



# The U.S. Army Approach to Security Force Assistance

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*PHOTO: NATO and International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan visit Provincial Reconstruction Teams in the Afghan provinces of Konduz, Balkh, Faryhab, and Wardak. Through PRTs, ISAF supports reconstruction and development in Afghanistan, securing areas in which reconstruction work is conducted by other national and international actors. Currently, there are 26 PRTs operating through Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Navy CPO Joshua Treadwell)*

**A**S THE U.S. military looks ahead to the first half of the 21st century, several global trends—globalization, technology availability, population growth, urbanization, increased resource demands, climate change, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction—are shaping the international security environment. They place increasing stresses on governments to satisfy their citizens' legitimate expectations, including meeting their basic needs, receiving fair and impartial justice, and attaining increased prosperity and opportunities for themselves and their progeny. Governments unable to satisfy these aspirations risk losing their ability to govern. This loss creates opportunities for extremist groups to export terror and violence on behalf of radical ideologies. Ultimately, it becomes a setting for persistent conflict.

## Persistent Conflict

Protracted confrontation among state, nonstate, and individual actors increasingly willing to use violence to achieve their political and ideological ends remains the likely strategic environment through the first half of the 21st century and possibly beyond. Anticipated strategies for an era of this persistent conflict suggest that U.S. forces will have four major tasks:

- *Prevail* in the current conflict.
- *Deter*, and if necessary, *defeat* enemies in future conflicts, including defense of the homeland.
- *Support* civil authorities at home and abroad.
- *Engage* with partner nations to build the capacity of their security forces; in concert with other elements of national power, build the capacity of their governments and gain their cooperation in operations across the spectrum of conflict.

While partner engagement has long been a part of national strategies, the United States has only episodically relied on its military forces to play significant roles in this fourth task. Because of the conventional military threats, the level of international stability ensured by competing superpowers, and a low extremist group threat, the U.S. military did not put much effort into persuading partner nations to build their security forces' capacities. However, with the heightened threat extremist groups pose to regional and global stability, the U.S. military must accept this role. Because the threat is persistent, the response must be persistent.

*Persistent engagement* is a protracted effort, in concert with other elements of government, to build the capacity of partner nations to secure their territory and govern their population, and to gain their cooperation in operations across the spectrum of conflict. Accomplished largely through security cooperation efforts to build partner capacity and relationships, persistent engagement is crucial to success in persistent conflict. The military is the primary instrument to build the capability of other nations' military forces and institutions by providing security force assistance (SFA). The military has supplementary roles assisting other agencies' efforts to build partner nations' governance capacity. It also helps those agencies develop their own capacity to assist other nations. Security cooperation, including SFA, increases the cooperation of partner nations in operations across the spectrum of conflict.

## Security Force Assistance

*Security force assistance* is the combination of activities to build the capability of foreign security forces and their sustaining institutions. SFA is a task military forces conduct in coordination with, supported by, or in support of other agencies, as part of stability operations across the spectrum of conflict.<sup>1</sup> Security force assistance also frequently contributes to building relationships, which, among other things, provides political support for military operations and government or security force capacity-building efforts.

The Army approach to SFA has five components:

- Demand.
- Supply.
- Preparation.
- Execution (including assessment).
- Sustainment.

**Demand.** Geographic combatant commands establish and articulate demand. They set it forth in their theater strategies to achieve end states of security and stability within their areas of responsibility, in accordance with guidance from the

secretary of defense in his guidance for employment of forces. Department of Defense processes validate, prioritize, and direct geographic combatant commands' demands.

Army service component commands develop theater campaign plans to execute geographic combatant commands' assigned responsibilities and achieve operational effects.<sup>2</sup> Army service component commands, security cooperation organizations, Joint Force commanders, theater special operations commands, and Department of State country teams coordinate plans within the area of responsibility.<sup>3</sup> They may also develop operational or institutional demands to include in the Army service component commands' plans. The country team, for example, is a likely source of demand for military assistance to other agencies' governance or economic capacity building plans.

The Army service component commands' plans set forth requests for assistance articulated in the form of capabilities required to achieve effects. The Department of Defense validates and prioritizes the requests and directs the military services to provide individuals, units, equipment, capabilities, and programs to the Army service component commands to meet the requests. Upon direction to provide assistance, the Army determines how to supply the requirement. The two sources from which the Army can draw are the operating force and the generating force.

**Supply.** When using operating forces to fill a demand, Army special purpose forces will frequently be the first and best choice. Organized, trained, and equipped to conduct small-unit operations, possessing regionally focused language and cultural skills and foreign internal defense training, Army special purpose forces are ideally suited for employment in the most common SFA tasks involving small, adaptive, and short-duration packages required for capacity building at the individual and small organization levels. When unique or niche capabilities are also required, general

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**A U.S. Army team leader gives a fist bump to a youth in Samatan Village in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province, 24 September 2010.**

purpose forces or small tailored organizations can be attached to the special purpose forces unit for the duration of the mission. Army special purpose forces can operate with a less visible footprint, making them ideally suited for many SFA missions, because the nations most likely to need SFA assistance often do not want their populations to know they asked for it.

When the demand for operating forces exceeds the supply of special purpose forces or when special purpose forces are not best suited for the mission, the Army will most likely task a general purpose forces brigade to provide the assistance. The Army has 302 modular general purpose forces brigades, including 73 maneuver brigade combat teams (BCTs) and 98 multifunctional support brigades. The Army used maneuver BCTs in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom (and now Operation New Dawn) to build Iraqi and Afghan security force capacity. Lessons from these deployments so far indicate that the brigade is a viable basis for large-scale SFA to build capacity at the individual and unit levels. The planning, command and control, and sustainment capabilities inherent in a general purpose forces

brigade headquarters enable the brigade to plan, execute, and sustain larger, more complex, more varied, and longer-duration SFA missions.

The brigade's modular design enables the Army to organize it for the SFA mission with individuals, organizations, and capabilities from special purpose forces, other general purpose forces, and even generating force organizations. The more the stated demand articulates the desired effects of the SFA mission and the earlier it is received, the more likely it is that the general purpose forces task organization will contain the best blend of capabilities for the mission. The brigade can organize elements of the required size and skill sets for each mission, and it can provide sustained assistance across multiple locations using its internal staff capabilities. Host nation facilities or specific logistic capabilities from across the parent formation can support the deployed teams logistically, depending on the environment. Specialized units can augment the formation, while organic units can adapt to meet unique mission requirements. The brigade contains a broad range of experience. An average brigade combat team,

for example, has over 250 commissioned officers and over 1,000 NCOs of sergeant rank and above, providing a large base of trainers and advisors.

When generating forces fill a demand, the Army will normally task an Army command to develop an appropriately sized capability package to deliver the desired effect, or organize the package around Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) or direct reporting unit staff elements. Other generating force elements can contribute individuals, organizations, or capabilities. If threat conditions require protected transportation and security, or the task requires a significant support structure, operating forces may contribute to the package, as well. If it is necessary to equip foreign security forces, the Army's Materiel Enterprise should determine the best way to supply the assistance. Options include the Foreign Military Sales program, authorized high priority direct sales, declaration of excess defense articles, and temporary loans. When a specific program best meets the demand—International Military Training and Education, for example—the generating force will supply the required assistance.

**Preparation.** Once a source of supply has been identified for a demand, the individuals, organizations, capabilities, equipment, or programs prepare for execution.

- When the source is special purpose forces, Special Operations Command will task an appropriate element and request augmentation, if required, from the general purpose forces or the generating force. HQDA will task accordingly.

- When the source is general purpose forces, Forces Command will task the appropriate organization in line with the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) process and request appropriate special purpose forces or generating force augmentation for HQDA tasking.

The ARFORGEN process enables progressive preparation for any assigned mission by allocating resources to organizations, which build readiness through three sequential phases—Reset, Train-Ready, and Available. Regardless of the organization sourcing the requirement, the matching of supply to demand should occur as early as possible in the ARFORGEN process—ideally before the end of a unit's Reset phase. During the Train-Ready phase, units receive individuals, organizations,

capabilities, training, and any special equipment required for the SFA mission. The 162d Training Brigade, collocated with the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana, is the primary instrument to assist in these integration activities. The brigade provides mobile training teams and on-site instruction to develop individual and collective skills and facilitate the scheduling of relevant language, regional and cultural awareness education. The integration of SFA training within JRTC and other combat training centers (CTCs) using special role players and mission-specific scenarios provides additional opportunities for collective unit preparation. During this Train-Ready phase, units coordinate with Army service component commands, country teams, offices of defense cooperation or coordination, and regionally focused special purpose forces to enhance mission preparation and regional orientation.

Region-specific teams, including regionally focused foreign area officers, will work with the 162d Brigade to help the deploying unit translate theory into specific situational practices. The teams may deploy with SFA units to improve language proficiency, cultural awareness, and long-term continuity. They also provide lessons from deployments to update and refine SFA training syllabi and help develop scenarios and assessments for specific geographic areas. Although the generating forces tasked with SFA do not operate on an ARFORGEN cycle, they are able to take advantage of the 162d Brigade's "clearinghouse" and tailorable training support capabilities.

**Execution.** Properly prepared individuals, organizations, capabilities, equipment, and programs are available to execute SFA during the ARFORGEN Available phase. Army service component commands assess the effects of SFA during and after its delivery and adjust plans and future requirements accordingly.

Special purpose forces-sourced SFA, coordinated with the country team, takes place under the operational control of the theater special operations command and, if appropriate, the special operations command-forward in the country.

Generating force-sourced SFA is under the operational control of the Army service component commands and coordinated with the country team

and, if appropriate, the local security cooperation organizations. The Army service component commands may choose to delegate control of smaller or less complex SFA missions to the security cooperation organizations or even to the Defense or Army attaché.

Generating force-sourced SFA delivered to foreign nonmilitary security forces and institutions (e.g., national police, intelligence services, local police) is under the operational control of the Army service component commands in direct support of another federal agency. The Army service component commands would either be assisting with military-unique capabilities or augmenting them with military capabilities adapted to a civil purpose for limited periods, usually when surge conditions exceed the capabilities of the federal agencies.

Equipment and associated training provided to foreign security forces is under the operational control of the Army service component commands, although the commands normally delegate it to the security cooperation organizations.

Recently added to each Army service component commands staff is a 20- to 23-person security cooperation division, the focal point for all SFA-related planning, execution, and assessment. The security cooperation division is the primary coordination point between the Army service component commands and country teams, security cooperation organizations, geographic combatant commands staffs, region-specific Special Operations Command elements, and HQDA. In addition to being the Army service component commands' major developer of SFA demand requirements, the security cooperation division assists units assigned SFA missions and assesses their effectiveness in SFA activities.

**Sustainment.** The anticipated strategic environment of the 21st century requires SFA missions of significantly greater frequency, duration, and scope than those in the latter half of the 20th century. The Army must adapt its force management institutions to *sustain* SFA efforts and make them as much a part of its core competencies as the ability to conduct major combat operations. The Army's enterprise approach will help it achieve balance between sustaining existing capabilities to prevail over conventional military adversaries and institutionalizing the changes necessary to enable

sustained SFA efforts. Enterprise approach leaders are empowered to take a holistic view of Army objectives and resources and act cohesively to provide trained and ready forces and capabilities effectively and efficiently. The two core enterprises most important for sustaining the Army's ability to conduct SFA are the Human Capital and the Materiel Enterprises.

The Army's Human Capital Enterprise trains, educates, and develops soldiers and leaders who understand the importance of SFA in the context of the national strategy. It makes Soldier participation in SFA-related activities part of the Soldiers' permanent record. Continuous review of skill requirements enables the Army to adjust and maintain adequate inventories of appropriately skilled individuals in both the active and reserve components. One example is the plan to field an additional 100 foreign area officers (10 percent increase overall and 25 percent in the critically affected specialties) by converting an equivalent number of generalist billets by FY 2012.

Army doctrine is another part of the Human Capital Enterprise. After the publication of FM 3-0, *Operations*, both FM 3-07, *Stability Operations*, and FM 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, were refined for building partner capacity. Future revisions will reflect continued evolution of thinking as lessons are learned and concepts honed.

Army training systems have also kept pace with the increased need for SFA. The TRADOC Culture Center at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, is one



A U.S. Army officer discusses area security issues with an Afghan National Police officer at a checkpoint in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province, 24 September 2010.

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example of adapting to the need for greater cultural awareness to support SFA. The establishment of a force modernization proponent for SFA at the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is further evidence of the Army's move to institutionalize its ability to deliver SFA.

In addition to supporting the soldiers who undertake SFA, the Human Capital Enterprise builds partner capacity. When an SFA effort focuses on a foreign security force's institutions, the Human Capital Enterprise's force management element meets the requirement. It also provides the International Military Education and Training program through which partner nation service members attend U.S. Army schools.

The Army's Materiel Enterprise is the primary generating force element maintaining and sustaining the equipment and materiel of a foreign security force. The Foreign Military Sales program provides equipment to foreign security forces. Loans, donations of excess defense articles, and encouragement of fledgling foreign nation production capabilities are also important means to build capacity, as are sales or donations by partner nations conducting complementary SFA activities. The Materiel Enterprise ensures equipment is available for foreign security forces and that supporting institutions are able to maintain it.

## Conclusion

The Army's approach to providing SFA nests within the security cooperation concept of persistent engagement to minimize enemy opportunities within an era of persistent conflict. The Department of Defense validates, prioritizes, and directs combatant commander requirements to ensure the Army makes the best use of its operating and generating forces for SFA. Both special and general purpose forces prepare and employ individuals, organizations, equipment, and programs to build the capability and capacity of foreign security forces and institutions. Organized with tailored assistance from operating and generating forces, prepared, trained, and regionally-aligned through the ARFORGEN cycle, and under the operational control of Army service component commands, brigades are the key component of this concept and the primary instruments for delivering SFA. The second key component is building foreign security force capacity at the institutional level through the employment of individuals, organizations, equipment, capabilities, and programs from the generating force.

This SFA concept is sufficiently versatile and agile to meet fluctuations in demand. It also allows the Army to maintain a balanced force capable of full spectrum operations to execute the balanced strategy our Nation requires. **MR**

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## NOTES

1. This definition of security force assistance is adapted from Department of Defense Instruction 5000.68 on SFA. It differs slightly from definitions in Army Field Manuals (FMs) 3-07 and 3-07.1 and from definitions in Joint Publication (JP) 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense*, previous draft DODI, and papers on SFA fundamentals. These differences are not stark and represent the continuing evolution of thinking regarding SFA and its objects. "Capacity" as used in this article is shorthand for "capability" (the qualitative ability to do something) and "capacity" (the quantitative amount of that capability the force can do)."

2. This article uses the term ASCC to refer only to the six geographic Army commands: U.S. Army Europe, U.S. Army Central, U.S. Army Pacific, U.S. Army Africa,

U.S. Army South, and U.S. Army North.

3. A Security Cooperation Organization (SCO) is responsible for planning and in-country management of U.S. security cooperation programs, including security assistance. These offices have a number of names, including Offices of Defense Cooperation, Security Cooperation Offices, Offices of Defense Coordination, Military Assistance Advisory Group, Military Group, Military Training Mission, etc. Combined Security Training Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) is a Security Cooperation Organization, as was Multinational Security Training Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), which is now United States Forces-Iraq, Advising and Training (USF-I (A&T)).