Integrating the Advisory Effort in the Army: A FULL-SPECTRUM SOLUTION

Major Michael D. Jason, U.S. Army

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the United States government.

"Arguably, the most important military component in the War on Terror is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we enable and empower our partners to defend and govern their own countries."[1]

—Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, 10 October 2007

A CLEAR GAP EXISTS that the Army should fill by providing a sustained conventional advisory capability as part of national defense. U.S. Army history since World War II reveals the repeated use of general purpose forces (GPF) as combat advisors.[2] Numerous strategic documents call on the Army to address this capability requirement, most notably, the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review. With the exception of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, and a brief mention in the most recent FM 3-0, *Full-Spectrum Operations*, Army doctrine fails to address the use of GPFs as advisors.

This paper proposes the creation of a single headquarters, a hypothetical "Advisor Command," at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, under the U.S. Army Forces Command, in collaboration with the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. This new command would include the advisor school and serve as the proponent for all issues relating to the advising and equipping of foreign conventional forces. The command would entail an institutional center of excellence and permeate Army force structure down to the BCT levels. Advisors could perform full-spectrum operations including training, equipping, liaison, and access to combat multipliers for our partners and allies.

Why Institutionalize?

One of the most contested subjects in today's military is the composition and role of advisor teams. Many in the institutional Army urge returning this role to the Army's Special Forces (SF), especially as they increase by five battalions.[3] Others, such as Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl, argue for a permanent 20,000-man "Army Advisor Corps."[4] Noted analyst Dr. Andrew Krepinevich of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments recently briefed the Pentagon's leadership on a similar proposal. Most recently, some called for placing the capability within BCTs. Yet, seven years after the invasion of Afghanistan and more than five years after the beginning of the Iraq war, the

Major Mike Jason is the S3 for the 3d Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 3d Infantry Division at Fort Stewart. He holds a B.S. from the U.S. Military Academy and an M.S. from Georgetown University. He is also a graduate of the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. He has served in a variety of command and staff positions in Germany, Italy, Iraq, and the continental United States.

PHOTO: A U.S. Army MiTT team visiting an Iraqi company forward operating base to coordinate for life support and force protection improvements. (courtesy of the author)

debate still rages, and the Army's advisor mission continues to be at best an ad hoc effort.[5] History and strategic guidance tell the Army to institutionalize the advisory role.

Historic Context

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."[6]

—William Faulkner

The U.S. Army prides itself on being a learning organization. However, in the most recent advisory efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, much of what the institution has "learned" has really been *relearned.* A cursory look at advisor missions conducted by conventional forces since the end of WWII reveals a distinct pattern.

The post-World War II era coincides with the emergence of Special Forces, so one would expect a decrease in advisor activities by conventional Soldiers. Instead, the use of GPF in advisory operations remains vast and continuous. For example, conventional forces deployed to Greece to stand up, train, and advise the Greek Army in their struggle against communist guerrillas in the late 1940s. The Korea Military Assistance Group conducted similar efforts. Perhaps the most significant and well known conventional advisory effort occurred in Vietnam under the Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MAC-V).

Numerous other operations have gone unnoticed. Advisors trained and mentored German and Japanese units after WWII and worked with French units in the 1950s against the Viet Minh. Army advisors have worked with Colombian forces and the Saudi Arabian National Guard for several years. Furthermore, conventional forces are used as advisors in Iraq, The Horn of Africa, and Afghanistan.[7] Indeed, the short history of the last five decades indicates combat advising by conventional forces is nothing new.

The Strategic Environment

"As they stand up, we will stand down."[8]

—President George Bush, 2005

The War on Terrorism caused what author Tom Barnett dubs "the rule set reset."[9] Since the war started, nearly all U.S. strategic documents have been rewritten to take into account new threats and needed capabilities. One of the first such documents was the joint staff's National Military Strategy Plan for the War on Terror (NMSP-WOT). With close collaboration between the joint staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, all of the services, and combatant commanders, the NMSP-WOT set the foundation for how the Department of Defense was going to take on what is now commonly known as the War on Terrorism. Key to this document is the emergence of the concept of "enabling partner nations to counter terrorism."[10] This effort helped shape the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review that clearly states that GPFs or "multi-purpose forces" need to be able to "train, equip, and advise indigenous forces; deploy and engage with partner nations; conduct irregular warfare, and support security, stability, transition, and reconstruction operations."[11] Further guidance notes that joint ground forces must "possess the ability to train, mentor, and advise foreign security forces and conduct counterinsurgency campaigns."[12]Although Soldiers have responded to this mission, there is little evidence of Army institutionalization of this requirement.

As the Army looked ahead to what Chief of Staff General George Casey called an "era of persistent conflict," only a few changes were made to how the Army viewed the task of advising our partners. In 2007, the Army published FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. This was a very important event for the Army as a learning organization while in the midst of a protracted counterinsurgency. The FM articulates the numerous tasks and complexities of the modern battlefield and stresses that the "key to all these tasks is to develop an effective host-nation (HN) security force."[13]

In February 2008, the Army published its most significant revision of its capstone document, FM 3-0, *Full-Spectrum Operations*. The FM did not break with the past with regard to advising. Though the Army recognized that stability and reconstruction were as important as the offense and defense, it still captured advisor missions under the role of foreign internal defense, and within the mission of irregular warfare: "Special operations forces conduct most irregular warfare operations. Sometimes conventional Army forces support them . . . conventional Army forces may assume the lead role"[14]

"Army commanders back in the U.S. told us this was going to be the most thankless and frustrating job we have ever held, and boy, were they right."[15]

—U.S. Army LTC, Brigade Team Chief, Iraq 2006

Think-tanks, the joint staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense might be clear on their expectations of the Army regarding advisors in the War on Terrorism, but the service's execution of these roles is as clumsy and ad hoc as its doctrine. Several articles from *The Wall Street Journal* provide insights into experiences on location at the advisor training schools as well as in theater, detailing a lack of focus, priority, and quality of personnel, and a general degree of frustration.[16] Coincidentally, these are the exact same frustrations noted by MAC-V advisors 40 years earlier.[17]

Looking at strategic guidance and the specter of history—and mistakes past—we can see there is a clear need to institutionalized this critical capability in the modern full-spectrum Army. The history and guidance justifies the need for this force structure change and the requirements should be analyzed across the spectrum of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) to resource this capability for national defense

A Full-spectrum Approach

"The task of the ground-level advisor was extremely difficult. He had to be a jack-of-all-trades."[18]

—Jeffrey Clarke on MAC-V Advisors

There is no commonality across the varied processes of selecting advisors, training and equipping them, and developing an advisor mission focus. None of the challenges facing the Army's various advisory efforts today have anything in common. The Army advisor mission splices together, from a vast hodgepodge of institutional diversity, a series of ad hoc efforts that make it impossible to figure out exactly who owns a mission, what exactly it is supposed to do, and how exactly it integrates into theater-specific command and control structures.

Doctrine. Building partner capacities is a precept of the way we fight in this new era; it is no longer irregular. All U.S. military forces should understand their roles as mentors, coaches, and advisors to our partners, friends, and allies. Many past combat advisors use the word "spectrum" to describe the variety of the missions they performed.[19] On one end of the spectrum, conventional advisors might be involved in force generation, literally building an army from the ground-up as we are doing in Iraq today. On the other end, advisors may be liaisons, providing our allies and friends with technical combat multipliers such as aviation, medical evacuation, and fire support. The advisor mission might even be with allies who have no need of instruction. Providing a combat advisor team to a NATO battalion so it has better access to our intelligence, logistics, or fires capabilities is an example.[20] The advisor mission might even include helping a governor with disaster relief efforts in a state. In essence, the advisor team can be a plug-and-play hub with selectable capabilities (see figure). Such a concept would mesh well with Field Manual 3-0, *Full-Spectrum Operations*. A permanent conventional advisor capability allows each BCT to work with bilateral partners and allies across the range of war actions.

What this spectrum does not encompass is unconventional warfare. Dropping a team behind the lines to raise a guerrilla army and conduct sabotage will remain the purview of SOF. This distinction provides a simple doctrinal delineation between general purpose forces and SOF, a distinction that is necessary to start the debate for institutionalizing an advisor capability in the conventional Army.

Organization. The organizational structure for this effort is likely to meet the most bureaucratic resistance. Currently, the Army's SOF community does not wish to "own" the Army's conventional advising effort, but it wishes to have a role. The general purpose Army needs to accept the eventuality that Army special operations forces will not be available for the conventional advisory role.

Other advising missions fall under different laws and authorizations. One, already mentioned, is the Office of the Program Manager-Saudi Arabian National Guard. Another is the Army's Security

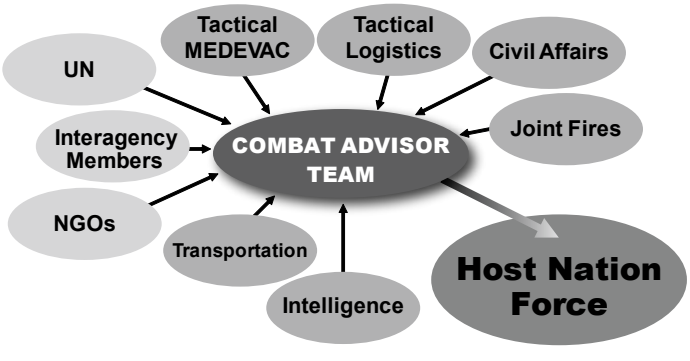

Figure. The combat advisor team: A Joint Interagency Multi-National Plug-and-Play Hub

Assistance Command. Traditionally tied to more political strategic objectives, its missions have long been associated with foreign military sales (FMS), an activity closely linked with the Department of State. In whatever manner they are funded, clearly active duty GPF Soldiers are executing the task of advising foreign militaries. Even so, the entire effort suffers from a lack of unity and synergy.

I suggest creating a single three-star level command under Forces Command, in partnership with Training and Doctrine Command, called the "Advisor Command." It would assume command of all other commands that control the advising, equipping, and training of foreign forces. Under this command, three rapidly deployable 240-man teams would be formed, each capable of advising an entire division. In addition, each of the Army's 48 active component BCTs would stand up five 10-man advisor teams: one at the brigade level and one in each of four battalions (logistics, two combined arms, and one reconnaissance and surveillance squadron). These teams would not be dual-hatted, but would have as their sole role the training, advising, mentoring, and partnering of other forces. During reset or dwell periods, these teams could attend language and other training, deploy in support of regional theater security cooperation missions, or assist in the training of their own BCTs. A separate training and travel funding pool with ties to the advisor command would ensure the teams had the latitude and ability to achieve their full potential (and perhaps even attract volunteers).

"The important thing for the Advisor is for him to know the specific problems of his own small area. This must be learned in country, since you really can't prepare for a job until you know what it is."[21]

—Helpful hints for officers assigned to Vietnam, 1966

Training. The aforementioned command would include a school to handle the training of these Soldiers. If located at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, this school would not only be collocated with the advisor command headquarters but also the Army's Special Operations Command; this facility would best leverage five decades of conventional and unconventional experience in advising foreign forces. A basic course on advising would last only a few weeks. Based on requirements and missions, future advisors could receive training in additional modules, including languages, foreign weapons, combat life-saving skills, and others. Advisors would earn a combat advisor tab and a new skill identifier after completion of the basic advisor course.[22]

Materiel. The materiel solution is a simple one to state but complex to work out. In terms of equipping the actual advisor teams, the small amount of equipment allows for delivery and maintenance in Army units. The rapid deployable units at the advisor command would also maintain ready-to-deploy equipment sets, including vehicles, communications equipment, weapons, and life support.

Lashing up foreign military sales with the newly created advisor command will be challenging. Combat advisors in the field have to have a direct line to the materiel component of their mission. This complication has been and continues to be a hurdle. Placing the capability to supply foreign armies under the same command as the advisors would have an impact on the success of combat advisors. An initial step could be a close working relationship between the hypothetical advisor command and the State Department's political-military office, perhaps exchanging permanent liaisons.

Leadership and education. Leadership and education are the most important elements of the entire advisor mission. How the Army will view this mission in terms of leadership is the critical factor to attracting the right leaders, preparing them for their mission, and ensuring their success. In June of 2008, the Army announced that majors serving as combat advisors would receive "key developmental" credit and that lieutenant colonels chosen to lead brigade-level advisor teams would be chosen from the battalion command selection list. This move is clearly meant to better recognize the importance of this mission in terms of leadership. Though it remains to be seen what the impact of this mission will be for individual officers' careers, the Army has made a monumental move towards institutionalizing the mission. The combat leadership of Army officers working closely with foreign units in complex counterinsurgency or conventional combat operations should and must count in the path to promotion. In this latest decision, the Army has formally acknowledged the leadership and educational value of these professionally challenging assignments.

The wrong soldiers were being chosen for the training teams and . . . they were being poorly taught.

U.S. Army

Advisors as Instructors: 1SG John McFarlane works with Iraqi NCOs of the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division on close quarters marksmanship with the AK-47.

The shortcomings were 'seriously undermining the effectiveness' of the overall training mission and 'fundamentally detracting from the U.S. strategy for transition in Iraq.' [23]

—U.S. Army Study on Advisors Training for Iraq at Fort Riley, KS, 2008

Personnel. How the Army handles the personnel of the advisory mission demonstrates how it views this mission. So far, the Army institution has treated this mission as a fad, something that one hopes will go away before much has to be changed. At the time of this writing, there are signs that the Army is beginning to see challenges in the retention of mid-grade officers and noncommissioned officers. The advisor mission may be an opportunity to address both issues.

This proposal calls for approximately 5,000 Soldiers to be taken from the latest end-strength authorizations. As noted above, each of Active Army's 48 BCTs would be manned with five 10-man teams. This would account for 2,400 embedded advisors in the active component brigades. The advisor command would have three rapid deployable advisor units, each able to advise an entire division. These three 240-man units allow for a three-way rotation in a long-term effort or two simultaneous operations with one unit in reset. Of course, elements of these three units could be dispatched globally to perform exercises with partners, assist in humanitarian emergencies, or conduct training missions. The remaining 1,900 Soldiers would fall under the advisor command itself. Some will be instructors, others will work administrative requirements, and others bound for the command will be students in the Army's TTHS account. Furthermore, additional capability could be added to the National Guard and Reserve force structure.

Key to the success of this effort would be the attraction and selection of quality Soldiers and leaders. The awarding of a "Combat Advisor Tab," a skill identifier, language training, and perhaps special pay, would go a long way to help attract the best. Furthermore, the exciting and fulfilling nature of this mission will have a significant impact on retention of quality leaders, given they are rewarded and promoted for their efforts. The latest decision to use officers from the command list will have a dramatic impact in setting the right tone and climate for the importance of this mission. Absolutely critical is the addition of new advisors to the force structure. Developing a formal advisor program cannot simply be a system of badges and identifiers issued to leaders simply to announce they have attended the training and achieved some level of certification (for instance, the way parachute

wings and Ranger tabs encrust people who never see airborne and ranger units). The habit of dual-hatting tactical unit officers and NCOs as advisors must end.

Facilities. Lastly, there are numerous facilities that can house such a small footprint. Fort Bragg provides a clearly suitable location. The proposed parent headquarters, Forces Command, is close to the Army's Special Forces School, the institutional experts for the last fifty years. If approved, other commands could move from their present locations to fall under any advisor command (most notably, Fort Belvoir's Security Assistance Command). At present, the advisor training mission is moving from Fort Riley to Fort Polk.

"Present your suggestions carefully, in detail, with adequate reasons. An explanation of the advantages will usually be effective."[24]

—MAC-V Advisor Handbook 1969

Conclusion

Since the end of WWII, conventional Soldiers have been involved in advisory missions in Greece, China, Korea, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Columbia, Japan, and numerous other locations. There is a wealth of knowledge in lessons learned waiting to be discovered. Guidance from strategic documents tells us this mission will only increase in scope. The Army has taken some steps forward. Much more needs to be done. Somewhere between the current ad hoc efforts and a 20,000-man "Advisor Corps" lies a plausible course of action. Filtering some ideas through the DOTMLPF construct, this paper attempts to define one possible course of action. The Army needs to be able to work effectively with our partners and allies during full-spectrum operations. This is one approach. ***MR***

NOTES

1. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, speaking to the Association of the U.S. Army, 10 October 2007, as reported by COL Robert Kilbrew in "SecDef has signaled a turning point in US defense thinking," *Armed Forces Journal,* <www.armedforcesjournal.com/2008/02/3240799>.

2. Many do not like the term general purpose force or GPF. In this paper, this term is used to clearly delineate those forces other than special operations forces, or SOF.

3. Program Decision Memorandum III, FY 08-13.

4. John Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation, It's Time for a Permanent Advisor Corps," Center for New American Security: Washington, DC, 2007, <www.newamericansecurity.org/publications/Nagl_AdvisoryCorp_June07.pdf>.

5. Since the beginning of the Iraq Advisor effort, training has gone from Camp Atterbury, to Fort Benning, to Fort Bliss, to Fort Carson, to Fort Hood, to Fort Riley, and will now move to Fort Polk. Assignments continue to be on an individual basis, based more on a Soldiers' timing rather than experience, deployments, or other considerations. It also continues to draw on over 1,500 Army Reservists from institutional training divisions whose legacy mission was training the conventional Army as part of a full mobilization. A separate paper can be written on whether these assignments are career enhancing or limiting. To most carrying out this mission, the jury is still out.

6. William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun,* act I scene III (New York: Vintage Publishing, 1975).

7. Just an example of the many flavors of advisors in Iraq and Afghanistan: military transition team, border transition team, special police transition team, national police transition team, embedded training teams, advisory support team.

8. President George W. Bush, address to U.S. Army Soldiers at Fort Bragg, NC, 28 June 2005, as reported by John D. Banusiewicz in the article "As Iraqis Stand Up, We Will Stand Down" on Defense Link, <www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=16277>.

9. Tom Barnett, discussion with the author, Pentagon, Washington, DC, 29 September 2004.

10. National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism, The Joint Staff: Washington, DC, 1 February 2006, 7.

11. *Quadrennial Defense Review,* Department of Defense: Washington, DC, 6 February 2006, 23.

12. "Transition Teams and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (TT/PRT) Mission Analysis to CG, TRADOC," 14 September 2007.

13. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, 6-1.

14. United States Army FM 3-0, *Operations*, Headquarters, Department of the Army: February 2008, 2-10.

15. Greg Jaffe, *"*A Camp Divided,*" Wall Street Journal*, 16 June 2006.

16. Yochi Dreazenm, "Training Mission Unaccomplished," *Wall Street Journal*, 29 February 2008. Dreazenm spent several days with trainers and students at the advisor course at Fort Riley, Kansas. Also Greg Jaffe's "A Camp Divided," *Wall Street Journal*, 16 June 2006. This article provides a critical insight into the difficulties and frustrations of an often ill-defined effort; Jaffe spent weeks in Iraq embedded with advisors in 2006.

17. Jeffrey Clarke, "The Advisors," *In Advice and Support: The Final Years, The U.S. Army in Vietnam, 1965-1973*, 49-74. Washington DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988.

18. Ibid.

19. Numerous discussions with author by advisors of 1st Brigade, 9th Iraqi Division, during the course of a full tour as a Battalion Team Chief, December 2005-November 2006.

20. In a 21 May 2008 roundtable with a recently returned Army Brigade Combat Team (BCT) Commander, he described sending a "robust LNO [liaison] team" with his attached Georgian Army Battalion—in other words, exactly what this paper argues, only it would not be out of hide for a commander in the future.

21. COL Frank S. Osiecki, U.S. Army, assistant class director, Command and General Staff College. Memo subject: Helpful Hints from U.S. Military Training Advisors, Republic of Vietnam, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: 27 April 1966.

22. Current training at Fort Riley, Kansas, consists of 3 months of intense preparation for advisor teams. Most of the time is spent preparing for theater specific survival and combat tasks. As the advisors would join permanent units (either the 240-man rapid deployment units or teams in BCTs) the only training to be conducted at the Advisor Command School is *advising*. Combat critical tasks, such as first aid, marksmanship, convoy operations and others would be conducted with their permanent units. Without these tasks, the actual Advisor Course could be much shorter. In the spring of 2008, the U.S. Army announced a Transition Team Identifier.

23. Yochi J. Dreazen, "Training Mission Unaccomplished," *Wall Street Journal*, 29 February 2008.

24. FF and PF Handbook. Headquarters, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. Revision 11-69.

*****ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*****

This paper is dedicated to Combat Advisors, past and present, who have had to do so much with so little, especially those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, including my friends Major Alan Rogers and Captain Shawn English. This paper would not be possible without the numerous conversations with my wingman in combat, Major Bill Taylor, as well as my team sergeant, First Sergeant (Retired) John McFlarlane. Special thanks to my brothers-in-arms from other nations with whom I have had the honor of serving, especially Colonels Khaled and Saad, and Lieutenant Colonel Muthana (IA), Warrant Officer Salvatore Iodice (IT), Brigadier Dennis Blease and Major Martin Evans (UK), and Colonel Mehmet Kinachi (TU).