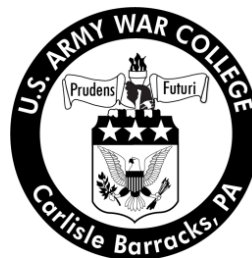


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“Made in the U.S.A.” CONUS-based Security Force Assistance Approaches in the Middle East and North Africa

by

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United States Army



United States Army War College
Class of 2013

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The challenges and opportunities in the Middle-East and North Africa demand new approaches in the U.S. Military's SFA efforts there. This assessment is near universal, but most research and analysis has been focused on advising and assisting partners in their countries, and how to optimize our unit structures and professional competencies to do so. The common belief is conducting SFA "forward" is the best approach, however we have numerous opportunities to conduct SFA more effectively and efficiently here in CONUS. This paper offers ideas on how to conduct SFA activities here in CONUS that are relatively low-cost and low-risk, yet yield a high return in terms of strategic relationship building and influence with our critical partners in the Middle-East. These initiatives and programs will maximize the strategic opportunities presented by the recent transitions of governments and militaries in the region following the "Arab Spring" by influencing the emerging strategic leaders of those countries ultimately building, solidifying, and in some cases repairing, the critical military-to-military relationships that will buttress the strategic relationships we have with countries throughout the Middle-East and North Africa.

“Made in the U.S.A.”
CONUS-based Security Force Assistance Approaches in the Middle East and North Africa

The challenges and opportunities in the Middle-East and North Africa demand new approaches in the United States military’s security force assistance (SFA) efforts there. This assessment is near universal, but most analysis has been focused on advising and assisting partners in their countries, and how to optimize unit structures and professional competencies to do so. The common belief is conducting SFA “forward,” focusing on tactical proficiencies and development of allies and partners’ capacity across the warfighting functions, is the best approach. In fact, however, the U.S. can accomplish many of its SFA objectives in a low-cost, low-signature manner in the United States by expanding professional military education (PME) opportunities for ascending military leaders from partner countries, expanding exchange officer programs, and integrating partner nation military units in the exercises and training events conducted in the United States.

The U.S. has an opportunity to secure the strategic gains made over the last 10 years in Iraq, and maximize the strategic opportunities presented by the recent transitions of governments and militaries in the region following the “Arab Spring.” There is clearly a strategic objective for stability in the region, and the U.S. can contribute to the accomplishment of that objective in a long-term manner by influencing partner military leaders through PME, embedding partner nation leaders in tactical and operational units and headquarters, and integrating partner nation units in training exercises conducted in the United States. This influence will help partner nation militaries defeat internal threats, defend against external threats, and serve as reliable and capable allies who help address issues of mutual concern.

In a time of diminishing resources and enduring commitments the U.S. cannot let opportunities slip away. As the U.S. Army Capstone Concept articulates, in spite of the rebalance to the Pacific, the greater Middle East is the area where land forces would most likely be employed for the foreseeable future.¹ With limited resources and little tolerance for large scale U.S. troop presence in the region, there are still opportunities to improve military-to-military relationships and collective capabilities and capacity to address issues of mutual concern through CONUS-based security force assistance endeavors.

One of the main underpinnings of the United States' strategic relationships with its Middle East partners will be military-to-military contacts, relationships, exercises, and security force assistance actions. The reality is, however, there will be little tolerance for large contingents of US Forces in the region for some time. The other reality is that for the foreseeable future, the Department of Defense faces a fiscally constrained environment, where multi-million dollar exercises overseas will be few and far between. In light of the strategic shift to the PACOM AOR, available resources for the Middle East will become leaner. How then can the U.S. shape the environment and prevent future conflict as well as secure the gains made over the last decade and take advantage of recent transitions following the Arab Spring? How can the U.S. continue to assist the security forces of those nations and continue to solidify relationships with those countries and their militaries?

PME (IMET & NEISC)

Expanding PME opportunities for the United States' Middle East and North African partners will ultimately build, solidify, and in some cases repair, the critical

military-to-military relationships that serve to buttress the strategic relationships the U.S. has with countries throughout the Middle-East and North Africa.

As military training doctrine illustrates, and common sense dictates, when resources are limited, the focus and resources should be applied to leader training & education. Increasing PME opportunities for partner nation military leaders is relatively low-cost and low-risk, yet yields a high return in terms of strategic relationship building and influence with critical allies and partners. There is a proven system where the U.S. provides allies PME opportunities through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. IMET is administered through the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), and funded by the State Department, and is “a low cost, key component of U.S. security assistance that provides training for students from allied and friendly nations.”² The courses include short-duration Cadet training and Non-Commissioned Officer courses, through the year-long Command and General Staff Colleges and War Colleges. Over half a million students from allied and partner nations have attended U.S. PME programs since 1950, and approximately 200 students from over 125 countries attend year-long courses in America annually.³ It is one of the best vehicles to expose partner nation students to the U.S. military training and education institutions, American culture, and the American way of life. It is also one of the best ways to emphasize U.S. democratic values, and the importance the U.S. military places on human rights, the rule of law, and civilian control of the military.

A historical look at the quality of international students who attended U.S PME courses indicates allied and partner nations send their very best leaders to American military courses. The U.S. Army War College has 23 alumni that have become heads of

state in their respective nations. Nearly half of the senior officers educated at the Naval War College have attained flag rank and more than 200 (approximately 10 percent of the total) have become the chief of their nation's navy. Over half of the international student graduates of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College attained flag rank, and most are in very influential positions in their Armies.⁴

Jordan and Bahrain are excellent examples of very strong strategic partners whose heads of state are graduates of U.S. Military Education courses. Jordanian King Abdullah II attended The Naval Postgraduate School and King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain is a U.S. Army Command and General Staff College graduate. Jordan has been a pillar of relative stability throughout the Arab Spring and has been an excellent partner over the years. Bahrain has also has been one of the U.S.'s strongest partners in the CENTCOM AOR and is host to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. Indonesia has likewise been a critical strategic partner and President Yudhoyono is a graduate of the U.S. Army's Airborne and Ranger schools as well as the Infantry Officer Advanced Course, and Command and General Staff College.⁵

Compare the divergent trajectories taken by the Egyptian & Syrian Militaries during the Arab spring. Egypt has received considerable U.S. military assistance over the years, and has numerous General Officers in the senior ranks who attended U.S. PME courses where Syria has not. The comparison highlights the value of military-to-military engagement, and the positive impact of U.S. PME exchange programs. The CENTCOM Commander articulated his assessment of the value of relationships built, and partnerships strengthened, through professional military educational exchanges during recent testimony to the Senate Arms Service Committee. "The Egyptian

military, while not perfect in its leading of the transition, has performed more responsibly than anyone would have presumed. Without years of assistance and partnership with the U.S., this would not have been the case. In comparing the Egyptian military's actions with the events continuing to unfold in Syria as the Syrian military continues to ruthlessly use lethal force with impunity against the Syrian people – the value of properly constructed, ethical military-to-military engagement is clear”.⁶ Granted, the conditions were different with each movement, and the rank-and-file of the Egyptian military would have been far less inclined to apply brutal force on their citizens than their Syrian counterparts have, but the contrast in their two Armies' conduct over the last two years is stark.

How can the U.S. do more? IMET is a great program but is limited -- allies and partners from the Middle East and North Africa want to send more leaders, but are unable to because of limited spaces/slots available, or limited numbers of fluent English speaking prospective students. A solution is the establishment of an institute for security cooperation tailored for the U.S.'s Near East / Middle East partners, much like the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), which was developed to support the United States' Western Hemisphere allies and the SOUTHCOM and NORTHCOM Commander's security cooperation objectives.

The Near East Institute for Security Cooperation (NEISC) would provide military training and education for Middle East partner militaries with a spectrum of instruction that spans from small unit tactical training, through mid-level officer education. Supporting primarily CENTCOM, and to a lesser extent AFRICOM, the institute would

support the security cooperation priorities of the Combatant Commanders and the State Department's Near East Affairs Bureau.

Many Middle East and North African militaries do not have PME institutions of their own and they would welcome the opportunity to have an education venue for their promising leaders. NEISC would include an array of PME from a short duration cadet and company grade officer course focused on small unit tactical training, an NCO program, a Captains Career Course equivalent, and the flagship program would be the Command and General Staff College, targeting high-potential Majors and Lieutenant Colonels. Leaders who attend would be educated on the virtues of civilian controlled militaries, professional military values, service to nation, and human rights, all in addition to military competencies they will develop through the respective curriculum. As one of the major limiting factors with the current IMET PME opportunities is English language proficiency, at NEISC the instruction and course materials would be in Arabic, allowing the U.S. to train and educate substantially more emerging leaders from the Middle East and North Africa -- far more than can be afforded the opportunity through IMET.

The NEISC faculty would be multinational and include interagency partners. Ideally the deputy commandant would be from a partner nation, and interagency faculty members would include State Department Foreign Service officers with experience in the region and Arabic language proficiency. Each seminar would include students from partner nations across the region as well as U.S. military sister services and the interagency.

Educating and developing partner nation military leaders builds the capacity and competence of U.S., allied, and partner forces for internal and external defense, strengthen alliance cohesion, and increase U.S. influence in their militaries and between U.S. and partner countries. These efforts provide significant payoff in shaping the environments and preventing future conflict or crisis. Relationships are important, and relationships established through shared PME experiences generate trust between professionals. That trust is critical in terms of assuring allies and contributing to security and cooperation in the region.

Attending PME in the United States through IMET or at an institute like NEISC, exposes those who attend to American culture, U.S. military and civilian institutions, and the world class manner in which the U.S. military conducts training and professional education. It also develops long-lasting professional relationships with U.S. future senior leaders and reduces the possibility that participating countries pursue similar PME programs and exchanges with U.S. adversaries or rivals (Iran, North Korea, Russia, China etc.) Those relationships in turn will reinforce deterrence with mutual adversaries in the region, help improve the security capacity and capabilities of partners and allies, and strengthen the coherence of mutual security goals and objectives. The military education and experiences they will have in the U.S. will also develop their ability to assume positions of greater responsibility in meeting their countries' respective security challenges when they go back home.

Everything has a cost, and there is little doubt that the return on the relatively small fiscal investment yields benefits that will serve U.S. strategic security objectives well. Some will undoubtedly cite cost as a limiting factor on expanding partner-nation

PME opportunities, but the return on the strategic investment is substantial. The annual operating cost for WHINSEC is approximately \$12 million USD.⁷ WHINSEC offers a broad curriculum that includes several courses specific to the SOUTHCOM Commanders priorities, specifically counternarcotic and several law enforcement courses. NEISC would be smaller scale, and a conservative estimate of annual operating expenses is less than \$10 million USD. Examine what the U.S. has invested in the region over the years and it is clear that the return on this relatively small investment will be significant. The Middle East is, and will continue to be, a strategically vital region, and as such will require continued attention and assistance.

In FY 2011, the United States spent more on IMET funded PME opportunities for Poland, Georgia, and the Czech Republic than it did for Iraq.⁸ The U.S. should not reduce IMET funding for these critical partner nations, but more resources should definitely be applied to developing and influencing the future senior leaders of Middle East partner nations. In FY 11 the United States hosted 1801 European students in U.S. military PME venues, but only 994 (approximately half as many) from Middle East and Near East partners.⁹ Most of European and NATO militaries have PME institutions, while many Middle East partners do not; creating NEISC will help bridge this gap.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in CJCS Guide 1800, underscored the importance of mil-to-mil activities. This guide states, "PME provides a substantial opportunity to develop and foster long lasting relationships with international actors." The Chairman communicates that PME better prepares U.S. and international officers for joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environments. The guidance also tasks Geographic Combatant Commanders (COCOMs) to incorporate PME into

their Theater Campaign Plans as part of the effort to shape the region and deter conflict.¹⁰ The Chairman clearly sees the value and potential influence from this investment.

The U.S. should expand proven PME programs through the development of NEISC and increasing IMET opportunities. The current effort through IMET is sound, but anemic. The development of an institution focused on providing PME to the United States' partners in the Middle East and North Africa (NEISC) has the potential for even greater strategic impact. The establishment of NEISC and expanding IMET opportunities will provide low-cost & high-yield ways to stay engaged and maintain long term influence with Middle East and North African partners, and in light of the strategic rebalance to the Asia Pacific region while staying engaged in the Middle East, the U.S. can match resources with stated priorities.

INTEGRATION OF PARTNER NATION MILITARIES IN CONUS EXERCISES

There is great value in conducting combined and multinational exercises. They foster cooperation, strengthen relationships, reinforce partnerships and add realism as virtually all foreseeable military operations will have a multinational component to them. The ability to conduct collective training exercises in the Middle East or North Africa is limited, but there are countless opportunities to invite and include partners to participate in training events and exercises conducted in the United States, particularly at the combat training centers (CTCs) at Fort Irwin, California and at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

Including partner nation forces with regionally aligned Brigade Combat Team (CTC) rotations would clearly strengthen military-to-military relationships and enhance cooperation. Additionally, there would be significant benefit to conducting echelon above brigade exercises and simulations with regionally aligned forces outside of BCTs as well as higher level exercises with Division, Corps, and the ARCENT Headquarters. Once again, facing an era of declining resources and limited tolerance for U.S. forces in many of the countries in the region, integrating partners in the exercises conducted in the United States makes a lot of sense.

Including partner nation forces in CONUS exercises would not be without precedent. Throughout the 1990s, partner nations routinely participated in exercises at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk Louisiana. German Airborne Companies would routinely be integrated in 82nd Airborne Division rotations. Canadian Infantry Companies would likewise be frequently integrated into 101st Airborne Division (AASLT) rotations. Integrating these units added the challenge of effectively coordinating with and integrating multinational operations at the tactical level, which greatly enhanced those rotations and the training experiences for the U.S. units as well as the partner nation units.

In support of IFOR/KFOR actions in the Balkans, the Partnership for Peace exercises, which integrated military units from numerous countries, were instrumental in the international community's actions in stabilizing the former Yugoslavia. These exercises were conducted at the combat training centers (CTCs) and they forced units to operate in a multinational and interagency environment during a time when that was rarely done.

The National Training Center (NTC) could easily integrate an Iraqi Tank Company in Armored Brigade Combat Team rotations. The Iraqi Army's 9th Mechanized Division is equipped with M1 tanks so they could use the fleet of training M1s that are available at NTC. The U.S. Army has 09L Arabic linguists stationed at both CONUS training centers that would be integrated, enhancing their skills and experiences as well as facilitating basic communication and coordination with the Iraqi unit. The U.S. BCT's training experience would be greatly enhanced as they would refine their operating procedures with multinational partners and increase their overall abilities to operate with partner nation military units. The relationships at the tactical level would be strengthened, and that relationship-building would resonate at the higher echelons of both countries' militaries. The Iraqi participants would be exposed to the best combined arms training venue in the world, and would see first-hand how tough realistic training against a very capable simulated adversary has made the U.S. Army the best Army in the world.

The costs would be relatively low, substantially lower than trying to conduct a bilateral exercise in Iraq. CENTCOM recently attempted to coordinate a relatively small scale exercise involving a U.S. Armor platoon and Iraqi Armor forces in Iraq, though lingering issues with the lack of a status of forces agreement and legal immunities squelched the idea. Additionally there would be serious concern with Iraqi political leadership if they were perceived to be allowing American forces to return to Iraq. Conducting exercises at the National Training Center (NTC) in Fort Irwin, California could be easily coordinated and once the Iraqi forces and senior Iraqi military leaders

see the value of a high-quality bilateral training event, it would open doors to eventual bilateral exercises to be conducted in Iraq.

Likewise, the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) could and should include partner units such as Jordanian Infantry Companies with a regionally aligned BCT's JRTC rotation. The training units would see all of the same benefits gained from the Iraqi inclusion in an NTC rotation, as well as build on the exceptional cooperation the U.S. enjoys with the Jordanian military. Including Jordanians in U.S.-based exercises would open the door for even more cooperative exercises and training events to be conducted in Jordan.

These examples would be the easiest to implement. Even with countries whose militaries are highly engaged in internal security priorities based on conditions within their respective countries, there are less troop-intensive options available. Egypt is a critical partner, and the U.S. must do everything possible to maintain a strong mil-to-mil relationship. The Egyptian land forces command could easily conduct a bilateral simulation or command post exercise (CPX) with either ARCENT or regionally aligned echelon above Brigade units in CONUS. With the still tumultuous conditions that exist in Egypt, CENTCOM's ability to conduct a traditional Bright Star exercise is limited, not to mention the substantial costs associated with a large scale exercise requiring the deployment of significant amounts of troops and equipment to the region.

Exposure to the U.S. Army's world class training facilities and more importantly exposure to the world class manner in which the U.S. military conducts training, would be the most tangible benefit for the allies that participate. The relationship building and the practice of operating in a multinational environment would greatly benefit all

participants. Overseas exercises are costly, and in a period of declining resources the money should be spent in the United States, where the return on investment in terms of the quality of the training is much more than what would be attained forward. The operational risks would be substantially lower conducting bilateral training exercises in the United States versus forward locations. The presence of U.S. forces could provoke demonstrations, they won't sustain IED or rocket attacks from violent extremist organizations, and the risk of "green-on-blue" incidents is sharply reduced. As is evident through events over the last decade, these tactical incidents soon have strategic implications/impact.

EXPAND EXCHANGE OFFICER OPPORTUNITIES

Another initiative to improve mil-to-mil relationships with Middle East and North African partners is to conduct exchanges on partner unit staffs. This is particularly important for the U.S. Army because nearly 90% of the Middle East and North African military power is in their ground forces.¹¹ The U.S. currently integrates partner nation military exchange officers in U.S. units, but it is typically at the division level and higher, and the exchange officers are typically from the UK, Canada, Australia or NATO partner countries. Integrating exchange officers from select Middle East and North African countries in units and headquarters that are aligned with that region would significantly enhance those units' understanding of the region and would foster cooperation and coordination that would in turn enhance the relationship and activities of those regionally aligned forces as they support the COCOMs security cooperation objectives.

Building on the idea of expanding the exchange officer program in U.S. military units and in U.S. PME venues, high-potential partner nation leaders should be selected to serve as visiting fellows at many of the U.S. think tanks and universities. The selection of high-potential future senior leaders should be a combined effort of the partner nation military, the U.S. Department of State, and U.S. military leaders in the partner nation embassy, as well as CENTCOM or AFRICOM security cooperation directorate leaders. This program would parallel the U.S. Army War College fellowship program, but on a much smaller scale. Like the PME exchanges described earlier, relationships would be built with future strategic leaders, and long-term benefits would emerge that would reinforce understanding, cooperation, and focus on mutual security and military objectives.

SUMMARY

The United States' interests in the Middle East and North Africa are strategically critical, and will remain so for the foreseeable future. In light of the strategic rebalance to the PACOM AOR, coupled with security concerns and political sensitivities and turmoil in many of the countries in the CENTCOM AOR, the U.S. will have to assist its partners in a very low signature manner and do so with resources that are sharply reduced in comparison to what was available over the last 12 years. By focusing on developing their most promising leaders through PME conducted in the U.S., expanding exchange officer programs, and integrating partner nation military units in U.S. based exercises, the low signature and low operational risk requirements of U.S. security force

assistance efforts are met, and long term influence with partner militaries throughout the Middle East and North Africa is attained.

In the past, critics assumed that manpower intensive security force assistance actions and counterinsurgency efforts jeopardized American military dominance and undercut preparations for major war.¹² In light of the current strategic conditions in the Middle East and North Africa, shaping the environment and preventing conflict is as important, if not moreso, than preparing for conflict itself. The initiatives described will do just that – prevent conflict by improving mil-to-mil relationships with partners in the critical Middle East and North Africa regions.

Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno has said that as the Army makes transitions over the next five years or more it will focus on three broad functions: prevent war; shape the international environment through strong military relationships with allies and by building partner capacity; and win the nation's wars decisively and dominantly. The creation of NEISC, expanding exchange opportunities, and including units from partner nation militaries in CONUS training events, and the resulting long term relationships with senior leaders across the militaries of the Middle East and North Africa will help accomplish those objectives. In a recent interview he was asked “What keeps the chief up at night?” His response was immediate -- “I continue to worry simply about the Middle East...I worry about, I watch very, very closely, these changing dynamics in the Middle East. “What does that mean to stability? What does it mean with Iranian influence and [their] continued move to gain more influence? What does that mean with them and the Sunni-Arab world? ¹³

A noted expert on security force assistance, Dr. Derek Reveron of the Naval War College, emphasizes how “With national security focused on weak states and persistent security concerns among stable allies has been changing over the last 20 years from a force of confrontation to one of cooperation. The military has learned that partnership is better than clientism and is adapting its command structure once optimized for waging major combat to one that is focused on conflict prevention. There is still a tremendous warfighting capability in the U.S. military, but coalition warfare is the norm and developing compatible warfighting partners is a key goal of this cooperative strategy.”¹⁴

Expanding PME exchanges, conducting more multinational exercises in the U.S, and expanding individual exchange officer programs will bolster the Joint Engagement Concept articulated in the Capstone Concept for Joint Operation Activity Concepts, which aims “to improve the capabilities of or cooperation with allies and other partners.”¹⁵ 3rd Army and U.S. Army Central Command has identified shaping the environment in the Middle East as one of its imperatives, and the Commanding General has articulated that exporting trust and professionalism to U.S. partners in the region, through programs like those described in this paper, will instill actions that promote cooperation and effectively address mutual security concerns.¹⁶

The January 2012 Strategic guidance tells the Department of Defense to develop innovative, low-cost and small-footprint approaches to achieve U.S. security objectives. Establishing NEISC, expanding exchange officer program and integrating partner nation units in CONUS training exercises, and all of the cascading long-term relationships that will emerge, will help shape the strategic environment in the Middle East, will help

prevent dangerous regional conflict and crisis, and will help in the U.S. military's ability to respond to a range of complex contingencies throughout the region for years to come.

Endnotes

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¹³ "Odierno's take on issues facing the Army" By Lance M. Bacon, Army Times, November 27, 2012

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