18</sup> One historian concludes that MSUG treated South Vietnam “as if it were a ‘normal’ Western nation like the United States at mid-century rather than what has been referred to as ‘a rice-based, Confucian, post-colonial, war-torn, Southeast Asian culture.’”<sup>19</sup>

The years from 1955-61 saw conflicts between all the agencies attempting to assist the South Vietnamese government in preventing the spread of communism, particularly with the use to the Civil Guard. The MSUG advisors saw that the Civil Guard leaders were staunchly for decentralization but Diem was adamant to place control of it under the ministry of defense, thus maintaining his political influence over it. The Military Assistance Advisory Group was also opposed to MSUG’s vision of the Civil Guard serving as Vietnam’s rural law enforcement force.<sup>20</sup> During this period, the issue of “mirror imaging” began to show additional issues in the way the U.S. was advising in South Vietnam.

The U.S. set out to replicate the U.S. army of the period making Diem’s military a “mirror image” of the U.S. with organization, training, and equipping but on a smaller scale. This took training and resources away from counter-insurgency efforts.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. attempted to establish a network of advisors who sought to persuade the Vietnamese to accept American advice, and in so doing, carried out, in William Odom’s words,

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<sup>17</sup> Spector, *United States Army in Vietnam*, 322.

<sup>18</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 51, 53.

<sup>19</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 55, Walter McDougal, ‘Commentary: The Cold War Excursion of Science’, *Diplomatic History* 24, 125.

<sup>20</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 75.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, 22-24.

“colonialism by ventriloquism.”<sup>22</sup> This problem would be seen again in Iraq and Afghanistan. South Vietnam was not a normal democratic environment acquiescent to American-style public administration methods of operation.<sup>23</sup> Due to this mirror imaging and the continued disregard for Diem’s political environment when trying to implement changes, the U.S. became to be viewed as a “quartermaster rather than a partner” to Diem.<sup>24</sup>

Dissatisfied with results up to this point, Kennedy energized the U.S. pursuit of counter-insurgency objectives.<sup>25</sup> Prior to 1960 there were approximately 350 advisors in Vietnam but by 1962 that number had grown to more than 3100.<sup>26</sup> As foreign governments attempted to modernize, the role of police and paramilitary forces was to protect the immature government from communist subversion. Kennedy intended for U.S. advisors to assist them in doing so. He recognized guerilla warfare as a problem and a scheme to counter it was one of the first things he required of his advisors. The end goal was to assist the host nation to provide its own internal security but with U.S. assistance, all the while not committing ground troops for actual combat.

In 1961 the Strategic Hamlet Program was implemented. This program provided building materials, such as barbed wire and pickets, for villages to construct their own defensive mechanisms to give the local villagers a fighting chance against insurgents. It was also an attempt, according to Robert Thompson, to win the hearts and minds of the

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<sup>22</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 64, William Odom, *On Internal War: American and Soviet Approaches to Third World Clients and Insurgents*, 63.

<sup>23</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 64.

<sup>24</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 75, DOS, Saigon to DOS, dispatch no. 14, 8 July 1960, p. 1, RG 286, OPS, Operations Division, East Asia Branch, Vietnam, ‘IPS#1, General Policy, Guidelines and Background, 1957-1960’, folder marked ‘IPS#1/Background Information/Vietnam 1960’, NACP.

<sup>25</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 77.

<sup>26</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, 105.

people and not just to eradicate armed communist terrorists.<sup>27</sup> Kennedy saw this program as an essential aspect that would lead to success. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson relayed that the U.S. would assume complete financial responsibility for the Civil Guard, a cost they mutually shared in the past, furthering Diem's reliance on U.S. financial and material assistance.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, this plan was Diem's to carry out while being supplied and funded by the U.S., but Diem's plan was too ambitious, and three quarters of the hamlets fell through infiltration and destruction by communist guerillas.<sup>29</sup>

There were three challenges with the Kennedy administration's policy in South Vietnam, particularly with the National Police. First, the policy failed to acknowledge the conflict between training police for routine, peacetime law enforcement and operations against guerrillas. Second, the police failed to heed conflicting U.S. institutional priorities: growing the police force also reduced recruits for the army. Finally, as with mirror imaging, police advisors sought to impose American law enforcement prescriptions on a developing country not ready for such and rife with insurgency and instability.<sup>30</sup>

During the Vietnam War the advisors on the ground had to be adept not only in advising but in day-to-day operations such as supplying themselves and conducting their own administrative tasks.<sup>31</sup> The issue of language and their unfamiliarity with the society and culture were also major factors affecting advisors. To most advisors their role was completely foreign. One senior advisor stated the role was

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<sup>27</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 111; British Advisory Mission to Vietnam [BRIAM], 'Appreciation of Vietnam, November 1961-April 1962', 27 October 1961, p. 5, RG 218, JCS Vietnam 1961, NACP.

<sup>28</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 105, *USVNR*, vol 11, 133 and Dennis J. Duncanson, *Government and Revolution in Vietnam* (London, Oxford University Press: 1968), 307.

<sup>29</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 116.

<sup>30</sup> Rosenau, *U.S. Internal Security and Assistance*, 135- 136.

<sup>31</sup> Jeffrey J. Clarke, *United States Army in Vietnam: Advice and Support: The Final Years, 1965-1973*, (Washington, DC, Center of Military History: 1988), 61.

entirely “new and challenging to most American soldiers. They have spent most of their lives giving and executing orders; they have a much less positive role, that of giving advice, providing guidance and exerting influence.”<sup>32</sup> Despite these requirements on advisors, “preparation for advisory duty was minimal.”<sup>33</sup> A six-week military assistance and training advisory course was conducted by the U.S. Army Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg. Advisors were trained on counterinsurgency tactics, small arms, psychological operations, and civic action.<sup>34</sup> There was some general history of Vietnam and 120 hours of language training but very little on the culture itself. A better understanding of the culture and their nuances would allow advisors to be more effective as they sought to build rapport with their counterparts. The American and Vietnamese cultures clashed in ideologies and mannerisms, especially in the areas of giving and receiving advice and admonishment in front of peers and subordinates.

Another challenge, and one particularly relevant to future advising missions, was the haphazard way in which advisors were chosen and trained. According to Spector, “The selection, training, and placement of the advisors themselves received relatively little attention. Prerequisites for advisory duties were generally identical to those demanded for advancement in regular military service.”<sup>35</sup> In addition the Army selected advisors, not based on familiarity with counterinsurgency, but on the premise that generalist were better suited to advise than specialist.<sup>36</sup>

In the beginning, advisors were assigned to like units, combat arms to combat arms but after 1964, “the importance of military experience in advisory posting at the lower levels had become

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<sup>32</sup> Spector, *The Early Years*; Reports, Senior Advisor, 2d Inf Div., 11 Apr 60, and Senior Advisor to Corps and 2d Inf Reg, 27 Apr 60, Incl 2 to Senior Advisors Conference Notes, 27-29 April 60, Folder 80, Williams Papers, 346.

<sup>33</sup> Clarke, *The Final Years*, 61.

<sup>34</sup> Clarke, *The Final Years*, 62.

<sup>35</sup> Clarke, *The Final Years*, 61.

<sup>36</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 80.

irrelevant.”<sup>37</sup> Some advisors were successful despite the lack of training and overall knowledge of the advisory mission. They possessed specific characteristics and traits.

Advisors walked a thin line when advising their counterparts. If the advisor was too insensitive or too critical, he risked alienating his counterpart. If he allowed his counterpart to continue with things that he was trying to change he risked alienating his counterpart.<sup>38</sup> It really took an exceptional person to make this happen. From an American perspective an advisor that had determination, patience, and perseverance was generally more successful. Additionally, an advisor’s personality, professional competence, and his techniques and procedures were considered important.<sup>39</sup> The latter two are teachable but personality is not, one either has it or not. I would characterize a good personality for an advisor as one who is confident without being arrogant, personable and approachable, and shows a general interest in listening to their counterpart’s issues and concerns. Another key unteachable trait was the ability to recognize common sense from a Vietnamese angle.<sup>40</sup> “There was no course to take or book to read that would guarantee success. He had to feel his way along, charting his course with great care, hoping to avoid pitfalls along the way. Since no two districts were alike, he could not rely on the experience of his peers...his greatest asset – common sense.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Clarke, *The Final Years*, 61. Supporting this assertion was an interview I conducted with MACV advisor, Rex Zeanah. Rex was a first lieutenant who volunteered to be an advisor. He received no advisory training before deploying and despite being a transportation officer was assigned to advise a South Vietnamese National guard infantry unit.

<sup>38</sup> Richard A. Hunt, Richard, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam’s Hearts and Minds*, (Westview Press, Boulder: 1995), 123.

<sup>39</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 57.

<sup>40</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 51.

<sup>41</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 51. John Cook, *The Advisor* (New York, NY: Bantam, 1973), 42

From a Vietnamese perspective the characteristics and traits were slightly different. The Vietnamese desired a correct attitude, sincerity, and mutual respect.<sup>42</sup> A correct attitude in this instance would be characterized as not arrogant and willing to listen to their counterparts. Sincerity demands that the advisor truly cares about his counterpart and their issues. Mutual respect is probably the most important. As has been stated numerous times, the concept of “face” in Asian cultures is deeply rooted. Without showing mutual respect, face can be lost and when it is, the relationship will falter and possibly never be rebuilt. Even if a potential advisor or an advisor on the ground possessed all of these traits or characteristics, the Army did not do a good job of selecting or utilizing.

In terms of selection, the importance of the advisory mission waxed and waned throughout the war. Emphasis on an advisor’s rank, experience, and knowledge came and went. MACV recognized the importance of competent advisors but was also commanding combat troops and therefore was reluctant to give up its best and brightest for the advisory mission. That meant that personnel selected for advisory duty were not the cream of the crop. That is not to say they weren’t capable but that on paper they weren’t the best. The initial rank structure was captains and above with in-country experience (preferably in command) and the potential for further advancement. As actual combat roles increased, MACV wanted them and the allure of advisory duties waned. Officers saw command with American troops as a career enhancer and advisory duties as a career killer.

It has already been mentioned that, when selecting advisors, the Army viewed generalization as more desirable than specialization. This has certainly been proven false. Specialists are experts in their field and would be more effective advisors advising in their specified areas. As in the case of the KMAG, MACV advisors also struggled with youth and

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<sup>42</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 57.



inexperience. The Vietnamese viewed age and rank as important. Often, the advisor was much younger and one to two ranks below his Vietnamese counterpart. This was not an insurmountable obstacle but it took an advisor with the characteristics and traits listed above as well as tact. By assigning advisors this way it gave the picture that a battalion commander in the Vietnamese Army was as important or held the same command authority of a lieutenant or captain in the U.S. Army. A 1965 RAND study recommended that “advisory service should be voluntary to ensure strong motivation” and that “careful screening of personnel was needed to test the suitability of candidates based on professional competence and experience, adaptability to foreign cultures, temperament disposition to work with foreigners, language skills or abilities, and the possibility of culture fatigue of filly qualified personnel who were no longer enthusiastic about this work.”<sup>43</sup> One way to increase the likelihood of success is through training.

As has been mentioned, training for advisors conducted before deployment was lacking in overall effectiveness. Advisors arrived in country ill prepared for what awaited them. Dr. Hickey emphasized training in the RAND study. He stated an emphasis on training of advisors is desirable. His main areas of interest are language, culture, structure of the Vietnamese military, Vietnamese civics, and the short-term, long-term, and potential adverse impact of advice that was offered. Language is the primary way to overcome cultural obstacles, extensive linguistic training should be given to all advisors.<sup>44</sup> Not everyone has the ability to learn a foreign language but a concerted effort to learn and use the language in country goes a long way when building rapport. In terms of culture, a true understanding and appreciation of the culture is

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<sup>43</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 59; Hickey, Gerald C., *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart: The Case of Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1965), 57.

<sup>44</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 59; Hickey, xii-xv.

paramount. Advisors should receive extensive training on culture that “must insist on the importance of respecting the Vietnamese cultural identity.”<sup>45</sup> This would allow advisors to overcome or bypass certain obstacles such as the Vietnamese nonchalant attitude towards time, the emphasis on Vietnamese traditions, the lack of concern for others especially if not family or close friends, and taboos among others. The training course should also have emphasis on the history, government, economics, society, ethnic make-up, religious aspects, and general customs.<sup>46</sup>

An emphasis on the advisory duty would appropriate the right rank structure, identify personnel with the greatest number of desired characteristics and traits, and prepare them for their duties as an advisor. In so doing, the likelihood of mission success would increase. In summary, we have looked at some of the missions in Vietnam, particularly those involving advisors and internal defense. We have identified the shortcomings of those missions and where advisors failed or struggled to accomplish what they set out to do. The advisory struggles do not rest with the individual advisor alone. A political battleground tied their hands. A lack of cultural understanding and a culture not accustomed to American ways also played a role. The lack of emphasis on advising, particularly in the latter years of the war, allowed for the selection of the second best for advisory duties. Advisors would have benefitted from a better training pipeline to prepare them for their duties. In short, certain aspects, and particularly certain advisors were very successful in their overall mission. However, the U.S. might have been more successful had a greater emphasis been put on internal

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<sup>45</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 59; Hickey, xii

<sup>46</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 59; Hickey, xii-xv

defense and the advisory mission tasked with providing guidance for Vietnam.



## Chapter 4

### Iraq, Military Transition Teams

The United States has no intention of determining the precise form of Iraq's new government. That choice belongs to the Iraqi people. Yet, we will ensure that one brutal dictator is not replaced by another. All Iraqis must have a voice in the new government, and all citizens must have their rights protected. Rebuilding Iraq will require a sustained commitment from many nations, including our own: we will remain in Iraq as long as necessary, and not a day more.

President George W. Bush, February 26, 2003

The U.S. would once again get a chance to enter an advisory role after the ousting of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. President Bush sought to shape the security environment using two methods, one of which is important to this topic. He wanted to enhance the military capabilities of partners, augmenting their ability to work in conjunction with U.S. forces, and assisting with the reform of civil-military relations during the transition to democracy.<sup>1</sup> A primary task of this strategy was the use of military forces outside the U.S. for training and exercises as well as security assistance programs.<sup>2</sup> After the quick defeat and overthrow of Hussein, Iraq was left with a depleted military and a governmental vacuum. In an effort to bolster the Iraqi government and its military, the U.S. devised a plan. The policy makers, senior military personnel, and advisors in America saw the need to provide monetary and military aid to the new Iraqi government and particularly to the new military. The goal, as expressed by the National Security Council, had three stages. "The short-term stage: Iraq is making steady progress in fighting terrorists, meeting political milestones, building democratic institutions, and standing up security forces. The medium term stage: Iraq is in the lead defeating terrorists and providing its own security, with a fully

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, (Washington, D.C., 2008), 62.

<sup>2</sup> Metz, *Iraq*, 62.

constitutional government in place, and on its way to achieving its economic potential. The longer term stage: Iraq is peaceful, united, stable, and secure, well integrated into the international community, and a full partner in the global war on terrorism.”<sup>3</sup>

This was to be accomplished through transition teams to train the Iraqi security forces as well as other entities. There were numerous types of teams employed in Iraq: Military Transition Teams, National Police Transition Teams, Police Transition Teams, Border Transition Teams, Port of Entry Transition Teams, and others, all with the goal of advising the Iraqis on how they should be conducting business, but in a very American way. For the purposes of this chapter we will focus on the Military Transition Teams (MiTT).

The primary mission of MiTTs was to advise the security forces of Iraq in six major areas of their military: intelligence, communications, fire support, logistics, operations, and infantry tactics. The goal was to build the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) into a capable and independent force able to carry out counterinsurgency operations, be tactically proficient, and be operationally and logistically sound. Additionally, transition teams would execute missions jointly and call for U.S. close air support, indirect fire, and medical evacuation, whenever necessary.<sup>4</sup> They also performed the critical role of liaising between the foreign unit and nearby U.S. units to ensure that each unit was aware of and could assist the other in their operations. Through training and joint mission, MiTTs monitored and reported on the capabilities of the fledgling security force to operate at all levels of military conflict. To ensure that the teams were tactically and technically proficient, they were generally made up of 10-15 mid- to senior-level officers and non-commissioned officers with ranks

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<sup>3</sup> National Security Council, National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, November 2005. 1 [file:///D:/457955%20\(1\).pdf](file:///D:/457955%20(1).pdf) (accessed May 17, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Fort Riley, <http://www.riley.army.mil/units/trainingteam.aspx> (accessed April, 3 2019).

ranging from sergeant to colonel. There could be as few as three to as many as 45 depending on their mission set. Teams were formed from all components and branches of the U.S. military, including the active Army, Army Reserve, Army National Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force. Teams also included an appropriate number of interpreters to assist in communicating with their Iraqi counterparts and often were supplemented with additional security and other support. The overwhelming majority of transition teams were provided by the U.S. military, but coalition partners fielded teams in support of the U.S. effort to train the ISF.

In the beginning, the initial efforts of the advising mission were “hodge podge” and there were little to no efforts to educate the advisors prior to deployment.<sup>5</sup> One advisor, COL Doug Shipman, Operations Officer for 1st Brigade, 98th Division, noted: “A couple of weeks out from mobilization, we found a website about adviser support teams that someone had set up. One of our NCOs found it accidentally through a google search and emailed it to us, and you know, there was more information on that website than we had received from anybody up to that point.”<sup>6</sup>

The 98th did attend five weeks of training at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, prior to deployment. Colonel Shipman stated that it was two weeks of training crammed into five weeks. He said some of it was useful but the subjects were not presented in the most helpful manner due to the background of the instructors not being what it should have been. For instance, instructors that had never been to Iraq taught about improvised explosive devices and Civil Affairs instructors that had never

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Clay, ‘Interview with COL Doug Shipman’, Operational Leadership Experiences interview collections archives, Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 3 November 2006.  
<http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p4013coll13/id/310/rec/1> (accessed 17 May 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Clay, ‘Interview with COL Doug Shipman’.

been to Iraq gave the country study. They did receive some language training but the program of instruction was not conducive to learning the language. When asked if they received training that focused on being an advisor he answered, “No. We strongly recommended that we get more training on being an advisor and on some of the Iraqi equipment we expected to encounter, but I don’t think the training was set up to accommodate that.”<sup>7</sup>

This shortfall in training was recognized and in June 2006, the Army, Air Force, and Navy consolidated transition team training at Fort Riley in order to standardize the training and economize on the use of resources.<sup>8</sup> Prior to the 1st Infantry Division assuming this mission, soldiers were sent to a number of places for training to include, Fort Carson, Fort Hood, and Camp Shelby, resulting in incongruent training. Members selected to be on a MiTT were sent to the school run by the 1st Infantry Division for a period of five months. The goal of this school was to prepare teams to advise, teach, and mentor Iraqi and Afghanistan security forces. Training consisted of individual skills as well as cultural training, advisor skills, and collective tasks.

There were problems with the training at Fort Leavenworth. The desired end state, or what would be described as success, for a MiTT was never quantified. Trainees were frequently told that they would figure it out on the ground. There was little or no training on “how to train.” There was no validated program of instruction (POI) nor were there any certifications of the instructors. The lack of this process put the cadre in an untenable position of having to guess at what constituted valid instruction. Given this was an “as assigned” mission that passed from one 1st ID battalion to the next for each new MiTT cycle, the quality and

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<sup>7</sup> Clay, ‘Interview with COL Doug Shipman’.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Military Transition Teams in Iraq, Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, One Hundred Ninth Congress, December 7, 2006. p. 9. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-109hhr32990/pdf/CHRG-109hhr32990.pdf>

consistency of the training varied broadly. Many of the briefs conducted were at the unclassified level but the classified information was what the trainees needed. Receiving the classified information at Leavenworth would have allowed the advisors to better prepare before their deployment. Although the trainees did receive language training, the way in which it was taught was not conducive to learning. MiTTs were designed to advise at the Iraqi battalion level and above but the training never introduced the Iraqi staff makeup or planning processes. There was no training on Iraqi weapons.<sup>9</sup>

Another issue at the time was the perceived quality of the personnel selected for these missions. The initial perception was that teams were manned by “leftovers,” those officers and men deemed disposable by their units. That statement is not a slight towards all personnel who performed duties in a combat zone while part of a MiTT, but is to shed light on how the Army went about filling these teams. The number of teams desired in Iraq, if filled with all top performers, would have a negative impact on the rest of the Army. For example, it would have taken 10 percent of the captains in the signal corps, military intelligence, and logistics branches to fill out the teams, just under 10 percent for artillery, and five percent for infantry.<sup>10</sup> Taking that many of the top performers from their formations could have had a negative effect on the overall Army’s ability to meet other challenges in the world.

Many of the advisors were Department of the Army selectees but the remainder were tasked by their owning units. Army Headquarters would identify a need for a certain number of requisitions with specific ranks and skill sets and send out “taskers” to units for them to fill those slots. It was up to those units to choose the personnel they were willing

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<sup>9</sup> After Action Review (AAR) of Military Transition Team (MiTT) Training, Camp Funston, Fort Riley, KS.

The author of this AAR approached the cadre at the advisor training academy about submitting the AAR and they declined to receive it. [unattributed]

<sup>10</sup> House, *U.S. Military Transition Teams in Iraq*, 19.



to part with. Human nature is to not send your shining stars as that would lessen the combat effectiveness of the unit. As a result, units sent their second best (or worse) personnel to fill those slots. The perception in the Army was that the advising teams were staffed with leftovers despite the serious nature of the mission.<sup>11</sup> By not having the proper personnel on the ground, the advisory mission was not as successful as it could have been. At the height of the advisory mission, more than 5,000 U.S. military personnel were assigned to transition teams in Iraq.

The handover of battlespace to Iraqi Security Forces is an often-cited benchmark of progress in the Iraq war. In the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, victory was defined as "an Iraq that is in the lead defeating terrorists and insurgents and is providing its own security."<sup>12</sup> In a 2006 report, the Iraq Study Group stated, "the primary mission of U.S. forces in Iraq should evolve to one of supporting the Iraqi army, which would take over primary responsibility for combat operations."<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the study recommended "the number of embedded personnel ... should be large enough to accelerate the development of a real combat capability in Iraqi Army units. Such a mission could involve 10,000 to 20,000 American troops instead of the 3,000 to 4,000 now in this role."<sup>14</sup> Despite the stigma surrounding MiTT members, the U.S. military reported they were satisfied with the results of the transition team strategy in the Iraq war. Policy makers and military leaders believed that if the U.S. armed forces could transition from fighting the insurgents to advising national security forces, U.S. casualty rates would come down.

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<sup>11</sup> David Voorhies, 'Making MiTT Work: Insights into Advising the Iraqi Army', *Infantry* 96, no. 3 (may-Jun 2007), p. 31, <https://www.benning.army.mil/infantry/magazine/issues/2007/MAY-JUN/pdfs/MAY-JUN2007.pdf> (accessed on 5 May 2019).

<sup>12</sup> National Security Council, National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, 30 November 2005, 1.

<sup>13</sup> James A. Baker, III and Lee H. Hamilton, Iraq Study Group Report, 2007 Archived 2009-06-01, <https://www.iraqsolidaridad.org/2006/docs/gei-1.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Baker, Iraq Study.

Due to the sub-standard pre-deployment training, the first wave of advisors deployed showed “little to no comprehension of the political dynamics and culture of the personnel they were to train.”<sup>15</sup> Their knowledge and understanding of Iraqi culture and the Islamic religion “was literally power-point deep.”<sup>16</sup> This ignorance created problems. “The Americans were keen to export to Iraq a more ‘democratic’ pattern of behavior for the officers.”<sup>17</sup> The initial plan was to not model the Iraqi army strictly in the U.S. image.<sup>18</sup> Despite these contrasts and differences, the U.S. and other coalition forces made headway in building a new Iraqi army, but not without difficulty.

Additionally, it is important to observe the advisory mission from the Iraqi viewpoint. While the American advisors felt they were teaching the Iraqis successful techniques and skills, the Iraqis received it with skepticism and apprehension. This was all incredibly foreign to them. While these leadership strategies had proven successful for the Americans, it ultimately crippled the only system the Iraqis were familiar with. The Iraqi officers could not believe U.S. officers sought input from their enlisted soldiers with no regard to rank.<sup>19</sup> These characteristics of US leadership were certainly not embraced by the Iraqis. The changes in dynamic actually sparked fear in them. They were worried that the military structure they were so familiar with was now jeopardized. They grew concerned their enlisted soldiers would see how the American

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<sup>15</sup> Ajami Fouad, *The Foreigner's Gift: the Americans, the Arabs, and the Iraqis in Iraq*, (New York, NY: 2006), 25-26, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Sullivan, Michael D., *Security Force Assistance: Building Foreign Security Forces and Joint Doctrine for the Future of U.S. Regional Security* (Fort Leavenworth, 2008), 37. <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a485510.pdf> (accessed 5 May 2019)

<sup>17</sup> Antonio Giustozzi and Artemy Kalinovsky, *Missionaries of Modernity: Advisory Missions and the Struggle for Hegemony in Afghanistan and Beyond*, (London: 2016), 113.

<sup>18</sup> Steven Clay, Interview with LTC (Ret.) Blaise Cornell-d'Echert, Operational Leadership Experiences interview collections archives, Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 31 October 2006. <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p4013coll13/id/306/rec/1> (accessed 5 May 2019)

<sup>19</sup> Giustozzi, et al., *Missionaries of Modernity*, 113.

officers valued their soldiers' opinions, regardless of rank, and perhaps they too would begin to vocalize their opinions to the Iraqi officers.<sup>20</sup>

In the Iraqi military, it is not common for officers to seek or accept input from the enlisted soldiers. It is quite likely the Americans knew, even strived, to set the standard and lead by example, however they were naïve to the devastating ramifications, and unwelcomed fears it introduced to the way Iraqi officers had always strategized, and led their soldiers. The Americans were driving an already existing wedge between the Iraqi officers and their soldiers, even further into the ground. When questioning how the Iraqi officers could misinterpret the American's advice, one could attribute it to a lack of cultural understanding on both sides.

It is clear the Americans and the Iraqis had separate ways to accomplish tasks. The American way is regimented, time is important, and enlisted soldiers valued for their additional insight. These methods have proven successful throughout history. Conversely, the Iraqi techniques were strikingly different. Time in the Iraqi culture is not measured on a watch. Being late to a meeting is polite. The belief that knowledge is power prevents the sharing of information, and enlisted soldiers are not sought out for input. To the Iraqis a good officer was viewed as having "a sense of entitlement and confidence, his manners were precise and his professionalism was keen, and he was feared by his men."<sup>21</sup> His military knowledge and prowess were irrelevant. As one could imagine, these officers resented being advised by an NCO.<sup>22</sup> This along with ineffective advising by the MiTT officers further hurt the advisor-advisee relationship.

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<sup>20</sup> Giustozzi, et al., *Missionaries*, 113.

<sup>21</sup> Wesley R. Gray, *Embedded: A Marine Corps Adviser inside the Iraqi Army*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 44. Keen professionalism includes being well dressed, a gentlemen by Iraqi standards, and others.

<sup>22</sup> Owen West, *The Snake Eaters: Counterinsurgency Advisors in Combat*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2012), 19.

Towards the latter half Operation Iraqi Freedom, it was evident advisors were still lacking in certain areas. In 2009 the Army published Field Manual 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*. It provides doctrinal guidance and direction for how U.S. forces contribute to SFA and is based on lessons learned from previous advising efforts and recent combat operations with a view to the future. Among its key tenants are “empathy, building personal relationships, embedding with FSF, advisors don’t win the war, advisors don’t command, be an honest broker, and operate in the gray area.”<sup>23</sup>

Empathy is crucial to successful advising and leads to a successful partnership. As we have seen in the previous examples, advisors must truly understand where their FSF partners are coming from. They must comprehend the situations, feelings, and motives of the FSF. If the advisee does not feel the advisor truly understand him or the country’s background, and does not appreciate the hardships, then a true partnership will be very difficult to establish. Without a true partnership, the advising mission is futile.

Advisors must be embedded with the FSF. By living with the HN FSF, an advisor has a better opportunity to embrace the culture and build partnerships. An advisor that does not live with the HN FSF can seem aloof. By living and fighting alongside the partner, true bonds, empathy, and trust can be built.

Advisors are often caught between a rock and a hard place. On one hand their unit expects results but HN FSF frequently do not operate at the U.S. military pace. On the other hand, HN FSF frequently expect guidance and material aid from the advisor that he cannot or should not provide. As MAJ David Voorhies put it “I was held accountable by both coalition partner units and my Iraqi counterpart to produce results.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> FM 3-07.1, *Security*, 7-3.

<sup>24</sup> Voorhies, “Making MiTT Work”, 30.

This can be a no-win situation but it is up to the advisor to manage it so that both sides are appeased.

Advisors do not command HN FSF. They build relationships with the HN FSF commanders and give timely advice, training, and facilitate access to coalition resources. They do not lead HN FSF into combat but can accompany them. The main goal is to influence the HN FSF commanders in line with higher headquarter's guidance.

One of the hardest things for an advisor is to be honest about the readiness and capabilities of their HN FSF. The advisor's higher headquarters expect results and briefing less than desirable information about the HN FSF can be difficult. It is important that advisors accurately depict the situation on the ground by being an honest broker.

Advisors live in the grey area on a daily basis. When trying to navigate between two different cultures and militaries, an advisor is often caught in the middle and must have the character, moral courage, and intellect to navigate the landscape

To accomplish the tenants above and be a successful advisor, one must possess certain characteristics or traits. Most of them are the same as mentioned in previous examples but they are worth repeating due to their importance. FM 3-07.1 lists them as tolerance for ambiguity, realistic when setting goals and tasks, open-mindedness, ability to withhold judgment, empathy, communicativeness, flexibility, curiosity, warmth in human relations, motivation of self and others, self-reliance, strong sense of self, tolerance for differences, perceptiveness, ability to accept and learn from failure, and a sense of humor. No single trait is more important than the others but it is desirable for an advisor to have most if not all of them.

In summary, the selection and training of MiTT advisors, during Iraqi Freedom, members were lacking. The desire was to have the best officers and NCOs fill the positions, but in reality, that would have hurt the overall effectiveness of the Army. The training was lacking or non-

existent in the beginning but even with an official school established, the training failed to hit the mark. Numerous instances occurred when U.S. tactics, techniques, and procedures were not modified to fit the culture, educational level, and technological capability of the FSF.



## Chapter 5

### Afghanistan, Security Force Assistance Brigade

The DoD has recognized the ongoing need for SFA and the role the U.S. will play in it throughout the world. For this reason, the Army was designated to institute a new concept, the Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB). The SFAB was the idea of Chief of Staff of the Army Mark Milley. He had first-hand experience of the ad hoc advisory teams at work in Afghanistan as the commander of ISAF Joint Command. He identified a need for a permanent force to tackle the issues associated with SFA instead of the re-missioning of personnel or units. LTC Johnathan Thomas, staff member of the Army's G-3/5/7 force management directorate at the Pentagon stated, "The SFAB is designed to rapidly deploy into a theater of operations in support of a combatant commander. Upon arrival, it will begin to work with, train, advise, and assist those partner nation security forces on anything they need help with, be it logistics, be it communications, be it maneuver. Anything they need help with to improve their capacity and capability, that's what the SFAB is designed to do."<sup>1</sup>

The SFABs will be organized similar to a normal brigade combat team (BCT) but manning will not be the same as a functional BCT. The average SFAB will consist of around 500 personnel. They will have one infantry battalion, one cavalry squadron (typically reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition), one brigade engineer battalion, one fires battalion, and a brigade support battalion. They are a unique organization which is built specifically to conduct tactical and operational advising tasks to support theater and strategic objectives.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Todd Lopez, "Security force assistance brigades to free brigade combat teams from advise, assist mission", 18 May 2017, [https://www.army.mil/article/188004/security\\_force\\_assistance\\_brigades\\_to\\_freebrigade\\_combat\\_teams\\_from\\_advise\\_assist\\_mission](https://www.army.mil/article/188004/security_force_assistance_brigades_to_freebrigade_combat_teams_from_advise_assist_mission) (accessed on 10 October 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Army Training Publication (ATP) 3-96.1, Security Force Assistance Brigade, MAY 2018, 1-8, 1-11.

This mission is one that the Army has conducted for years in numerous configurations. As has been shown in the empirical evidence, conventional forces conducting these missions were soldiers that were given minimal and sometimes no training before conducting said missions. They were selected in an ad hoc manner, thus lessening their overall effectiveness in conducting the advisory mission and meeting the intent. Recently, BCTs were re-missioned as part of Security Transition Teams, Security Force Assistance Teams, and Security Force Advise and Assist Teams to perform advising missions with our partners and host nation forces. In an attempt to rectify the shortcomings of the selection and training process, soldiers that fill the SFABs will be volunteers that go through a selection process and an extensive training program. Additionally, these volunteers will have held positions of leadership in their areas of expertise and at specific levels. For example, an SFAB Brigade Commander will have held an actual brigade command.<sup>3</sup>

Soldiers selected to become advisors in an SFAB will have to volunteer to be an advisor, be assessed, and meet specific requirements. The goal of this selection process is to determine a candidate's physical attributes, problem solving abilities, communication skills, inter-personal skills, as well as their ethical perspectives.<sup>4</sup> COL Scott Jackson, commander of the 1st SFAB, stated, "The purpose of the assessment is twofold, first, to validate that a candidate can meet Army directed and organizational standards derived from our mission profile. Secondly, to confirm that candidates possess the desired mental and personal attributes to be an effective advisor."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Fort Benning, U.S. Army Fort Benning and The Maneuver Center of Excellence, "Military Advisor Training Academy (MATA)", the Army refers to those who have completed certain assignments as "KD complete", <https://www.benning.army.mil/Armor/316thCav/MATA/Recruiting.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Arjenis Nunez, "1st SFAB Assesses Candidates" army.mil, November 3, 2017, [https://www.army.mil/article/196416/1st\\_sfab\\_assesses\\_candidates](https://www.army.mil/article/196416/1st_sfab_assesses_candidates).

<sup>5</sup> Arjenis Nunez, "1st SFAB Assesses Candidates".



In previous SFA missions, advisors were identified based on career performance, but just because one is good at his job does not mean they would be a good advisor. The same still applies for the SFABs in that potential candidates must be proven leaders with high potential for advancement, independent self-starters, and tacticians who can coach, teach, and mentor partner nation soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

The assessment will challenge candidates physically and mentally and is designed to establish the potential of an individual to serve in the SFAB. “It is a 48-hour physically and mentally demanding objective and subjective assessment and selection process. Its purpose is to identify the best possible candidates. The objective assessments are based on Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) expertise, physical fitness, and moral, ethical, and values-based decisions. The subjective board process targets individual leader attributes and character through board proceedings and discussions. The board assesses the technical, tactical, ethical, and moral potential for the individual.”<sup>7</sup> The current selection rate using this process is around 60%. This is a great start to manning the SFABs with the best possible personnel, but it is not without its faults.

Brigadier General Mark Landes, commander of the Security Force Assistance Command, stated the Army is still trying to figure out how to assess effectively and select candidates but what is in place is a step in the right direction.<sup>8</sup> He went on to say that the overall goal of the assessment is to determine whether candidates have the social skills and attributes necessary to be a good advisor. “The challenges are not necessarily getting the right people, it’s that we don’t know yet what we

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<sup>6</sup> Arjenis Nunez, “1st SFAB Assesses Candidates”.

<sup>7</sup> SFAB frequently asked questions, <https://www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs/current-and-prior-service/advance-your-career/security-force-assistance-brigade.html>

<sup>8</sup> BG Mark Landes (Security Force Assistance Command), interview by the author, 24 January 2019.

are assessing. We are still trying to figure out what skillsets we do want. Such as high on emotional intelligence, maturity, ethics, but there are a myriad of those. The real question is how do we measure those? Is that tests or some other sort of evaluation tool? We don't have those yet. For example, we don't do their psyche evaluation until they go to the Military Advisor Training Academy (MATA). Bottom line is there are a lot of things we haven't figured out yet.”<sup>9</sup> In a roundtable interview with members of 1st SFAB who had just returned from Afghanistan, the advisors further enforced Landes' concerns regarding the selection process. When asked if they thought the selection process was effective, they answered no as a group. They agreed that the assessment is too short; it should be two to three weeks, not 48 hours. Also, they wanted a secondary assessment once advisors get to their team, a sort of probationary period.<sup>10</sup> It is clear the SFAB concept includes identified shortcomings in the selection of advisors from past experiences and that the SFAB leaders are trying to ensure the best possible candidates get selected.

Once candidates have been selected, they will then attend the Combat Advisors Training Course (CATC), conducted by the MATA at Fort Benning, Georgia. The MATA is a new unit specially trained and built to serve as the cadre and instructors for CATC. The MATA's mission is to “train, educate, and develop professional SFA combat military advisors that are specifically trained, equipped, and postured to train, advise, assist, accompany, and enable allied and partner nation forces in peacetime engagement, contingency, crisis, and/or combat operations in support of the Geographical Combatant Commander's (GCC) Theater Campaign and Contingency Plans.”<sup>11</sup> The CATC's purpose is to train U.S. Army Foreign Security Forces (FSF) Combat Advisors to serve within the

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<sup>9</sup> Landes interview.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with seven members of 1st SFAB, 7 March 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Fort Benning, U.S. Army Fort Benning and The Maneuver Center of Excellence, “Military Advisor Training Academy (MATA)”, <http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/316thCav/MATA/>.

SFAB. “Graduates from the CATC will have the requisite knowledge, skills, and attributes to competently train, advise, assist, accompany, and enable FSF. Students will be confident in the knowledge and skills needed to function in complex environments by, through, and with FSF as a member of an advisor team.”<sup>12</sup> The program of instruction (POI) is divided into three phases of training in an effort to put forth the best and most capable advisors able to assist combatant commanders in providing FSF the advising and assistance needed.

Phase I is three weeks in length, encompassing the initial deployment of a combat advisor team (CAT) and the members’ orientation as advisors. Students will learn the advisors’ roles and responsibilities (4 days), communications (2 days), human terrain (5 days), and the operational environment tied to small unit mission planning (4 days). This phase is designed to correct mistakes made in the past that did not address the roles and responsibilities of the advisor, verbal and non-verbal communication and the use of interpreters, the role of culture, and preparation of the mission set. Phase I culminates with a practical exercise in which the teams will conduct an assessment with the FSF to identify capability gaps and develop a training plan together going forward. CATC instructors will give an overall assessment of how well the teams performed.

Phase II is three weeks in length, encompassing the training plan and continuous reassessment of the FSF by the CAT as identified during the assessment during Phase I. Students will learn medical (7 days), weapons (5 days), and fire support (6 days). The primary area this phase corrects from the past is foreign weapons familiarization. There are three assessments to ensure the material is being learned. At the end of each module advisors will train, advise and assist the FSF on the topic of that

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<sup>12</sup> Fort Benning, “Military Advisor Training Academy (MATA)”.

specific module. CATs will be assessed on how well they learned the material and how well they advised the FSF.

Phase III is three weeks in length, continuing the training plan and reassessment of the FSF by the CAT. The primary learning objective of this phase is survivability and force protection (6 days). During this phase CATs will be assessed on how well they train, advise, and assist the FSF on force protection and during a combined arms operation. The last assessment allows the CAT to practice transitioning and preparing to conduct “relief in place” (RIP) with a new CAT. The assessments are judged on how well the CATs interacted with the FSF and assisted them in conducting a combined arms operation as well as how well they assisted the new CAT to take over operations.

All three phases build towards one final field training exercise in which advisors are evaluated on their proficiency in all tactics, techniques, and procedures learned throughout the CATC. The overall objectives are to assist the FSF BN and company commanders in conducting an area assessment of the area of operations (AO), to support the FSF BN and company commanders in establishing influence in their AO, establish relationships and cooperation with the local population, assess the mission performance of companies on patrol/mission, build the confidence, pride, and skills in the FSF formations, and assist in fixing the FSF processes, systems, and tactics previously identified as problematic.<sup>13</sup>

Brigadier General Landes, Security Force Assistance Command commander, considers the MATA training somewhat effective but in need of refinement. He describes the training of an advisor by using three boxes. Box one is individual skills, box two is social skills, and box three is mission command. He feels that there is too much focus on the individual skills at this time and more emphasis needs to be put on

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<sup>13</sup> Briefing, Military Advisor Training Academy, CATC 3.0 Course Map.

social skills and mission command.<sup>14</sup> The roundtable also echoed Landes in the shortcomings of their training. It is important to note that the 1st SFAB's training was truncated due to mission timeline requirements so their viewpoints could be slightly skewed. One major recommendation is that teams should collectively attend the MATA. This would have allowed them to build relationships, identify the weakness of the team and/or the weak advisors prior to getting to Afghanistan. They also recommend more technical instruction on equipment and additional classroom study of intelligence gathering and the military decision-making process. The consensus was the academic knowledge required, to be an effective advisor, is much more critical than most think.<sup>15</sup>

The 1st SFAB deployed to Afghanistan in March 2018 and immediately began its advisory duties. It was generally deemed a successful deployment as the advisory teams did embed themselves with their partner units and appeared to impart valuable knowledge to the Afghans. Areas where it is thought they had the most impact were integration of Afghan air and ground assets, logistical planning, operational planning, establishing or assisting an artillery leaders' course, and training in land navigation.<sup>16</sup> Landes said, "I think they have met the commander's intent. I think the generals in charge can see the value-added benefit of SFABs. The real issue is getting off of Combat Outposts and Forward Operating Bases but there is risk associated with that especially in regards to the amount of training and dollars spent on each advisor."<sup>17</sup> During the deployment a critical observation was made, "that while you are advising foreign forces, you also have to advise friendly forces about the roles and responsibilities of the advisors as well as the capabilities, good and bad, that the foreign forces bring to the fight

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<sup>14</sup> Landes interview.

<sup>15</sup> 1st SFAB interview.

<sup>16</sup> John Friberg, 1st SFAB in Afghanistan – A Successful Deployment?, SOF News, December 12, 2018 <http://www.sof.news/afghanistan/1st-sfab-in-afghanistan/>.

<sup>17</sup> Landes interview.

and we don't do well with that. The question is how do you merge foreign force goals and friendly force goals and get them to work?"<sup>18</sup> This is something that needs to be added to POI at the MATA. According to BG Landes, the 1st SFAB was successful through talent. "What we did was take very talented people and threw them at a problem and told them to figure it out. We did not prepare them and are facing the same issue with 2nd SFAB, but we are getting better."<sup>19</sup> Talent trumps all is our motto. Through talent we are able to overcome a lot of deficiencies that we are seeing."<sup>20</sup>

In summary, the SFAB concept has looked at historical examples of advisory missions, have attempted to address the shortcomings they saw, and fully acknowledge their shortcomings now. It is very evident that the SFABs are trying to attract the best the Army has to offer and are working diligently to identify those through the selection process. Additionally, the MATA is doing its part in developing a training plan that fully trains advisors. The MATA and SFAB both acknowledge that continued changes to improve the training and execution are necessary. The ultimate goal is to field one National Guard and five active duty advisory brigades in an effort to be the premier conventional advisory force in the U.S. military.

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<sup>18</sup> Landes interview.

<sup>19</sup> Landes was not saying that the advisors were not prepared or trained for their mission. He is saying that the training was not as good as it could have been and they recognize that improvements could have been made and will be made going forward.

<sup>20</sup> Landes interview.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

The role of nation assistance, particularly FID and SFA, was conceived as a SOF mission set that transformed into conventional forces conducting advise and assist operations. By using conventional forces, that were selected poorly and lacked proper training, the U.S. lost the tactical advantage of SFA. There were many problems with this as seen in this paper.

The selection process for advisors did not always obtain those who had the propensity to be effective advisors. Being a good U.S. officer or NCO does not necessarily equate to being a good advisor. To address this issue, the MATA developed a selection process. It is not an ideal process but is a start. The MATA is making significant headway in identifying characteristics and traits that make a good advisor but those are also the hardest things to identify and quantify. In an effort to do so, the MATA has recently partnered with the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences to design behavioral assessments and supporting tools to elicit, score, and provide actionable feedback on advisor attributes. This process increases the likelihood of selecting the best candidates and the overall success of advisors in the SFABs.

Advisors in the past received improper or no training, which significantly affected the U.S.'s ability to conduct SFA. It is clear that the MATA has developed a training program to address these training shortcomings. MATA leaders acknowledge the shortcomings of the current training and are seeking ways to improve it. Input from recently redeployed units will only enhance the training for the next group of advisors. As the additional brigades are stood up, the MATA will be able to adjust the training for the geographical region alignment.

Not covered in the SFAB chapter but important to point out is the concept of geographical alignment for each SFAB and the mission set going forward. The five active duty SFABs will be aligned with geographic

combatant commands and aid that command in all things SFA. The focus will be on U.S. Central Command, Africa Command, European Command, Indo-Pacific Command, and Southern Command. This will allow each SFAB to focus training on their assigned region but could lessen their effectiveness in other regions should the need arise.

Additionally, the Army believes that future SFA missions will not be as a whole brigade but could be as small as one team which brings up one final point. In the past, advisor teams would deploy to an area of operations for a designated period of time and then would be replaced by another team. This impacts the overall effectiveness of the advisory mission as the FSF will have to make adjustments to the new team. Often times taking a step back. The author does not have a solution to this problem but additional study would help alleviate it.

This is not a comprehensive assessment of all the problems with the execution of SFA. Additional issues from the past still plague us today. The U.S. leads the world in terms of dollars spent on the military and is in the top five as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product. This is a significant advantage for us, but can be a detriment for countries being advised that do not have the monetary or technical resources. The U.S. is quick to provide military assets and equipment that are not sustainable by the HN countries. As a case in point, the U.S. has provided military equipment to the Afghan National Army (ANA) that they cannot support without the help of the U.S. This includes, vehicles, aerial assets, and other equipment common to U.S. forces. On a simpler level, the author observed the Support Operations Officer, 5th Kandak, 4th Brigade, hand drawing a requisition form yet there was a brand-new computer and printer on his desk provided by the U.S. When the author asked him why he wasn't using the computer, he stated he didn't know how to operate it.



The biggest issue with historical SFA and today has been the concept that FSF can perform, sustain, and learn like the U.S. military. The mirror imaging or Americanization of FSF is not the way ahead. It has not worked in the past and will not work in the future. In talking with members of the MATA, SFAB, and Special Forces soldiers, the new concept of SFA and the SFABs is to help FSFs identify their problems and help them come up with their own solutions. These solutions would be sustainable by the host nation. The problem is that we, the U.S., continually say one thing and do another. It is human nature to stay in one's comfort zone and in this case that means trying to get FSF to do it an American way. We must use our American brainpower and military acumen to help FSF dissect their own problems and come up with their own solutions not just throw American solutions and equipment at the problem. The political and military objectives must be clearly defined. Because SFA is a way to accomplish national strategic goals, leaders and politicians at all levels must be on board in as far as what can and cannot actually be accomplished by SFABs. Asking too much of the SFABs will only deter their capabilities and mission success. They are not miracle workers. We must let FSFs stumble to learn but also not let them fall.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Transcripts**

#### **SFAB Advisor Interview conducted at Fort Benning, GA., March 7, 2019**

Attendees consisted of three Sergeants First Class, two Captains, and one Master Sergeant. All had recently returned from the 1<sup>st</sup> SFAB's deployment to Afghanistan and agreed to discuss multiple aspects of the SFAB concept with me in a non-attributorial setting as some of the things discussed and said could be construed in the wrong way. The following is text version of the conversations:

Why did you volunteer to be an advisor?

Input #1 - I have already had of two Afghan and 2 Iraq and an Australian deployment under my belt and realizing after all those deployments really the only way to stop going to the same place every time was for them to handle their own stuff. Politically that is essentially what everyone else is saying that they have to handle it themselves.

I have three boys of my own and if they have to fight a war the same way that I have fought for the past 16 years then I have failed as an infantryman and as a leader in the Army in hindsight. I think the FSAB mission is designed more as a mission statement than what is it designed to do. It is perfect on the conventional side and yet a conventional army should be able to deter war in their own country. You can't always do that or getting defeated, beat down or unwilling to accept your own mission in your own country and that fits anywhere, that fits in Afghanistan which we just got back from, it fits in Africa and anywhere else where people and/or governments need that little extra boost to fight or to deter war. I believe in the mission.

Input #2 - I like volunteering. I was in a TRADOC job so my pace was pretty slow and I'm an active person. I heard about the concept of SFAB

being one terrain feature behind, being able to advise, help out, fire fights may happen, etc. Sounded like good stuff.

Input #3 - So, when we first started doing the MiTT teams back in 04, I was actually training them. I was ACRC and we trained the first MiTT team to go to Iraq and then I went on an advisor mission in 2007 and then I did a STT in 2012 in Afghanistan. I think it is a great mission so I signed up to come over here and continue everything that I've been doing.

Input #4 - We did really volunteer for SFAB, but when the orders came down it was a break from the traditional conventional army stuff that I have been doing for the last 8 or 9 years and coming down here the first thing you heard was that you are going to be in charge of a 12 man team and that sounds great to a 200 man HHC.

Input #5 - Seeing the mission and seeing the need and to do something different and seeing two different approaches to Afghanistan, I had been there twice before, and saw the change from us being with them to advise and assist to pulling them along to us being behind them and that seems interesting to me. Another chance to command and another chance to hone your skills, to exercise mission command and as a team leader you have all the war fighting functions under you and how to manage the team operations, the advising team operations which are very different but connected and getting more reps at that under a smaller force structure and seemed appealing and also to the talk which I feel has been marginally has been backed by the walk. Of the resources, whether they be monetary or talented personnel coming into the organization seemed like a decent place to be.

What did you know about advising prior to joining the SFABs?

Input #1 - A little bit, it was more kind of token – hey we can brief that we advised them on a slide. They came with us on an operation, sort of a joint operation and we did a little with mortars...I was a PL of

marksmanship...teach them how to do this, but not advising them and I can see how I played a role because training falls under advising. At that step it was more watch what I do.

Input # 2 - I would say that there was a lot of hesitation by senior leaders to me about coming to a unit about this because there was the hangover about the SFATs purported to not be well resourced...thrown together, thought thru and that people only taking care of General Isley's perception and so there was a concern that there would be a repeat of that and so that was something else like...they are saying this is going to be great but also the people at SFATs were saying the same kind of things before they went to the SFAT but there did seem to be some energy about the SFAB starting up that gave some confidence that it would not be like that but there was definitely a lot of people saying are you sure you want to do that.

Interviewer's injection - Right now it is the shiny penny and promotions are good

Numerous inputs - Maybe not accelerated but a higher percentage pickup for promotions across all ranks for having been a part of the SFAB. It is hard to say that because I feel a lot of guys were strong to begin with and just happened to be looked at while they were here. .... Even when I looked down the line, all these guys, NCOI's \, finished their KD time and had like 36 to 48 months ... they were like 16 to 18 years in the Army, so I think it was going to happen. The only advantage was that it was the promotion without the school piece, there was the deploys, the waiver, right? You talk about ETB?.yeah. So that may be it...the thing that would be telling for that would be the promotion cycle to see, you know, if you have five SGT First Classes and all things remaining equal, only four may be picked up and the 5<sup>th</sup> wasn't the SFAB. I don't know. The only big difference was that at the time there was only one SFAB and we were shiny so when the next board comes around, they you may be

nothing special. When I write their evaluations, the scope of responsibility is tremendously larger ...that helps with evaluation.

Have you studied or do you know anything about prior attempts by the US to conduct security force assistance? I'm talking before Afghanistan and Iraq. I think we are all familiar with MITT teams and SFAAT's but like in your history studies. Did you study or pay attention to MACV, etc...?

Input #1 - Our teams specifically and transitions into the battalion a little bit, we've done some, some historical lessons with MACV and we even brought in some advisors from the Viet Nam error to do a panel, a kind of answer question to give their insight and went into some deep discussion and research into T. E. Lawrence, of course who was probably the author of doing this kind of thing and then of course now we are post deployment, can really see where some of those ideas, those facets that worked for us or didn't work for us. Obviously, when it comes to TE Lawrence, they dressed, eat what they dressed, they were able to do that kind of thing, but that same mentality is still there as far as honoring their culture and things like that....

Input #3 - .....kind of like looking at "the art of war" it has the same thought or principles were there but there are a lot good things that you can take out. We had a lot of Vietnam advisors come in...it was pretty much all in line with things we had read from TE Lawrence and now that we have deployed, it is all valid stuff...it is just more of the theater you go too.

When I talk about the difference between Security Force Assistance and Foreign Internal Defense, what do you think?

Input #1 - When we went through CATV, all of these unconventional SF instructors over there, all their experience was with FID. No actual unconventional side. So the overlap like you are discussing there was good information however, there is a huge aspect of that that we don't have the training or know how to be able to do and oh by the way, they don't have the know-how and the training to do the things we're asked to



do. There was a disconnect at the time even though you could see the similarities when it came to the overall mission. It is obviously getting better now with people of more experience going over there to teach but I think that is something worth noting there. There is an overlap but it is not the same.

Do you think the selection process that they are executing now allows for the selection of the right advisors?

A joint NO from the participants.

Input #1 - I'll elaborate on it but I know he is going to speak on it as well, It is impossible without a lengthy process to pick advisors. You can be a great infantry, you can be a great cavalryman, your OER's are fantastic and they say that you are tactically and technically sound...that does not mean by no means that you are going to be a good advisor and we saw that very evident in our team being away from the flagpole and really relying on our own internal assets. Some of them were very weak, they were very good at their specific job or it is just that they were not good talking to people or they don't have the charisma or intelligence to be a good advisor. You having to make some sort of a friendship with someone, not the kind of friendship that you take them home to go bowling, overall you would have to have a lengthy assessment to do that.

Input #2 - SF even has issues. The time for selection should be 2-3 weeks but at the end of the day when you get to the team, then it can make an assessment of "on the job assessment". If he receives a good assessment, then send him to a support team or company or whatever.

Input #2 - Across the MOS's we have really struggled. It became difficult for me to advise the Intelligence Warfighting Function when the intelligence advisor did not know how to enemy terrain analysis. It is difficult when your mechanic has to advise a KANDAC maintenance Soldier on proper PMCS but doesn't know how to do it himself, that's a problem.

Input #3 - When an infantry squad leader shows up at your unit there are assumptions as to what this person is and what this person has done. When a commo guy shows up at your unit there is a whole bag of things that he may or may not have done because there are different sections such as the commo guy we got to the team, he was an Microsoft Office kind of guy, he was not a tactical RTO – he had not had that experience. Some of the MOS's are not stressed like combat arms are but there are a lot of situations where MOS's can be working but not necessarily competent in the areas that you think they are.

Multiple examples of Soldiers attached to the advising units that were technically sound in their jobs but had no real world experiences and were unable to adapt to the advising unit or the roll as an advisor thus impacting the mission.

Input #4 - I don't think any of us think that necessarily the selection process has failed but it was the only option, but were we are already conducting operations to push, out but it is going to take time.

Input #5 – For 1<sup>st</sup> SFAB, 18 months of training was reduced into four months. The availability of Soldiers was a huge aspect, the quality was on issue. The really good Soldiers do not sit on staff, they get pushed down to lower.

Interviewer injection - “Performance Punishment”, you are so good at your job that they keep you doing that instead of broadening your knowledge.

Input #6 - That was apparent to me at JRTC. The selection process is going to take time. Input #7 - I think we are never going to win because the Army that I have been in for 17 years is never going to have that kind of time. The ranks that the SFAB is hurting at are the same ranks that the whole Army is hurting at (E5-E7). Good ones are hard to draw away from what they know and are good at. They are needed all over the Army!!!

Interview injection - SFA is a long, long process.

Did your training prepare you for the mission?

Did it train you to be an advisor or did it train you on your individual tasks?

Did it train you on language, did it train you on culture, did it train you on under that culture and language about the actual personalities – in this case – Afghans – or any group – and the ends, ways and means of what your advising role was going to be.

What was the goal, how do we get there and how are we going to get there?

Input #1 - Captain said NO and the reason no is because of the timeline. But some of the training was absolutely beneficial. When I look back at pre-deployment, whoever soon realized that we were shoving too much down for training.

We went from 18-months train-up to 120 days. The training was largely individually based; however, it was individual meaning sometimes for equipment that I had never seen before. It was individual base when it came to culture and language type stuff and it was collective based in the wrong areas. We did team live-fires with enablers that one – I would probably never do a live-fire with one team – looking back on that, this job is significantly more intellectual and academic based than it is my individual skills as an infantryman and I think the focus was off on that prior to deployment this time and now that we have that experience, if it is Afghanistan again we will be absolutely prepared for that. It doesn't matter where we are going, the academic stuff and knowing our own doctrine will carry in to that. I'm a firm believer that you don't ever have to qualify yourself with a weapon to teach someone how to qualify.

Input #2 - To add on to that point, if there is one thing that I was willing to accept risk on was the shoot and maneuver of piece of it, my team had 6 infantry guys on it that were E6 and above, I would have accepted risk on the shooting and maneuvering piece in order to get more technical

knowledge on equipment and truthfully more classroom study of the military processes such as MDMP, Intel, etc.... the academic side is so much more critical than most think.

Input #3 - I think the biggest problem with our training was three due on the training calendar..the FG battalion, the brigade shit was all there so it was just easy...it was a quick win for me to look good in front of the boss. That's why I did that stupid F'ing STG and the GD motorpool next to us. The shit we did at Bragg and the F'ing black line objective were a waste of time. There was no thought put into the F'ing training prior to this. All these guys were shotgun blasted out. There was no team training at all when the team should have been slated together to go to the Military Advisor Training Academy (MATA). They had that time to build that relationship and identify the weakness or the weak ones prior to getting over to Afghanistan, we could have fixed a lot of F'ing problems.

Interviewer injection - I really like what you just said about the teams going through the MATA together, instead of the guys going through individually.

Input #4 - I do think that we need the team training but I would never take away the individual training.

Interviewer injection - I would argue that you guys are here for a reason...whether you volunteered or "voluntold". You guys are all great, top-notch soldiers and know your individual task so going through that training again is nothing but normal training that you would do in a normal unit on a daily basis.

So, should the MATA be more focused on being an advisor rather than individuals and collective tasks? When you came in you didn't know how to be an advisor. You didn't know how to be an advisor until you got over there and started to advise and some people were able to make the adjustment and some people still thought they were yelling at Private Snuffy!

Input from multiple - we talked about this before, this experience that we had was just from time in the Army and when we went to our partner we had no POI. MATA also has to help someone know how to operate in a small team. There is a lot of demands where you have to do stuff well outside your MOS. But going back to what we said earlier, we were shoving what we know down their throat. Instead of being taught this is their country, this is how they operate, and we need to know their structure. Looking at CATC, you know MATA, I would actually recommend that they break it up where these TACT teams have their own force, that the Battalion (BAT) Teams and the Brigade teams have their own course. The reason I say that is, at the BAT staff Level and Brigade staff Level, isn't enough rank there that has run a staff before so I think they could have a more condensed academic side of the staffing function. I also think we kind of got lucky in this Brigade that the majority of everyone here has previously deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan if not both on multiple times whereas when we go through the SFABs you are going to find less and less of that. Must cover every war fighting function on the staff.

Input #2 - Point is made that at MATA you should be able to fail. Currently, advisors are being passed even though they show a lack of capability to be a good advisor.

Input #3 - How do you train an advisor? I have guys that are incredibly tactical and efficient but they are terrible advisors. Then I have guys that are not very good technically but they have the right personality and they are good advisors. But what they lack on technical limits what they can do. So what I'm thinking is I got to through this guy out to teach his own peers to develop these skills. The problem is that culture does not come into account during a JRTC rotation because its blue force advising blue force which takes culture out of the equation.

Input #4 - I agree with the OC concept but I believe it should be as a team.

From the audience at they built a huge facility over here...you should be able to send a team from there straight to a JRTC Rotation home for a refit on leave and into a deployment as an advisor.

Are you manned at sufficient levels as far as numbers, ranks, and I guess you can through in MOS's in there – are all the war fighting functions covered by the entire team and if not how would you change that?

Input #1 – There are definite gaps which go back to earlier conversations regarding personnel being able to do their job. Certain soft skilled MOSs are able to do their job in garrison but not necessarily deployed and conduct an advising mission. So sir, the MTOE is pretty much covered but getting into competencies, that where your shortfalls come in for any unit. One of our biggest gaps was in teaching mortar systems where the advisor we had was a forward observer and we didn't have the ability to teach them out to use the equipment.

Input #2 - We at SFAT's do not have our own support organization such as staff, supply, and other support functions that allow advisors to advise.

Input #3 - The battalion staff was under staffed.

Input #4 - I would completely revise the MTOE and how we are actually organized and I would never allow the company to be an advising team. I would make them a Command and Control (C2) node, it works in Special Forces and can work for the SFAB. The company commander does not advise, his team, even though they had the capabilities to go multiple echelons above they focused only on one level above that is also a limiting factor for us because in the doctrine they say up to two levels. I honestly think it should be changed to go only one level above so a team can advise a company or advise a Kandak. I think they need to restructure at MTOE base so a company commander is the C2 and does the administration background stuff but bust them up and I think if you did that, what you would be able to do as take some of these critical

MOS's you could actually buff them up and bump up a rank requirement at the company level and your number of personnel can go down. So at the company level you can have one or two guys whose level of knowledge would allow them to work with more than one team at a time.

Input #5 - We did a lot of OJT and I think one year was too much time. The biggest piece the MTOE list missed was power generation. Radio communications was a big problem, we had multiple different radios to do the same job...often we some had to send secure information over radios that were not encrypted.

Input #6 - We had a severe shortage of vehicles

Interviewer injection - as we look at culture, especially Afghanistan, one of the hurdles I had to overcome because I was a Captain advising an 05 and an 06 and at times a Brig General but it took me time to build that rapport because I significantly under-ranked them.

So talking about going 2 up – do we need to go 2-up?

Input #1 - This is what I think we are missing here,...instead of having those battalion staff act as a staff when they are designed to be advisors then that TAC-E staff should have been the ones while the battalion staff was doing the advising. The processes were painted to make it appear like how we wanted it to look, not how it actually should have been done. The staff should be advisors not staff, so that they can assist in advising as foreign force's staff need assistance as well.

So this question concerns shadowing Afghan processes to ensure success and pressure from above for results and yea/ney thoughts from the group?

Input #1 - The speed of progress of your partner unit is much slower than the appetite from whatever unit you may be under and so it becomes a (we've done this)

Frequently a ghost process to make things happen via US advisors not the host nation

Discussion of getting artillery KANDAC's set up to conduct fire missions in conjunction with US Air power. Time on target was set but air power said hold up and kept the KANDAC's waiting for over two hours.

Input #2 - The one-star who was directing that operation had no concept of what was happening at that level. So the teams could not communicate "straight to the man." So it was a communications snafu. So the execution was screwed up. When we trained, we trained like we were going to be the only show in town but some of our advisors were under control of Turks and others.

Input #3 -30 radios for a 12 man team, over 20 different types of communication platforms, no real comms plan, everything was primary, no PACE plan.

In your opinion, what makes a good advisor?

The ability to relate to someone outside of your culture.

Critical thinker.

Experienced and well-rounded.

Confident and life-experienced and personality.

Inter-personal skills

What would you change?

To be able to get rid of certain people if they didn't work on my team.

Being able to be a part of the selection process to make sure that the guy fits with my team.

I want to be able to pick the dude but have the ability to remove him quickly, not to move them across the formation but to get rid of them. In the future, kind of making SFAB one of those areas that you stay in.

**Interview with Brigadier General Mark H. Landes, Commander  
Security Force Assistance Command**

B As I said in my email I took an elective last year at Air Command and Staff College called Small Wars, and we got pretty deep into Security



Force Assistance and Foreign Internal Defense and trying to define those two and separate them with the amount of overlap they have spurred me to start thinking about my experience working for you as an SFAT guy and then as we went through time in a regular unconventional warfare and looking at where the US inserted advisors the difficulties that our advisors had made me think (and I wrote a pro-paper on it) and then I got to SAAS and they said, "Hey, now the Army's new focuses is the SFABs and my Thesis advisor said there's your question right there - is the army getting it right. Based off everything we've done in the past not that we haven't done some good things in the past with Advisors, and we have certainly had extreme difficulty a lot of it has to do with three main areas in two of them are almost synonymous; one of them is proper Personnel - Are we putting the right advisors in and then the second when I get overlap is of what I call Americanization or mirror Imaging of a foreign force or a foreign government by inserting and the wrong advisor goes in and just says hey this is American way let's do it but then there's also a lot top pressure sometimes. I think we saw it particularly when I was working for you with a couple of those GOs all they cared about was results - they didn't care how the results got there and so in theory the Afghans were doing it but there was shadow going up the backside of all the Americans all the way up so that somebody somewhere I got told hey look what the Afghans did, and they didn't - it was complete shadow. When I flew Gen. Charleton all the way up with that MOD 14 and it didn't get approved for one pair of brake pads he was blown away. He was well "how are all these other people having success?" I tried to say it because somebody somewhere is doing it for them. If you follow this with them without any other influence so we get into it, that's basically the gist of where I'm going and

L That's two things, so what was the third?

B The Americanization and Mirror Imaging were two and three but they are overlapping: they're almost the same so right advisors and I guess

you can say right training with now that we look at the MATA because when you look at historically we weren't really given them training from cultural awareness to that type of thing and I've got some questions we can run through. That's just kind of the gist of .....

L To answer your question well no, we probably haven't got it right yet. I mean you just heard us we're earlier stages early days and we're still working through doctrine. (unint) people is easy because we have boards and assessments and yes, we are promoting my advisors at a greater rate than the Army average. Like training, we're still working our way through that. We don't know how to train and advisor. I was just laying it out for (?) things that I am coming to the conclusion of how do you train advisors (11:57) but the SFAB according for to General Milly is the conventional force that trains indigenous Personnel on Conventional tactics - It's not Special Forces.

B. I think that's when we get into the real line between SFA and FID (?)

L. right, no that's where it is. We're doing conventional forces, and what we should be able to do is we should do it across the continuum of war. We do it across the continuum of war and so we can advise System ????? but um, we're actually written in War Plans right now. Without getting into classified stuff, there's things called digital liaison teams in Korea right now so if you can imagine my Brigade falling in (We're not written into the war plan which is likely to be revised) if we fell in on like the???????? I could partner for the polls from their battalions all the way through their???? (13.20) If you can imagine them being able to communicate and see the same cops you can see where that would be beneficial in a decisive action plan.

B. Is the SFAB Doctrine - last year it was it was out there but it was not officially signed and approved for - it still hadn't been stamped yet - but I have a copy of it I've read it but it's not

L. What did you read?

B. I don't remember the nomenclature on it. I would have got it the late winner last year

L. The one that seems to be the closest to done is ATP 3-07.10, and then ATP 3 - 96.1. So, ATP 3 - 96.1 is the SFA Brigade published in May of '18, and 3 - 07.10 is the???? for advising for Security Force from November 2017.

B. That's the one I have then.

L. Alright so you can .. the other one is the Brigade.

B. And then right now we've got 1st and 2nd stood up

L. 1st is already back, 2nd is getting ready to deploy, and 3rd is mostly stood up.

B. And then what's the time frame for 4, 5 and 6?

L. Well, 6 is in the Guard, so it's started already. 4th is 10% filled right now, and 5th is probably six months away from even starting.

B. Is the intention to have them geographically oriented?

L. That's desired end-state. That's why there's five and so one per co-com and then the Guard one would either float or be assigned to Northern Command.

B. Then if we do dial back in Afghanistan then then that's where we'll start looking at Geographic orientation for them?

L. I think Gen Milly wants to. He's on record but you can look it up. He just said that in a speech last week. That would be good to quote him because literally last week he just said that in a speech last week..

B. I know the SFABs are conventional doing SFA in groups or unconventional doing FID but is there some coordination with

L. Oh, absolutely. so it's a good tie with to the SF community. We have a lot of long tabbers in our organization. So, if they're the experts at it, we're not ignoring them and we think when we work it out with the COCOMs, we'll be associated with groups so we can see where both of those would want to work hand and hand.

B. As far as coordinating outside the Army you know the Air Force has the 6th SOS which is a... They call themselves a FID squadron but they really kind of an SFA because they're conventional. Now they belong to ?????? but they're not like Green Berets.

L. At Eglin?

B. Yes Sir at Eglin

L. I've talked to them (17:09)

B. You have? Rocky is Battalion Commander. the group Commander, the Full Bird is a friend of mine for a long time.

L. Their former SGM is up at Dover ?????????????????????? about an hour talking to him. And so the question is how do we do what?

B. Right. What kind of

L. So we're a FORSCOM and so FORSCOM is providing forces for the COCOMs so I get approval to go to AFRICOM in places like that talking to Gen. Milly is like, "Yes you can go talk to them, but you can't promise anything. I'm not in an advisor headquarters selling cookies. I will advise people on the capabilities for their War plans, but right now, I'm under the shield of FORSCOM as the Force provider and COCOM sets the troop requirements requirement up consolidated by the Joint Staff before they can get me

B. But then as far as like working with 6 OSS trading TTP's, Lessons Learned or working together in a situation where we don't

L. I think we could. Have you visited with them?

B. I have. They're definitely not as robust as ..

B. So the training they are conducting right now at the MATA and of course this would all be geared towards 1st SFAB 'cause they are the only ones who have been used yet ..... Would you say the training is effective

L. No. so I was just talking some guys through it, so if you if you draw three boxes on your paper the top box on the left is ????? and so you have to know what you're talking about to advise. You have to have the

knowledge. Whether its weapons so if you shoot move, communicate, medicate but then it can be ?????? whatever it is you need to have some individual skills there.

The second box I've labeled social skills, and so that's communication skills, emotional intelligence, I put assessments is social skills. Some people argue with me and say it's an individual skill set, but I think it's more social skills how you assess people. There's a lot of other things in there. Language is in there; You can imagine all this crap that's in there. and the last box I have is Mission Command, because you've got to know how to ask for things, see to things, integrate US assets, US mission into the partner. Now when you look at the MATA we're focused on the individual skill sets, because the NCOs and Officers we're getting from the Army, because of the way we've been running like this are/lax in the knowledge they need to advise, and so we'll use VRM. So VRM for us takes about three weeks. Because every advisor has to not only be able to fire every weapon with night vision with aiming devices but they have to teach it, and most sergeants will come with a rudimentary knowledge of like an M-4 and maybe they were a SAW gunner but they haven't shot the 50 Cal. They haven't shot the 240. They haven't done 9mm. They haven't ..... We start going through it, and so in three weeks ???????? (22:00), So that everyone of my NCOs teach every weapon, so if we get in a firefight, I don't want to hear "I don't know how to do the 50 cal. You know, you'd better get your ass up there and start shooting. And so medicate, communicate... I hate units where you hear some private yell, "Commo" and you're like "so what's the problem with your radio?" "It doesn't work."

There's a whole skillset you're supposed to be doing before you yell "Commo." It's in the -10. But I want all my advisors in commo to not be a -10. They can troubleshoot a little more than that. So when they're stuff goes bad, they're not yelling "Commo", they're fixing it. And so when you go meet my advisors, you'll see them. They have eleven different ways to

talk to their battalion and each individual knows how to set those things up and put them into operation. They may not know how to troubleshoot on an 11 yet, but they're pretty close. That's not a skill set they came with. JTACs. You want everybody to understand how to bring in air. MDMP. You know everybody's got to understand a planning course. So, when you go to get everybody from the Army you know the 101st is really good at these three, but maybe they don't do that. the 1st ID does this but they don't do this one, you know what I'm saying so the MATA is Baseline training. But as I tell people, it takes me 9 months to train an advisor and I'm not getting it all done.

B. To get them to that point sir when we talk... and I think for what it's worth, I think you're dead on with the three boxes and I like to and I see what it's worth I think you're dead on going on the three boxes and I like that I didn't think of that way but the assessment process to get them in..... Or the selection process?

L. We've got something but it's not ... there's no ????? (24:15) at this time. so PT test what really gets a lot of people is the Board (consisting of a Bn, CO, SgtMaj, etc) they're asking questions and so you're really looking for a more mature leader. we don't I don't have the science behind this is why we're doing a 5-mile fit marching this is what we should be getting out of it, So I went back to my assessment team. You know we've assessed all these people now and I think we're getting it generally close. But I can't sit there and say.. You know who's got a good one - Civil Affairs has a really good assessment team that gets after a lot of the... When I looked at all them.. I mean of course SOF I mean Special Forces is three weeks. ??????? ?????? ?????? (25:14) I don't have that. I have two days. Ranger RGMT does assessment .. you know PT Test - run forty minutes - 12 mile ruck march You know what I'm saying?

B. But I think for me as you put it first and foremost is the social skills.

L. That's what we're assessing. That's what we're trying to assess the right people.

B. The individual skills are teachable; mission command is teachable but if you don't have the social skills to be dropped into an indigenous force and be able to recognize what are culture is instead of coming in like the Ugly American as the book called it then you're not going to be as successful. You might be successful, but you're not going to be as successful as you could have been.

L. You're exactly right. And we were just doing some Gallop Poll results from 310. We just came out and we said "Hey, did the Advisors make you better, and probably only a third said yes. So even though I've trained these people, nine months, their partner force, in this case 310, didn't feel like they helped him at all.

(26:28)?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? no I don't. I'm still trying ..... I still ask the question how do you train Advisors. Just because I'm the boss doesn't mean I know how to... So like assessments, I was talking to ?????? who just got back, all the NCOs were saying Hey we need reps and ???????? You need to send this to an ??????? (26:50) or a National Guard and we should do assessments of that brigade. We needed to do assessments. That's such a critical part of problem solving because that's a real the thing that the SFAB does it does problem solving in echelons, so how do you teach an E-6 to problem solve?

B. That sounds like a lot like what are OC's are doing

L. The only problem.. I get that comparison a lot.. I love that comparison here's the only the only two things that I have a problem with that comparison one The OC not only knows red (enemy forces) but is usually controlling red. As an advisor you don't know red, you have to see it through green (friendly forces) The second thing is that the OC is coach, teach, and mentor but they are not there to necessarily help you win. An advisor is trying to help you win. So I said, I'm going to send my

advisor team to JRTC but I don't want them to be OCs, I want to hook them up with blue and make them win.

B. I was looking at it more as a recruitment landscape. A good OC would probably make a good advisor.

L. I think you're right but it's a small pool, not a lot of people have been OCs. But to your point, the skill sets to being a good OC and advisor are very similar.

B. What are the challenges to attracting the right personnel at this point?

L. We don't have a problem filling our advisors, they are all volunteers now versus advisors in the past that were voluntold. Because they are volunteers, they get assessed and some of them don't get selected. Its about a 60% selection rate.

B. Is that selection rate for all ranks?

L. Pretty much except for example Battalion Commanders, they volunteer but then get boarded. Division Commanders and the like sit on that board. The challenges is not necessarily getting the right people its that we don't know yet what we are assessing. We are still trying to figure out what skillsets we do want. Such as high on emotional intelligence, maturity, ethics, but there are a myriad of those. The real question is how do we measure those? Is that tests or some other sort of evaluation tool? We don't have those yet. For example, we don't do their psyche evaluation until they go to the MATA. Bottom line is there are a lot of things we haven't figured out yet.

B. If you had to assess 1<sup>st</sup> SFAB on their first deployment?

L. I think they have met the commander's intent. I think the generals in charge can see the value-added benefit of SFABs. The real issue is getting off of Combat Outposts and Forward Operating Bases but there is risk associated with that especially in regards to the amount of training and dollars spent on each advisor.

L. Something that 1<sup>st</sup> SFAB came back saying, and that we don't teach, is that while you are advising foreign forces, you also have to advise



friendly forces about the rolls and responsibilities of the advisors as well as the capabilities, good and bad, that the foreign forces bring to the fight and we don't do well with that. The question is how do you merge foreign force goals and friendly force goals and get them to work?

B. Can you identify any mistakes that have been made by/through the SFAB concept?

L. We threw them (1<sup>st</sup> SFAB) together to quick, 4 months, and we still don't know how to train an advisor. What we did was take very talented people and threw them at a problem and told them to figure it out. We did not prepare them and are facing the same issue with 2<sup>nd</sup> SFAB but we are getting better. Talent trumps all is our motto. Through talent we are able to overcome a lot of deficiencies that we are seeing. GEN Milley recognizes this shortcoming. One of the issues is the buildup timeline, 9 months to stand-up a brigade.

