



The Warrior Way for Building Partnerships

By Lt. Col. Matthew T. Archambault

The Army is a people business. Every aspect of our profession revolves around people. Whether we are trying to understand them, motivate them, provide them assistance, influence them, inform them or, with regards to our enemies, kill them, people are at the center of our business. The exchange between people or organizations is a relationship. As succinctly as only Merriam-Webster can define, relationship is derivative from relations and means, “the way in which two or more people, groups, countries, etc., talk to, behave toward, and deal with each other.” Building relationships is an essential part of business if you’re assigned to United States Army Europe (USAREUR). It’s the third of five pillars in the Strong Europe campaign.¹ As USAREUR’s World Class OPFOR, 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, known as “The Warriors,” is uniquely placed to experience, theorize and develop basic principles for normatively establishing and maintaining an effective partnership.

Background

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Alliance and the United States’ strategic partners in Europe are evolving in the face of emerging threats. Partnerships are being redefined. It’s a different world from when Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister for Great Britain in the 1800s, infamously said, “we have no eternal allies and no permanent enemies. Our interests are eternal, and those interests it is our duty to follow.”² That’s realpolitik at its best, however, perhaps Major General Fox Conner’s guidance, “Never fight unless you have to; never fight alone; and never fight for long”³ seems more relevant in an age of coalitions. Regardless of your international relations predilections, the partnerships we form while in USAREUR must be strong, enduring and provide a unified front in order to be an effective deterrent.

No relationship starts or stays at peak strength. There are ebbs and flows as both partners evolve and perhaps end-states shift. No one knows each other, either individually or as organizations when the relationship begins. People within organizations change. Each organization is inherently busy with their own agendas. The Warrior Battalion at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) maintains on-going partnerships with two European Allies: the Slovenian Armed Forces and the Lithuanian Grand Duchess Uhlan Battalion. The former is a formal partnership in accordance with Army Regulation (AR) 350-2, *Integrating the Armed Forces of Other Nations Into U.S. Army Unit-Level Training Events in Europe*, by which the Slovenians provide a tank platoon while the latter is an informal partnership with the Lithuanians providing a mechanized infantry platoon. These partnerships provide critical assets, namely combat power, for 1-4IN during Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE) rotations in order to provide a realistic and tough Brigade Tactical Group to oppose whatever Rotational Training Unit is currently at JMRC.

As for the Slovenians and the Lithuanians, they found an outlet where they can develop junior leaders through valuable tactical experiences. No other Army wants to be the United States Army. Sure, they might want the budget, but they want to remain distinct with their own particular traditions and unique heritage. When these Armies come to train with us, it’s not because they want to learn how the US Army functions. They’re looking for experiences from which they can learn and identify which aspects of our methodologies will work within their cultural framework. They’re looking for experiences that will develop their next generation of leaders.

Principles

The principles outlined below are by no means profound nor are they new. The intent is to highlight where



where 1-4IN is having success and what the Battalion is learning as its partnerships mature. These insights will be useful to any unit preparing to work with a partner or ally.

Stick to the Fundamentals

Twenty years ago Sapper Leader Course instructors imparted fundamentals, like the “Five Principles of Patrolling,” onto the author as a young cadet.⁴ While the principles of reconnaissance, planning, control, security, and common sense seem intuitive, the experience of watching students at Sapper School, Ranger School, or any of the Combat Training Centers demonstrates they are not. The Five Principles seem as germane today as when they were new, and are applicable to building partnerships.

Reconnaissance. This might be a “chicken or egg debate,” but visiting the partner nation is vital to the relationship and it is vital to planning. The initial visit and introduction is the easiest part and it’s usually where the excitement peaks. There might be a new passport stamp or a box check on the bucket list, but if that’s the attitude then the initial visit will also be where things go off the rails. If the partnership is going to be strong, then the visiting party should be learning the moment they step off the airplane.

Our Allies and Strategic Partners host better than we do. They’re eager to show off their countries, tell you about their history, and let you experience some culture. There will be plenty of coffee and time to talk. Most of the talk will not center on “work.” Americans tend to be more business oriented. Everyone knows about America. We’re America; ‘murica. We subconsciously believe there’s no need for tours, explanations, or small talk about who we are because everyone should already know everything there is to know about us. This is not a new lesson. Numerous critiques and after action reviews (AARs) capture this lesson from our operations in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. The real lesson is that it’s germane regardless of the nation being engaged.

The country you’re visiting is unique. It’s not “like” here or there. It’s unique. There’s no one size fits all rubber stamp for building a partnership. You will learn this during the reconnaissance and your partner will tell you, more through actions than words, what’s important to them. Ask the questions. Come prepared with recommendations, but ease into the business side of the transaction.

Planning. Develop a plan. Optimally, the plan is the result of both partners sitting at the table discussing what their objectives are for the arrangement. Recommendations proffered by the more experienced side are perfectly okay, but each side must listen. The biggest mistake we can make is to assume the partnered nation just wants to learn how we do things. They don’t want to be the United States Army. They want to be their Army. What we have are the resources and the infrastructure to help them achieve their training goals. They have the unique perspectives, which a large and cumbersome organization such as USAREUR, overlooks because we don’t think in terms of economy anymore.

The calendar, preferably the long range calendar (LRC), should be involved. Having interactions and events programed on the calendar will force staff-to-staff and commander-to-commander interactions. Those marks on the calendar will force each unit to synchronize and make choices.

Something to think about is USAREUR has roughly 30,000 troops. We think we’re small, which is true compared with ten, fifteen, and twenty years ago. **Thirty thousand though is still twice the size of the Lithuanian Armed Forces and four times the size of the Slovenian Armed Forces.** Think about that. The number underscores the importance of transforming the partnership into a solid relationship. If that realization hits home then it should reflect in the partnership plan’s details as well as its execution.

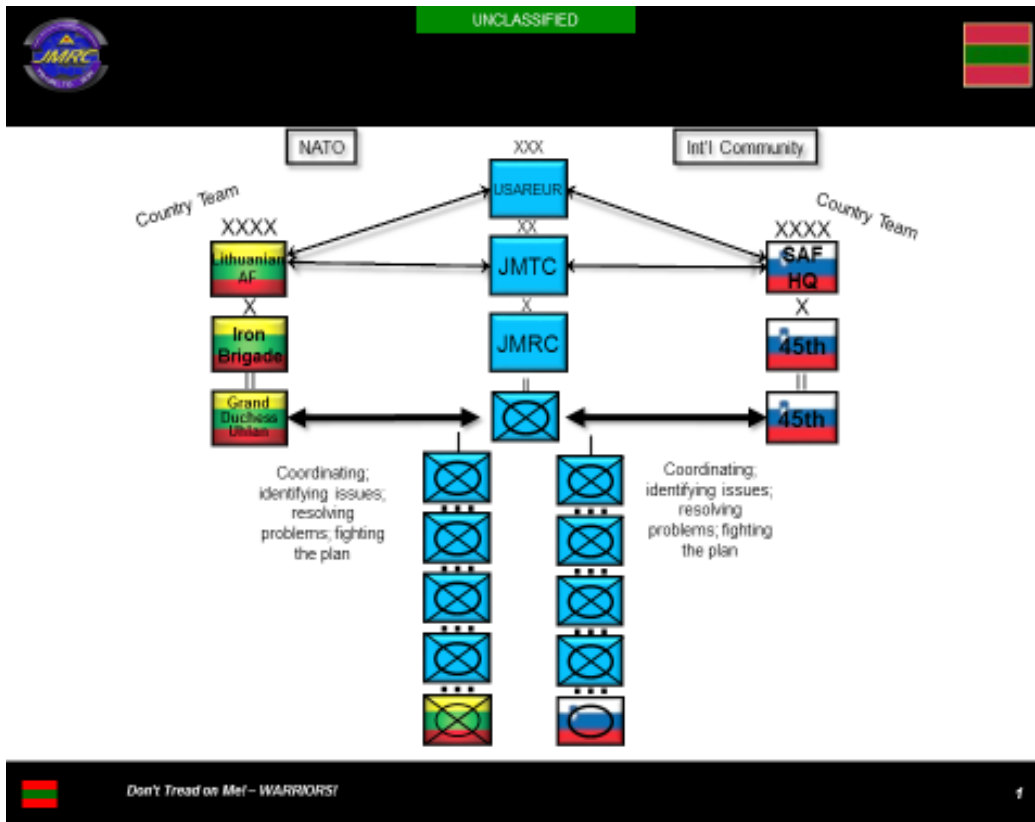


Figure 1: Depicts Command Relationships and Responsibilities

Just like a Brigade operation, every echelon owns a different aspect to the fight. The partnership plan should delineate different responsibilities for execution. For platoon exchanges, company commanders are executing. They are bringing that platoon into the fold. Battalion commanders are supervising, assessing, and communicating. Echelons above the battalion are ensuring resources are in place and the conditions are set, which may focus on strategic level engagement. The plan doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to be complete beyond everyone knowing what's going to happen next, and maybe over the next six months, as well as logistical arrangements.

Control. Through the execution of the plan, leaders must remain engaged, evaluate progress, and make changes as necessary. After the warm glow of the initial visit fades and the honeymoon phase is over, reality strikes.

Every organization is busy and no organization is busier than the one you happen to be in. But that's not true. Marriages end in divorce when neither partner finds time to work on the relationship. Battalion Commanders need to reach out to their counterparts and keep the partnership alive at that level. Staff officers act in accordance with their commander's wishes. Before your Operations Officer starts reporting radio silence and negative contact with his counterpart, the battalion commanders must talk about friction points, priorities, and any other salient issues. A simple email or phone call to see how things are going goes considerable distance to maintaining the partnership's momentum.

Leadership transitions happen. Everyone leaves their unit at some point and this is true even with our multinational partners. One of the reasons the echelon approach, mentioned in the "planning" principle section, is critical is so continuity remains possible. If there's anything the United States Army should be good at after so many years in Iraq and Afghanistan it is key leader transition. The partnership relationship is no different. Time needs to be found on the calendar to foster the relationship at the key leader level



(ostensibly battalion commander) so the relationship can continue to mature. The plan isn't enough. There should be a deliberately cultivated opportunity for dialogue and meeting.

Security. When you are building a relationship with another nation's army the resident foreign disclosure representative needs to be involved. Training and employment with various pieces of equipment needs to be determined as part of the plan. Some equipment or training simulators require specific programs of instruction (POIs) approved by TRADOC before they can be implemented. It's also probably wise to reach out to the Counterintelligence branch or Military Intelligence for a Foreign Military Intelligence Collection Activity (FORMICA) brief.

Common Sense. In terms of relationship building, if empathy finds its way into your dialogue about where the relationship is going and what needs to happen then common sense is probably prevailing. If there is a leader visiting from their unit, take him (or her) out to dinner. That's usually the experience whenever a U.S. Army delegation visits somewhere, but, on the whole, our reciprocation, if they're not distinguished visitors, is usually poor. We blame that on our schedules and how busy we are. These dinners, time out for coffee, and "unofficial" moments are where great breakthroughs occur because the multinational (MN) partner relaxes and speaks more freely.

Push it to the lowest level

Delegate and supervise. Each echelon has its role to play. The battalion "fight" is to monitor the plan and make changes as necessary. Companies are employing the platoons and doing the day to day work associated with monitoring their progress. Junior grade officers gain valuable experience through the interaction. The company command team gets an extra complexity in their everyday business as they also work and develop skills related to building mission command.

Another aspect to consider is that there is less pretense for junior leaders. People are just people. Soldiers are essentially the same regardless of the nationality. They easily see past the uniforms and other things when given an opportunity to interact. More importantly, relationships can be built, really built, at the lower levels. The Slovenians send the same platoon back to JMRC for every rotation with only minor personnel changes, which maintains the continuity and also broadens the Slovenians' experience base. The returning platoon is familiar with their surroundings. They know where they live. They know their American company leadership. They know where their tanks park and they feel at ease to access the maintenance facilities. The partnership at this point really begins to evolve towards a familial relationship. They are now part of the organization. 1-4IN is experiencing a similar phenomenon with the Lithuanians. The Lithuanian platoon leaders are graduating to be their company executive officer, who are planning for the next platoon's "deployment" to Hohenfels. All of this creates the environment where we're executing at the lowest level.

Part of the Family

The most powerful messages we send are our actions which usually involves the small things. Sometimes we miss opportunities. Our partnership plans focus on training events. Training events cost money, time, and quantifiable metrics, but the nuances of mission command defy those variables. It takes time to build mission command, the trust between commanders and subordinate leaders. It takes time to evaluate and understand others' training level, capacity and where there is risk. The training plan that conquers these issues is valuable, but it's not enough. What is even more valuable is when the training is done, weapons are back in the arms room, vehicles are parked in the motor pool, and everyone moves off to other calendar events. The partners are still here after the planned event ends. They should be integrated.

This is where it's easiest to leverage the principle of pushing the partnership to the lowest level. The partnered formation should be in every Battalion formation as part of the Company they're attached to. If there's a

Battalion Hail and Farewell, the partnered Platoon Leader and Platoon Sergeant should come along (and be Hailed!). If there's a Battalion professional development discussion, those partnered units' leaders should be participating. When these small things happen, the relationship really has the opportunity to grow. Now they feel part of the Battalion Family and they become part of the Battalion's message when they return to their country. They spread the word about the Battalion's professionalism and priorities.

Tell Someone About it

There's a lot of learning that happens when nations and their armies interact. The units make progress and an unforeseen opportunity arises. Someone needs to know. Partnerships impinge on mission command and interoperability. Interoperability, as noted below, has three dimensions. 1-4IN has limited opportunity with regards to technical solutions so the human and the procedural solutions are paramount.

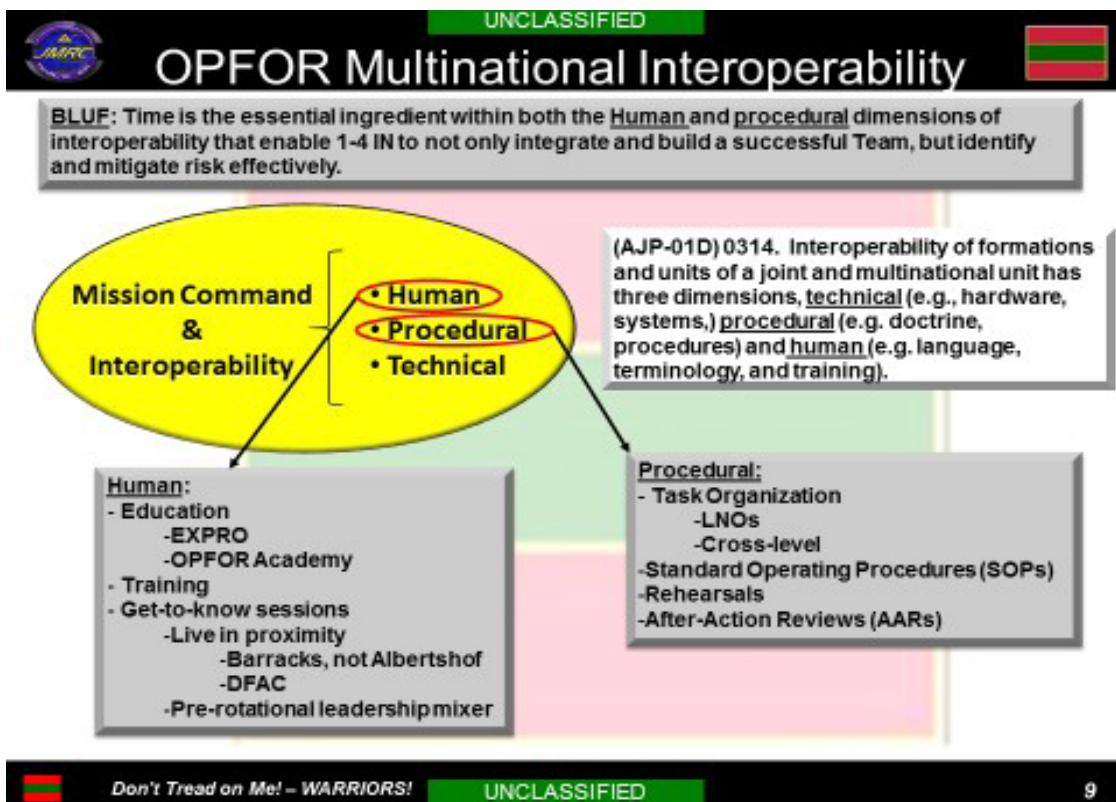


Figure 2: 1-4IN's Perspective on Interoperability

All parties involved, from the enlisted soldier through the lieutenant to the battalion commander, might have an epiphany on where the relationship should go and what opportunities might lay ahead. This business is, after all, a people business.

Finally, sell the relationship and its importance to not only others, but those involved. Both sides need to hear from the leadership--of both sides—of the importance of what they're doing together.

Conclusion

It is an exciting time to be in USAREUR. More than any other combatant command, units permanently assigned to Europe or deployed as part of the regionally allocated forces (RAF) have the opportunity to engage with strategic partners and allies. These opportunities can only be capitalized upon if a plan exists. Partnership should not be an ancillary task to another operation. Similar to information operations, partnership and building relationships is about sending messages about individuals, units, the Army, and the United States. Commanders determine what that message is by the plan they develop and execute when they build relationships.



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NOTES:

1. "Army Strong, Strong Europe: The Official Homepage of United States Army Europe," U.S. Army Europe, accessed May 15th, 2016, <http://www.eur.army.mil/>.
2. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 96.
3. Robert Gates, "Reflections on Leadership," *Parameters* 38(2) (Summer 2008): 185–191.
4. *Sapper Leader Handbook*, U.S. Army Engineer School, (July 1996): 1-1.