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14. ABSTRACT: Multiple media outlets recently published stories about Iraqi security forces disintegrating under pressure from elements of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Despite the $25 billion dollars and the eight years spent training, arming, and equipping Iraq's security forces by the United States, ISIL forces still managed to capture large amounts of strategic territory and US supplied equipment from the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). In contrast, during the 1980s and 1990s, the United States spent an estimated six billion dollars each aiding both the armed forces of El Salvador and Colombia. In El Salvador, a ten-year United States military training mission concluded with a negotiated settlement between government and insurgent forces. In Colombia, an ongoing military training mission continues its success aimed at combating Colombian drug cartels and left-wing insurgent groups in Colombian territory. Clearly, high expenditures and a large presence do not guarantee success. With recurrent training missions in Afghanistan, and emerging training missions in Syria and again in Iraq, this thesis identifies the benchmarks for success of future training missions. In today's resource constrained environment, this approach to organize, train, and equip host nation forces secures American strategic objectives without the costly and lengthy deployments of U.S. forces. With a war weary populace, the United States government's success or failure to train host nation forces will have enduring effects on future policy.

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NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE

JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL

BIGGER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER – THE UNITED STATES SUPPORT TO SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE.

by

Matthew R. Moore

Colonel, United States Army

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BIGGER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER – THE UNITED STATES SUPPORT TO SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE.

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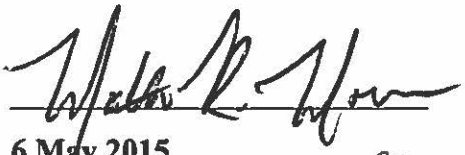
Matthew R. Moore

Colonel, United States Army

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College, the Department of Defense, or the Department of Homeland Security.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

Signature: 

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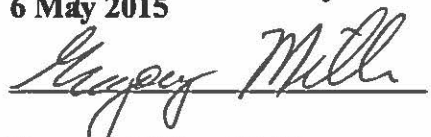
Signature: 

Gregory Miller, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Joint Advanced Warfighting School
Thesis Advisor

Approved by:

Signature: 

Michael Bennett
Special Operations Chair,
Joint Forces Staff College
Committee Member

Signature: 

Dr. Robert M. Antis, Ph.D.
Acting Director
Joint Advanced Warfighting School

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ABSTRACT

Multiple media outlets recently published stories about Iraqi security forces disintegrating under pressure from elements of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Despite the $25 billion dollars and the eight years spent training, arming, and equipping Iraq's security forces by the United States, ISIL forces still managed to capture large amounts of strategic territory and US supplied equipment from the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). In contrast, during the 1980s and 1990s, the United States spent an estimated six billion dollars each aiding both the armed forces of El Salvador and Colombia. In El Salvador, a ten-year United States military training mission concluded with a negotiated settlement between government and insurgent forces. In Colombia, an ongoing military training mission continues its success aimed at combating Colombian drug cartels and left-wing insurgent groups in Colombian territory. Clearly, high expenditures and a large presence do not guarantee success.

With recurrent training missions in Afghanistan, and emerging training missions in Syria and again in Iraq, this thesis identifies the benchmarks for success of future training missions. In today's resource constrained environment, this approach to organize, train, and equip host nation forces secures American strategic objectives without the costly and lengthy deployments of U.S. forces. With a war weary populace, the United States government's success or failure to train host nation forces will have enduring effects on future policy.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family and especially my wife. I would not be here in this course or in the United States Army without her love and support on countless occasions. In the face of pain, illness, separation, and adversity, my family has been my rock. It is because of them that I continue to serve. They make the oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States worth fighting for.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am forever grateful to my class and seminar mates from the United Kingdom, Australia, U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Defense Intelligence Agency, and State Department. You have made the experience truly remarkable and made me smile on a daily basis. I would also like to thank the dedicated professionals in the Joint Advance Warfighting School at the Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, VA. You have made us see the big picture and pushed us to greater knowledge.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> "This army is not prepared to fight. Nobody trusts anyone, not even from their own sect."
>
> - Amar, a 32-year-old Iraqi federal police officer[1]

Multiple media outlets recently published stories about Iraqi security forces disintegrating under pressure from elements of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Despite the $25 billion dollars and the eight years spent training, arming, and equipping Iraq's security forces by the United States military during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, ISIL forces still managed to capture large amounts of strategic territory and US supplied equipment from the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). In contrast, during the 1980s and 1990s, the United States spent an estimated six billion dollars each in aid to the armed forces of El Salvador and Colombia. In El Salvador, a ten-year United States military training mission during the Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations concluded with a negotiated settlement between government and insurgent forces. In Colombia, an ongoing military training mission continues its success aimed at combating Colombian drug cartels and left-wing insurgent groups in Colombian territory. Clearly, high expenditures and a large presence do not guarantee success.

With recurrent training missions in Afghanistan, and emerging training missions in Syria and again in Iraq, this thesis identifies the benchmarks for success of future

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[1] David Zucchino, "Why Iraqi army can't fight, despite $25 billion in U.S. aid, training," *The Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 2014.

training missions. In today's resource constrained environment, this approach to organize, train, and equip host nation forces secures American strategic objectives without the costly and lengthy deployments of U.S. forces. With a war weary populace, the United States government's success or failure to train host nation forces will have enduring effects on future policy.

The training mission in El Salvador concluded in 1992, while the training missions in both Columbia and Iraq continue today. Though shorter in duration than the training mission in El Salvador and the ongoing training mission in Colombia, U.S. Forces in Iraq find themselves again training and re-training ISF. This new round of training comes in response to urgent Government of Iraq (GoI) requests following ISIL victories in the north and west of the country.

Variables

Using three case studies, this thesis examines how the variables of force structure, longevity, and scope of mission contribute to successful host nation-training missions. Additionally, it identifies other factors that lead to future successful training missions. Iraq, Colombia, and El Salvador offer contrasting comparisons when looking at force structure and scope of mission. These three case studies cover four decades and both Republican and Democratic administrations (governments).

This thesis defines force structure as the combat-capable part of a military organization, which describes how military personnel, their weapons, and equipment are

organized for the operations.[2] In relation to the three countries, this thesis poses several questions to assess the influences of force structure on the host nation's organizations. What did the size and organization of the U.S. trainers contribute to the countries in best utilizing their host nation infrastructure? Were there changes to the host nation organizations because of the U.S. training mission? Finally, more trainers at all levels of the host nation's armed forces should increase the number of personnel trained and therefore increase the overall training of the force. But do more forces ensure a greater fidelity of training in the chosen level of interaction?

Scope of mission includes the tasks or operations that should be trained and the tasks or operations that need not be trained. None of the examined host nation countries needed a strategic attack force. All three case study nations fought domestic insurgencies rather than wars of territorial conquest. Was the training across the land, sea, and air domains? At what level was the training focused? At the Division, Brigade, or at the lower tactical levels?

Longevity identifies the number of years the U.S. military training mission participated in support of the host nation, be it El Salvador, Columbia, or Iraq. More time spent means increased training opportunities. The greater amount of contact between trainers and host nation forces improves host nation relationships with the U.S. Repeat contact between the training audience and the trainers is better and more desired for

[2] Michael Moran, "Modern Military Force Structures", Council on Foreign Relations, (October 26, 2006): p118-19, http://www.cfr.org/world/modern-military-force-structures/ (accessed January 25, 2015).

continuity of message and development of relationships between trainers and training audience.[3]

Security Force Assistance

In understanding the United States military's involvement in El Salvador, Colombia, and Iraq, it is imperative to first define the term Security Force Assistance. Despite a history of doing Security Force Assistance (SFA) activities, U.S. military doctrine only adopted the term Security Force Assistance in 2006. Specifically in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. military found itself involved in operations with no existing doctrine.[4] SFA is defined as, "DOD activities that contribute to unified action by the United States Government (USG) in support of foreign security forces (FSF) and their supporting institutions."[5] SFA equates to those activities (organize, train, equip, rebuild/build and advise – OTERA) that support the development of Foreign Security Force capability and capacity.[6]

In concert with Joint doctrine (Joint Publication 3-0) and Army doctrine (Field Manual 3-0, Operations), SFA occurs across the full range of military operations, all phases of military operations, and across the spectrum of conflict. SFA applies not only

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[3] In developing the variable of longevity, the Rand Corporation Research Report, "*Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations*" was used. The report cites the most commonly mentioned factor was the amount of time devoted to learning the complexities of relationship building—which is continually hailed as the key to SFA success. The other variables of force structure and scope of mission were developed based on the author's 22 years of military experience. Leslie Adrienne and Jan Osburg Payne, "Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations," *Rand Arroyo Center Research Report* (2013): 14, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR416/RAND_RR416.pdf (accessed April 1, 2015).

[4] Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, "Historical Context and Contemporary Understanding of SFA," Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, https://jcisfa.jcs.mil/Public/jointtext.aspx (accessed on January 25, 2015).

[5] Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, "What is SFA?" Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, https://jcisfa.jcs.mil/Public/WhatIsSFA.aspx (accessed on January 25, 2015).

[6] Ibid.

to the development of the host nation's military, but can include police, border, paramilitary, and unique or specifically tailored security forces. It can includes all levels in government ministries, departments, and institutional structures responsible for host nation and regional security efforts.[7] More recently, U.S. national policy reflects an increased emphasis on SFA as the primary activity to achieve U.S. national objectives. SFA is part of the U.S. strategic goal of having countries responsible for their own security. Each of the United States military services has begun to organize, train, and equip for SFA. The services also attempted to standardize training for deploying forces to support commanders in their SFA mission.[8]

[7] Ibid.

[8] Congressional Research Service. *Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance* by Thomas K. Livingston, Congressional Research Service, (2011) p. 2.

Chapter 2

El Salvador

> "It was a tragedy that there was no respectable body of doctrine to be drawn on, that we were thrown back into pragmatism. We had no respectable organizational approach to deal with this."
>
> U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Thomas Pickering[1]

Bordering the Pacific Ocean to the south, and the countries of Guatemala to the west and Honduras to the north and east, El Salvador is the smallest and the most densely populated country in Central America. From 1980-1992 the country fought a bloody civil war that ended with a negotiated peace settlement. During the conflict, the United States provided SFA to El Salvador to assist in the nation's stability.[2] By assessing the variables of force structure, scope of mission, and longevity, it is clear that the U.S. successfully assisted El Salvador through SFA in achieving its security goals.

After the 1979 victory of the Sandinista insurgents in Nicaragua, the El Salvadoran leftist movements formed into a single organization, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).[3] In 1981, the United States began training the El Salvadoran military in the face of an offensive launched by FMLN to overthrow the U.S. supported government. During the 12-year military assistance program to El Salvador, U.S. training missions helped increase the size, effectiveness, and capability of the El

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[1] Ambassador Thomas Pickering, quoted in Max Manwaring, *El Salvador at War: An Oral History of Conflict from the 1979 Insurrection to the Present* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 244.

[2] Operations conducted in El Salvador consisted of Foreign Internal Defense (FID) a subset of SFA. The term SFA did not exist in doctrine until 2006, but covers all activities conducted by USSOF.

[3] Cecil Bailey, "OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisors in El Salvador," Special Warfare (December 2004), 20.

Salvadoran military to the point that, in 1992 the FMLN sued for peace.[4] During the conflict, the United States provided SFA to El Salvador to assist in the nation's stability

Force Structure

The mission of U.S. Military Group (MILGP) in El Salvador, and specifically the Operations, Plans, and Training Teams (OPATT), stands out as one of the longest running of all Special Forces missions.[5] A 55-man team of advisors organized, trained and equipped a substantial amount of the El Salvadorian military, providing SFA and developing what many considered a rag-tag force into a much more professional organization.[6] The El Salvadorian Armed Forces (ESAF) had minimal doctrine, training, or experience in counterinsurgency warfare. The majority of the ESAF defended fixed sites from insurgent attack. The El Salvadoran forces were noted for being untrained, poorly equipped, and notorious for human rights abuses.

In March 1981, the Reagan Administration accepted a compromise with Congress that set a 55-man limit on the number of U.S. advisors deployed to El Salvador. At any given time, 55 military personnel officially designated as "trainers" could be assigned to the U.S. Military Group (MILGP) in El Salvador.[7] As a component of the country team, the MILGP worked for the ambassador. As stated in the MILGP mission, reshaping the El Salvadoran armed forces into a professional military that respected human rights was

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[4] Matt Hilburn, 2006. Intervention. *Sea Power* 49, no. 5: 30-32.
[5] Bailey. "OPATT: The U.S. army SF advisers in El Salvador," 18.
[6] Michael D. Sullivan, "Security Force Assistance: Building Foreign Security Forces and Joint Doctrine for the Future of U.S. Regional Security" School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas AY 2008 p 8.
[7] Robert D. Ramsey, III, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam,and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 83.

thought to require more advisors than the agreed upon limit. The limit was a political compromise with Congress that kept aid flowing into El Salvador.

At the time, the American press compared sending military advisors to El Salvador with the opening stages of the military build-up in Vietnam in the early 1960s. During the 1980s, the Reagan and Bush Administrations had to convince the American public that the conflict in El Salvador would not become another Vietnam.[8] Congress' biggest fear was that "mission creep" would set in and the American military presence would slowly transform itself into a repeat of the disaster it faced in Vietnam.[9] The 55 man cap sought to limit the available force structure to the bare minimum.

In terms of Force structure, the 55-man limit may have been the best thing that happened to the ESAF during the 1980s. The limited number of advisors compelled the Salvadoran armed forces to accomplish the military mission on the ground after the American advisors trained them.[10] The actual 55-man limit related to the number of military advisors assigned to a one-year tour in El Salvador. In addition, numerous 12 men Special Forces "A" Teams deployed to El Salvador to conduct unilateral training throughout the country. These teams deployed between six and twelve weeks on temporary duty orders (TDY) and then returned to their home stations[11]

The MILGP, based in the embassy, provided the ESAF with three things: material, training and advice. The MILGP worked within the 55-man limit to the best of its ability. As difficult as it was to work within that limit, it became an advantage by

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[8] Paul Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992," *Small Wars Journal* (1996): 1, accessed January 27, 2015, http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/cale.pdf., 10
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

forcing the ESAF to deal directly with its problems on the ground. With 55 men, the U.S. was not going to fight or win the El Salvadoran war against the FMLN. The 55-man advisor limit forced the U.S. to conduct "train the trainer" types of instruction.[12] While force structure provided finite limits on the amount of U.S. personnel available to conduct SFA with the ESAF, the scope of the mission provided by the El Salvadoran National Campaign Plan and run through the MILGP limited the tasks to be accomplished.

Scope of Mission

The scope of the mission of the MILGPs assistance in El Salvador is important in the context of SFA. Mindful of "mission creep", Congress feared the American military presence would slowly transform itself into a repeat of the disaster it faced in Vietnam. U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) sent a seven-man Strategic Assistance Team led by Brigadier General Fred Woerner to El Salvador in late 1981.[13] The team's mission was to guide the military leadership of El Salvador in developing a national military strategy to defeat the FMLN and to provide an assessment of the ESAF's capabilities to the U.S. Government.[14] This strategy, known as the National Campaign Plan (NCP), outlined clear objectives for the Government of El Salvador (GOES), the ESAF, and the U.S. forces advising them.

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[12] Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992," 13.
[13] GEN Frederick F. Woerner, Jr. later became the Commander of United States Southern Command. "Frederick Woerner," The Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, http://www.bu.edu/pardeeschool/profile/frederick-f-woerner/ (accessed February 21, 2015).
[14] Sullivan, "Security Force Assistance: Building Foreign Security Forces and Joint Doctrine for the Future of U.S. Regional Security," 36.

The NCP addressed not only how the application of military force could contribute to winning the war, but how the GOES and civilian institutions could do so as well, reflecting the whole of government approach.[15] The cornerstone in executing this strategy of U.S. military's SFA to El Salvador was the brigade level Operational Planning and Assistance Training Teams (OPATT).[16] The NCP called for a dramatic increase in the size of El Salvador's armed forces and required an increase in training the ESAF in counterinsurgency operations.

Operating at the BDE level and above, U.S. advisors improved the tactical competence of the ESAF, but also improved the efficiency of maintenance, logistics, and other support functions.[17] American advisors were allowed to train the ESAF at their garrisons, but they were restricted from accompanying them on actual combat patrols. The focus in Washington was in avoiding direct American involvement and subsequent casualties that would have followed.[18] The limitations placed on the level of actual U.S. participation in El Salvador satisfied the El Salvadoran government because such a small U.S. presence ensured that El Salvadorans would maintain control over military operations.

Longevity

The duration and continuity of engagement by the U.S. and primarily the USSOF successfully built ESAF capacity. Repeated exposure to USSOF personnel gave El Salvadoran security forces newfound expertise, which enabled them to make better use of

[15] James S. Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," *Airpower Journal* (Summer 1988): 30.
[16] Bailey, "OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisers in El Salvador," 11.
[17] Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," 30.
[18] Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992,"15.

Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) provided by the United States trainers. U.S. assistance remained effective because it was continuous and primarily sourced through the 7th SFG. However, the demands for 7th SFG manpower in other countries such as Honduras and Panama, led to shorter tour lengths. The American Embassy in San Salvador fought hard to have the tour lengths extended for military advisors.[19] Its position was that one year was an insufficient amount of time to learn their job and then put that knowledge to use. Productivity of a MILGP advisor, it argued, was significantly less than a year. Leaders within the MILGP believed that experienced advisors serving longer tours would benefit the El Salvadoran armed forces by building stronger relationships with the host nation and giving the advisors greater influence with their ESAF counterparts.[20]

Summary

Mindful of the ghost of Vietnam, the U.S. SFA to El Salvador started with a review and a plan. The Strategic Assistance Team led by Brigadier General Woerner, and the assistance they provided to the NCP set the conditions and strategy in motion. This strategy, known as the National Campaign Plan (NCP), outlined clear objectives for the Government of El Salvador (GOES), the ESAF, and the U.S. forces advising them. Both the Woerner report and the American assistance to El Salvador had sharp constraints on the number of U.S. advisors and major restrictions on the nature of U.S. support. All support flowed through the embassy MILGP and ensured that the ambassador was fully engaged and aware of the limits and scope of the FSA. The actual trainers of the ESAF, USSOF, and more specifically the 7th SFG, were culturally attuned

[19] Cale, "The United States Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, 1979-1992," 34.
[20] Ibid.

and language-enabled to better accomplish the SFA tasks. U.S. Government policy forbidding American advisors from participating in combat operations, while opposed by USSOF advisors, let the El Salvadorans fight their own wars. Though the tour length for the trainers was no more than a year, multiple tours by the members of the 7th SFG increased and solidified the military-to-military relationships through repeated exposure. This repeated exposure increased the longevity of the support and contributed to a better trained and capable ESAF, which provided the El Salvadorans leverage to successfully negotiate with the FMLN and bring the conflict to a negotiated settlement.

Chapter 3

Colombia

> " … [T]oday we are called upon to stand for democracy under attack in Colombia. Drug trafficking, civil conflict, economic stagnation, combine everywhere they exist, and explosively in Colombia, to feed violence, undercut honest enterprise in favor of corruption, and undermine public confidence in democracy. Colombia's drug traffickers directly threaten America's security. But first, they threaten Colombia's future".[1]
>
> President Bill Clinton

Situated approximately 1200 miles to the southeast of El Salvador, Colombia is the northernmost country of South America.[2] Insurgency plagued Colombia throughout the second half of the twentieth century. A nearly five-decade long conflict between government forces and anti-government insurgent groups, principally the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), escalated during the 1990s into civil war that claimed over 200,000 lives.[3] Colombia, producer of 90% of the cocaine coming into the U.S., was also torn asunder by criminal drug cartels vying for control of the country.[4]

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[1] William J. Clinton, "Remarks by President Bill Clinton at the 2000 Washington Conference On the Americas," *Americas Society / Council of the Americas* (May 2000): 1, accessed January 27, 2015, http://www.as-coa.org/articles/remarks-president-bill-clinton-2000-washington-conference-americas.
[2] The air travel distance from El Salvador to Colombia is 1181.15 miles, "Distance from El Salvador to Colombia," Distance From To: Distance Between Cities, Places On Map, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.distancefromto.net/distance-from/El+Salvador/to/Colombia.
[3] Mark Moyar, Hector Pagan, Wil R. Griego, "Persistent Engagement in," *Joint Special Operations University JSOU Report 14-3* (2014): 1, accessed January 27, 2015, http://jsou.socom.mil/PubsPages/JSOU14-3_Moyar-Pagan-Griego_Colombia_FINAL.pdf. P.3.
[4] Most famously, Pablo Escobar controlled the Medellín Cartel. Ed Vulliamy, "Medellín, Colombia: Reinventing the World's Most Dangerous City," *The Guardian*, June 9, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/medellin-colombia-worlds-most-dangerous-city (accessed February 1, 2015).

During the early part of the 1990s, Colombia and the U.S. focused aid and support on the destruction of these cartels. Upon the successful destruction of the cartels, drug trafficking splintered among many smaller actors. The FARC initially opposed the illicit drug industry. However, after observing the massive profits to be made and losing their Soviet sponsorship, the FARC chose to enter the drug business to better fund the revolution.[5] For the FARC, the destruction of the big cartels spelled higher drug revenues. With the cartels neutralized, the FARC could bargain more easily with smaller groups and enter new segments of the drug industry.[6] With 80 to 90 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States coming from one country, the narcotics issue was at the top of the bilateral agenda between Colombia and the United States.[7]

In 1999, newly elected Colombian president Andres Pastrana, in danger of losing control of his country, developed a long-term program he entitled "Plan Colombia", and sought large-scale U.S. and European aid to support it.[8] "Plan Colombia" was a comprehensive strategy to deal with the country's longstanding and mutually reinforcing problems. This plan called for substantial social investment, judicial, political and economic reforms, and renewed efforts to combat narcotics trafficking. It also included some important first steps towards modernizing Colombia's Armed Forces.[9]

President Bill Clinton's administration, under pressure to combat the flow of drugs coming to the United States from Colombia, supported Pastrana's plan and

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[5] Moyar, Pagan, Griego, "Persistent Engagement in Colombia,"7.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Omar Pina, "Plan Colombia: How U.S. Military Assistance Affects Regional Balances of Power 2004" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, California, 2004), 1, accessed January 27, 2015, http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/1531/04Jun_Pina.pdf?sequence=1. 47
[8] Moyar, Pagan, Griego, "Persistent Engagement in Colombia," 15.
[9] U.S. Department of State, *A Report to Congress on United States Policy Towards Colombia and Other Related Issues*, House Conference Report 107-593 accompanying HR 4775 enacted as the 2002 Supplemental Appropriations Act P.L. 107-206 (Washington, DC, 2002), 6.

increased foreign aid and assistance to Colombia that surpassed all other aid packages the United States had ever provided to a Latin American country. This aid, primarily in the form of SFA, supported the Colombian military and police to conduct counter narcotics operations. Initially, United States policy was to support Colombia only in the fight against the narcotics trafficking only. The U.S. did not allow its money, training, and equipment to be utilized to fight Colombia's internal war with the FARC. However, after September 11, 2001, U.S. policy shifted to include counter-terrorism.[10]

With the passage of "expanded authorities" by Congress in 2002, "Plan Colombia," previously focused on the counterdrug component of President Pastrana's plan, became the term for a modified US counterdrug program that permitted assistance to Colombia in its internal struggle against the FARC and its ties to narco-trafficking. In the U.S.'s support of "Plan Colombia", Colombian FARC guerrillas became labeled "narco-terrorists".[11] The resultant SFA, provided by the United States, assisted the Colombian government in its efforts to bring about a victory over the insurgents. By, with, and through SFA, the Colombian Government fought for and gained presence throughout the country. This successful approach succeeded and forced the FARC to start formal peace negotiations with the government in 2012. This peace settlement aimed at reaching a ceasefire and incorporating demobilized FARC members into mainstream society and politics.[12] During the conflict, the United States provided SFA to Colombia to assist in the nation's stability. By assessing the variables of force structure,

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[10] Jeffrey D. Waddell, "United States Army Special Forces Support to 'Plan Colombia'" (master's thesis, U.S. Army War College, 2003), 2.
[11] Robert D. Ramsey III, *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: the Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008* (Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 47-48.
[12] "South America: Colombia," The World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/co.html (accessed February 1, 2015).

scope of mission, and longevity, it is clear that the U.S. successfully assisted Colombia in achieving its security goals through SFA.

Force Structure

As in El Salvador, Congress constrained American assistance to Colombia by limiting the number of U.S. advisors and the nature of U.S. advice and support.[13] The mission of U.S. Military Group (MILGP) in Colombia and specifically the United States Special Operations Forces' (USSOF) Special Forces Operation Detachments-Alpha (ODAs are key contributors to the success of SFA in Colombia. An Army colonel with regional experience, special operations or foreign area background, and Spanish-language skills commanded MILGP–Colombia. The MILGP constituted a security assistance organization staffed by joint personnel, many serving on temporary duty. As a component of the country team, the MILGP, as in any other embassy, and as in El Salvador, worked for the ambassador.[14]

In the 1990s, the FARC showed signs of increasing strength, and the Colombian government decided to increase the use of its military in counterinsurgency operations. The Clinton Administration, however, did not share the Colombian government's view. The American tradition of leaving internal matters to civil law enforcement inclined U.S. policymakers to demand that foreign partners adhere to the same tradition.[15] Moreover, the Clinton administration was mainly concerned with the drugs that left Colombia for the United States, not the FARC. The United States, in turn, concentrated its SFA on the

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[13] Moyar, Pagan, Griego, "Persistent Engagement in Colombia," 15.
[14] Ramsey, "*From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: the Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008,*" 19.
[15] Moyar, Pagan, Griego, "Persistent Engagement in Colombia," 27.

Colombian National Police (CNP) and insisted that it be used for counter-narcotics purposes. By 1998, 90 percent of U.S. counter-narcotics assistance in Colombia went to the CNP.[16] U.S. assistance to Colombia, virtually all of it related to counter-narcotics efforts, increased steadily since 1995. The United States provided equipment, supplies, and other aid for the counter narcotics efforts, largely to the CNP at first, but also to the Colombian military (COLMIL).[17] Ironically, the CNP counterdrug funding and humanitarian aid continued, while funding to the COLMIL ended because of human rights issues.

In 1996, Congress passed the Leahy Amendment mandating a human rights certification by the Secretary of State for any foreign military unit receiving US counterdrug assistance.[18] Two ghosts from the recent past influenced United States policy in Colombia—Vietnam and El Salvador. From Vietnam came the imperative not to become involved in a counterinsurgency and from El Salvador came the necessity of emphasizing human rights. This meant maintaining a strict policy distinction between counterdrug and counterinsurgency efforts.[19] By the end of 1998, despite increases in professionalism, and increased training on human rights, the Colombian Army remained too small and too ill-equipped to counter and defeat the growing FARC threat.

Although fifty times the size of El Salvador in terms of area, Colombia had an Army merely twice the size of El Salvador's Army during its civil war.[20] Yet before the

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[16] Ramsey,"*From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: the Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008,"* 19.
[17] Pina, "Plan Colombia: How U.S. Military Assistance Affects Regional Balances of Power 2004," 47.
[18] Ramsey," *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: the Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008,"* 19.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 75.

implementation of "Plan Colombia," the U.S. Embassy in Bogota MILGP consisted of only 160 military personnel. This included a 12-man Special Forces Mobile Training Team (SF-MTT), training Colombian Army counterdrug battalion personnel, and 30 Department of Defense (DOD) civilians. This is in contrast to the 55 military personnel who served in El Salvador during the height of its conflict.[21] Just as it had in El Salvador with the implementation of "Plan Colombia," Congress imposed a limit of 500 DOD personnel and 300 contractors in Colombia.[22] In 2004, the Bush administration convinced Congress to accept another increase in the U.S. force cap to 800 DOD personnel and 600 contractors.[23] Most importantly, like El Salvador, the Executive Branch testified to Congress on several occasions that there were no plans for the engagement of U.S. military personnel or U.S. civilian contractors in a combat role in Colombia.[24]

In the truly counter-narcotics role, several SF ODAs merged to form a counter-narcotic operational planning group. This was part of a multinational effort to interdict drugs across the Andean region. American SF also provided security to U.S. Air Force radar sites that assisted in the tracking of suspicious and possible drug-laden aircraft. The U.S. teams also assisted the CNP and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in assembling intelligence and then planning strikes on drug laboratories.[25]

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[21] Ibid., 53.
[22] Ibid., 58.
[23] Moyar, Pagan, Griego, "Persistent Engagement in Colombia," 27.
[25] U.S. Department of State, *A Report to Congress on United States Policy Towards Colombia and Other Related Issues*, House Conference Report 107-593 accompanying HR 4775 enacted as the 2002 Supplemental Appropriations Act P.L. 107-206 (Washington, DC, 2002), 6.
[25] Moyar, Pagan, Griego, "Persistent Engagement in Colombia,"8.

In terms of force structure, support for "Plan Colombia" required time for the U.S. Embassy's country team to reorganize, increase manning, and develop appropriate programs. The post 9/11 "expanded authorities" created challenges for the MILGP in 2002 and 2003. In addition to coordinating training for Colombian units by 7th Special Forces Group personnel, the MILGP organized liaison sections to work with the COLMIL on information operations, psychological operations, medical, intelligence, civil affairs, and engineer issues. Temporary duty personnel, primarily Spanish speaking active, reserve, and guardsmen from all services filled many of the positions. An American four-man Planning and Assistance Training Team (PATT), manned by USSOF, worked with the COLMIL and scheduled mobile training teams to the limited number of human rights vetted units. The functions, locations, and size of the teams changed over time, but the maximum PATT strength seldom exceeded 50.[26] High quality USSOF engagement bolstered Colombian capacity, primarily by promoting the development of the Colombian military.

Scope of Mission

The scope of the mission in the Colombian MILGP's assistance was important in the context of SFA. Mindful of the Congressional fear of "mission creep", which would slowly transform the American military presence into a repeat of the disaster it faced in Vietnam, the MILGP scope of mission remained small, but transformed in the post 9/11 world.

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[26] Ramsey, *" From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008,"* 107.

Just as it had during the Clinton administration, U.S. policy toward Colombia remained basically unchanged at the beginning of the George W. Bush administration; counterdrug and human rights drove the relationship. U.S. policy changed after September 11, 2001 and in November 2002, President George W. Bush signed an executive order on Colombia that authorized the use of U.S. funds for counterinsurgency and counterterrorism as well as counter-narcotics.[27] "Narco-traffickers" became "narco-terrorists." This change supported the administration's Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Thereafter, Colombian military units supported by the United States could operate in areas that were previously off limits to forces not engaged in what the Americans defined as counter-narcotics.[28]

Drawing a distinction between counterinsurgency and counter-narcotics in Colombia made some sense when the Colombian narcotics industry emerged in the 1970s, but by the 1990s it distorted reality. Initially, the FARC provided protection to drug traffickers, rendering futile all attempts to concentrate resources against one and not the other. Later, the FARC produced and moved the drugs themselves.[29]

Before 9/11, the U.S. Department of State ordered its personnel in the Bogota embassy to make sure that helicopters, weapons, ammunition, and forces underwritten by the United States were employed exclusively for counter-narcotics and not counterinsurgency, based on the belief that involvement in the counterinsurgency would drag the United States into a quagmire. They insisted that resources provided by the

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[27] Linda Robinson, "Warrior Class, Why Special Forces are America's Tool of Choice in Colombia and Around the Globe," *U.S. News and World Report*, February10, 2003, 1, http://backissues.com/issue/US-News-and-World-Report-February-10-2003 (accessed February 1, 2015)

[28] Scott Wilson, "U.S. Moves Closer to Colombia's War," *Washington Post*, February7, 2003.

[29]. Moyar, Pagan, Griego, "Persistent Engagement in Colombia," 10

United States and units trained by U.S. personnel operate only in the areas where drug traffickers were believed to be concentrated, and prohibited their employment in known insurgents areas.[30] However, that changed in the post 9/11 world when the "narco-traffickers" became identified as "narco-terrorists."

Colombian military units, supported by the United States, could then operate in areas that had previously been off limits to forces not engaged in counter-narcotics operations. As Colombian forces matured, the U.S. trainers focused increasingly on advanced skills. The Operational Detachments-Alpha (ODAs) taught complex operational planning, secure communications, intelligence, and combat engineering. U.S. Civil Military Support Elements (CMSE) and Military Information Support Teams (MIST) trained Colombians to conduct Information Operations (IO) programs aimed at winning the populace and projecting the Colombian government's message.

Longevity

The duration and continuity of engagement by the U.S., and primarily the USSOF, successfully built COLMIL capacity. Building partner-nation capacity, which was the U.S. Government's primary mission in Colombia, could take decades to achieve.[31] A long-term partnership between the Colombian and U.S. militaries existed prior to "Plan Colombia." Throughout the 1950s, and in reward for its participation in the Korean War, Colombia was the largest recipient of U.S. security assistance in Latin America. Much of this assistance focused on developing officers through training and

[30] David Passage, *The United States and Colombia: Untying the Gordian Knot* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2000), 8-10.
[31] Moyar, Pagan, Griego, "Persistent Engagement in Colombia," 5.

education.[32] Many decades of exposure to U.S., especially USSOF, gave Colombian security professionals significant expertise, which enabled them to make use of advanced technologies and techniques provided by the United States. The Colombian political and military leaders who turned the war around in the late 1990s and 2000s began receiving American training, education, and support in the 1970s or 1980s. Long-term engagement was required to influence a generation of leaders from their formative years through their rise to positions of senior leadership.[33] Though COLMIL direct aid ceased in 1996 as a result of the Leahy amendment, it was restored in 1997when the Colombians demonstrated improvements in human rights and the subsequent certification of select units.

U.S. assistance remained effective because it was continuous and primarily sourced through the 7th SFG. However, the demands for 7th SFG manpower in other theaters like Iraq and Afghanistan impeded the group's activities in Colombia and other Latin American countries after 9/11. Multiple Afghanistan deployments left 7th Group deployments to the USSOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) shorter in duration than in the past. Several years earlier, deployments were reduced from six months to three months to facilitate more and longer deployments to Afghanistan. In 2013, the deployments to Colombia remained at three-to-four months to allow units to spend more time in Afghanistan. The loss of language skills, cultural expertise, and relationship building opportunities that resulted from the disruptions due to the GWOT showed what a difference those assets made. In light of these realities, the "Plan Colombia" SFA to COLMIL forces contributed to a successful counterinsurgency. From the start, many

[32] Ibid., 4.
[33] Ibid., 50.

ostensible "counter-narcotics" operations harmed not only drug traffickers but also insurgents and those who were both insurgents and drug traffickers. The SFA to Colombia's counter-narcotics forces (CNP and COLMIL) also benefited the counterinsurgency in the longer term by building forces, infrastructure, and relationships that Colombia could use against the FARC when U.S. policy changed after 11 September 2001.

Summary

The large U.S. monetary contribution to "Plan Colombia" and the publicity it received created the impression that "Plan Colombia" dramatically increased the resources available to Colombia's armed forces. That impression in turn led to the view that "Plan Colombia" was the main reason for the ensuing security improvements. "Plan Colombia" had powerful effects. Firstly, it concentrated on very focused civil and military capabilities and played a disproportionately large role in intelligence and operations. American SFA to Colombia restricted the number of U.S. advisors and the nature of U.S. advice and support, both of which are features of most foreign engagements.[34] The official U.S. Government policy forbidding American advisors from participating in combat operations, while not favored by USSOF advisors, let the Colombians fight their own wars. The fact that Americans stayed in safety while the Colombians went into battle might have hindered the development of a sense of shared sacrifice and lessened advisor influence, but more importantly, it allowed the COLMIL to grow on its own. The U.S. Embassy rejected recommendations to lift the ban on American accompaniment in combat operations, maintaining that the loss of a few

[34] Ibid. 49.

American lives would destroy support in the U.S. Congress for aid to Colombia. In practice, the Americans did not always heed this rule but more did than did not and no loss of an USSOF advisor endangered the mission.[35]

Through professionalization, reorganization, better training, day-to-day improvements, and combat operations, the COLMIL blunted the guerrilla threat and developed its own experience-based doctrine. Unlike other militaries that falter when provided additional resources and new missions, the COLMIL continued to build on its previous experience and reduced the areas under FARC control with SFA provided by the United States and particularly USSOF.[36]

Although the majority of COLMIL security force personnel never worked with an American trainer, Colombian training and programs increasingly became U.S. influenced. U.S. funded equipment also provided important capabilities. The SFA provided for COLMIL operations and for security force counterdrug programs permitted the clearing, holding, and building of governance and social services throughout Colombia.[37] Through SFA, the training and education that the United States provided to the COLMIL transformed the Colombian leaders by teaching them how to think for themselves rather than what to think.

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[35] Ibid., 33.
[36] Robert D. Ramsey III, "*From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008,*" 152.
[37] Ibid. 154.

Chapter 4

Iraq

> "...Certainly our goal is to leave Iraq, but we can't leave Iraq with our forces until we know that the Iraqi security forces are capable and efficient enough to defend the sovereignty of the nation. And over time, I think, as Iraqi security capacity builds, you'll see American and coalition presence there decline."
>
> General John Abazaid[1]

On 1 May 2003, President George W. Bush landed on the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln*, where he announced the end of major combat operations in the Iraq war. A week later, President Bush announced the appointment of L. Paul Bremer to lead the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and gave him supreme authority over all US actions in Iraq. Bremer was, in effect, the U.S. Viceroy in Iraq and the most powerful American in a post war country since MacArthur in Japan.[2] On 23 May 2003, against the advice of the military, state department, and CIA representatives on the ground in Iraq, Bremer issued CPA Orders 1 and 2, which led to de-Ba'athification and the disbandment the Iraqi security forces.[3],[4]

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[1] John Abizaid, interviewed by Jim Lehrer, March 04, 2004.
[2] James P. Pfiffnerus, "Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army," *Intelligence and National Security* 25, no. 1 (February 2010) 77.
[3] De-Ba'athification refers to refers to a Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) policy outlined in CPA Order 1 which entered into force on 16 May 2003. "COALITON PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY ORDER NUMBER 1," iraqcoalition.org, http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516_CPAORD_1_De-Ba_athification_of_Iraqi_Society_.pdf (accessed February 14, 2015).
[4] Ibid., 79.

From this event, the SFA to Iraq changed in scope and magnitude from those operations conducted in El Salvador and Colombia. Instead of training and equipping an established military force, the U.S. committed to the full organize, train, equip, rebuild/build and advise (OTERA) mission. The CPA initially decided to build a small Iraqi Army consisting of approximately 30,000 troops focused on self-defense.[5] Training to build the first four Iraqi battalions started in July 2003 with the first battalion graduating on 4 October 2003.[6] However, as security conditions deteriorated with the insurgency, the CPA decided in September 2003 to increase the number of battalions from nine to twenty-seven, enough to create three full infantry divisions.[7] As the numbers of the ISF increased, the need for additional U.S. trainers for the Iraqis became top priority for the U.S. leadership in Iraq.

The lack of a host nation plan undermined the whole SFA effort. Upon the capture of Baghdad and the stand-up of the CPA, the Iraqis had no say in the structure of their armed forces. Even after the transfer of sovereignty in June of 2004, the new Government of Iraq (GoI) barely functioned. Unlike with "Plan Colombia" there was not going to be an Iraqi whole of government approach like to the growing insurgency following de-Ba'athification.

Force Structure

Unlike El Salvador or Colombia, Iraq did not have a U.S. Embassy with an associated MILGP. The United States Embassy in Baghdad closed during the 1990 Gulf

[5] "Iraqi Military Reconstruction," Global Security.org, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/iraq-corps.htm (accessed February 14, 2015).
[6] Ibid.
[7] Michael D. Sullivan, "Security Force Assistance: Building Foreign Security Forces and Joint Doctrine for the Future of U.S. Regional Security" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, AY 2008), 42.

War, and in May of 2003 the CPA handled the duties of the embassy with Ambassador Bremmer as its head. The CPA organization entrusted with SFA to the Iraqis was the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT). CMATT was tasked with developing Iraqi forces under political control, accountable to the nation, and defensive in capability and intent.[8] The Advisor Support Teams (AST) acted as the lynchpin for this effort. These teams, consisting of both active and reserve forces, provided a 10-man team capable of training an Iraqi Army Battalion and conducting combat operations with that battalion.[9]

Unlike El Salvador and Colombia, the majority of the AST's did not come from the regionally aligned Special Forces Group.[10] Special Forces teams that would have trained the Iraqis engaged in other combat missions, sought out high profile targets, and searched for weapons of mass destruction. With the USSOF engaged, the vast majority of these ASTs were sourced from General Purpose Forces (GPF). Initially, the training of the ASTs was limited and they received little guidance from CMATT, partially due to lack of secure communications and partially due the hectic pace within the newly liberated Iraq.[11] However, this was due to change.

Upon the return of Iraqi sovereignty, the CPA stood down and the United States reorganized the Iraq command to mirror a more traditional structure in the four star Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) and a separate U.S. Embassy with an ambassador. Under MNF-I the CMATT was reorganized into the three star Multi-National Security

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[8] "Iraqi Military Reconstruction," Global Security.org, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/iraq-corps.htm (accessed February 14, 2015).
[9] Sullivan, "Security Force Assistance: Building Foreign Security Forces and Joint Doctrine for the Future of U.S. Regional Security," 43.
[10] Ibid. 42.
[11] Ibid. 44.

Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I) and not under the embassy's MILGP and Defense Attaché. With the shift in name to MNSTC-I, the ASTs eventually became Military Transition Teams (MiTTs). Because the MiTTs drew on GPF and not the regionally aligned and language enabled 5th Special Forces Group, effective advisor training became paramount. The advisor training increased greatly in scope and duration resulting in the MiTTs receiving nearly 60 days of intense training. This training ranged from combat skills to Arabic language and culture classes, but could not replace the years of study and cultural exposure typical of Special Forces training.[12]

By December 2006, more than 5000 U.S. military personnel were assigned to transition teams in Iraq.[13] Unlike El Salvador and Colombia, there was no ghost of Vietnam to exorcise. In the post 9/11 world, having given its authorization for the war in Iraq, Congress did not put restrictions on the number of advisors. On the contrary, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group (ISG) recommended,

> "...United States should significantly increase the number of U.S. military personnel, including combat troops, embedded in and supporting Iraqi Army units. As these actions proceed, we could begin to move combat forces out of Iraq. 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." [14]

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[12] Sullivan, "Security Force Assistance: Building Foreign Security Forces and Joint Doctrine for the Future of U.s. Regional Security," 50.
[13] Carter Ham, "Transition Team's Role in Iraq," *Military Training Technology*, November/December 2008, 1, http://www.kmimediagroup.com/military-training-technology/articles/75-military-training-technology/mt2-2008-volume-12-issue-1/1466-transition-teams-role-in-iraq-sp-270 (accessed February 15, 2015).
[14] Iraq Study Group (U.S.), James Addison Baker, Lee Hamilton, and Lawrence S. Eagleburger. *The Iraq Study Group Report*. New York: Vintage Books, 2006 , 48.

The ISG also concluded that the number of MiTT personnel should be large enough to accelerate the development of a real combat capability in Iraqi Army units. This expanded mission could involve 10,000 to 20,000 American troops.[15] While never meeting this aspirational number of training team members in Iraq, the nature of the force structure morphed again after Operation IRAQI FREEDOM transitioned to Operation NEW DAWN.[16]

At the end of 2009, with the mission of U.S. forces in Iraq changing, MNSTC-I merged into the new United States Forces Iraq (USF-I). What were separate organizations in CMATT and MNSTC-I, outside of the MILGP control, were now included in the new force headquarters structure. In its 2006 report, the ISG recommended that military priorities in Iraq must change, with the highest priority given to the training, equipping, advising, and support missions. The establishment of the Advise and Assist Brigade (AAB) concept in 2009 sought to better meet these priorities through the use of the battle space owning conventional Brigade Combat Teams (BCT). Given the SFA mission, an AAB would accept attachments of external advisor team members, primarily field grade officers, and other modular units to conduct SFA in Iraq.[17] In favor of the AAB, the concept of the centrally trained MiTT drew to a close. Manning the new advisor teams changed significantly under the AAB construct. BCTs identified for deployment as an AAB were augmented with a Stability/Support-Transition

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[15] Ibid., 49

[16] U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Request to Change the Name of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM to Operation NEW DAWN (February 2010)*, by Robert Gates, Memorandum for the Commander, U.S. Central Command

[17] Brennan Cook, "Improving Security Force Assistance Capability in the Army's Advise and Assist Brigade" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, AY 2010-1), http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a522929.pdf (accessed February 15, 2015) pg. 30

Team (S-TT). This included a complement of field grade officers assigned directly to the AAB as augmentees for the advisory mission.[18] The majority of training and support for S-TTs fell to the AABs rather than an external training organization. This marked a significant departure from earlier advisor team organizations because it relied heavily on an external pool of field grade officers in the rank of major and lieutenant colonel. Additionally, the AAB to supported movement, security, and training resources to the S-TTs. The training teams embedded in their brigades provided SFA to the Iraqis throughout 2011. However, when the GoI refused to sign a Status of Forces Agreement with the United States, large-scale training missions ended in December of 2011.

Scope of Mission

The scope of the mission in Iraq differed greatly from those SFA missions in El Salvador and Colombia. Upon the CPA decision to disband the Iraqi Army under CPA Order Number 2, SFA to Iraq changed in scope and magnitude.[19] Instead of training and equipping an established military force as the U. S. did in El Salvador and Colombia, the U.S. signed up for the full organize, train, equip, rebuild/build and advise (OTERA) mission in Iraq. The CPA initially decided to build a small Iraqi Army consisting of approximately 30,000 troops focused on self-defense.[20] The security situation on the ground dictated the need for a larger ISF than the CPA had planned. As the insurgency grew, the scope of the mission changed. First CMATT, and then MNSTC-I worked with both the Iraqi Ministries of Defense and Interior to provide SFA.

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[18] Ibid., 31.
[19] Pfiffnerus, "Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army," 80.
[20] "Iraqi Military Reconstruction," Global Security.org, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/iraq-corps.htm (accessed February 14, 2015).

MNSTC-I's overall responsibility focused on growth and sustenance of the ISF. Within this framework, its mission fell into four categories: generating force, increasing ISF independence, improving Iraqi institutional capacity, and enhancing ISF professionalism.[21] MNSTC-I emphasized force generation as its main priority and focused its efforts on building an Iraqi counterinsurgency force capable of combating Sunni and Shi'a militia groups as well as Al-Qaeda in Iraq. In May 2008, the two-year growth rate for the Iraqi Army (IA) alone was approximately 220 percent.[22] The IA's substantial expansion allowed the Iraqis to maneuver forces, and to clear and hold decisive terrain.[23]

Building an independent counterinsurgency force remained MNSTC-I's main focus, but the command also established the Iraqi Air Force and Navy. Due to the combined efforts of MNSTC-I, the Ministry of Defense, and the Government of Iraq, the Iraqi Air Force built a fleet of 56 aircraft, including both fixed wing and rotary assets. Based on these improvements, the Iraqi Air Force increased its number of sorties and greatly contributed to enhanced mobility, sustainment, and security during ISF's operations.[24] The Iraqi Navy was built to execute operational missions that included border and waterway protection and site protection of port and oil assets in the Persian Gulf. The force was capable of patrolling out to the 12-mile international water boundary in the Persian Gulf using small patrol boats, rigid-hull inflatable boats, and other support vessels.

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[21] Andrea R. So, *Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I) Status Report*, Institute for the Study of War, Backgrounder #33 June 20, 2008 http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/MNSTC-I%20Status%20Report.pdf. 1

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

These improvements in the ISF's capability to conduct independent maneuvers and sustainment missions would not have happened without rigorous efforts to procure vehicles, equipment, and weapons systems. MNSTC-I's programs enabled the force generation, equipment acquisition, and capacity building that the Iraqi Security Forces required. However, the overall objective became the training of the ISF to a level whereby it could effectively conduct independent operations, eventually allowing the United States to leave Iraq.

Unlike El Salvador and Colombia, U.S. forces actively conducted combat missions with their Iraqi counterparts. With no congressional objections to an active combat role, U.S. forces involved in SFA lived on Iraqi garrisons and outposts and openly operated with the ISF on missions ranging from supply convoys, to routine patrols, to direct action raids. Soldiers fought side-by-side with their ISF counterparts, in pursuit of suspected insurgents and al-Qaeda members.[25] This increase of the scope of mission for U.S. forces caused casualties that would have all but destroyed the SFA missions in El Salvador or Colombia.

Longevity

The duration and continuity of engagement by the U.S., and primarily the GPF training teams, proved unsuccessful in building broad ISF capacity. Building partner-nation capacity and training the ISF to a level whereby it could effectively conduct independent operations, eventually allowing the United States to leave Iraq sovereign and democratic, could take decades to achieve. However, the failure of the U.S. and the GoI

[25] Stephen C. Taylor, "Effective and efficient training and advising in Pakistan" Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California.2010 36-37

to sign a Status of Forces Agreement caused the large-scale training mission to end in December of 2011.

No long-term partnership between the ISF and U.S. militaries existed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Unlike decades of training in U.S. military schools enjoyed by El Salvador and Colombia enjoyed, Iraq was effectively excluded from any western military advanced schooling after 1990. Iraq lacked decades of exposure to U.S. doctrine and equipment. USSOF personnel could not provide ISF the necessary expertise to make use of advanced technologies and techniques provided by the United States. The lack of long-term engagement failed to influence a generation of Iraqi leaders from their formative years through their rise to positions of senior leadership.

U.S. assistance remained only marginally effective because it was neither continuous nor sourced through the 5th SFG. Demands for 5th SFG manpower in other theaters like Afghanistan also impeded the group's activities in Iraq and other Arab countries after 9/11. With the majority of Special Forces teams engaged in Afghanistan, combat trainers for the Iraqis had to come from the GPF.[26] The AST/MiTT/STT all contributed, but minimal one-year tours burdened them like the USSOF teams in El Salvador and Colombia. Therefore, the lack of repeated, quality, engagement by the training team members with the ISF did not allow the U.S. to build the relationships with the Iraqis as the USSOF teams did in El Salvador and Colombia.

[26] Sullivan, "Security Force Assistance: Building Foreign Security Forces and Joint Doctrine for the Future of U.S. Regional Security," 42.

Summary

The large size of the U.S. force structure, wide scope of mission, and relatively small longevity did not help the U.S. SFA mission in Iraq. Unlike El Salvador and Colombia, the U.S. SFA to Iraq had few constraints on the number of U.S. advisors and no major restrictions on the nature of U.S. advice and support. In fact, the best advice from the ISG was to double down on the training and advisory efforts. Also, in stark contrast to El Salvador and Colombia, no official U.S. Government policy existed forbidding U.S. advisors from participating in combat operations. U.S. training teams shared many of the same hardships that their Iraqi partners did. This sense of shared sacrifice and greater advisor influence that the combat role the U.S. had in Iraq proved beneficial in the short run, but did not allow the ISF to grow on its own. The U.S. Embassy in Iraq did not intervene in the daily operations of the SFA effort. CMATT, MNSTC-I, and USF-I did not report to the ambassador though the MILGP. They reported to the U.S. Force Commander, who in turn, reported to the ambassador.

The large organizations like CMATT, MNSTC-I, and USF-I who had the mammoth task of conducting SFA, lost lives in support of Iraq. The sheer number of these deaths would have destroyed the training mission in El Salvador and Colombia.[27] However, even with these casualties, the training and equipment provided important capabilities to the Iraqis. The SFA provided for the ISF permitted the clearing, holding, and building of governance and social services throughout Iraq. Through SFA, the training and education that the United States provided assisted the ISF and may have

[27] Over 200 U.S. Advisors trained at Fort Riley died in Iraq. Kyrstal Bihm, "Global War On Terrorism Monument Site of Post-9/11 Ceremony Honoring Fallen Soldiers," *Collegian*, September 12, 2012, http://www.kstatecollegian.com/2012/09/12/global-war-on-terrorism-monument-site-of-post-911-ceremony-honoring-fallen-soldiers/ (accessed February 22, 2015).

changed the Iraqi institutions themselves; but perhaps not for the better. When the United States withdrew its forces from Iraq in 2011, the ISF was left as an incomplete effort.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

> "The United States is unlikely to repeat another Iraq or Afghanistan—that is, forced regime change followed by nation building under fire—anytime soon. But that does not mean it may not face similar challenges in a variety of locales. Where possible, U.S. strategy is to employ indirect approaches—primarily through building the capacity of partner governments and their security forces. In this kind of effort, the capabilities of the United States' allies and partners may be as important as its own, and building their capacity is arguably as important as, if not more so than, the fighting the United States does itself."
>
> Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, January 2009[1]

Conclusions

In examining the case studies of El Salvador, Colombia, and Iraq through the variables of Force Structure, Scope of Mission, and Longevity certain benchmarks for successful SFA present themselves. In terms of Force Structure, both El Salvador and Colombia had considerable congressional oversight regarding the limits on the number of deployed personnel. This ensured that the host nation forces did their own fighting. Congressional oversight was mainly due to the perceived "ghosts" of Viet Nam and the fear that "mission creep" would spiral out of control with U.S. involvement. In El Salvador and Colombia, the reduced number of U.S. personnel and a strict combat exclusion policy ensured U.S. forces involved in SFA stayed out of potentially deadly circumstances that could endanger support for the mission. Iraq stood in contrast to El

[1] Robert Gates, "A Balanced Strategy," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 88, No. 1, January/February 2009, pp. 29-30

Salvador and Colombia concerning both of these points. Congress neither placed limits on the number of U.S. advisors nor expected them to refrain from combat.

Furthermore, the efforts to develop the ISF were characterized by several different types of organizations.[2] CMATT, MNSTC-I, and the AABs with their AST's, MiTTs, and STTs answered to the CPA, MNF-I, and USF-I respectively. In El Salvador and Colombia, all the advisors answered to the U.S. ambassador through the country team's MILGP. This simplicity in the chain of command insured the military policy better aligned with that of the country team. The Force Structure of a SFA mission had a far greater impact than any other factor in reducing the time required to build internal security forces. A lack in unity of command and unity of effort within the advisory effort remains at the center of the struggle to build effective SFA.[3]

With regards to Scope of Mission, SFA lacked clear strategy. With the NCP and "Plan Colombia", both El Salvador and Colombia benefited from a strategy that they developed in conjunction with the U.S. Iraq did not, and probably could not have presented a plan to the U.S. In Iraq, the U.S. was forced not only to provide SFA, but to fully establish the government and the security forces as well.[4]

In terms of longevity, the use of regionally aligned Special Forces Groups in the SFA mission greatly helped the assistance provided to El Salvador and Colombia. The 7th SFG that trained the El Salvadorans and the Colombians were language enabled and culturally aware of the training audience that they provided SFA. In Iraq, most training

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[2] Sean R. Pirone, "Security Force Assistance: Strategic, Advisory, and Partner Nation Considerations", Naval Post Graduate School 2010. Pps. 31-32.
[3] R. H. Reynolds, "Is expanded international military education and training reaching the right audience?" *DISAM Journal of International Security Assistance Management, 25*(3), 93-99. 2003.
[4] Ibid.

teams for the ISF drew from the GPF. Despite training and education, these soldiers could not replace the experience the USSOF provided. The USSOF from 7th SFG also had the advantage of multiple engagements in El Salvador and Colombia. Even with one-year tours in El Salvador and Colombia, an ODA team member likely served multiple tours or populated mobile training teams. These repeat engagements increased the trainer's knowledge and exposure regarding specific personalities of the host nation. Relationships born from this exposure could be leveraged to institute change in the ESAF or COLMIL. Relationships in Iraq were more difficult. The regionally aligned 5th SFG did not have a long standing relationship with the ISF. Over a decade of sanctions and lengthy isolation from the Iraqis did not build the longstanding relationships crucial to SFA. Advisors from the GPF spent 1 year with their ISF partners after which they were replaced by another GPF training team. Lack of continuity and lack of persistent engagement hurt the SFA effort. Historically, U.S. training teams emanated from the Special Forces community. However, the demand for more advisors, coupled with the United States' commitments has far exceeded the organizational strength of USSOF.[5] The GPF will be more involved in SFA than ever before and will be crucial to the success of U.S. strategies in the contemporary and future operating environments.[6]

[5] Christopher E. Phelps, "Selecting and Training U.S. Advisors: Interpersonal Skills and the Advisor-Counterpart Relationship," University of Kansas, 2009.
[6] https://jcisfa.jcs.mil/Public/WhatIsSFA.aspx

Recommendations

In examining the case studies of El Salvador, Colombia, and Iraq through the variables of Force Structure, Scope of Mission, and Longevity numerous recommendations can be ascertained and additional questions arise. Future missions in supporting SFA will require forces to organize, train, equip, rebuild/build and advise (OTERA) partner nations militaries. The role of the U.S. advisor is critical to empower our partners, and U.S. advisors originating from the GPF are an enduring mission. The U.S. needs to continue to effectively train the GPF for the SFA missions.

In a resource-constrained environment, a thorough cost analysis needs to be explored to measure the relative cost of sourcing the SFA mission to USSOF as opposed to the GPF. This thesis concludes that the USSOF conducted better SFA, but there needs to be a better analysis of the costs. USSOF and the GPF are expensive to train, maintain, and equip. Could private security contractors have similar success and be more cost effective?

In terms of culture of the host nation, is there a difference based on religion? While not covered in the scope of this thesis, more attention should be directed to ethnic and military cultures of the partner nations. Policymakers should temper their expectations for what SFA can achieve in light of the extent of dysfunction in the partner nation's domestic politics and culture.

Success in SFA requires overcoming challenges such as corruption, illiteracy, and language barriers. To succeed, it is important to convince the host-nation population that the U.S. forces there are helping a legitimate government.[7]

To be most effective, SFA should be executed through a whole of U.S. government approach, in conjunction with developmental efforts across all the elements of national power.

[7] Thomas Nelson and Capt. Eamon Breslin , Security Force Assistance: Applying Lessons From Iraq in Afghanistan, ARMY Magazine, April 2014 p. 26-28.

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VITA

COL Matthew R. Moore graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and was commissioned as a 2LT in the Infantry Branch in 1992. His background is in infantry operations. He has commanded soldiers at the platoon, company and battalion level. He served with the Multinational Force and Observers Group, Sharm El Sheik, Egypt, the United Nations Command Security Battalion-Joint Security Area, Panmunjon, Republic of Korea, the Australian Combat Training Center, Lavarack Barracks, Australia, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn. COL Moore's most recent assignment was at the Joint Staff, J7 Deployable Training Team. COL Moore is a graduate of the United States Army Infantry Officers' Basic and Advanced Course, and the British Joint Command and General Staff College. He holds a Masters in Military Studies from Kings College, University of London.