



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Travis Snook, senior instructor, NCO Academy, trains a Tentara Nasional Indonesia – Angkatan Darat (TNI-AD) student attending a Warrior Leader Course in 2009 on reacting to indirect fire. More than 50 students in the class learned basic squad level techniques, tactics and procedures during the three-week course in Bandung, Indonesia. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Joann Moravac)

The Security Cooperation Program: Shaping To Avoid War

By Jonathan (Jay) Koester

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Spend time talking to the NCOs of U.S. Army Pacific and you'll hear a lot of discussion about foreign partnerships and leveraging relationships to shape the Pacific. Taking the lead in building those relationships between USARPAC and foreign countries and militaries is the Security Cooperation Program.

The goal of USARPAC's SCP is nothing less than preventing war. Establishing strong relationships with foreign countries in the Pacific leads to stability and peace, said 1st Sgt. Paul McNeill, NCO in charge of the SCP,

because "there is no reason to fight if you're friends." The necessity of building relationships is a lesson learned from Afghanistan and Iraq.

"We have 'advise and assist' now," McNeill said. "We've evolved to where we are now a real partner with our partner nations. We realized it's better to establish those relationships prior to deploying.

"I firmly believe that shaping deters wars," McNeill said. "If we look at them as partner nations and not as subordinates, it lets our partners know, 'We are engaged



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Pelayo, USARPAC operations non-commissioned officer, discusses troop leading procedures with an Tentara Nasional Indonesia – Angkatan Darat (TNI-AD) instructor during a Warrior Leader Course in 2009. Indonesia is one of 39 nations across the Pacific to train with U.S. Soldiers as part of USARPAC's Theater Security Cooperation Program. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Joann Moravac)

with your cares here; we're not just focused on Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Watching the process grow organically is a pleasure to watch, said Sgt. Maj. Matthew Hill, USARPAC'S G-9 (Civil-Military Operations) sergeant major.

“The relationship-building, it's a great thing,” Hill said. “The first time I showed up for one of the DREEs [Disaster Response Exercise and Exchanges], right off the bat you saw field-grade officers on the Indonesian side walking right up to my master sergeant and greeting each other like long-lost friends. It's great to build those relationships because it cuts out a lot of red tape as far as being able to coordinate and develop programs to build those partnership capacities.”

Developing the capabilities of partner nations becomes more important as the United States leads multinational peacekeeping operations. Having partners helping in Afghanistan and elsewhere loses its value if those partners can't truly step up to the fight, McNeill said.

“A lot of countries out there want to be peacekeeping forces and want to deploy,” McNeill said. “Unfortunately right now, 90 percent of the partners we send on

peacekeeping forces are only doing force protection in Afghanistan or Iraq, guarding the gate and stuff of that nature. We're trying to get them to a point where they can go out there and fight alongside us and become more of a partner.”

Developing those partners and building their soldiers up from a basic level creates NCOs who are better trainers, mentors and leaders when they return to their units, McNeill said.

“My intent for the NCOs is that they learn how to teach and mentor going back to the basics,” McNeill said. “When you have a ready-made Soldier here in the United States Army, it's kind of easy for an E-7 to move into a platoon that's already trained, and be successful. But can you go into your kit bag and teach a country that's not as fully developed? We're talking about going ‘back to the basics,’ but it's hard to go ‘back to the basics’ when you have a finished product. [In the Pacific region], you'll be dealing with [foreign] soldiers who maybe don't believe in you. There's a language barrier, and you've got to get into your kit bag and learn those interpersonal skills to be an effective teacher and mentor. When they come back, they are better NCOs for it. They can take that back

[to the U.S.] and apply it. Then, when you have a disgruntled NCO or Soldier, you have skills you've already developed."

Building relationships, training foreign soldiers, slowly changing the culture and image of the U.S. Army — those things aren't always easy or quick, McNeill said, but they are vitally important to the stability of the

Pacific region.

"The [commanding general] said it best when he said he can pick up the phone and talk to a friend and stop something," McNeill said. "Just by being friends — not on a military level, but with the relationship they made on a personal level — that can be leveraged toward preventing problems and aiding stability." ■



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