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Dagger on Point: Assessing the Regionally-Aligned Brigade

by

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Abstract

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In the spring of 2013, a brigade based out of Fort Riley, Kansas will begin a series of deployments to Africa to support Security Cooperation (SC) activities in support of United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). This is the first of several planned regionally aligned brigades (RAB) ultimately intended to support other Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs). Two follow-on RAB deployments are tentatively scheduled to support European and Pacific commands in 2014. Historically, special operations forces have conducted the majority of Department of Defense activities to train, advise, and assist partner nation security forces, whereas the involvement of general purpose forces has been more limited. As this first RAB prepares to support this new initiative, research into building partnership capacity suggests that, although substantial capabilities for this mission exist, elements of the Army's Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel and Facilities (DOTMLPF) have not been fully optimized to set conditions for effective employment.

Dagger on Point: Assessing the Regionally-Aligned Brigade

In the spring of 2013, a brigade based out of Fort Riley, Kansas will begin a series of deployments to Africa to support Security Cooperation (SC) activities in support of United States Africa Command (AFRICOM).¹ This is the first of several planned regionally aligned brigades (RAB) ultimately intended to support other Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs). Two follow-on RAB deployments are tentatively scheduled to support European and Pacific commands in 2014.² Historically, special operations forces have conducted the majority of Department of Defense activities to train, advise, and assist partner nation security forces, whereas the involvement of general purpose forces has been more limited. As this first RAB prepares to support this new initiative, research into building partnership capacity suggests that, although substantial capabilities for this mission exist, elements of the Army's Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel and Facilities (DOTMLPF) have not been fully optimized to set conditions for effective employment.

With substantial force commitments in Iraq concluded and the deployments to Afghanistan drawing to a close, the Obama administration's refocus to Asia and Africa are creating shifts in service priorities. Adding further complexity, the Army is facing fiscal uncertainty of reduced budgets and new questions about the service's future role have emerged with the evolution of new defense strategies that appear to emphasize air and naval power over ground forces. To the unfocused observer, it may not be apparent that since 2010, our Army has already begun to implement significant changes

in the way it organizes and operates. Even though some of this change was stimulated by strategic guidance, much of it has been driven through the foresight of Army leadership. The principal element of this role modification is known as Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF). RAF is the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army's vision for providing combatant commanders with versatile, responsive, and consistently available Army forces. RAF are defined as those Army units assigned to combatant commands, apportioned for contingency planning, and forces likely to be allocated to a combatant command. Aligned forces maintain proficiency in wartime fundamentals, but also possess a regional mission and training focus that includes an understanding of the languages, cultures geography and militaries of the countries where they are most likely to be employed.³ Although regionalization involves forces from the Total Army, Active Army, Army Reserve, and the Army National Guard, this paper will focus on the application of active duty "general purpose" brigades to source established GCC security cooperation priorities.

Background

The Genesis of Regionalization

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has been challenged to accomplish key national security goals due to a lack of capability and capacity to effectively advise, utilize, and partner with foreign security forces. Historically, special operations forces have conducted the majority of Department of Defense activities to train, advise, and assist partner nation security forces. Over the course of ten years in Iraq and Afghanistan, conventional forces earned considerable experience in security

force assistance despite not having been permanently organized or equipped for this mission. To retain this capability and prevent regression to pre-9/11 mind-sets, the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) cited building the security capacity of partner nations as a key mission area and emphasized security force assistance as an increasingly critical element of this mission.⁴ QDR also identified several initiatives for the Army to broaden its ability to build partner nation security capacity, such as strengthening and institutionalizing general purpose force capabilities to conduct security force assistance.⁵ In one of four stated objectives, the QDR outlines an imperative to prevent and deter conflict through improvement of partner capacity to maintain and promote stability.⁶ The Army, through its strategy and campaign support plan, pursued courses of action to meet these objectives. In December of 2011, Headquarters Department of the Army issued Execute Order (EXORD) 039-12, providing guidance to the Army for the resourcing, training and employment of Regionally Aligned Brigades (RABs) as a means for delivering General Purpose Forces (GPF) for security cooperation (SC) missions in support of geographic combatant commanders' (GCCs) Theater Campaign Plans (TCPs).⁷ Specifically, this EXORD provided direction for employment of a RAB to United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in Fiscal Year 2013 to serve as proof of principle for future employment of RABs in other GCCs' area of operations.⁸

In January 2012, as planning and coordination for regional alignment continued, senior Department of Defense (DOD) leaders unveiled a revised defense strategy based on a review of current policy and impending budgetary constraints.⁹ The

new approach calls for a leaner military that is agile, flexible and rapidly deployable.¹⁰

The U.S. military was directed to rebalance global posture and presence to areas where potential problems are most likely to arise, with priority to the Asia-Pacific and Middle Eastern regions.¹¹ U.S. military forces in other regions of the world (Africa, Latin America and Europe) were directed to foster innovation in current partnerships, cultivate new partnerships, and strengthen key alliances.¹² Several force structure decisions were highlighted to support this announcement¹³:

- Active forces no longer be sized to conduct large and protracted stability operations;
- Army force structure sustained in the Pacific, and a persistent presence maintained in the Middle East;
- Army forces rotation through Europe and other regions on a more frequent basis;
- a U.S.-based heavy brigade allocated to the NATO Response Force;
- a brigade combat team (BCT) aligned with each geographic combatant command to provide cultural and language training to support engagement operations;
- BCTs and enabling units examined for optimum design, which could lead to further BCT reductions if the Army decides to increase the capability of BCTs.

This announcement strongly emphasized a re-balancing towards Asia and the Middle East, and reflected the Army's initiative to employ Regionally Aligned Forces.

Anticipated Outcomes

Regional alignment is anticipated to improve the Army's ability to conduct bilateral and multilateral military cooperation, exercises, and advisory activities, aimed at strengthening strategic access and reinforcing enduring relationships with US allies and partners.¹⁴ The most substantial benefit is likely to be the increased level of predictable support to Combatant Commanders with forecasts of aligned forces necessary to answer planning assumptions and develop longer term engagement strategies. RABs will be prepared for the mission with advisory skills training, security force assistance training, and Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (LREC) training, affording Combatant Commanders enhanced options for security cooperation previously unavailable. Because of the expeditionary nature of this support and the smaller teams which will be employed from within the RAB, alignment should become a cost effective, small-footprint approach in support of GCCs¹⁵. Finally, regional alignment may serve as the impetus for integration of lethal and non-lethal special operations (SOF) and conventional force (CF) capabilities to assess, shape, deter and influence foreign security environments. The Army is striving to replicate the high levels of SOF-CF interdependence achieved in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁶

Implementation

Implementation of the full Regionally Aligned Force concept is underway, but will take several more years to complete. Each GCC will have forces aligned, meaning that they will be available for planning, as well as executing theater shaping activities. Because of the significant requirements for forces in Iraq and Afghanistan in

the past, forces assigned to Combatant Commanders other than CENTCOM have not been routinely available¹⁷. As the gradual drawdown continues from Afghanistan and CENTCOM, GCCs who do not have assigned forces will have forces aligned to them. The resourcing system for security cooperation missions historically resulted in ad-hoc responses to GCC requirements, many times extracting individual augmentees from multiple organizations. Sourcing forces derived from RABs is innovative for several reasons. Soldiers will now originate from a single brigade aligned with a geographic region, will receive language and cultural training relevant to their area of assignment, and will fall under a single chain of command responsible for training and administrative support¹⁸. RAB participation in support of theater campaign plans initiates the process of fostering regional expertise and sustained access which can only be realized by operating in that region. Additionally, the Army is also advancing initiatives such as the establishment of training sets of equipment in PACOM and EUCOM AORs to support RAB rotations and interoperability with partners and allies¹⁹.

Regionally Aligned Forces provide the Combatant Commander with up to a Joint Task Force capable headquarters with scalable capabilities. It is important to note that regionally aligned brigades are just one component of the potential Army assets assigned to combatant commands, allocated to a combatant command, and those capabilities distributed and prepared by the Army for combatant command regional missions. In full context, RAF can include organizations and capabilities which are: forward stationed; operating in a combatant command area of responsibility; supporting or prepared to support from outside the area of responsibility, or those Army organizations providing reach-back²⁰. Sourcing for RAF is through the Army Force

Generation process: The structured progression of unit over time to produce trained, ready, and equipped units prepared for operational deployment in support of the combatant commander and other Army requirements²¹.

In addition to the first BCT alignment with AFRICOM, another Army priority in Fiscal Year 2013 is to begin alignment of its Corps and Division headquarters²². The Army will formally establish the alignment of I Corps to U.S. Pacific Command, III Corps to U.S. Central Command, and XVIII Corps to the Global Response Force. In addition, the Army is expected to align division headquarters to U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Africa Command²³. For fiscal year 2014, the Army will align its other BCTs to support theater requirements. Planning is currently underway to align brigades to PACOM, EUCOM and AFRICOM. Due to current operational requirements, the Army is not expected to complete the alignment program until 2017²⁴. U.S. Army Forces Command will maintain administrative control of the RAF, and the senior Army Commander will command and oversee training until Soldiers are ready to deploy. Once deployed, the gaining Combatant Commander/Army Service Component Command will exercise operational control until aligned personnel return to their homestation²⁵.

The Modular Brigade Combat Team as Force Provider

“Modularity has served our Army very well and we will not walk away from it, however, we now have time to discuss and recommend changes to our brigade combat team organization and the execution and oversight of the modular brigades. It is critical that this vital war fighting formation remain dominant against the evolving hybrid threats in evolving operational environments.”²⁶ -General Raymond T. Odierno, U.S. Army Chief of Staff

The Army has demonstrated throughout the last decade that it can adapt to meet emerging requirements while engaged in large-scale operations, yet if history is our guide, further adjustments in the structure of the BCT may be in order to meet the needs of regional alignment. In 2003 and 2004, the Army significantly altered its traditional force structure, driven by Department of Defense initiatives for transformation and experiences encountered early in the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq²⁷. Prior to 2004, combat brigades were embedded in divisions, drawing upon them for essential support. Transformation resulted in modular BCT formations, entirely self-contained with a combination of combat and support units. Transformation also facilitated a greater number of combat brigades in the active structure. The modular BCT became capable of expeditionary, independent operations, with flexibility to be scaled or task-organized for a variety of mission sets with a leaner support structure, operating from a smaller footprint.

Later in the OEF and OIF campaigns, as military forces and security institutions had to be created on a large scale to support counterinsurgency strategy, the Army reacted to generate internal capacity to recruit, train, sustain, fund and advise indigenous forces, as modular BCTs predominantly served a supporting role in this effort. Thousands of Army Officers and NCOs were organized and trained for a myriad of Transition Teams to build partner capacity from tactical units to training institutions and security ministries. As the Army migrated away from the Transition Team concept and host nation security forces assumed more a leading role in operations, the modular BCT was adapted again to new configurations to re-purpose internal assets no longer required for unilateral combat operations to the Security Force Assistance (SFA)

mission. Known as Advise and Assist Brigades (AABs) in Iraq and Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) in Afghanistan, these units derived from modular BCTs augmentation with trained advisory talent²⁸. These units, still currently being employed in Afghanistan, are manned with about 2,000 personnel, significantly less than the usual 3,500 Soldiers found in a BCT²⁹. The SFABs have an advisory, assist and support role with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The SFABs provide enabling support to the ANSF in addition to intelligence, base support, logistical support, force protection, close air support, MEDEVAC, and other support to 48-man Security Force Assistance Teams (SFATS) attached to the brigade³⁰. SFATs are specially trained individuals who perform advisory roles with defined developmental goals for the ANSF on Stability Transition Teams (STTs)³¹. As we look to our experience in Iraq and Afghanistan to inform future roles of regionally aligned brigades, one characteristic that will likely continue is the leader-intensive nature of capacity-building. Senior officers and NCOs in varying specialties will be drawn into partner engagements and training at a much higher proportion than other personnel in the RAB. The effect of losing key RAB leaders over the course of a year-long cycle of expeditionary support could adversely impact cohesion and mission command.

To add even more complexity to what the Army's BCTs are undertaking in regional alignment, the Army has decided to conduct another re-design of the BCT structure. The new design is not directly oriented towards enhancing security force assistance capabilities. Proposed changes include adding organic horizontal and vertical construction capability in the form of a new Engineer Battalion to each Armored BCT, Infantry BCT, and Stryker BCT, which would add several hundred more soldiers³².

Additional BCT engineering capabilities would include enhanced clearing, route clearance, and gap-crossing capabilities intended to improve force protection and enhance mobility in complex and urban terrain³³. The Army also plans to add a third combat maneuver battalion to its Armored and Infantry BCTs. This would be accomplished through redistribution of combat maneuver battalions inactivated by ABCTs and IBCTs, adding them to existing ABCTs and IBCTs either at the same location or at other installations³⁴. Each realigned combat maneuver battalion would add approximately 700 additional soldiers per BCT³⁵. These structure adjustments may take years to implement, but could potentially add further dimension to the range of security cooperation activities the RAB can support in the future.

Although the Army has three different types of modular BCTs (Armored, Stryker and Infantry) to be aligned to GCCs, it has yet to be fully determined which may be best suited for certain activities in specific geographic regions. The first RAB deploying assets to support AFRICOM is an Armored Brigade Combat Team consisting of six battalions: two combined arms battalions, one reconnaissance squadron, one fires battalion, one brigade special troops battalion, and one brigade support battalion. This heavier, mechanized formation appears incongruent for a region where resident armies do not field similar formations.

All Army BCTs are addressing training readiness deficiencies in core competencies of Combined Arms Maneuver and Wide Area Security which have atrophied following extended counterinsurgency campaigns. Prior to 2003, the Army focused almost entirely on major combat operations. In the last 10 years, BCTs have significantly advanced understanding of the complexity of modern operational

environments, and the doctrine and mission essential tasks list have evolved accordingly. A demanding range of expertise and capability is expected from the BCT; from potentially simultaneous combination of offensive, defensive, and stability operations in an environment with both conventional and hybrid threats, to requirements of building partner capacity in securing populations, protecting infrastructure, and strengthening institutions as a means of protecting common security interests³⁶. All of this activity must occur within the context of host nation, multinational and interagency frameworks that require their own training and leader competencies. As BCTs enter the force generation cycle for the RAF mission, the demands to achieve training readiness in such a broad range of collective tasks may increase tension between achieving the priorities of restoring core competencies and cultivating specialized engagement skills for regional alignment.

The modular BCT is anticipated to serve as a major personnel sourcing solution to support GCC SC objectives. These brigades will become regionally focused but expected to be capable of decisive action and globally available for emergent needs. As the Army's baseline fighting formation, the application of these vital units warrants analysis to determine if this is the most efficient and effective means of supporting SC activities. Regionalizing BCTs will test the Army's ability to balance application of a significant portion of its combat power towards both engagement activities and warfighting. Commanders of RABs will be tested in balancing breadth and specialization in preparing for the types of missions to be assigned.

Dagger Brigade on Point

Beginning in March 2013 and ending in June 2014, elements of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division (2/1ID), stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas, will deploy to support U.S. Africa Command's security cooperation and partnering requirements. Since AFRICOM reached full operational capability in October 2008, resource constraints have impeded planning and execution and contributed to ad hoc, episodic security cooperation engagements. 2/1 ID affords scalable, tailorable capabilities to enable AFRICOM to shape the environment. Theater security cooperation is a core function for AFRICOM throughout an area of responsibility that includes 53 countries. An extremely complex region, Africa is the second largest and second most populous continent, with well over one thousand spoken languages³⁷. 2/1 ID has a proud and distinguished history operating in some of the most challenging environments over the last ten years. Beginning in 2003, 2/1 ID has completed four rotations to Iraq, returning in November 2011 from a deployment to Baghdad, Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn as an Advise and Assist Brigade, tailored specifically to develop and support Iraqi security forces. The brigade has approximately 3865 Soldiers assigned, but only anticipates deploying approximately 5% of the force during any given quarter of the year-long commitment in Africa³⁸. However, those deploying are predominantly senior officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) serving in low density specialties, such as medical, intelligence, and communications. Soldiers will deploy as teams or small units to countries in the AFRICOM area of responsibility upon completion of brigade collective training at the National Training Center and specialized Language, Regional Expertise and Cultural (LREC) training. Unlike a typical

deployment, the RAB will not deploy as an entire unit, with many of the headquarters and administrative sections remaining at Fort Riley. The brigade expects to execute a variety of military to military engagements designed to improve certain aspects of an African nation's military from the senior officer/NCO to the Soldier level³⁹. Elements of the brigade are projected to support approximately 108 activities in 34 African countries during first six months of employment⁴⁰. The majority of these activities will consist of 2-3 Soldier teams deploying to the continent in week-long increments to train African Soldiers on basic skills such as deployment preparation, the Military Decision Making Process, basic rifle marksmanship, and first aid⁴¹. Teams will be employed within the authorities set out in the Foreign Assistance Act, the Arms Export Control Act, and the directives of civilian leadership⁴². A series of larger exercises will involve the brigade leadership and staff deploying to a host country within one of four African regions to conduct command post exercises. The largest of these exercises in South Africa, will include the deployment of an infantry battalion to conduct a multi-national, combined arms live fire exercise⁴³.

Potential Issues for Implementation of the RAB Concept

Impacts of the New Fiscal Reality

America's budget crisis is prompting Congress to reduce defense spending to rein in debt. The effects of sequestration are now being felt by the Army and will impact implementation of RAB support to GCCs. The Army is attempting to adapt to new fiscal realities in maintaining force balance while preparing for most likely future threats, all

with a reduced budget. Army senior leaders have articulated that recent budget reductions will result in reduced support to Combatant Command Exercises and Building Partnership Capacity events, which risks eroding critical partnerships in a complex strategic environment⁴⁴. Funding levels will be prioritized to ensure readiness for forces in Afghanistan, then for units designated for deployment to Afghanistan, and finally to the Division Ready Brigade⁴⁵. Congress has been informed that inadequate funding through FY13 will leave Army units in a degraded readiness posture and inhibit the progressive build of unit capability to meet early Fiscal Year 2014 missions, emergent requirements, and timelines associated with Combatant Command Operational and Contingency Plans⁴⁶. Additional budget cuts will most likely force reductions in the scale and scope of Department of Defense activities to train, advise, and assist partner nation security forces, and potentially disrupt Army timelines for aligning forces regionally.

Looming Force Structure Changes

As the Army institutes regional alignment, the force pool of BCTs is shifting towards lower levels and may continue to diminish as the administration and Congress pursue possible areas of cost savings within the defense budget. The fluctuation in the number of BCTs marked for drawdown may cause Army planners to revisit their assumptions and established timelines for regionalization. The Army may have to cut more than eight BCTs from the current 44 Active BCTs. Army end strength will lessen from 570,000 in 2010 to 490,000 during the Future Year Defense Plan period⁴⁷. A March 2013 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report proposes options for even

further reductions in the total number of BCTs. The most aggressive proposal would cut 18 armored, Stryker and infantry BCTs, as well as 58 major warships, three Marine regiments and 25 Air Force fighter squadrons⁴⁸. Using an armored BCT as a cost model, CBO projects annual cost savings of \$1.6 billion with the elimination of a single BCT and the units required to support its operation and maintenance⁴⁹. The BCT is a lucrative target for Congressional cost-cutters who may question the need for a large, standing army which DOD has directed no longer be sized to conduct large and protracted stability operations.

Authorities

Without proper legal authorities in place to enable longer horizon security cooperation activities, GCCs will be constrained in harnessing the full potential from the RAB. Current authorities generally allow for short-term relationships with partner nations, but planning for and conducting security force assistance as DOD envisions requires longer-term, sustained interaction⁵⁰. A complex patchwork of funding authorities and the accompanying legal, regulatory and fiscal restrictions will hamper security cooperation planning and execution. The process of determining what kind of funding can be used for particular security cooperation activities can be very complicated. Theater security cooperation in some GCC areas of responsibility involves a combination of funding authorities, primarily under Title 22 (Foreign Relations and Intercourse) and Title 10 (Armed Services) of the U.S. Code⁵¹. Different funding authorities have resource allocation and congressional approval timelines of up to two years and require congressional approval for allocated funds to be moved from one

country to another, or from one theater security cooperation activity to another⁵². In addition, under certain authorities, there may be restrictions on the types of activities that can be funded. For example, DOD has limited ability to build capacity of non-ministry of defense security forces such as police.

GCCs must navigate long-term planning and program sustainment while simultaneously aligning those activities with priorities of partner nations and interagency stakeholders. If this was not difficult enough, GCCs possess limited ability to capitalize on opportunities that arise outside of established funding cycles. All GCCs would benefit from U.S. government efforts to streamline the cumbersome authorities for security cooperation funding and develop a more flexible multiyear approach⁵³. The review and modification of current statutory authorities available to DOD are ongoing for eventual proposal to Congress, but at this time of the first RAB employment with AFRICOM, authorities continue to be a limiting factor⁵⁴.

Employment Considerations for the RAB

Army conventional forces have accumulated a substantial amount of recent experience in building capacity of security forces and security ministries in the campaigns in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Philippines. In time, institutional memory will fade, so it is imperative hard earned lessons of effective capacity building are integrated in the approach RABs take with new partners. The Center of Army Lessons Learned and its vast repository of data from Operation's Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF) may offer a unique opportunity for research analysis and a

consolidation of proven tactics, techniques and procedures that are applicable in most environments RABs are anticipated to be operating.

The RAND Arroyo Center, the Army's only federally funded research and development center for studies and analysis has performed extensive research which could inform a RABs effectiveness and efficiency in efforts to build partner capacity (BPC) under a variety of circumstances. A RAND study collected and compared 20 years of data on 29 historical case studies of U.S. involvement in BPC and tested a series of validating factors and hypotheses to determine how they held up to real-world case examples⁵⁵. The findings of this research coupled with a consolidated best practices summary from OEF/OIF would provide a strong empirical foundation for resource and employment planning at both the ASCC and the brigade-levels.

Recommendations

Revise Leader Development and Education

Leaders at the brigade level and below must understand the strategic context and purpose associated with the tasks the RAB will be assigned. Most of the experience base within the RAB emanates from security force assistance and counterinsurgency from recent deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. Very few, if any, leaders will possess a background in early campaign, Phase 0 shaping operations designed to prevent and deter conflict through improvement of partner capacity. Regional alignment will only be successful if those personnel with the right combination of language, regional expertise, cultural awareness, and advisory skills working directly

with our partners and allies also possess an understanding of the strategic guidance and desired outcomes of regional alignment. Decentralized execution of missions in host-nation countries requires leadership with maturity and good judgment, particularly when decisions and actions have strategic implications. Army training and educational institutions have proven adaptive in the past, reacting to counterinsurgency and stabilization missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, while implementing doctrine and curricula to reflect lessons learned. In support of the RAF concept, Professional Military Education requires further adaptation to impart the increasing emphasis, complexity and necessity of BPC as an instrument of national power⁵⁶. Our company and field grade officers and senior noncommissioned officers assigned at the brigade level should possess at least a general understanding of civilian-military operations in Steady State and Phase 0 operations, the contribution of other US Government agencies in the conduct of preventative strategies, and the integration of security force assistance in security cooperation activities⁵⁷.

Adjust the Human Resources System

Success in the execution of regional alignment is inexorably linked to the human capital the Army invests in the initiative. Currently, the Army's personnel system for general purpose forces is not oriented toward a long-term outlook for attaining regional expertise, establishing enduring and personal partner relationships, exercising language proficiency and leveraging cultural understanding. Investments in language training are costly, time consuming, and require sustainment. If the Army is going to make these investments for the RAB, it would be more efficient to stabilize talent within

BCTs that maintain a particular regional alignment. The normal Soldier assignment cycle of 2-3 years is at cross-purposes with the tenets of a regional focus. The Army should adjust the current personnel system and the force generation cycle to retain specially qualified personnel in RABs and manage personnel assignments with unique regard to regional, language, and advisory expertise⁵⁸.

Assess the Impact of the Mission on the RAB

The Army is refining the methods and processes to assess the operational and institutional effectiveness of RAF⁵⁹. This feedback will be critical to facilitating the training, preparation, deployment and employment of current and future RAF units. Much emphasis will likely be applied to investigating measures of effectiveness and performance of our allies and partners, but it should be imperative to determine if the modular BCT can retain its cohesion and identity, maintain proficiency in core competencies, and balance the myriad of tasks levied on it with expeditionary support to GCC AORs. The Army emphasizes that the RAB represents a personnel sourcing solution, not a new mission⁶⁰. Many security cooperation activities will extract senior leaders and low-density, high demand Military Occupational Specialties from the formation for extended periods of time. The intermittent absence of key leadership and distributed, decentralized nature of operations supporting regional alignment will affect the cohesiveness and functionality of the organization. A deliberate effort to capture objective feedback, looking inward at multiple levels of the RAB could help identify trends that may require attention through adjustments in doctrine, organization, education, training, or policy.

Develop and Consider Other Advisory Force Options

The Army should develop other courses of action to meet the partner-capacity building needs of the GCCs if regional alignment of BCTs is determined to be inefficient, ineffective, or otherwise hampered by other factors. Proposals for a bi-modal Army which include either a permanent Advisory Corps or a specialized Stability and Reconstruction Division have been rejected in the past in deference to the modular, full spectrum force⁶¹. It may be prudent for Army planners to explore specialized organizations to provide alternative options for support to GCCs if the performance of RABs fails to meet desired expectations.

Strategic leaders have directed that security force assistance be a key function for the Army in the near term, so it may be time to institutionalize a permanent advisor functional area or branch. The Army's 162nd Infantry Brigade at Fort Polk, Louisiana, formed in March 2009 to prepare advisors for duty for both Afghanistan and Iraq, is well postured to train a core group of dedicated specialists.

Another option for consideration may include establishment of regionally focused Security Force Assistance Teams to augment and enhance the advisory capacity of each RAB, an efficient option that could be modeled after teams recently employed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Feedback from 2/1ID's rotation in support of AFRICOM should provide indicators to determine if we are asking too much of our Soldiers and modular BCTs. In the meantime, planning staffs should be developing alternative options to include formation

of specialized forces or advisory teams to ensure the Army can fulfill requirements outlined in the National Security Strategy and DoD Strategic Guidance.

Enhance Army Oversight/Integration of RAB Employment

As the pace of the implementation of RAF accelerates, the Army will require additional capacity to provide support for oversight, coordination and integration for both the RABs preparing to deploy, and the Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs) employing RAB assets in their AORs⁶². The formation of a distinctive Army section or group charged with responsibilities for staffing and prioritizing RAF support requests would close the coordination gap between the RAB and the ASCC. This group could be organized by region to harness important expertise and coordination relationships. This entity could maintain situational understanding of activities conducted globally that build partner country capabilities, focus scarce resources available for ensuring compatibility with partners, provide guidance on niche capabilities the Army recommends to be cultivated, and ensure good stewardship of security cooperation resources devoted to the effort⁶³.

Gain Refined Authorities

In order to optimize the employment of its RABs, the Army must continue to pursue additional or revised authorities in order to plan for and conduct increased and sustained security force assistance activities, such as training partner nation forces, beyond the current level of effort. Current authorities generally allow for more short-term relationships with partner nations, but planning for and conducting security force

assistance as part of the regional alignment concept requires longer-term, sustained interaction⁶⁴. Army leaders are closely tracking a legislative proposal submitted to Congress for a conventional advise and assist authority, and more work with Department of Defense must continue to determine whether additional authorities are required⁶⁵.

CONCLUSION

The regional alignment of Army forces remains an immature but evolving concept without some resources in place for optimal execution. 2/1 ID's mission support to AFRICOM will afford ample opportunities to assess our approaches to planning, preparation and execution. Although a ship underway may be easier to steer, the commitment of our baseline fighting echelon should be analyzed during this proof of principle to determine if this approach is the most efficient use of valuable resources in a projected era of constrained defense budgets. More importantly, despite significant achievements in security force assistance in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army as an institution must adapt to the future security environment and prepare our leaders and formations properly to improve the capacity of partners in some of the most complex human and physical terrain in the world.

Endnotes

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