



(U.S. Army photo by Maj. Lindsey Elder, USARPAC PAO)

Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, commanding general of U.S. Army Pacific, tours a training area 18 January 2015 with Gen. Xu Fenlin, commanding general of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Guangzhou Military Region, during the tenth annual 2015 Pacific Resilience Disaster Management Exchange at Macun Barrack in Haikou, Hainan Province, People's Republic of China. The security cooperation event emphasizes hands-on, side-by-side interaction with the PLA during training for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

The Army, Engagement, and America's Pacific Century

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With the Pacific Ocean spanning 63.8 million square miles of open water, it is easy to lose sight of the importance of U.S. land power in the region. While much has been written in recent years regarding the significance of

the Nation's rebalance to the Pacific, many leaders in the Army may question what role their land forces will play in this strategic theater. At risk are forces that are singularly focused on cultivating combined arms maneuver competencies at the expense of their ability

to adequately train and advise host-nation forces. This myopic view could stymie efforts toward achieving operational and strategic objectives in the Pacific.

This article argues that security force assistance (SFA) activities, a subset of overall Department of Defense (DOD) security cooperation initiatives, are critical in shaping the security environment in the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) area of responsibility (AOR). It will examine the USPACOM strategic theater, while describing the Army's role in security cooperation, reviewing lessons from SFA missions, and making recommendations about how the Army should organize, train, and equip itself for its strategic role in the USPACOM AOR. SFA *done well* in the region holds incredible potential for achieving U.S. strategic objectives.

Examining the USPACOM Strategic Theater

President Barack Obama's vision for a renewed focus on the Asia-Pacific became clear during his first term. In November 2011 remarks before the Australian parliament, Obama reminded the audience that "the United States has been, and will always be, a Pacific nation."¹ This vision was reinforced in the 2015 *National Security Strategy* and the Department of Defense *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014*, which describes the DOD's goal to "continue our contributions to the U.S. rebalance to the Asia-Pacific ... a region that is increasingly central to U.S. political, economic, and security interests."² Military commanders in the Pacific understand this guidance and are adapting forces to meet strategic requirements.

USPACOM's strategy outlines the command's approach for implementing defense strategic guidance outlined in *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (upon which the *Quadrennial Defense Review* builds).³ Adm. Harry B. Harris, commander of USPACOM, lists the need to "modernize and strengthen alliances and partnerships" as one of his guiding principles; his command guidance also

calls for a line of operation focused on strengthening relationships as part of the rebalance.⁴ Within this strategy, the development of partner-nation capacity to conduct defense and provide for deterrence is a goal inherent to security cooperation.⁵ Despite the maritime nature of the region, security cooperation is conducted predominantly within the land and human domains, thus requiring unique army-to-army interactions. The ability to control the land domain and influence the human domain are land component tasks.⁶ As the joint force land component command within the USPACOM area of responsibility, these tasks fall to the U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC). However, the Army is not adequately prepared to contribute to the achievement of the USPACOM commander's theater objectives in either domain.

Indicative of this inadequate preparation is an assigned force that is better structured to fight Operation Desert Storm than to execute security cooperation in the region and to conduct what Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, designates as "Phase 0, Shape."⁷ While initiatives are underway to facilitate forward presence through the bilateral and multilateral exercises, building ally and partner-nation capacity is often treated as an ancillary task.

The Army's Role in Security Cooperation

The Army's role in security cooperation deserves further analysis. Currently, the spectrum of engagement in the region spans activities ranging from senior

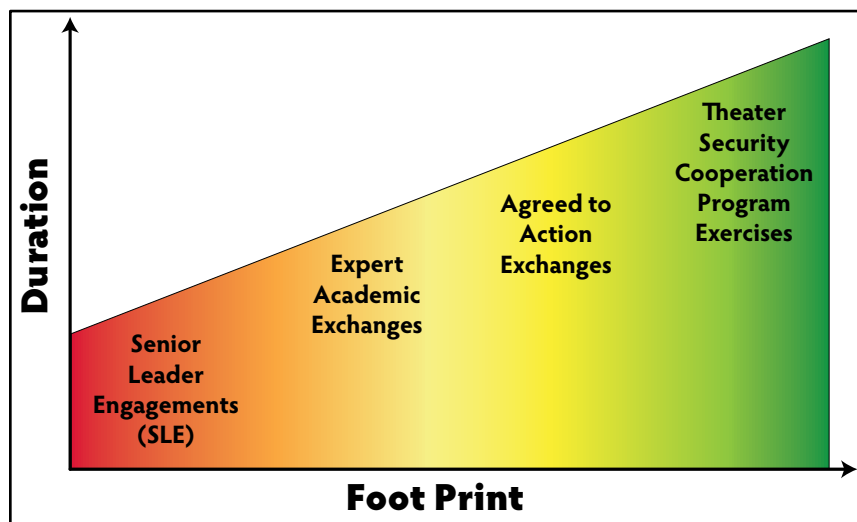


Figure. Spectrum of Engagement

leader engagements to theater security cooperation program exercises, as depicted in the figure.

The time required for individual senior leader engagements, represented on the far left side of the spectrum, is relatively short. They focus on a small, albeit influential, audience; the number of participants is relatively few. They are usually general officers who typically have the ability to build and leverage relationships for two to three years before they move to subsequent assignments. On the far right of the spectrum are theater security cooperation program exercises. These exercises last longer, involve many more troops, and focus on building relationships with much larger audiences.

Between these two ends of the spectrum fall numerous activities that can facilitate achievement of the USPACOM commanders' strategic objectives. Most of these midspectrum activities generally fall into the category of expert academic exchanges or agreed-to-action exchanges.⁸ These could be planned, coordinated, and executed by midlevel leaders and could produce long lasting effects because the relationships established should last much longer, potentially a decade or more. These activities deserve specific attention and specialized training for would-be practitioners. The Army is moving with haste to distance itself from operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, which risks losing hard-won, human-dimension lessons learned associated with face-to-face relationship building that apply directly to the execution of these type of exchanges.

The force's value increases through the retention of these capabilities and skills for future use. Drawing on these lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq and adapting a SFA approach can help to win in Phase 0 and mitigate the possibility of having to conduct these tasks in a future irregular conflict. Accordingly, it would be short sighted to cut the resourcing for SFA training as a cost-saving measure.

Lessons Learned in Iraq and Afghanistan

The rebalance to the Pacific follows deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, where SFA missions were numerous, and essential to operations. Initial research regarding whether lessons from those deployments can be applied across combatant commands has occurred to a limited degree. A 2013 RAND report, *Leveraging*



Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations, notes, "Canvassing the vast network of current SFA advisors and collecting their insights is relatively easy. The harder task is determining which of those lessons learned are actually implementable and sustainable for SFA operations in the future."⁹

This report proposes many qualitative conclusions with relevance to conducting future Army operations. Of note, the report explores the role that staffing should play, stating, "Morale and enthusiasm for the advising mission will continue to be closely linked with the performance and delivered results of advisors."¹⁰ The report also notes the role that training must play



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Angel Serna)

U.S. Marines with Company B, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, Marine Rotational Force–Darwin, conduct patrol-based operations and engage in platoon-level attacks 9–11 September 2015 with troops from His Majesty's Armed Forces of Tonga, the New Zealand Defence Force, the French Army of New Caledonia, and the Tongan Royal Guards during their culminating event for Exercise Tafakula 15 on Tongatapu Island, Tonga. The rotational deployment of U.S. Marines in Darwin affords unprecedented combined-training opportunities such as Exercise Tafakula and improves interoperability between the involved forces.

in developing competent advisors, highlighting that the time and emphasis placed on training for SFA tasks across the conventional force is inadequate. The value of these conclusions should be debated in greater detail among Army leaders as they apply to preparing regionally aligned forces.

The Army's effort to capture SFA lessons and establish doctrinal principles led to the publication of Field Manual (FM) 3-22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation*,

in early 2013. This FM contains important sections on the skills advisors should develop and the role that culture plays in advising, as did its predecessor, the now-obsolete FM 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*.¹¹ Numerous articles published in Department of the Army publications and other sources provide guidance on how SFA can be conducted effectively. These works, in addition to the current doctrine, should frame how units in the Pacific think about their regional engagements.



(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Antonio Turrento Ramos)

Lt. Zach Feenstra, navigation officer, teaches Royal Cambodian Navy sailors navigation techniques 17 November 2015 aboard the USS *Fort Worth* during Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Cambodia 2015. CARAT is a series of annual, bilateral maritime exercises between the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Marine Corps, and the armed forces of nine partner nations, including Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Timor-Leste.

In the last decade, we have seen the rebirth and evolution of SFA as an operating concept as the Army grappled with how to select and train for the mission at the institutional level. Organizing for SFA evolved from military transition teams and police transition teams to larger advise-and-assist brigades in Iraq. In Afghanistan, embedded training teams evolved to security training teams, which were later replaced by SFA teams and brigades. At present, with the decline of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army is at an institutional crossroad similar to its experience at the close of the Vietnam era. It must ask, “What level of commitment should the Army place on the SFA mission relative to its other responsibilities?”

With the recent reduction of the Army’s Advisor Academy at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and the stand down of the Army’s Irregular Warfare Center, the institutional foundation for future advisory efforts is at risk. Lack of institutional knowledge could lead to units adopting

ad hoc approaches to security force assistance. As Army forces become increasingly engaged in multilateral exercises across the Pacific, it would seem critical for these formations to take advantage of appropriate lessons from recent conflicts in order to properly train forces to conduct SFA across the theater.

Using SFA to Achieve Strategic Results: What is Required?

It is useful to examine organizing principles for SFA before setting forth recommendations for consideration by the land force in the Pacific. While the need for a persistent SFA capability is apparent, the cost of maintaining it could be perceived as too high. Consequently, it must be weighed in terms of trade-offs against overall force reductions.

Currently, the Army is conducting military-to-military engagement in the Pacific with a force that has nominally trained on SFA tasks, but that force retains

the advantage of extensive operational experience from ten years of SFA missions. However, as time passes, the Army's institutional memory is fading. New soldiers and leaders entering the Army in 2015 and beyond will have never known the significance of what can be achieved through SFA done well, or the costs of doing it poorly or not at all.

To combat this atrophy, training for SFA missions could be conducted simultaneously and in conjunction with other mission-essential tasks, supporting the combined arms maneuver core competency.¹² Indeed, advisors must be experts in their craft before they can adequately train partnered forces. However, for units assigned to and aligned with USPACOM, modifications should be made to standing mission-essential task lists, manning policies, and modified tables of organization and equipment (MTOEs) to allow for optimal implementation of SFA in order to support the Army's role in engagement.

It is essential to recognize the requirement for SFA skills in USPACOM and to prioritize and resource development of capabilities accordingly. To facilitate prioritization and resource development, the Army and units assigned to USPACOM must also make institutional changes.

At the height of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, there were calls for institutionalizing the Army's advisory efforts into a single advisor command. Notably, in his 2008 *Military Review* article entitled "Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for an Army Advisor Command," John Nagl advocated that "rather than focusing exclusively on conventional wars that may or may not occur in the future, the Army might better serve our Nation by building the most effective capabilities to win the wars of today."¹³ While numerous USPACOM entities and institutions focus on building various capabilities for conducting traditional operations, there remains no organization focused on training leaders and soldiers to a recognized standard in language, regional expertise, or cultural skills (LREC) to effectively engage with and advise their regional counterparts. To address USARPAC requirements, we recommend the following changes:

Manning for SFA. Manning policies should be updated to provide specially trained SFA practitioners in units assigned to USARPAC. Billets should be created to meet SFA requirements at the brigade combat team

(BCT) level; more precisely, these formations should be supplemented with the addition of SFA cells. The structure of the SFA team could be loosely based on previous SFA manning concepts used during deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Led by a field grade officer who has completed intermediate-level education and advisor training, the SFA cell would have the lead within the BCT for planning and coordinating SFA training and deployments.

Ideally, members of the SFA cell will have previously served in USPACOM assignments, will be well versed in the various linguistic and cultural aspects of the region, and they will have conducted the type of SFA missions they will be helping plan and coordinate. The formations frequently taking part in regional exercises need a small cadre of professionals who are comfortable with the SFA mission and understand the importance of engaging partners within the region.

In line with the Army's emerging concept for the engagement warfighting function, the nucleus of the cell should be a BCT's MTOE-authorized S-7 (inform and influence) and S-9 (civil affairs) sections.

Emphasis on language capability. A second priority should be to staff SFA cells with individuals having language and cultural competencies specific to their areas of operation. While the Army should not necessarily send all soldiers with a specific language proficiency to a region where that language is spoken, it makes sense to assign a certain percentage of U.S. soldiers with Filipino, Japanese, or other appropriate language skills and, perhaps, cultural heritage to units within USARPAC.

In examining what languages units assigned to USARPAC units should identify as a basis for manning, it is useful to start with the languages of treaty allies, i.e., Japanese, Korean, Tagalog (for the Philippines), and Thai. Mandarin Chinese would likely prove valuable as well. Expanding regional language and cultural competency through manning will undoubtedly enhance security cooperation in the USPACOM AOR.

Selection and proper recognition for SFA assignments. Not everyone has the personality or aptitude for SFA duties. Therefore, formations should select individuals who have traits compatible with the SFA mission-set and then dedicate time to training those soldiers for SFA. In addition, the institutional bias the Army saw against SFA assignments and

SFA-assigned officers in the last decade will have to be addressed by commanders at all levels from the start. Often advisors were viewed less favorably than those operating in traditional combat roles. A system of identification, training, and management should be established to ensure that the right individuals are attracted, selected, and rewarded for their service according to their contributions to achieving the desired engagement effects.

Further, since SFA instruction by outside agencies has been reduced, USARPAC should look to develop its own course or *advisor academy*, perhaps by leveraging the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) as the DOD's Asia-Pacific-focused regional studies center that specializes in leader development and education. Specifically, leaders designated for SFA positions should attend the APCSS advanced security cooperation course at the beginning of their assignment. The course would expose these leaders to a network of over one hundred international leaders from up to forty Asia-Pacific countries and establish relationships that could be leveraged throughout their tour, indeed throughout their career.

In addition to external courses, units should develop their own courses. An example of where this could occur would be in the 25th Infantry Division's *Lightning Academy* and specifically, the *Lightning Leader Course*. This recently developed course is aimed at junior officers and noncommissioned officers who will be taking part in regional engagements during their time assigned to USARPAC. Such courses should evolve to train the skills necessary for the SFA mission.

Personnel assignment policies. Finally, units in the Pacific should look to extend the time that service members are assigned to the region. The USARPAC engagement profile is robust with units executing numerous exercises with host-national partners annually. The Army should consider whether the current policy of an enforced thirty-six-month *date eligible for return from overseas* (DEROS) across certain USARPAC assigned forces is necessary. Another means of retaining institutional knowledge would be to develop a means of consecutively reassigning individuals within USARPAC units. To capitalize on lessons learned from regional exercises aimed at building and reinforcing better relationships with

partnered forces, soldiers assigned to a combatant command in the capacity of SFA should have longer utilization tours.

Training for an Advisor Role in the Pacific

Bringing in the right people is effective only if those individuals are properly trained to succeed in SFA missions. The U.S. Army describes the distinction between training for traditional, decisive-action missions and training for employment of regionally aligned forces: "Training focused on Unified Land Operations Standard METL [mission-essential task list] prepares our forces to excel during the 'seize the initiative' and 'dominate' phases of an operation. The RAF [regionally aligned forces]-focused training, particularly [LREC] combined with advise-and-assist skills training, prepares Army forces for the 'shape' and 'deter' phases of an operation."¹⁴ This guidance, extrapolated beyond regionally *aligned* forces and applied to *assigned* forces, and coupled with the USPACOM commander's emphasis on Phase 0 tasks, points to the necessity of training forces assigned to and aligned for USARPAC to manage the intricacies of SFA in the AOR.

Regional exercises with partners in the Pacific will only succeed if units see the requirement to train for SFA as a decisive operation. In providing guidance to units on training priorities, SFA activities are captured within the "Conduct stability operations" essential task as a subtask below the "Coordinate essential services for host nation" task group.¹⁵

Despite this formalization, many BCTs across the Army have assumed risk by forgoing fostering these SFA skills and focusing their training instead on refreshing and building core *combat* tasks. This focus is largely warranted as we restore and revitalize our core conventional competencies. However, within USPACOM, the probability of executing some type of SFA activity is almost certain and thus deserves proper attention. Therefore, units must seek a balance to achieve and sustain proficiency at advisor tasks while maintaining core combat-related competencies.

Equipping and Supporting Expeditionary Teams

Another vital factor to consider is how to best equip and sustain SFA elements in USPACOM. Despite

budgetary constraints, equipping and sustaining formations conducting numerous regional efforts cannot be undervalued. One of the first simple facts is that units need equipment tailored for the operational area they will be entering. For example, Pacific formations must be equipped to succeed in jungle environments. Unit acquisition priorities should, within budget constraints, field equipment that will ensure small units about to deploy can effectively support exercises across the Pacific.

The current process for funding SFA is extremely bureaucratic and is not responsive to changing and emerging needs. Therefore, USPACOM should consider implementing a funding mechanism similar to the Commanders' Emergency Response Program used during Operation Iraqi Freedom. This would enable operational units to fund short-suspense, emerging activities and initiatives, as well as to have readily available funds to support operations within the partner nations.

A larger, overarching sustainment issue centers on how USARPAC should support itself during regional exercises throughout the Pacific. Currently, units ship equipment to and from their home station when they participate in an exercise. In an October 2014 USARPAC Pacific Pathway exercise, equipment was moved on "contractor-piloted ships," which is an inefficient means of sustaining forces.¹⁶

While the Pacific Pathways program will continue to evolve, the U.S. Marine Corps "Darwin" model

could be useful as a template for developing future Army sustainment models.¹⁷ This model, currently in its infancy, provides Marine Corps elements with a sustainment base that can be leveraged in support of security cooperation exercises. The Army could look to leverage Camp Zama, Japan, as a sustainment node in support of regional exercises by building force equipment-and-sustainment packages there that units could draw from while en route to other nations.

Conclusion

The Army will continue to take part in numerous exercises in support of the USPACOM goal of shaping the theater. To do so effectively, Army units should embrace the advisor mind-set. Properly manning and training formations to advise will not be easy—it will require institutional change within the U.S. Army and other services. Nonetheless, this change will allow teams preparing to partner with forces across the USPACOM AOR to capitalize on the time they have together to achieve national strategic Phase 0 objectives. ■

The ideas and opinions presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not represent an official statement by the RAND Corp., the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Army, or any other government entity.

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Lessons of War in the 20th Century (New York: Routledge, 2006), 84. Marston provides a great example of how quickly lessons learned can be forgotten. He discusses the unbelievable effort to transform the British Indian Army (May 1942 to June 1943) to fight in the jungle against the Japanese. They turned the tide by 1944–1945 and became the best-trained jungle-fighting organization in the world at that time. Three years later, at the start of the Malayan Emergency in 1948, the lessons learned had largely been lost.

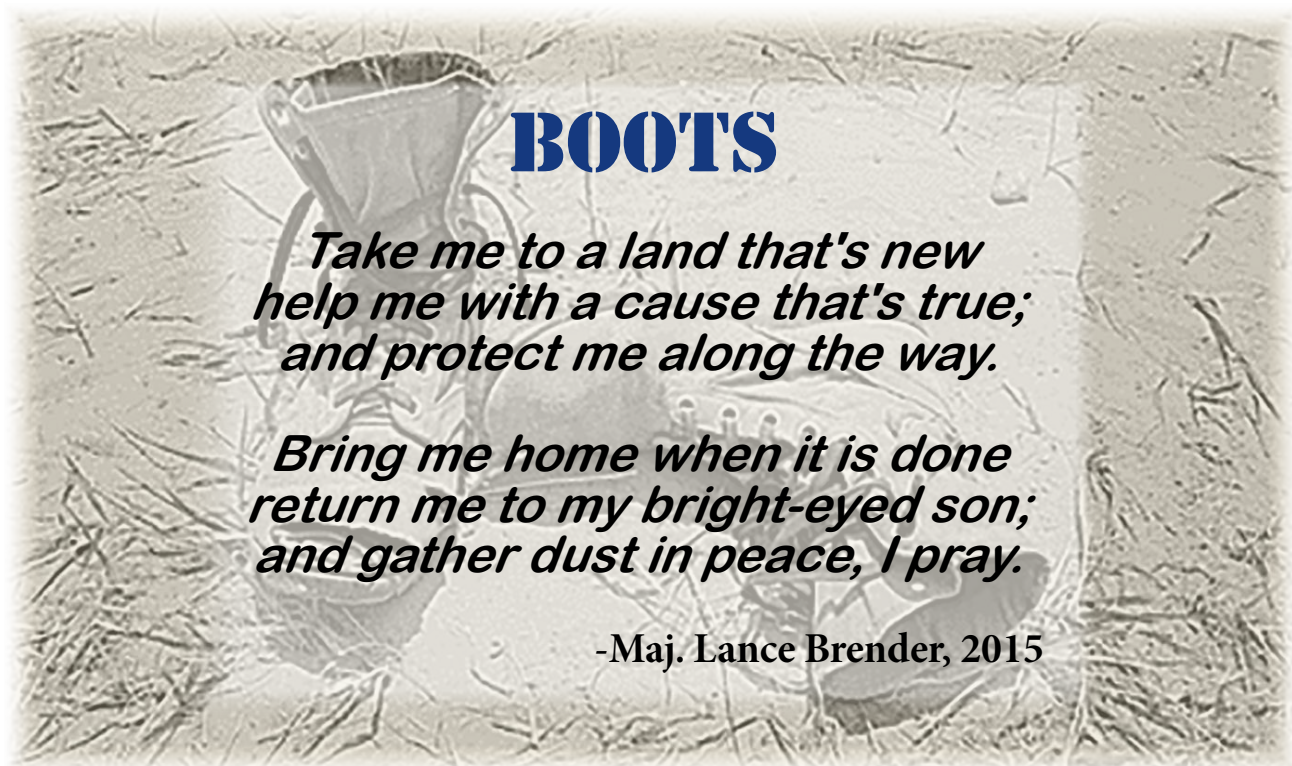
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BOOTS

*Take me to a land that's new
help me with a cause that's true;
and protect me along the way.*

*Bring me home when it is done
return me to my bright-eyed son;
and gather dust in peace, I pray.*

-Maj. Lance Brender, 2015

(Photo courtesy National Archives)