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THESIS

**SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE:
STRATEGIC, ADVISORY, AND PARTNER
NATION CONSIDERATIONS**

by

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**SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE:
STRATEGIC, ADVISORY, AND PARTNER NATION CONSIDERATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

United States Security Force Assistance (SFA) provided to partner nations (PN) enjoys varying degrees of success. The conduct of a PN government can have a tremendous impact on the success of SFA efforts and, although it is often ignored, is not beyond the capability of the U.S. to influence. Additional factors within U.S. control, such as the establishment of clear goals and objectives, as well as unity and continuity of effort, often do not receive adequate emphasis in SFA operations. The way U.S. advisors are selected, trained, and employed can also have a significant impact on the success of SFA operations. Although General Purpose Forces (GPF) have assumed a greater advisory role in recent years, the training they currently receive is not adequate to make them effective advisors.

This thesis will show that, in order for U.S. SFA missions to be successful, such operations must: be based on clearly stated goals and objectives agreed upon by both the U.S. and the PN government, be contingent upon a PN government adhering to prescribed standards of conduct, and employ advisory personnel and units that have received specialized training in advisory duties.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANAAC	Afghan National Army Air Corps
ANASF	Afghan National Army Special Forces
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AP3	Afghan Public Protection Program/Police
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
CDI	Community Defense Initiative (Afghanistan)
CF	Coalition Forces
CFSOCC-A	Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan
CJSOTF-A	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan
COIN	Counterinsurgency
DoD	Department of Defense
ESAF	El Salvador Armed Forces
ETT	Embedded Training Team (Afghanistan)
FAS	Salvadoran Air Force
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FMLN	Farabundo Marti para Liberacion Nacional (El Salvador)
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FSF	Foreign Security Forces
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GOES	Government of El Salvador
GPF	General Purpose Forces
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
HN	Host Nation
IDAD	Internal Defense and Development
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (Afghanistan)
IW	Irregular Warfare

JCET	Joint Combined Exchange Training
JCISFA	Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance
JCMB	Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (Afghanistan)
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JSOTF-P	Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines
LCE	Liaison Control Element (Philippines)
LDI	Local Defense Initiative (Afghanistan)
MCO	Major Combat Operations
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Philippines)
MILGROUP	U.S. Military Group in El Salvador
MITT	Military Transition Team
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NTM-A/CSTC-A	NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OEF-A	Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan
OEF-P	Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines
OPATT	Operations, Plans and Training Team (El Salvador)
PN	Partner Nation
PSDF	People's Self Defense Force (Vietnam)
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
SA	Security Assistance
SC	Security Cooperation
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SF	Special Forces
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SFODA	Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha
SOF	Special Operations Forces
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UW	Unconventional Warfare
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement (Philippines)
VSP	Village Stability Platform/Program

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the Global War on Terror, the United States military has been called upon to perform traditional tasks at an unprecedented tempo, as well as performing many tasks, which it had not performed previously. The increasing emphasis on assisting partner nations to develop the capability and capacity to maintain their own security has led to an increase in both of the above categories. Providing assistance to partner nations is not a new task for the U.S. government or its military forces. Since World War II, even before the U.S. entered the war, the U.S. government provided significant assistance to allies in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. This assistance consisted of economic, technological, and military aspects. Assisting other nations in developing and maintaining their security forces, often involving the direct involvement of U.S. troops in combat, was a major component of U.S. strategy throughout the Cold War,¹ motivated by the perceived necessity to prevent the spread of communism. Since the end of the Cold War—and especially since the beginning of the Global War on Terror—military assistance efforts have come to require increasing “boots on the ground” presence. However, as Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates has acknowledged, “the U.S. military was designed to defeat other armies, navies, and air forces, not to advise, train, and equip them.”² However, due to increasing demands on the military forces of the United States, it is becoming increasingly important for the U.S. to assist its allies in developing the capability to be responsible for their own security.

Assistance to partner nations is a U.S. national priority, rooted in strategy documents and supported by joint and service-specific military doctrine. A still evolving concept concerning building partnership capacity is Security Force Assistance (SFA), which is defined in *U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-07*,

¹ Robert M. Gates, “Helping Others Help Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Assistance,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (May/June 2010): 2.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

Stability Operations, as “the unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority. It improves the capacity of host-nation or regional security organizations’ security forces (collectively referred to as foreign security forces (FSF)).”³ Security Force Assistance “consists of organizing, training, equipping, rebuilding, and advising foreign security forces.”⁴ Although the U.S. has been conducting activities that fit this description for some time, the institutionalization of this term, and the priority it is receiving from the national to tactical levels, highlight the importance of SFA to the fulfillment of U.S. national objectives.

A. THE BASIS FOR SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE

In order to adequately identify the characteristics of U.S. SFA efforts that determine success, it is necessary to understand how such efforts support U.S. national objectives. Because of the importance of these efforts, they are based not only in military doctrine, but foremost in national strategy. A series of strategy and policy documents, nested in our National Security Strategy (NSS), outline national priorities in different areas, as well as prescribing the means to achieve these ends. The NSS, the most recent version of which was published in May 2010, is a broad overview of the priorities our leadership seeks to pursue to ensure the national security of the United States. Although some of these mechanisms can be influenced by the application of military force, the NSS includes several other means by which our national security can be preserved. Although the purpose of the NSS is to outline broad priorities that contribute to the overall security of the United States, its focus is not exclusively internal. For example, the section of the NSS that most relates to this study prescribes that we

³ United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-07: Stability Operations* (Washington, D.C., Headquarters, Department of the Army, October 2008), 6–14.

⁴ Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, *Commander’s Handbook for Security Force Assistance* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, July 14, 2008), 3.

“Invest in the Capacity of Strong and Capable Partners”⁵ as a means to advance our national interests. There are several strategy documents nested in the NSS (including in the areas of Intelligence, Homeland Security, Combating Biological Threats, Countering Terrorism, etc.), but for the purposes of this discussion, the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and its supporting policies are more pertinent.

The most recent version of the NDS, which was published in June 2008, outlines the objectives that will guide the Department of Defense in support of the National Security Strategy, as well as providing direction for the National Military Strategy (NMS).⁶ According to the 2008 NDS, “arguably the most important military component of the struggle against violent extremists is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we help prepare our partners to defend and govern themselves.”⁷ In support of the NDS, the Joint Chiefs of Staff produce the National Military Strategy (NMS), the most recent version of which was published in 2004. The NMS supports the NDS by outlining how the military services will achieve the objectives prescribed in the National Defense Strategy. One of the concepts outlined in the NMS is Security Cooperation (SC), which consists of “All Department of Defense interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation.”⁸ One of the components of Security Cooperation is Security Assistance (SA), which is “A group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, as amended, or other related statutes by which the United States provides defense articles,

⁵ United States National Security Council, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 2010), 26.

⁶ *National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, 2004, 1.

⁷ *National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, United States Department of Defense, June 2008, 8.

⁸ United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, April 12, 2001 (amended through June 13, 2007), 480.

military training, and other defense-related services by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales in furtherance of national policies and objectives.”⁹ It is important to note the mention of U.S. national interests, policies, and objectives in these two nested definitions.

One of the DoD’s formal processes for assessing and reprioritizing how it will execute missions in support of national objectives is the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). As the 2006 QDR Report summarizes, “helping others to help themselves is critical to winning the long war,”¹⁰ and prescribes that General Purpose Forces (GPF) from all services develop the capability to “train, mentor and advise foreign security forces.”¹¹ Secretary Gates reiterated this guidance, stating, “...advising and mentoring security forces is moving from the periphery of institutional priorities, where it was considered the province of the Special Forces, to being a key mission for the armed forces as a whole.”¹² Institutionalizing the QDR and Secretary Gates’ comments, U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3.07-1, *Security Force Assistance*, which integrates several themes from the 2006 QDR, states that conventional ground forces must “perform more of the tasks traditionally performed by special operations forces. Conventional forces must understand foreign cultures and societies, as well as be able to train, mentor, and advise FSF.”¹³

B. CAPTURING SFA LESSONS LEARNED

In 2006, then Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Donald Rumsfeld directed the establishment of the Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA). The mission of the JCISFA is to “capture and analyze security force

⁹ United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 479.

¹⁰ United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, February 6, 2006), 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹² Gates, “Helping Others Help Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Assistance,” 3.

¹³ United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-07.1: Security Force Assistance* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, May 1, 2009), 1–2.

assistance lessons from contemporary operations in order to advise combatant commands and Military Departments on appropriate doctrine, practices, and proven tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) to prepare for and conduct security force assistance missions efficiently.”¹⁴ The JCISFA charter directed that the Secretary of the Army act as the Executive Agent for SFA, as well as prescribing that the Commander of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center (a Lieutenant General) would be the JCISFA director, and would report through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the SECDEF.¹⁵ The high rank of the JCISFA director, as well as his abbreviated reporting chain, are clear indications of the priority being given to SFA. Finally, Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 3000.07, dated December 1, 2008, prescribes that the DoD will “train, advise, and assist foreign security forces and partners at the ministerial, service, and tactical levels to ensure security in their sovereign territory or to contribute forces to operations elsewhere.”¹⁶ Although it remains to be seen how the individual Service chiefs will implement this guidance, based on the emphasis being given to SFA efforts, and on improving our performance when conducting them, it is clear that SFA will be an enduring facet of U.S. operations for the foreseeable future.

C. SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE AND FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE

The increased emphasis on performing advisory missions has required significant adjustments in U.S. military doctrine, and—perhaps more importantly—the training of our own forces to support these adjustments. The publication of *U.S. Army FM (FM) 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance* in May 2009 established SFA as a core competency of the U.S. Army, and designated the

¹⁴ Memorandum from Secretary of Defense to Deputy Secretary of Defense et al. Subject: Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA) Charter, April 4, 2006, 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Modular Brigade Combat Team (BCT) as the Army's cornerstone SFA unit.¹⁷ However, BCTs will require augmentation and additional training prior to being deployed to conduct SFA missions, and will also be required to be trained and equipped for their more traditional doctrinal missions.¹⁸ Although *FM 3-07.1* acknowledges the necessity of Special Operations Forces (SOF) to participate in SFA, and discusses the integration of SOF and General Purpose Forces (GPF) in conducting SFA operations, it devotes only an appendix to their responsibilities in SFA.¹⁹ In practice, BCTs tasked with SFA missions have become the focal point of ongoing operations, especially in Iraq, in the form of "Advise and Assist Brigades."²⁰ Although this refers to the mission they are conducting, rather than to a change in force structure, SFA missions require "a different mind-set and focus" than missions to which BCTs are more accustomed.²¹ This paradigm shift has caused some consternation in both SOF (particularly Special Forces) and GPF circles, in part because of resistance to change—both because of the necessity for GPF to learn new skills, and because of the perception that they are actually being asked to conduct Foreign Internal Defense (FID), thus encroaching on a mission traditionally reserved for SOF. In practice, however, FID and SFA are more closely related than prevailing opinions may make them seem.

1. Foreign Internal Defense (FID) Defined

Despite the priority Security Force Assistance is receiving from U.S. government and military organizations, it is still often confused with FID. FID, which has traditionally been the province of SOF (and in particular, U.S. Army Special Forces (SF), also known as 'the Green Berets'), is defined as

¹⁷ United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-07.1: Security Force Assistance* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, May 1, 2009), 4–1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ii.

²⁰ Gates, "Helping Others Help Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Force Assistance," 3.

²¹ Philip Battaglia and Curtis Taylor, "Security Force Assistance Operations: Defining the Advise and Assist Brigade," *Military Review* (July–August 2010): 4.

“participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.”²² Notably absent from this definition is any reference to *external* threats; as the name implies, FID is an inwardly focused program. FID is conducted by U.S. military forces and government organizations, in support of a partner nation’s Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) program, which encompasses “the full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and protect itself from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. It focuses on building effective institutions (political, economic, military, and social) that respond to the needs of society.”²³ Given the significant similarity between FID and SFA, it is easy to see how the two practices could be confused.

2. Sources of the Confusion Between FID and SFA

Despite the priority being placed on conventional (albeit augmented) BCTs by the Army, the Department of Defense recently designated USSOCOM as the joint SFA proponent.²⁴ Furthermore, the Army’s Combined Arms Center, which has been assigned Army proponentcy for Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, has assumed responsibility for SFA as well, and integrated it into the U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center,²⁵ which arguably contributes to the confusion. Although the U.S.’s two most visible ongoing operations—Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation New Dawn (formerly Operation Iraqi

²² United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, April 12, 2001 (amended through June 13, 2007), 212.

²³ *Ibid.*, 273.

²⁴ Theresa Baginski et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Improving U.S. Security Force Assistance Efforts* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College, 2009), 9.

²⁵ Counterinsurgency, Security Force Assistance, Stability Operations Website, *United States Army Combined Arms Center*, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/index.asp>.

Freedom)²⁶—involve conducting SFA in COIN environments, fighting an insurgency is not a precondition for SFA (and is in fact a more common feature of FID missions). This disparity in doctrinal responsibility, as well as the presumptive connection between COIN and SFA, is arguably one of the reasons for the confusion about what differentiates SFA from FID. The similarity between FID and SFA, as well as the fact that both types of missions are being conducted simultaneously in both Afghanistan and Iraq, has fueled the debate over whether GPF are simply now being tasked with conducting FID, which has traditionally—but not exclusively—been a SOF mission. This confusion is so pervasive that FID and SFA are often used interchangeably, even in professional literature.

Although there is currently no formal joint definition of SFA, the Army definition above focuses on the legitimate authority receiving assistance, rather than on the potential threats—internal or external—that this authority may face. Therefore, when analyzing these two definitions, it seems that FID is actually a subset of SFA, which specifically addresses internal threats, including insurgencies. The Department of Defense publishes the Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept (IW JOC) to outline how it visualizes the joint force operating to counter irregular threats in the future.²⁷ According to the most recent version of this document, published in 2010, “FID occurs in the context of an internal threat, whereas SFA may be provided or conducted as part of peacetime engagement or in response to an external threat.”²⁸ Based on that definition, it is more accurate to say that SF units are conducting a specific type of SFA when they engage foreign military forces through activities, such as Joint Combined Exercise Training (JCETs), which are “programs conducted overseas to fulfill U.S. forces training requirements and at the same time exchange the sharing of

²⁶ Memorandum from Secretary of Defense to Commander, U.S. Central Command. Subject: Request to Change the Name of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM to Operation NEW DAWN, dated February 17, 2010.

²⁷ United States Department of Defense, *Joint Operating Concept for Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats (Version 2.0)* (United States Department of Defense, May 17, 2010), 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

skills between U.S. forces and host nation counterparts.”²⁹ However, the 2010 IW JOC expands on the definition of FID it provides by describing it as “a long-term effort that requires persistent rather than episodic engagement” that “should be a multi-year program of synchronized civilian and military activities and engagements.”³⁰ However, the characteristics listed in this description seem to describe SFA more so than FID.

Both FID and SFA may be conducted across the full spectrum of military operations, from stable peace to general war. The key difference between FID and SFA is that FID is concerned mainly with internal threats, while SFA focuses on both internal and external threats. Furthermore, as our current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq illustrate, although FID and SFA differ in their focus, they can occur simultaneously. In each of those operations, U.S. military forces (along with forces from other NATO member countries) are currently training security forces, which are responsible for internal security (such as police), as well as military forces, which will someday be responsible to protect their respective countries from potential external threats. The differences between FID and SFA are based on the consumers and objectives of the assistance provided, not on the type of U.S. forces used to provide it. Despite the differing focuses of FID and SFA, some believe that SFA is a task best performed by Special Forces, based on their competence and experience in conducting FID.

3. Assigning Responsibility for SFA

Although SOF are required by law to conduct FID,³¹ and are the forces most closely associated with it, there is no legal requirement that they be the *only* forces who do so. In fact, the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report prescribes that GPF from all services develop the capability to “train, mentor and

²⁹ United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-05: Doctrine for Special Operations* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, December 17, 2003), G–7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.

advise foreign security forces,”³² guidance which received even greater emphasis in the 2010 QDR Report.³³ *Joint Publication 3-07.1, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense*, states, “Although USSOCOM is legislatively-mandated to conduct FID, which it does as a core task, other designated DoD conventional forces may contain and employ organic capabilities to conduct limited FID indirect support, direct support, and combat operations.”³⁴

Because SFA is a fairly new and still evolving concept, several different theories exist regarding what conditions dictate SOF or GPF primacy in SFA missions. Regardless of the arguments for assigning responsibility for SFA to SOF units, the U.S. simply does not possess enough SOF assets to fulfill our current U.S. SFA requirements, much less any new requirements that may emerge. According to *U.S. Army FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency*, the first edition of which was published in December 2006, “while SOF personnel may be ideal for some training and advisory roles, limited numbers restrict their ability to carry out large-scale missions to develop [host nation] security forces.”³⁵ In response to this scarcity, *FM 3-24* assigns responsibility thusly: “while FID has traditionally been the primary responsibility of the special operations forces (SOF), training foreign forces is now a core competency of regular and reserve units of all Services.”³⁶ This guidance directly supports the priorities outlined in the 2006 QDR Report.³⁷ Furthermore, while *FM 3-24* and the QDR established FID as a

³² United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, February 6, 2006), 42.

³³ United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, 2010), 29.

³⁴ United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-07.1: Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, April 30, 2004), V-4.

³⁵ United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 2006), 6-3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, February 6, 2006), 23.

doctrinal responsibility of each of the services, the development of *capabilities* to conduct FID is still lagging behind doctrine (a phenomenon that is not uncommon). However, although recent experience in Afghanistan and Iraq have made it clear that advisory missions cannot remain the exclusive province of SOF, it would be an error to assign advisory missions to GPF based solely on the lack of available SOF units to accomplish the mission.

a. *The Influence of ‘Size’ on SFA Mission Assignment*

Although the sheer scope of ongoing U.S. efforts to assist in the development of Afghan and Iraqi security forces, as well as long-standing steady-state advisory efforts, have brought to light the need for GPF to serve as the main effort in SFA—at least under certain conditions. However, there is concern that this realization is a function of the scarcity of SOF relative to numerical mission requirements, rather than the core competencies and skill sets required for such missions. It is important that leaders do not use merely the size of an SFA mission to determine the type of forces should be employed for it. The critical skill sets and expertise that are required to accomplish the mission (and to further U.S. goals while providing relevant training to the partner nation’s forces) have far more influence on success than the type of units employed.³⁸ However, even some of the Army’s senior leaders have reversed these factors. In late 2007, Lieutenant General Peter W. Chiarelli, then Senior Military Advisor to the SECDEF, wrote, “we should ensure our conventional forces have the inherent flexibility to transition to ISF support when the mission becomes too large for the Special Forces. If requirements exceed Special Forces capabilities, then training and transition teams should be internally resourced from conventional U.S. or coalition units already operating in the battlespace.”³⁹ Unfortunately, this reasoning focuses solely on physical requirements, and ignores the role

³⁸ John Mulbury, “ARSOF, General Purpose Forces, and FID: Who Does What, Where, and When?,” *Special Warfare* 21, no. 1 (January–February 2008): 18.

³⁹ Peter W. Chiarelli and Stephen M. Smith, “Learning from Our Modern Wars: The Imperatives of Preparing for a Dangerous Future,” *Military Review* (September–October 2007): 8.

competency must play in assigning responsibility for SFA missions. The assignment of responsibility for SFA missions should be based on the skills required for success, as well as the political and operational conditions under which these missions must be undertaken, rather than on numerical requirements.

Although SFA and FID are closely related concepts, they are not synonymous. The key distinction between SFA and FID is a function of focus, and of the conditions under which each type of mission is conducted. The determination of whether an advisory effort is best classified as SFA or FID does not depend on what type of units are employed to conduct these missions, or on the scope of the requirements they entail. The association of SOF—particularly SF units, with the low signature and unique skill sets for which they are known—with FID, and a lack of clarity concerning SFA, continues to contribute to a certain level of confusion, even among senior military leaders. Although SFA is a more recently established term than FID, based on their doctrinal definitions, FID is actually a specific type of SFA operation.

Inherent to any discussion about what type of forces are best suited to perform SFA missions is an underlying debate about what qualities and capabilities are necessary for an advisor to be successful. Special Operations Forces—particularly Special Forces personnel—are uniquely qualified to interact with foreign security forces under a wide range of operational and political conditions. However, General Purposes Forces—due in large part to their numerical superiority to SOF—will be required to participate in SFA operations for the foreseeable future, despite the disparity that currently exists between their traditional skill sets and those required for successful advisory and assistance missions. Given this disparity, it is clear that measures must be taken to adequately prepare GPF to conduct SFA missions, while maintaining competence in their doctrinal missions. However, the best way to achieve this—at the individual and organizational levels—is currently the subject of much debate.

D. FUTURE SFA REQUIREMENTS

Although the specific projections for SFA requirements submitted by geographic combatant commanders (GCCs) is classified, it is inadvisable to expect that SFA requirements will be unnecessary after the current missions in Afghanistan and Iraq have been completed. Furthermore, despite the long duration and resource-intensive nature of U.S. efforts to assist the Afghan and Iraqi governments to improve the capabilities and capacity of their security forces, it is important to note that U.S. assistance to its allies is actually more effective if it is conducted during Shaping Operations,⁴⁰ and is therefore, *preventative* in nature.⁴¹ The preventative nature of assisting our partner nations was reiterated in the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS), which prescribes investing in capable partners as a means to “Prevent the Emergence of Conflict.”⁴² Failing to provide proper assistance to partner nation forces during peacetime may result in the necessity to do so (and perhaps to actually participate in combat operations) during periods of conflict. Although the governments of Afghanistan and Iraq were not allies of the U.S. prior to our intervention in those countries, it had become obvious that U.S. assistance efforts required increased emphasis, in order to decrease the potential burdens on our military forces.

Although the U.S. government maintains long-standing assistance relationships with several countries around the world, this assistance (e.g., direct funding or Foreign Military Sales (FMS)) is often transparent to the indigenous population. However, in instances where U.S. assistance is more overt (i.e.,

⁴⁰ United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, September 17, 2006 (Incorporating Change 1, February 13, 2008), IV–27—IV–28. “Shaping Operations” involve joint and multinational operations – inclusive of normal and routine military activities—and various interagency activities that are performed to dissuade or deter potential adversaries and to assure or solidify relationships with friends and allies.

⁴¹ David Maxwell, “Considerations for Organizing and Preparing for Security Force Assistance Operations,” *Small Wars Journal*, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/03/security-force-assistance-oper-1/>.

⁴² *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, May 2010, 27.

requiring the presence of U.S. military forces), it becomes far more evident to the population, and can have a far greater impact—positive or negative—on the level of legitimacy the partner nation government enjoys in the eyes of the public. In any U.S. advisory effort, a high priority is placed on ensuring that operations are conducted with a partner nation “face” on them. Indeed, official guidance to that effect is often published. However, there is a far greater purpose to ensuring that partner nation forces are “in the lead” on operations. As advisory missions continue, and partner nation competency improves, the level of responsibility should shift from U.S. forces to partner nation forces, and U.S. forces should shift their focus from “training” to “advising.” Partner nations, therefore, must be afforded opportunities to improve their capabilities, which they cannot do without exercising them at increasing levels of independence.

Many U.S. assistance efforts—including the current efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq—rely on contribution from our allies. As further evidence of the importance of our continued engagement with partner nations and their militaries, Admiral James Stavridis, Commander and U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, stated, “foreign military training is the most important long-term activity our military undertakes in terms of delivering security in this century.”⁴³ Furthermore, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff designated Building Partnership Capacity and Security Force Assistance as special areas of emphasis in Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) for academic year 2010-2011,⁴⁴ showing the criticality of emerging military leaders becoming well versed in SFA principles.

⁴³ Kevin Baron, “Pentagon Sees Training Allies As Its Greatest Hope,” *Stars and Stripes*, July 30, 2010, <http://www.stripes.com/news/pentagon-sees-training-allies-as-its-greatest-hope-1.112875>.

⁴⁴ Memorandum from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, et al. Subject: 2010 Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) Special Areas of Emphasis (SAE), May 17, 2010.

E. FOCUS AND SCOPE OF INQUIRY

Although there is no universal template that can be applied to all SFA efforts, this study will seek to identify the strategic decisions, partner nation conditions, and best advisory practices employed in past and ongoing U.S. SFA efforts. Based on the positive or negative results yielded by these, it will recommend ways to maximize the former while mitigating the latter in future SFA efforts, and possibly in our continuing engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although U.S. assistance to Afghanistan and Iraq has been underway for several years, both operations continue to offer opportunities to improve our practices, in pursuit of more positive and enduring results. This thesis will draw parallels between U.S. assistance to El Salvador in the 1980s and 1990s and the ongoing efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and will identify positive and negative aspects of each operation in order to recommend methods that may be used to influence the success of future SFA operations.

Despite the obvious contribution to U.S. national priorities that SFA activities make, and the strategy and policy documents that highlight its importance in building the capability and capacity of partner nations, there is still a lack of clear doctrinal guidance describing the best practices for conducting SFA. Although SFA as it is now defined is still an immature (and indeed still evolving) concept, the U.S. has undertaken operations exhibiting the key SFA characteristics several times in the past. This work will therefore consider U.S. SFA efforts in El Salvador, as well as ongoing SFA efforts in Afghanistan and the Philippines, as case studies. In his comparison of U.S. assistance to Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador, Ramsey asserts, “Each of these conflicts is significantly different, yet the challenge confronted by the advisors—how to establish an effective working relationship with their counterparts to improve the host nation military effectiveness in addressing its security problems—was the same.”⁴⁵ The same comparison can be extended to current assistance to Afghanistan and Iraq.

⁴⁵ Robert D. Ramsey, III. *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 2.

Although SFA efforts usually include the various security forces of a partner nation—including military forces and police—this study will focus primarily on the military aspects of SFA. However, many of the countries to which we provide SFA do not employ the same template—that is, a clear separation between military forces and law enforcement organizations—as the United States. For example, many countries have (or desire to establish, with U.S. assistance) a national police force, for which there is no clear U.S. corollary.⁴⁶ However, despite the lack of a direct corollary within our military, or even within the U.S., our military forces—because they possess many of the skills a partner nation may wish to develop in a given security force—may be required to assist in developing these forces. Although the training of the police forces in Iraq has in large part been tasked to civilian law enforcement personnel and organizations, and the training, which has been performed by military personnel, has generally been tasked to military police organizations, there are examples of military forces assisting in the establishment of law enforcement organizations. For example, U.S. Special Forces units are currently being used to train Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) units, as well as local militias in several areas under the “Village Stabilization Program.”⁴⁷ There are several other examples of there not being a clear distinction between military, paramilitary, and law enforcement functions in partner nations, where we can expect to conduct SFA missions in the future. This study will therefore approach SFA partnerships not from a “consumer” perspective, but from a U.S. perspective.

It is extremely unlikely that an oppressive regime would request Security Force Assistance from the U.S., or any other external actor. Such a regime would most likely not enjoy the voluntary support of the indigenous population, much less the U.S. government, and any U.S. military involvement would most likely be

⁴⁶ United States Department of Defense, *Joint Operating Concept for Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats (Version 2.0)* (United States Department of Defense, May 17, 2010), 32.

⁴⁷ Andrew Feickert, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, July 16, 2010), 9.

in the form of Special Operations Forces conducting Unconventional Warfare (UW), which differs from SFA in that it centers on working with irregular forces, rather than a host nation's conventional forces.⁴⁸ More importantly, although the U.S. has a history of providing humanitarian aid even to totalitarian regimes (e.g., North Korea), if such a regime requested security assistance from the U.S., it would most likely not be forthcoming. This study will therefore consider only those instances in which a partner nation has requested—or at least consented to—U.S. assistance, with respect to both historical research and future application.

United States interaction with partner nations is increasingly being conducted through a “whole of government” approach. However, this work will focus primarily on the factors influencing SFA that are within the purview of military decision makers (within the context of their role as agents of the U.S. government; their decisions will be assumed to support overall U.S. government objectives). If external influences had (or are having) a significant positive or negative impact on the military aspects of the SFA operations discussed herein, they will be examined. Furthermore, although each of the Services contributes to advisory efforts, the focus of this work will generally be on the U.S. Army's role in SFA. More specifically, it will examine conditions under which U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) and GPF are being employed in SFA roles, with the goal of identifying conditions that best determine which type of force is best suited to a particular SFA mission.

Another factor that must be considered in any study of U.S. security force assistance effort is the context under which the effort is undertaken, and the objectives that are established as a result. The U.S. participates in several persistent, “steady state” assistance relationships, which usually involve providing some type of military assistance under generally permissive conditions.

⁴⁸ United States Department of the Army. *Field Manual 3-05.130: Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, September 2008), 1–2.

However, SFA operations, like the ongoing efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, which were initiated after the cessation of major combat operations (MCO) and regime changes in those countries (and conducted during periods of extended conflict short of MCO), are more resource intensive, politically sensitive, and potentially dangerous. It is for this type of environment that we must prepare our forces, and therefore, it is operations, such as these, that merit continued study. Although we would prefer to successfully assist partner nations in shaping the environment so that our assistance could be provided in more hospitable conditions, we cannot take as given that this will be possible. We must, therefore, prepare not for this war, but for the next, but we can only do so by examining recent and current operations, and determining how we can improve our operations in the future.

II. U.S. ASSISTANCE TO EL SALVADOR, 1980–1992

The assistance provided to El Salvador by the United States in the 1980s and 1990s is an example of a U.S. assistance effort that lends itself to examination on several levels. The strategic basis for U.S. involvement, conditions placed on continuing assistance, the impact of advisory characteristics at the individual and organizational levels, and the conditions within El Salvador prior to and throughout U.S. assistance had a significant effect on the success of the U.S. assistance efforts.

The assistance provided by the U.S. to El Salvador was successful for several reasons. Although there were certainly challenges that affected the efficacy of this assistance effort, the methods employed by the U.S. government and its advisors contributed to increasing the competence of El Salvador's military forces and government, and ultimately to El Salvador's ability to defeat an insurgency. By assessing the status and requirements of El Salvador's military forces, placing strict limits on advisory presence, screening advisors for specific qualifications, and establishing and enforcing standards of conduct for the El Salvadoran government and military, the U.S. successfully assisted El Salvador in achieving its security goals.

A. BACKGROUND

Despite a military coup in 1979,⁴⁹ the El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) was lacking in training, equipment, discipline, and professionalism, and was operating more as a widely dispersed militia than the professional military of a sovereign nation.⁵⁰ By late 1980, the Government of El Salvador (GOES) found itself facing a growing communist insurgency, led by the Farabundo Marti

⁴⁹ Robert D. Ramsey, III, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 83.

⁵⁰ Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 1988), 24.

National Liberation Front (FMLN), which rapidly evolved into a civil war.⁵¹ Still reeling from the failures of Vietnam, the U.S. government was reluctant to risk becoming involved in another protracted conflict on foreign soil. However, in order to maintain regional stability in Latin America, and to prevent the spread of communism in the western hemisphere, it was in the U.S.'s strategic interests to assist the GOES in defeating the growing insurgency and restoring stability in El Salvador. Initially, the U.S. elected only to reinstate economic aid to El Salvador, to offset the support the insurgency was receiving from Cuba and the Soviet Union,⁵² but the ineffectiveness of the ESAF soon made it evident that more direct assistance was necessary.⁵³

B. THE BASIS AND CONDITIONS FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE

One of the main discriminators between the U.S. advisory effort in El Salvador and many other such efforts (including ongoing efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq) is that it was based on a clearly defined strategy that had been agreed upon by both governments.⁵⁴ U.S. assistance to El Salvador had the advantage of a unique foundation, in the form of a National Campaign Plan (NCP), which outlined clear objectives for the GOES, the ESAF, and the U.S. forces advising them. Although it was not published until 1983,⁵⁵ the NCP addressed not only how the application of military force could contribute to winning the war, but how El Salvador's government and civilian institutions could do so as well,⁵⁶ reflecting the "whole of government" approach, which is necessary for any assistance mission (especially one being conducted in support of COIN) to succeed. The

⁵¹ James S. Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," *Airpower Journal* (Summer 1998): 27.

⁵² *Building Peace and Democracy in El Salvador: An Ongoing Challenge* (Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Foundation for the Americas, February 18, 2000), 2.

⁵³ Ramsey, "Advising Indigenous Forces," 84.

⁵⁴ Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," 30.

⁵⁵ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, 21.

⁵⁶ Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," 30.

cornerstones of U.S. military assistance to El Salvador were Operations, Plans and Training Teams (OPATTs), which were established at the brigade level.⁵⁷

One of the most important aspects of U.S. aid to El Salvador is that it was contingent upon the actions of the Salvadoran military, and indeed the Salvadoran government as a whole. Although it was in the strategic interests of the United States to support El Salvador in defeating the insurgency with which it was faced, there were several issues—most notably the El Salvadoran government's record of human rights abuses—that made close U.S. monitoring of Salvadoran actions prudent, if not necessary. The U.S. government therefore had to find a way to influence the actions of the El Salvadoran government and improve the competence of its military, while also protecting its own national interests. Making continued U.S. assistance contingent upon the GOES improving its performance with respect to human rights was necessary for the U.S. to maintain its own legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. Furthermore, the U.S. government did not shrink from acknowledging El Salvador's problems, or from communicating their relationship to continued U.S. aid. In fact, President George H. W. Bush visited El Salvador personally, to communicate to the GOES the necessity of eliminating human rights abuses if they desired continued assistance.⁵⁸ As a result, although U.S. advisors were in El Salvador to help the ESAF to become a more competent, effective, and professional military, they had the additional responsibility of monitoring the ESAF's conduct and reporting on any issues that could undermine U.S. government interests, especially those related to human rights.⁵⁹ However, while this use of OPATTs as de facto "compliance officers" may have enhanced the perceived legitimacy of U.S. assistance to El Salvador in the international community, it may have actually harmed the effort at the tactical level.

⁵⁷ Cecil E. Bailey, "OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisors in El Salvador," *Special Warfare* 17, no. 2 (December 2004): 18.

⁵⁸ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 86.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

C. ADVISORY CONSIDERATIONS IN EL SALVADOR

Initial U.S. military assistance to El Salvador was limited to a small group of officers from the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) advising the ESAF general staff. Although the stated purpose of this team, which was led by General Fred E. Woerner, was to assist the GOES in developing their national military strategy, another equally important task was to conduct an assessment of internal conditions within the ESAF, and to determine the objectives of U.S. assistance before large-scale advisory efforts were initiated.⁶⁰ The “Woerner Report,” as this assessment came to be known,⁶¹ is somewhat unique, because it was completed under conditions where U.S. forces were not actively involved in combat. Assessments, such as these, were not possible in Afghanistan and Iraq, since U.S. forces were tasked with training and advising those partner nations after they were already engaged in combat operations. It was not long before it became clear that, in order for the ESAF to reverse the influence of the insurgency before it had become too strong to counteract, it was necessary to increase not only the size, but more importantly the competence and professionalism of the ESAF in a short period of time.⁶²

In an effort to avoid repeating the ever-increasing advisory presence (which eventually grew into a major commitment of maneuver divisions) that characterized U.S. assistance to South Vietnam in the 1960s, the U.S. Congress imposed a strict limit on the advisory presence in El Salvador. Only 55 military personnel (officially designated as “trainers”)⁶³ could be assigned to the U.S. Military Group (MILGROUP) in El Salvador at any given time.⁶⁴ Although the number of U.S. troops in El Salvador actually reached 150, as a result of

⁶⁰ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 85.

⁶¹ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, 21.

⁶² Bailey, “OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisors in El Salvador,” 18.

⁶³ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 84.

⁶⁴ Corum, “The Air War in El Salvador,” 31.

personnel being attached to the MILGROUP on a temporary basis,⁶⁵ even this number is incredibly low, given the size of the staffs they were charged to train and develop. Furthermore, U.S. advisors were charged not only with improving the tactical competence of the ESAF, but also with improving the efficiency of other disciplines like maintenance, logistics, and other support functions.⁶⁶

The limitations placed on the level of actual U.S. participation in El Salvador (most notably the limit of 55 military trainers/advisors) satisfied all U.S. government stakeholders. This limitation also satisfied the El Salvadoran government (and most, though not all, of its military leaders), because such a small U.S. presence ensured that they would maintain control over military operations. Nonetheless, although some ESAF brigade commanders accepted U.S. assistance, many of them viewed the presence of U.S. advisors in their units as an intrusion, because they believed their competence (and by extension, their authority), was being questioned.⁶⁷ Furthermore, some of the Salvadoran officers objected to being advised by a U.S. officer of equal—or even senior—rank.⁶⁸ On MiTTs currently employed in Iraq, the team leaders are generally at least one rank below the commander they advise. Therefore, majors (and sometimes captains) typically lead battalion MiTTs, lieutenant colonels lead brigade MiTTs, and colonels lead division MiTTs. Although there are other factors that may contribute to this practice, including the limited availability of U.S. officers of appropriate rank, seniority, and experience, it has the additional effect of being less threatening to partner nation counterparts. However, it may also result in less effective advisory efforts. By 1985, OPATTs in El Salvador were led by combat arms majors, instead of lieutenant colonels, to diffuse the

⁶⁵ Corum, “The Air War in El Salvador,” 31.

⁶⁶ Michael Childress, *The Effectiveness of U.S. Training Efforts in Internal Defense and Development: The Cases of El Salvador and Honduras* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 1995), 21.

⁶⁷ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 93.

⁶⁸ Bailey, “OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisors in El Salvador,” 20.

issue of rank.⁶⁹ Although the rank structure of MiTTs currently operating in Iraq and Afghanistan was designed to prevent this issue from arising, the sheer number of MiTTs in operation represents a significant drain on combat arms officers that could otherwise be employed in more conventional roles.

The numerical limitation on advisors in El Salvador made it necessary for the MILGROUP to develop alternate methods of training ESAF units. One specialized ESAF infantry battalion, or BIRI, was actually trained at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Perhaps because of the location of the training, a cadre of 180 personnel was eventually used to train this one battalion, at a prohibitive cost of \$8 million. This high cost-training model, as well as the lofty goals for ESAF expansion, made it necessary to train new units locally. However, the operational tempo and conditions within El Salvador made it desirable to establish a training facility outside the country, so the Regional Military Training Center in Honduras was established.⁷⁰

On an individual level, many of the officers and non-commissioned officers who served on OPATTs served multiple tours in El Salvador before and during the civil war. This was largely the result of having a small pool of qualified personnel from which to choose. Since the 7th Special Forces Group was already training elements of the ESAF prior to the outbreak of war, it was natural for personnel from that unit to form the foundation of the increased assistance effort. However, a greater pool of candidates was needed, so officers with previous SF experience who had returned to their basic branches were sought out for OPATT assignments as well. Although SF did not become a distinct branch until 1987,⁷¹ many of the officers chosen for OPATT assignments were SF qualified, and most of them had previous experience in El Salvador. Furthermore, many of the non-SF officers selected for OPATT assignments were

⁶⁹ Bailey, "OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisors in El Salvador," 21.

⁷⁰ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 84–85.

⁷¹ "A Brief History of U.S. Army Special Forces," *Special Forces Association*, http://www.specialforcesassociation.org/sf_history.php.

combat arms officers who had previously served in the 7th SF Group, and were therefore requested by name to serve on OPATTs. However, combat arms officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) without SF experience also served on OPATTs. The desired (but not required) qualifications for an OPATT assignment included previous experience in El Salvador, experience on a battalion or higher staff, and the ability to speak Spanish well.⁷²

D. ADVISORY CHALLENGES IN EL SALVADOR

Unlike the conditions under which we are currently conducting SFA operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, where we are not only assisting, but *establishing* military forces under conflict conditions, the U.S. advisors in El Salvador were tasked with assisting an established military (albeit one without recent combat experience),⁷³ in improving its overall competency (with the exception of the five BIRIs, which were conceived and created under U.S. supervision).⁷⁴ Although this would seem to be a more desirable situation than building military forces from scratch, it presented its own set of challenges. For instance, the ESAF already had a well-established institutional culture, which was quite dissimilar from the U.S. military's culture. One manifestation of this cultural difference was the divide between officers and soldiers, which was a wide gulf in the ESAF. While one of the strengths of the U.S. military is the existence of a professional non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps, the ESAF (like many Latin American militaries) was composed of officers (who were generally privileged, and promoted as a matter of course, or as a result of political connections, rather than merit), and generally young, illiterate soldiers,

⁷² Bailey, "OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisors in El Salvador," 21.

⁷³ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 2.

⁷⁴ Bailey, "OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisors in El Salvador," 19.

with no professional NCO corps.⁷⁵ One reason for this lack of intermediate leadership was that the officer corps viewed NCOs as a threat to their authority and position.

The MILGROUPE's principal mission was to transform the ESAF into a professional organization,⁷⁶ and although the organization and culture of the ESAF did not match that of the U.S. military, U.S. advisors found it hard to resist the impulse to remake the ESAF in the image of the U.S. military. They therefore attempted to impose an NCO rank structure on the ESAF. Unfortunately, this attempt was unwelcome, and ultimately unsuccessful as a result of resistance from the officer corps. In a mutually supporting effort, the MILGROUPE, believing that a change in the ethos of the officer corps would lead to acceptance of NCOs into the ESAF structure, began training what it hoped would be a new generation of ESAF officers. Additional officers were necessary to support the ESAF's expansion, but to remove these officers from potentially negative influences; the new officers were trained outside of El Salvador. Ultimately, at least 500 ESAF officers received training in the U.S., or at the Regional Military Training Center in Honduras.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, upon their return to El Salvador, these junior "gringo officers" were seen as outsiders and, succumbing to pressure from the more established senior ESAF officers, tended to abandon the lessons they had learned in training and subscribe to the same types of behavior.⁷⁸ Although Afghanistan is not a class-based society, the class differences within the ESAF

⁷⁵ Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," 29.

⁷⁶ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 85.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 99. Although Ramsey places the number of U.S.-trained ESAF officers just above 500, other estimates of this number vary widely. For example, Michael Childress reported that the total number of ESAF officers trained by the U.S. at the School of the Americas alone was 1,070, 470 in 1982, and an additional 600 in 1983 (Childress, *The Effectiveness of U.S. Training Efforts in Internal Defense and Development: The Cases of El Salvador and Honduras*, 25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 98–99.

were similar to the ethnic differences currently being encountered in the development of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF),⁷⁹ which will be discussed in detail below.

Another challenge faced by U.S. advisors in El Salvador came in the form of restrictions placed on them by the U.S. government. In order to avoid having to invoke the War Powers Resolution, U.S. advisors were prohibited from participating in combat operations with the ESAF.⁸⁰ Advisors were officially considered to be “trainers,” because of the connotation that the duties of a trainer would not require him to accompany ESAF units in the field.⁸¹ Although the U.S. government deemed this restriction necessary to prevent the U.S. from being drawn into a full-blown war (another manifestation of post-Vietnam concerns), it had some negative consequences for the advisors themselves. Already viewed as “spies” by some ESAF brigade commanders, U.S. advisors believed that their credibility suffered as a result of this type of restriction. As a result, some advisors ignored the restriction, believing that the risk of being caught violating it was worth the rapport with their counterparts their participation yielded.⁸²

In contrast to Korea, where U.S. advisors assisted the Korean government in a generally conventional conflict,⁸³ the GOES was conducting large-scale counterinsurgency operations. U.S. assistance to the GOES therefore more closely fits the definition of FID noted earlier, rather than SFA. The ESAF had long maintained an internal focus, due to instability within El Salvador’s borders. However, despite the prevalence of FID missions occurring in COIN environments, and the fact that El Salvador certainly fit that criteria, U.S. training and advice was influenced by the previous experience of the advisors, as well as

⁷⁹ “Afghan Army’s Pivotal Role,” *Center for a New American Security*, February 25, 2010, <http://www.cnas.org/node/4164>.

⁸⁰ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, 9–10.

⁸¹ Bailey, “OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisors in El Salvador,” 24.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 24–25.

⁸³ Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 2.

the institutional memory of the U.S. Army. After Vietnam, many of the U.S.'s military leaders (especially in the Army) had eschewed COIN doctrine, believing (or at least claiming to believe) that we would never again need to fight a war like Vietnam, and should therefore focus on regaining competency in maneuver warfare. This mindset manifested itself in U.S. assistance to El Salvador (as well as other allies), and resulted in the ESAF receiving training that may have been more applicable to a maneuver war , rather than a COIN environment.⁸⁴ Although this was useful in the early stages of the civil war, once it became more indirect in nature, this emphasis on conventional tactics may have contributed to the conflict being more protracted than if U.S. advisors had been more willing to embrace COIN doctrine themselves, and to pass it on to the ESAF.

E. ADDITIONAL U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE ESAF

Although U.S. Army advisors, particularly Special Forces personnel, were very successful in the professionalization of Salvadoran ground forces, they did not possess all of the capabilities necessary to address all of the ESAF's training needs. Of particular importance was the Salvadoran Air Force (the Fuerza Aerea Salvadorena, or FAS), which represented one of the few ESAF capabilities for which the guerillas had no equivalent. At the beginning of the civil war, the FAS was arguably the most professional component of the ESAF.⁸⁵ However, it was also the smallest component and, because of the prohibitive costs inherent to operating and maintaining aircraft, it rarely conducted exercises prior to the start of the insurgency, and was, therefore, forced to improve its proficiency while conducting actual combat operations against the guerillas.⁸⁶ However, ESAF ground forces could not defeat the insurgency without air support, so it was critical to increase the competency of the FAS. Due to the limit of 55 advisors in

⁸⁴ Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, 14–15. For more detailed discussion of how the U.S. “conventional mind-set” manifested itself in training the ESAF, see Childress, *The Effectiveness of U.S. Training Efforts in Internal Defense and Development: The Cases of El Salvador and Honduras*, 32–33.

⁸⁵ Corum, “The Air War in El Salvador,” 29.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

El Salvador, however, the U.S. Air Force was only allowed to provide five personnel to train the FAS in El Salvador. By the end of the war, the FAS had received nearly 25% of the \$1 billion of military aid provided by the U.S. to El Salvador.⁸⁷ Due to the importance of air power to the ESAF, other means of training had to be explored, including training several FAS personnel in the U.S., or at the Inter-American Air Force Academy (IAAFA) in Panama.⁸⁸ A similar course of action, which will be discussed below, is currently being pursued to train Afghan National Army Air Corps (ANAAAC) helicopter pilots, some of whom have received training in the U.S.

F. THE RESULTS OF U.S. ASSISTANCE TO EL SALVADOR

By the early 1990s, the FMLN has lost much of its popular support, and was forced to enter into negotiations with the GOES, resulting in a formal peace agreement being signed on January 16, 1992.⁸⁹ By the end of the Salvadoran civil war, U.S. assistance efforts had yielded significant, positive results, which benefited the governments of both El Salvador and the United States. On an operational level, the ESAF had grown not only in size, but in competence in several areas, while neutralizing a strong insurgency. With U.S. assistance, the ESAF increased in size from just over 10,000 to approximately 43,000,⁹⁰ and had achieved a level of capability far beyond anything it had previously enjoyed. On a national level, the government of El Salvador attained a level of legitimacy—both internationally and internally—that it had never before enjoyed, and the U.S. had protected its own interests by ensuring that the conditions it placed on continued aid to the GOES were well-known, and closely monitored. Although the direct

⁸⁷ Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," 27.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸⁹ "Building Peace and Democracy in El Salvador: An Ongoing Challenge," 3.

⁹⁰ Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," 35. Several different estimates exist regarding the strength of the ESAF, both at the beginning and end of the civil war. While Corum's estimate is near the lower end of these estimates, Ramsey's figure ("Advising Indigenous Forces," 85) of 56,000 is among the highest. Estimates of the strength of the ESAF at the beginning of the civil war are generally congruent, between 10,000 and 11,000.

impact of U.S. advisory efforts on El Salvadoran human rights practices is impossible to accurately measure, due to the possible influence of other factors (including the election of Jose Napoleon Duarte, a moderate reformer, to the office of the President),⁹¹ it is clear that much progress had been made in this area by the end of the civil war.⁹² The reduction in human rights abuses by the ESAF was most likely a product of training conducted by U.S. advisors both within and outside of El Salvador and the “conditionality of U.S. assistance,” although it is impossible to determine which of these was a more important factor.⁹³

G. SUMMARY

Although U.S. assistance to El Salvador was not without problems, it provides an example of a long-term advisory presence that yielded observable positive results. The positive aspects of this effort were evident at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Despite the unwillingness of the ESAF officer corps to alter its patterns of behavior, or to accept a professional NCO corps, the significant increase in both the size and competence of the ESAF, which ultimately resulted in the neutralization of a strong insurgency, is clear evidence that a relatively small group of competent advisors—when supported by clear national policies and objectives—can have measurable effects on a partner nation’s security forces, even during periods of conflict.

The repetition of advisory tours, and the preservation of expertise that it allowed, almost certainly contributed to the success of U.S. assistance to the ESAF. Although serving multiple tours of duty in the same theater, and even the same country, is not an uncommon occurrence (especially since the U.S. began operations in Afghanistan and Iraq), the repetition of experience—especially

⁹¹ Corum, “The Air War in El Salvador,” 35.

⁹² Bailey, “OPATT: The U.S. Army SF Advisors in El Salvador,” 26.

⁹³ Childress, *The Effectiveness of U.S. Training Efforts in Internal Defense and Development: The Cases of El Salvador and Honduras*, 37–38.

among conventional forces—is far more diffuse than it was during the U.S. advisory effort in El Salvador. Although many of the Special Forces personnel who worked with the ESAF worked with different brigades on subsequent tours of duty in El Salvador, their duties were typically the same as—or at least similar to—what they had been previously. Furthermore, even if these personnel advised a different ESAF brigade each time they returned to El Salvador, they retained the cultural sensitivity, geographical knowledge, and institutional savvy that they had accumulated on previous tours. Conversely, with respect to operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is not uncommon for GPF soldiers to transfer to different units, be promoted to different positions, or even change military occupational specialties (MOS) or career fields between deployments, resulting in a diffusion—rather than concentration—of experience.

Perhaps the greatest difference between U.S. assistance to El Salvador and other assistance efforts (most notably Vietnam, but also the ongoing efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq) is not merely the unity of effort, but the *continuity* of effort that characterized it. Although the advisory effort in El Salvador evolved somewhat throughout the civil war, it was generally a focused effort. Furthermore, from its inception, U.S. assistance to El Salvador was undertaken with clear objectives, with respect to improving both the ESAF's competence and the perception of El Salvador in the international community. U.S. assistance to El Salvador was based on a National Campaign Plan agreed upon by both the U.S. and Salvadoran governments. Furthermore, clear guidelines regarding U.S. assistance—as well as standards of acceptable conduct by both the ESAF and GOES—were established prior to the U.S. becoming fully engaged in such assistance. More importantly, the U.S. government—personified by President Bush himself—exhibited the will to enforce these standards.

In contrast to U.S. assistance to El Salvador, our ongoing assistance to Afghanistan seems to lack both a clear, consistent strategy and the threat of negative consequences for the Afghanistan's government or security forces failing to adhere to prescribed standards of conduct. Furthermore, the efforts to

develop Afghan (and, to a degree, Iraqi) security forces, which will be discussed in more detail below, have been anything but focused, instead being characterized by several different types of organizations with disparate missions being developed simultaneously. However, in Afghanistan, the U.S. was forced not only to provide military assistance, but to fully establish the Afghan National Army, if not the government itself, which has certainly contributed to this lack of clear focus.

III. U.S. SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN

United States assistance to Afghanistan has been fraught with setbacks, at the tactical and operational levels, as well as the diplomatic level. Although many causes may have contributed to these setbacks, the lack of clear goals and objectives, a lack of continuity of effort, and the failure of the U.S. government to hold the Afghan government to explicit standards of conduct are certainly among them. Because the same criteria that were applied to El Salvador were not applied in Afghanistan, true unity of effort with respect to counterinsurgency operations and assistance to Afghanistan has never been achieved, and too many new security initiatives are being pursued without consideration of whether they help or harm the Afghan government's ability to govern. Furthermore, the Afghan population, no longer willing to trust what they see as a corrupt government, is beginning to once again embrace the Taliban, especially in rural areas.

A. BACKGROUND

Prior to the United States involvement in Afghanistan, which began in reaction to the September 11, 2001 attacks, the only group that could claim to providing governance and security in Afghanistan was the Taliban. However, the Taliban's influence over the population was based not on providing services or protection, but on coercion. The Taliban rose to power in Afghanistan largely because they exhibited—in the midst of years of anarchy that followed the departure of Soviet forces from Afghanistan—the ability to establish and enforce order in much of the war-torn country. However, this sense of order came at the cost of a strict brand of justice that prescribed severe punishments for violations of the Taliban's fundamental interpretation of Islam, which was enforced by their Department for the Propagation of Virtue and Suppression of Vice.⁹⁴ The Afghan

⁹⁴ Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 2002), 284.

population therefore had to endure despotic rule for a semblance of stability. Furthermore, the focus of the Taliban was purely internal. Although they were able to exert control over most of the Afghan population through fear and intimidation, the Taliban were incapable of protecting Afghanistan from external aggression. Largely because of the Taliban's ignorance of human rights, the international community refused to recognize the Taliban as a legitimate government,⁹⁵ and was therefore unlikely to assist in addressing threats, including those from Iran, Afghanistan's neighbor to the west. Therefore, although the Taliban established order in Afghanistan, it never achieved many of the benchmarks to be considered—by the international community and by the Afghan population—a legitimate government. After the fall of the Taliban in November 2001, however, Afghanistan was left without a functioning government, creating a void that had to be filled quickly. The Bonn Agreement, which established an interim Afghan government, was therefore, passed in December 2001.⁹⁶

B. THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Afghanistan is perhaps the most complex environments in which the U.S. has undertaken assistance operations since—and arguably including—Vietnam. Although nearly any environment to which U.S. troops are dispatched to provide assistance can be described as “complex,” the operating environment in Afghanistan presents a large number of interacting variables that make it the most complex environment in which U.S. troops are currently operating. The Afghan population consists of several different ethnic groups and tribes (which are further divided into sub-tribes and clans),⁹⁷ spread out throughout a country with little (and in many places no) infrastructure to connect them. As a result,

⁹⁵ Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban*, 285.

⁹⁶ Seth G. Jones, “Community Defense in Afghanistan,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 57 (2nd Quarter 2010): 9.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

independent entities like shuras and jirgas are formed to address local issues. It is therefore difficult (and, in the eyes of many rural Afghans, unnecessary) to extend any centralized influence over many areas of Afghanistan, including the influence of government security forces.

Another factor that has hindered U.S. prosecution of the war in Afghanistan, including the development of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF, which are composed of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP)), is the necessity to operate as part (and the de facto leader) of a coalition.⁹⁸ Although the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is composed of forces from 48 nations, nearly two-thirds of the almost 131,000 troops currently in Afghanistan are U.S. forces.⁹⁹ However, despite the majority of ISAF being U.S. forces, and U.S. Army General David H. Petraeus being the ISAF commander, the U.S. does not enjoy complete independence with respect to decision making. Furthermore, although participation by several different countries has some benefits, it also creates challenges, especially with respect to unity of command. Although all international partner forces fall under ISAF command, they also have internal authorities to which they must answer, which may obscure lines of communication and operational priorities. Furthermore, many of the countries, which have contributed forces to ISAF, have done so on the condition that their forces are allowed to adhere to caveats and/or rules of engagement that restrict the activities they can be compelled to conduct.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Refighting the Last War: Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template," *Military Review* 84, no. 6 (November–December 2009): 3.

⁹⁹ International Security Assistance Force, "International Security Assistance Force: Key Facts and Figures," November 15, 2010.

¹⁰⁰ Johnson and Mason, "Refighting the Last War: Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template," 3.

C. LEGITIMACY AND CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN

Since early in the U.S.'s involvement in Afghanistan, the U.S. government—primarily through military means—has sought to assist the new Afghan government (known as the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, or GIRoA) to gain legitimacy not only in the eyes of the international community, but also in the hearts and minds of its own population. In contrast to El Salvador, where both the U.S. and Salvadoran governments acknowledged issues internal to El Salvador (e.g., human rights violations) that had the potential of undermining the effectiveness of U.S. involvement there, there seems to be a lack of acknowledgement of such problems in Afghanistan.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the perceived legitimacy of a partner nation's government in the eyes of its own population can have a significant effect on the legitimacy of U.S. forces that have been invited or welcomed by the host government. Therefore, the perceived legitimacy of the GIRoA and of U.S. forces are inextricably related.

After the oppressive Taliban regime was removed from power, Hamid Karzai was appointed to serve as interim president of Afghanistan, and to lead its fledgling government.¹⁰² However, nearly nine years after they were removed from power, the Taliban is experiencing resurgence in popularity, at least partly because of questionable conduct by the GIRoA, ranging from mere incompetence to widespread corruption. Corruption is nothing new in Afghanistan, and a certain level of what most Westerners would consider corruption, in the form of the practice of “backsheesh,” which generally consists of small bribes in the course of business, is actually considered the norm

¹⁰¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: What It Will Take to Implement the ISAF Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, November 2010), 7.

¹⁰² Vanda Felbab-Brown, “The 2009 Afghan Elections and the Future of Governance,” *Brookings*, October 23, 2010, http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2009/0813_afghanistan_elections_felbabbrown.aspx.

there.¹⁰³ However, corruption in the GIRoA (including the ANSF) has reached a level that has created conditions favorable to the Taliban. Although the Taliban can sometimes be brutal, it has cultivated the image of an efficient, corruption-free organization capable of resolving local issues in a timely manner, in sharp contrast to the prevalent perception of the GIRoA.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, recent events have begun to affect even the relationship between the U.S. and Afghan governments, to the point where the emphasis on addressing corruption may be undermining the U.S.'s focus on achieving its overall goals in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁵

Although corruption in the GIRoA has undoubtedly existed for some time, the Afghan presidential elections in August 2009, which were widely acknowledged to have been fraudulent,¹⁰⁶ brought it to the attention of the American public, as well as the international community. Despite the negative attention caused by the 2009 election, the parliamentary elections held in September 2010 were also tainted by reports of widespread fraud, much of which has been attributed to the influence of Ahmed Wali Karzai, President Karzai's brother and Provincial Governor of Kandahar.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, in a system in which the president appoints the provincial governors,¹⁰⁸ who in turn appoint subordinate district governors, it is not hard to see how favoritism and nepotism are prevalent. In addition to undermining the perceived legitimacy of an already suspect government in the eyes of its own constituents, the effect the corruption signified

¹⁰³ "White House Mulls: Just How Much Afghan Corruption Is too Much?," *CNN.com*, September 16, 2010, <http://afghanistan.blogs.cnn.com/2010/09/16/white-house-mulls-just-how-much-afghan-corruption-is-too-much/?hpt=Sbin>.

¹⁰⁴ Sabrina Roshan, *Afghans on the Taliban* (Belfer Center Policy Memo, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, November 2009).

¹⁰⁵ "White House Mulls: Just How Much Afghan Corruption Is too Much?."

¹⁰⁶ Anand Gopal, "U.N. Envoy Calls Afghan Fraud Widespread," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 12, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125529560818278877.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Alissa J. Rubin and Carlotta Gall, "Widespread Fraud Seen in Latest Afghan Elections," *The New York Times*, September 24, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/25/world/asia/25afghan.html?_r=2.

¹⁰⁸ Eric T. Furey, "A Comprehensive Approach to Local Engagement in Afghanistan, That May Also Mitigate IEDs," *Small Wars Journal*, October 24, 2010, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/585-furey.pdf>.

by these elections may have on coalition partnerships remains to be seen. The U.S. is undoubtedly more invested in Afghanistan than any of the other NATO members currently contributing to operations there, so they are likely to lose patience with the GIRoA's continued malfeasance more quickly than the U.S.

Although the Salvadoran government negotiated with the FMLN to bring an end to hostilities only after the FMLN was at a significant disadvantage (and as a result of U.S. pressure to do so), it did so with the support of the population. In Afghanistan, however, negotiation is a fairly recent development, initiated by the GIRoA in response to a reinvigorated—rather than weakened—Taliban. Furthermore, popular support for these negotiations is anything but guaranteed. Throughout 2010, possibly in response to the inability of ISAF and Afghan forces to defeat the Taliban, Afghan President Hamid Karzai has made repeated overtures to the Taliban, in an effort to bring about an end to hostilities. However, these discussions have been informal, and in fact, Karzai did not acknowledge such efforts publicly until October 2010.¹⁰⁹ President Karzai has also made more official efforts to achieve peace diplomatically. On September 4, 2010, Karzai announced the formation of the High Council for Peace, an effort to reintegrate former Taliban members (some of whom would be invited to be members of the council) into Afghan society. While the U.S. and its ISAF partners have voiced their support of the council, the Taliban denounced it, citing the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan as evidence that the Afghan government is still “subordinate to the international community,” and therefore, any such measure is meaningless.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, Karzai's conciliatory attitude toward the Taliban,

¹⁰⁹ “Afghan President Hamid Karzai Confirms Peace Talks with Taliban,” *FoxNews.com*, October 11, 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/10/11/afghan-president-hamid-karzai-confirms-peace-talks-taliban/?test=latestnews>.

¹¹⁰ “Afghanistan Review,” *Civil-Military Fusion Centre*, September 9, 2010, [https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/CFC%20AFG%20Newsletters%20Archive/CFC%20Weekly%20Sector%20Review-Afghanistan%20\(09-Sep-10\).pdf](https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/CFC%20AFG%20Newsletters%20Archive/CFC%20Weekly%20Sector%20Review-Afghanistan%20(09-Sep-10).pdf).

even if it is a sincere gesture to bring about peace, may be alienating some of his supporters, and possibly undermining the legitimacy of the Afghan government.¹¹¹

One of the greatest external influences affecting the perceived legitimacy of the GIRoA is the mere presence of ISAF forces. After more than nine years in Afghanistan, and with troop numbers at their highest level ever, it is difficult to counter the perception of ISAF (and, as its most prominent member, the U.S.) as an occupying force. Although the GIRoA endorses (and openly acknowledges the necessity of) this presence, it is difficult to overcome the perception that the U.S. “installed” the new government, and therefore dictates the conditions of its continued presence. Despite constant claims to the contrary, it is becoming increasingly clear that the U.S. is involved in “armed nation building” in Afghanistan.¹¹² In addition to providing assistance to Afghanistan, the U.S. has been attempting to apply the template of a democratic government where none has ever existed. The only times when previous Afghan governments were perceived by the Afghan population as legitimate were the result of dynastic or religious influences, or a combination of both. By assisting Afghanistan to conduct elections, the U.S. is therefore attempting to leverage the only mechanism for which there has been no prior success.¹¹³ As Secretary of State John Foster Dulles admonished the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary in 1954, “Strong and stable governments and societies are necessary to support the creation of strong armies.”¹¹⁴ By any measure, the current situation in Afghanistan does not exhibit any of the variables in Dulles’ equation.

¹¹¹ “Karzai Divides Afghanistan in Reaching Out to Taliban,” *FoxNews.com*, September 9, 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/09/09/karzai-divides-afghanistan-reaching-taliban/?test=latestnews>.

¹¹² Anthony H. Cordesman, *Shaping Afghan National Security Forces: What It Will Take to Implement President Obama’s New Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, December 10, 2009), 95.

¹¹³ Johnson and Mason, “Refighting the Last War: Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template,” 4–5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

D. ADVISORY CONSIDERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

The ultimate goal of any FID or SFA effort is for the partner nation's security forces to achieve the capability to take sole responsibility for the security of their own country. This is accomplished through a long-term program involving both training and advising. Ideally, as the competency of partner nation forces increases, emphasis will gradually shift from training to advising, until even advising is not required (although it may continue past this point). However, this is not necessarily a linear process; partner nation security forces (just like any U.S. military unit) may have to "backtrack" and conduct retraining in certain areas. In Afghanistan, however, (as well as in Iraq, which will be discussed later), the U.S. has created its own setbacks by continually adjusting the mechanisms by which it seeks to establish and develop Afghan-controlled security institutions. Furthermore, with the U.S. and its NATO partners focusing on combat operations in Afghanistan, sufficient priority was not placed on the development of the ANA for several years after assistance operations in Afghanistan began.¹¹⁵

Since October 2009, the development of the ANSF has been the responsibility of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (NTM-A/CSTC-A).¹¹⁶ The mission of the NTM-A/CSTC-A, which includes personnel from the U.S. and thirteen additional coalition partners,¹¹⁷ is to "in coordination with key stakeholders, generate and sustain the ANSF, develop leaders, and establish enduring institutional capacity in order to enable accountable Afghan-led security."¹¹⁸ This is accomplished

¹¹⁵ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: Shaping Host Country Forces as Part of Armed Nation Building* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, November 4, 2009), 24.

¹¹⁶ Cordesman, *Shaping Afghan National Security Forces: What It Will Take to Implement President Obama's New Strategy*, 9.

¹¹⁷ Samuel Chan, "Sentinels of Afghan Democracy: The Afghan National Army," *Military Review* LXXXIX, no. 1 (January–February 2009): 29.

¹¹⁸ Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, *Ministerial-Level Advisor Training Effectiveness Study (Phase I Initial Impressions)* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, October 2010), 8.

through advisors contributed by several of the NATO partner nations operating in Afghanistan. Although advisors are sometimes viewed as a military tool, in addition to providing assistance to the ANSF at the tactical level, military and civilian advisors from the NTM-A/CSTC-A also operate at the ministerial level, in both the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Interior (MoI),¹¹⁹ which are responsible for the ANA and ANP, respectively. In addition to providing assistance to the ANSF, NTM-A/CSTC-A also tracks the development of the ANSF, based on input from advisors working with ANSF units. Although this input is collected according to prescribed formats, it still has a measure of inherent subjectivity, since it relies on input aggregated from the observations of advisors working with units under disparate conditions throughout Afghanistan. The most concrete measure of the ANSF's progress is therefore the number of recruits or cohort units that complete training at the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTTC).

Although it is the most observable measurement of any military force, size does not equate to capability or competence. In fact, one could argue that, in the early phases of its development, there is an inverse relationship between the size of a force and its overall competence (which will likely become even more pronounced if numerical growth receives more emphasis than competence). The development of the ANSF must be considered a prerequisite to the withdrawal of NATO (and especially U.S.) troops from Afghanistan, but this development cannot be rushed, or we run the risk of leaving Afghanistan with security forces that are not adequately prepared, which would most likely require more U.S. assistance in the future. As Anthony H. Cordesman asserts in his report "Afghan National Security Forces: Shaping Host Country Forces as Part of Armed Nation Building":

¹¹⁹ Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, *Ministerial-Level Advisor Training Effectiveness Study (Phase I Initial Impressions)*, 8.

...such efforts must not race beyond either Afghan or US/NATO/ISAF capabilities. Quality will often be far more important than quantity, and enduring ANSF capability far more important than generating large initial force strengths. US/NATO/ISAF expediency cannot be allowed to put half-ready and unstable units in the field. It cannot be allowed to push force expansion efforts faster than ANSF elements can absorb them or the US/NATO/ISAF can provide fully qualified trainers, mentors, and partner units and the proper mix of equipment, facilities, enablers, and sustainability.¹²⁰

It is important to note that Cordesman emphasizes the role of “trainers, mentor, and partner units” in developing partner nation security forces. Unfortunately, as Cordesman points out, despite the renewed emphasis being placed on the development of ANSF, there is still a significant shortage of qualified advisors relative to the numerical requirements of the ANSF.¹²¹ If Cordesman’s assertion is correct, this relative shortage will only increase in the near term, due to increasing goals for ANSF growth.

Throughout U.S./NATO involvement in Afghanistan, unity of effort has been a significant issue, especially with respect to the development of ANSF, as well as other entities that will be discussed below. Although this is not an unusual phenomenon in any coalition environment, the constantly changing structure and evolving goals for their growth, have had a detrimental effect on the development of the ANSF. In January 2010, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) announced an ambitious plan to increase the size of the ANA from around 97,000 (the estimated current strength at that time) to 171,600 by the end of 2011 (the original goal for the ANA was to field 134,000 trained soldiers by the end of 2011),¹²² and to increase the size of the Afghan National Police (ANP)

¹²⁰ Cordesman, *Shaping Afghan National Security Forces: What It Will Take to Implement President Obama’s New Strategy*, iii.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 18.

from 94,000 to 134,000 in the same timeframe.¹²³ These increased size goals carry with them a significant monetary commitment. Even before these increases were announced, the U.S. had committed a significant amount of capital to the development of the ANSF. Through the passage of the fiscal year 2010 DoD Appropriations Act, the U.S. had already obligated \$25.23 billion (representing nearly 50% of our total cumulative assistance to Afghanistan) to the Afghan Security Forces Fund.¹²⁴

While the ANSF growth objectives are being increased, they are actually facing a great deal of difficulty merely maintaining their current strength, due largely to unusually high attrition. Like any military force, the ANA has to absorb combat losses. However, the ANA typically experiences higher attrition from other causes. Approximately 12% of the ANA declines to re-enlist every year; although this may not be a cause for great concern, the desertion rate is nearly as high, at 10 percent. Combined with battlefield losses, the non-retention and desertion rates result in a 25% reduction in the ANA's strength every year.¹²⁵ It is easy to see how this trend has a negative effect on the ANA's development, and therefore on the advisory mission in Afghanistan. President Karzai has openly considered resorting to conscription to address shortfalls in ANA manning. However, this option, which has not been endorsed by Minister of Defense Wardak,¹²⁶ would most likely be very unpopular with Afghans, and may actually cause even higher desertion rates.

Although the size of the ANSF is obviously an important factor in its ability to effectively provide security in Afghanistan, competence is clearly a more important consideration. However, regardless of how many ANSF personnel

¹²³ "Afghanistan Plans Dramatic Boost in Security Forces," *FoxNews.com*, January 20, 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/01/20/afghanistan-plans-dramatic-boost-security-forces/?test=latestnews>.

¹²⁴ Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: What It Will take to Implement the ISAF Strategy*, 17.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 105–106.

successfully graduate from the KMTC, and how well trained they are, the performance of ANSF *units* as they conduct operations in the field is a far more important measure of overall effectiveness. Placing U.S. advisors—usually in small Embedded Training Teams (ETTs)—with ANSF units was not yielding tangible results (or perhaps just not yielded results quickly enough), so ISAF recently began employing “partnering” as a new method to develop the ANSF. In August 2009, the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) was established. Under this command, the Combined Team approach, which entails ANSF and ISAF forces operating as equal partners on a permanent basis, was established. Similar to how the Combined Forces Command operates in South Korea, “Afghan and Coalition forces plan, brief, rehearse, and fight together as embedded partners, constantly building operational effectiveness and security capacity.” This partnership applies to all major operations, including conventional and special operations, as well as to partnering staff officers at every echelon and, in order to build the capacity of the ANSF, places special emphasis on assessing their performance and conducting retraining.¹²⁷ Although the partnering of ANSF and ISAF units appears to be yielding positive results, it took nearly seven years to be institutionalized, and it remains to be seen if it will be an enduring paradigm.

E. ADVISORY CHALLENGES IN AFGHANISTAN

Several challenges to the advisory effort in Afghanistan exist, some of which are not uncommon, but others, which are somewhat unique—if not by their mere existence, than by their severity—to Afghanistan. One of the greatest challenges inherent to establishing the ANSF as a viable collective entity is the ethnic divisions that have plagued Afghanistan for decades. Most of Afghanistan’s population is composed of member of the Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara ethnic groups. Claims of certain ethnic groups receiving preferential treatment are common (and certainly not unique to the GIRoA or ANSF). Despite

¹²⁷ Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr. and David W. Pendall, “The Combined Team: Partnered Operations in Afghanistan,” *Small Wars Journal*, May 25, 2010, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2010/05/the-combined-team-partnered-op/>.

President Hamid Karzai and several other high-ranking members of the GIRoA being Pashtun, Tajiks have been, and continue to be, overrepresented in the ANA, and especially in the officer corps, as a result of absorption of a large number of Northern Alliance members into the ANA's ranks at its inception. Conversely, the Pashtuns, despite being Afghanistan's largest ethnic group (comprising 42% of the population),¹²⁸ continue to be highly underrepresented in the ANA.¹²⁹ Ethnic misrepresentation is even more pronounced in the ANA Special Forces (ANASF, discussed in more detail below), where a disproportionately large percentage ANASF candidates are Hazaras, while a disproportionately small percentage are Pashtuns.¹³⁰

Another reason Pashtuns may be being discriminated against is that most members of the Taliban are also Pashtun,¹³¹ which has caused members of some other ethnic groups to mistrust Pashtuns in general. Furthermore, President Karzai's recent negotiations with the Taliban have increased the divide between Pashtuns and other ethnic groups.¹³² In an effort to mitigate ethnic misrepresentation in the ANA, Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak has established percentage targets for each ANA brigade in order to maintain ethnic balance,¹³³ but maintaining proportionate ethnic representation is just the first step in eliminating ethnic problems in the ANA. Promotions are often based

¹²⁸ Furey, "A Comprehensive Approach to Local Engagement in Afghanistan, That May Also Mitigate IEDs."

¹²⁹ Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: What It Will take to Implement the ISAF Strategy*, 109–110.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 97–98.

¹³¹ Trudy Rubin, "Afghan Army's Pivotal Role," *Center for a New American Security*, February 25, 2010, <http://www.cnas.org/node/4164>.

¹³² Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: What It Will take to Implement the ISAF Strategy*, 63.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

more on ethnicity, or on other factors including personal loyalty, rather than on ability or merit. If this is allowed to continue, it may cause the creation of rival factions within the ANA,¹³⁴ which will undermine the overall public trust they enjoy, and therefore their effectiveness.

Similar to the challenge faced by U.S. advisors in establishing a professional NCO corps in El Salvador, ANA NCOs were not readily accepted early on. Under previous military incarnations in Afghanistan, senior officers made nearly all decisions, and delegated tasks to junior officers that would have been the responsibility of NCOs in the U.S. military. This paradigm carried over into the early development of the ANA, leaving NCOs with virtually no responsibilities and minimal oversight, which led to a lack of motivation. Afghan NCOs became not much more than additional soldiers, rather than capable professionals who could lead soldiers and contribute to the competence and effectiveness of their unit, and the ANA as a whole. Despite this initial reluctance, NCOs have begun to have a greater impact in the ANA, thanks in part to the appointment of a Sergeant Major of the Afghan Army (a position which never before existed, and which, although it may have been done simply “to please the Americans,” has resulted in significant progress toward a professional ANA NCO corps).¹³⁵

Another challenge facing the development of the ANSF relates to determining the role of women in contributing to the security of Afghanistan. Despite the relative loosening of gender restrictions since the fall of the Taliban, Afghan culture continues to be male-dominated. However, females are being given opportunities—including some in the ANSF—that would have been unheard of until recently. On September 23, 2010, the ANA commissioned its first group of female officers, as 29 females graduated from a 20-week program of instruction that included eight weeks of basic training and twelve weeks of

¹³⁴ Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: What It Will take to Implement the ISAF Strategy*, 110.

¹³⁵ Chan, “Sentinels of Afghan Democracy: The Afghan National Army,” 31–32.

branch-specific training. This training—which was conducted separately from male officer candidates—was conducted by an all-female cadre formed from a U.S. Army Reserve unit. Although female officers will be limited to performing duties relating to finance and logistics (and will likely continue to be underrepresented in the ANA), this represents a significant step toward gender equality in the ANSF.¹³⁶

In addition to the significant challenges inherent to developing the ANSF, the U.S. advisory effort in Afghanistan is also hampered by some self-imposed challenges. Among the most significant of these is that the selection process for U.S. personnel being assigned to advisory positions in Afghanistan does not assess their suitability to perform advisory duties.¹³⁷ Furthermore, once selected, these personnel receive little or no advisory training prior to assuming these duties.¹³⁸ Even if personnel selected for advisory duties are themselves adept at the tasks and functions with which they are charged to train others, they may not possess the proper attributes to be effective advisors. Furthermore, even those who do possess such attributes will likely require specific training prior to advising partner nation forces.

F. ESTABLISHING AN AFGHAN SPECIAL FORCES CAPABILITY

United States Army Special Forces Groups have traditionally been regionally oriented, each with a specific area of responsibility designed to support a Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC). This relationship is not, however, an exclusive one.¹³⁹ The operational requirements of the Global War on Terror (GWOT)—and especially operations in Afghanistan—have necessitated that the

¹³⁶ Ian Graham, “Afghan Women Earn Army Commissions,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, September 23, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=60978>.

¹³⁷ Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, *Ministerial-Level Advisor Training Effectiveness Study (Phase I Initial Impressions)* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, October 2010), 29–30.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹³⁹ United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05: Special Forces Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, June 2001).

employment of Special Forces beyond their traditional geographic areas of responsibility. Since 2003, the 3rd and 7th Special Forces Groups, have served on an alternating basis as the core of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A). Along with special operations forces from several allied nations, these units have conducted unconventional warfare (UW) missions, including traditional tasks, such as special reconnaissance (SR) and direct action (DA) missions against the Taliban. However, as the U.S. has attempted to transfer greater responsibility for fighting the war to the ANA and other local security forces, the two SF groups have supported that objective by conducting Foreign Internal Defense (FID).

When conducting FID, U.S. Special Forces units typically train the conventional (often called “regular”) forces of partner nations, but under certain circumstances they are called upon to establish a capability which matches their own in a partner nation’s military. As of early 2010, such is the case with Afghanistan. Although U.S. Special Forces have, since May 2007,¹⁴⁰ primarily been responsible for training the ANA’s 7,000 man elite Commando Brigade, they were recently tasked with the initial establishment of a special forces capability in the ANA (ANASF). Although the Afghan government granted final approval for the establishment of a special forces capability in its military, the idea actually originated in the mind of Brigadier General Ed Reeder, former commander of the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A) and a previous CJSOTF-A commander, and was endorsed by General Stanley A. McChrystal, then the ISAF commander.¹⁴¹ Regardless of the inspiration for developing this capability, it is clearly necessary if the ANA is to be a fully capable force. Throughout 2010, special operations missions—generally conducted by U.S. and NATO SOF—have become increasingly prevalent through Afghanistan, and have caused some dissension

¹⁴⁰ Furey, “A Comprehensive Approach to Local Engagement in Afghanistan, That May Also Mitigate IEDs.”

¹⁴¹ Sean D. Naylor, “No Easy Task: Making the Afghan Special Forces,” *ArmyTimes.com*, May 27, 2010, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2010/05/army_afghan_special_forces_051810w/.

between the GIRoA and the U.S. government. The U.S. has therefore pledged to allow ANASF a greater role in such operations in the future, with the intent to eventually shift the weight of SOF missions to Afghan control as their capabilities increase.¹⁴²

In instances when a partner nation desires its own special forces capability, U.S. Special Forces are obviously the best choice to lead the establishment and development of that capability. In addition to the arguably enhanced cultural knowledge and sensitivity that SF soldiers possess, the nature of their training and operational experience gives them the appropriate skills to pass on to prospective SF soldiers in a partner nation. Furthermore, the structure of ANASF teams is based directly on that of a 12-man U.S. SF Operational Detachment-Alpha (SFODA), with three additional positions (an extra intelligence sergeant, an information dissemination sergeant, and a civil-military operations specialist). The training ANASF candidates must complete is also designed to be very similar to the training U.S. SF students attend, with the exception of language training and a distinct phase for survival training. Candidates must complete a one-week assessment and selection phase in order to be accepted into the 17-week training course, which, like its American model, emphasizes adaptive thinking skills. However, the ANASF teams will not be considered fully qualified until they complete a 26-week “on-the-job training” period, during which they will be partnered with a U.S. SFODA, which will certify that the ANASF teams are fully qualified to operate independently.¹⁴³

There are several challenges inherent to establishing an Afghan SF capability. One such challenge is that, in order to quickly qualify the initial class of ANASF soldiers, candidates had to be pulled from the ranks of the Commando Brigade, to take advantage of the fact that they were already trained in direct

¹⁴² Adam Entous and Julian E. Barnes, “Kabul Is Offered Wider Role in U.S. Missions,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 16, 2010, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703628204575619080915497128.html?mod=W SJASIA_hps_SecondMIDDLETopStoriesWhatsNews#.

¹⁴³ Naylor, “No Easy Task: Making the Afghan Special Forces.”

action, and would therefore require training only in internal defense and special reconnaissance. Although these were clearly the best candidates for Special Forces training, their departure from the Commando Brigade has created vacancies in that unit that need to be filled. Furthermore, since ANASF was deemed a higher priority than the Commando Brigade, the development of the latter has been halted to accommodate the full development of the ANASF. The ultimate goal is to field 72 ANASF teams, grouped into four kandaks (battalions), under a group headquarters,¹⁴⁴ meaning that over 1,000 Afghan soldiers will be drawn from conventional ANA units and the Commander Brigade to fill these slots.

G. ADDITIONAL USES OF U.S. SPECIAL FORCES

In addition to training conventional and elite units of the ANA, U.S. Special Forces units are also currently being used to train Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) units. The purpose of these units—as their name implies—is to maintain order within their areas of responsibility. However, they will most likely accomplish this by maintaining a visible presence, and performing tasks, including manning checkpoints, etc., that will require them to interact with the Afghan population. They will most likely not be required to conduct raids like a paramilitary force, or to conduct criminal investigations like a traditional U.S. police force. Most of their probable tasks are quite similar to those with which most conventional units have become quite comfortable as a result of over nine years of operations in Afghanistan. The use of SFODAs to train ANCOP units is arguably unnecessary, because conventional units are competent in such tasks, and more abundant than SOF.¹⁴⁵ Special Forces teams have also begun training local militias, which, upon completion of their training, will be controlled by local police chiefs in 23 areas considered to be beyond the reach (if not the capability)

¹⁴⁴ Naylor, “No Easy Task: Making the Afghan Special Forces.”

¹⁴⁵ Andrew Feickert, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, July 16, 2010), 9.

of regular ANSF to influence.¹⁴⁶ These units hearken back to the People's Self-Defense Force (PSDF) in Vietnam,¹⁴⁷ both in their stated purpose and in the additional effect they may have of empowering local populations not only for the purpose of assuming responsibility for their own security, but also to mitigate the temptation to join the Taliban.

Although there is obviously support for local initiatives like those described above, there is also a fair amount of criticism of such programs. Local security initiatives like the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3) and the Community Defense Initiative (CDI)¹⁴⁸ caused concerns that, instead of empowering local communities to maintain their own security while reducing the strain on security forces, they would instead be enabling corruption by taking advantage of a lack in security force reach. Although the CDI was ultimately short-lived in its initial manifestation,¹⁴⁹ it was merely absorbed into the Village Stabilization Program (VSP), which is an overarching name for several different local security programs.¹⁵⁰ Those who criticize this type of program (including detractors in the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, and even some members of the GIRoA) often do so not because of doubts as to their efficacy; in fact, they argue that the opposite condition may in fact be cause for greater concern. Enabling security forces at the local level—and justifying doing so specifically because national security forces are unable to establish a presence in those areas—may result in a return to conditions similar to those that existed when “warlords” controlled many parts of Afghanistan that were beyond the reach of a central authority. These local

¹⁴⁶ Feickert, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress*, 9.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Weitz, “CORDS and the Whole of Government Approach: Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Beyond,” *Small Wars Journal*, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2010/02/small-warsjournal-volume-6-no/>.

¹⁴⁸ Furey, “A Comprehensive Approach to Local Engagement in Afghanistan, That May Also Mitigate IEDs.” The AP3 was initiated in January 2009, under the training and mentorship of U.S. Special Forces.

¹⁴⁹ The CDI was initiated in July 2009, but was soon renamed the Local Defense Initiative (LDI).

¹⁵⁰ Furey, “A Comprehensive Approach to Local Engagement in Afghanistan, That May Also Mitigate IEDs.” The LDI, which replaced the CDI, was also short-lived; it was renamed the “Village Stability Program (or Platform)” in May 2010.

defense groups are currently being trained and mentored by U.S. Special Forces (with the implied task of ensuring that they do not evolve into militias);¹⁵¹ however, once these forces are no longer present, the local security forces will ostensibly be independent. Although ANA SF teams are intended to assume the “oversight” role as soon as it reaches operational capability,¹⁵² there were still concerns that such “bottom-up” approaches would result in power being held at the local level at the expense of the influence of the GIRoA. As a result of these concerns (with which President Karzai and some U.S. embassy staffers agreed), the VSP was quickly transitioned into the Afghan Local Police (ALP) program,¹⁵³ but it remains to be seen if this change was merely in name only. Seth G. Jones asserts that, “Keeping [local] forces small, defensive, under the direct control of local jirgas and shuras, and monitored by Afghan national and coalition forces should prevent the rise of warlords in Afghanistan.”¹⁵⁴ However, the complexity of this mere statement, the number of conditions and elements it prescribes—and the integration between them it would necessitate—illustrate how difficult a task it will be.

H. THE WAY AHEAD

On December 1, 2009, President Barack Obama announced his intent to begin large-scale withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan beginning in July 2011,¹⁵⁵ and this guidance was reiterated in the DoD’s 2010 QDR Report.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: Shaping Host Country Forces as Part of Armed Nation Building*, 54.

¹⁵² Naylor, “No Easy Task: Making the Afghan Special Forces,” *ArmyTimes.com*, May 27, 2010.

¹⁵³ Furey, “A Comprehensive Approach to Local Engagement in Afghanistan, That May Also Mitigate IEDs.”

¹⁵⁴ Jones, “Community Defense in Afghanistan,” 14.

¹⁵⁵ President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Whitehouse.gov*, December 1, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

¹⁵⁶ United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, 2010), 11.

Although it remains to be seen what the scope and pace of this withdrawal will be (or when it will actually begin), it is likely that U.S. troops will not fully depart from Afghanistan, but will instead undergo a change of mission not unlike that which recently took place in Iraq. When conditions warrant it, U.S. troops—which are already providing Security Force Assistance to the ANSF—will shift their focus so that SFA is their main effort. It remains to be seen, however, if Afghan President Hamid Karzai’s determination “that Afghan National Security Forces will be responsible for all military and law enforcement operations throughout our country by 2014.”¹⁵⁷ Although a 2014 departure is a goal—rather than a deadline—contingent upon the development of the ANSF,¹⁵⁸ it remains to be seen how long countries providing forces to develop the ANSF will possess the resolve to continue that mission, especially if they are faced with more shifting objectives, whether they are based on time, or on the size or competence of the ANSF.

Lieutenant General William Caldwell, currently the commander of NTM-A/CSTC-A, previously hoped that the ANSF would be fully capable by the end of October 2011, but in light of the problems discussed above; this may no longer be a realistic goal. Caldwell recently reported that, at least in terms of numerical growth, both the ANA and ANP are actually ahead of schedule. According to Caldwell, “The growth has been so dramatic that both the ANA and ANP have exceeded their 2010 growth goals by about three months ahead of schedule.”¹⁵⁹ However, in late 2010 Caldwell, adjusting his previous position, stated that without an additional 900 trainers (an increase of nearly 50% over current

¹⁵⁷ President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Whitehouse.gov*, December 1, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

¹⁵⁸ Ian Traynor, “NATO Maps Out Afghanistan Withdrawal by 2014,” *guardian.co.uk*, November 20, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/20/nato-afghanistan-2014-withdrawal-lisbon>.

¹⁵⁹ Patrick Summers, “Despite Growing in Size, Afghan Forces Not Yet Prepared to Take on Security Duties,” *FoxNews.com*, August 23, 2010, <http://politics.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/08/23/despite-growing-size-afghan-forces-not-yet-prepared-take-security-duties?test=latestnews>.

numbers), the ANSF will not be prepared in time to meet the 2014 objective.¹⁶⁰ In late 2009, General Stanley McChrystal, then the ISAF commander, requested that NATO partners contribute an additional 2,000 trainers to assist the ANSF, but his request was met with little enthusiasm.¹⁶¹

In any assistance effort, specific capabilities may require more resources to develop than others. One of the best examples of such a capability is aviation support. Just as in El Salvador, additional forces have had to be sent to train pilots in the ANA Air Corps (ANAAC) how to fly fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, which is being conducted by the CSTC-A's Combined Air Power Transition Force.¹⁶² Furthermore, some Afghan pilots have been trained in the U.S., repeating a method used during U.S. assistance to El Salvador in the 1980s.¹⁶³ The ANAAC continues to make significant improvements, having increased its support to the ANA from 10% of missions in early 2008 to 90% in 2009. However, even if their training is maintained at its current pace, the ANAAC will not reach full operational capability until 2016.¹⁶⁴

While we cannot leave Afghanistan before the ANSF is a capable force, neither can we remain in Afghanistan too long, even if for the purpose of ensuring that the ANSF are adequately prepared to assume responsibility for security in Afghanistan. The longer we remain in Afghanistan, the greater the risk of further alienating a population that is already critical of foreign forces¹⁶⁵—which many of them view as occupiers—to such a degree that they are beginning

¹⁶⁰ Justin Fishel, "Military Leaders Embrace 2014 Afghan Exit Date," *CNN.com*, November 8, 2010, <http://politics.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/11/08/military-leaders-embrace-2014-afghan-exit-date>.

¹⁶¹ Trudy Rubin, "Afghan Army's Pivotal Role," *Center for a New American Security*, February 25, 2010, <http://www.cnas.org/node/4164>.

¹⁶² Chan, "Sentinels of Afghan Democracy: The Afghan National Army," 27.

¹⁶³ Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: Shaping Host Country Forces as Part of Armed Nation Building*, 34–35.

¹⁶⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Afghanistan Report 2009* (Brussels, Belgium: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2009), 15.

¹⁶⁵ Christopher J. Lamb and Martin Cinnamond, "Unity of Effort: Key to Success in Afghanistan," *Strategic Forum* 248 (October 2009): 3.

to shift their support to the Taliban in many provinces. For this reason, in addition to the necessity to make U.S. forces available for other contingencies, time is of the essence, and we must focus on increasing the ability of the ANSF to conduct independent operations, so U.S. forces can leave Afghanistan.

I. SUMMARY

Current security force assistance operations in Afghanistan exhibit several challenges, some of which are inherent to the specific operating environment, and some of which have been self-imposed by NATO, the U.S., or the GIRoA, or a combination of them. Although the operating environment in Afghanistan is very complex, it does not account for the lack of development of the ANSF after over eight years of U.S. and NATO presence, despite the fact that the focus of that presence was on combat operations, rather than on security force assistance, for the first several years.

Although what Westerners may consider corruption is commonplace in Afghanistan, it has reached such a level—particularly with respect to the appointment and election of government officials—that the Afghan population is beginning to favor allowing the Taliban to return to power, at least at local levels. The perceived corruption of the GIRoA presents it with one of its greatest challenges, because a government that does not have the trust of its population cannot function effectively, nor can its security forces. Additionally, the lack of accountability within the ANSF has reached a level that can no longer be accepted, because it is clearly having a detrimental effect on their development. Although the U.S. and NATO are in Afghanistan with the permission of the GIRoA, similar to the conditions the U.S. placed on its continued assistance to El Salvador during the 1980s, the GIRoA—and by extension the ANSF—must be held accountable for its actions to continue receiving financial, material, and operational assistance.

Perhaps the greatest self-imposed challenge (for which NATO/the U.S. and the GIRoA must share responsibility), is the lack of a clear vision for the

ANSF, in terms of size, organization and competency. The most glaring manifestation of this apparent confusion is the myriad incarnations of different ANSF organizations, some of which, because of their local focus, have the potential to undermine the influence of any centralized government. Although the focus of the NTM-A/CSTC-A should be to build the ANA and ANP, the inability of the GIRoA to extend its influence into rural areas of Afghanistan has necessitated the establishment of several different local security and defense initiatives (including some, which, in the interest of brevity, were not even mentioned in this work). Furthermore, the rapidity with which these programs have superseded one another (for example, the evolution of the AP3 to the CDI, which rapidly became the LDI, then VSP, then ALP, all within the span of less than 18 months), betrays the lack of clear direction between NATO, the U.S., and the GIRoA. Even when considering only the ANA and ANP, there is a clear lack of long-term vision with respect to their development. The constantly increasing numerical objectives for the ANSF, which have been increased several times before previous increases had even been achieved, are evidence of this.

As the incarnations of nominal ANSF organizations have grown and evolved, so too have the command and control structures charged with overseeing their operations and development. Within the ISAF structure, the NTM-A/CSTC-A is responsible not only for providing advisors to military units, but to the ministerial level as well. The ISAF Joint Command (IJC) is responsible for coordinating combined operations involving ANSF and ISAF forces working together throughout all phases of major operations. However, due to the ever-increasing requirements of these missions, neither entity has been able to consistently field personnel with adequate training to serve as advisors. In fact, the NTM-A/CSTC-A has never been fully manned (despite requesting additional manpower from NATO partners), even with untrained personnel. With respect to the ISAF forces conducting partnered operations with the ANSF, very few of these forces (with the exception of U.S. Special Forces) receive advisory training

before being embedded with their ANSF partner units. Finally, Coalition partners in Afghanistan must begin making greater contributions to the security force assistance mission there if it is to be effective.

There are also several problems inherent to the ANSF that cannot be easily overcome by U.S. or NATO efforts, but must be addressed by the GIRoA. The ANSF will never gain the trust of the Afghan public unless ethnic balance is achieved within its ranks. Even if such a balance is ever achieved, ethnic concentrations in localized areas may still be reluctant to recognize centralized authority, choosing instead to rely on local militias to provide security, which will set the conditions for a return to “warlordism.” Until the GIRoA can overcome the perception that it is corrupt, can gain the public trust, and can extend its influence into rural areas of Afghanistan, these conditions will persist. Finally, until the GIRoA is able to overcome its unusually high desertion rates, it will not be able to maintain security forces capable of defending Afghanistan without assistance.

Ongoing operations in Afghanistan are undoubtedly the most publicized U.S. military operations in the world. However, although Afghanistan is the most resource intensive theater of operations supporting Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), there are other countries to which the U.S. is providing assistance under the auspices of OEF as well. Although it is on the other side of the world, and presents the U.S. government and military with different objectives and challenges, one such country is the Philippines, where U.S. forces are involved in Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P).

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IV. U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE PHILIPPINES

Although it is one of the smaller U.S. military operations currently ongoing, U.S. assistance to the Philippines has yielded significantly positive results for the last several years. Harkening back to U.S. assistance to El Salvador, part of the reason for this success is the employment of Special Operations Forces (SOF) as the main effort in the operation, which has also allowed for another factor contributing to success, which is the ability of the U.S. to maintain a minimal military presence in the Philippines, therefore ensuring that indigenous security forces are held responsible for the security of the Philippines.

A. BACKGROUND

The continuing presence of U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) in the Philippines is one example of U.S. assistance that is being conducted almost exclusively by SOF, with little involvement from General Purpose Forces (GPF). Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P) began with the deployment of Special Forces soldiers to the southern Philippines in early 2002, to assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in combating Islamic militant groups that were gaining strength, particularly in the southern Philippines.¹⁶⁶ Although there have been several insurgent groups operating in the Philippines over the last several years, the main targets of the operation are the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Prior to a negotiated ceasefire that took effect in 2003, the U.S. assisted the GRP in its struggle against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).¹⁶⁷ In return, the U.S. received assistance in its own pursuit of the ASG and JI. Ironically, the cessation of hostilities between the GRP and the MILF created conditions that contributed to the growth of other Islamic

¹⁶⁶ United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, 2010), 28.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

groups, including the ASG and JI, especially in the southern Philippines.¹⁶⁸ In addition to undermining the stability of the Philippines, both the ASG and JI have aligned themselves with al-Qa'eda and committed acts of terror, including the Bali bombings in 2002 (for which JI claimed responsibility), which killed more than 200 people.¹⁶⁹ U.S. involvement in the Philippines was, therefore, considered part of OEF, because defeating these groups supports U.S. national objectives in what was formerly known as the Global War on Terror (GWOT).¹⁷⁰

B. ADVISORY CONSIDERATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Since its inception, OEF-P has been almost exclusively a Special Forces-based operation, using the 1st Special Forces Group as the foundation of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P). These forces had the benefit of a long-standing relationship with the AFP, based on JCETs and large-scale routine joint training exercises. U.S. participation in these exercises—and the conduct of OEF-P—has been allowed by the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), which was ratified by the Philippine Senate in 1999.¹⁷¹ This prior relationship made the transition to more robust assistance relatively easy. However, OEF-P continues to be subject to several caveats, imposed not only by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), but also by the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM). The most important restriction placed on U.S. assistance to the AFP is the provision in the Philippine constitution that prohibits foreign military forces from engaging in direct combat in the Philippines. This restriction has set the tone for the conduct of OEF-P since it was initiated and, similar to previous U.S. assistance to El Salvador has preserved the primacy of

¹⁶⁸ United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 28.

¹⁶⁹ Adrienne Mong, "America's Forgotten Frontline: The Philippines," *MSNBC.com*, October 1, 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39444744/ns/world_news-asiapacific/.

¹⁷⁰ Brian Petit, "OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID," *Special Warfare* 23, no. (January–February 2010): 11.

¹⁷¹ "Materials on Visiting Forces Agreement," <http://www.philsol.nl/L-VFA.htm>.

Philippine military forces and civilian institutions.¹⁷² With the AFP conducting combat operations, U.S. forces have been free to conduct humanitarian assistance missions like building new roads, schools, and irrigation systems. However, U.S. forces always ensure that the Philippine government receives the credit for such projects, which not only contributes to their own acceptance by the population, but to increasing the perceived legitimacy of the Philippine government and the AFP.¹⁷³ In addition to U.S. forces fulfilling a limited role in the Philippines, the size of the U.S. contingent in the Philippines is severely limited as well. Currently, fewer than 600 U.S. troops—mostly Special Operations Forces—are providing training and intelligence support to the AFP,¹⁷⁴ down from a high of nearly 2,000 in 2003.¹⁷⁵ The GRP does not desire a large U.S. presence in the Philippines, both to protect its perceived legitimacy in the eyes of the population and to avoid escalation of the conflict. Perhaps most importantly, however, is that the nature of the mission, which, as a result of the insurgency and restrictive terrain, is more suited to small unit operations than to large-scale troop movements.

Although operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have been characterized by large troop presences, ongoing operations in the Philippines are an example of how employing smaller numbers of U.S. forces to train and advise partner nation forces can produce positive results. As stated in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report:

Efforts that use smaller numbers of U.S. forces and emphasize host-nation leadership are generally preferable to large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns.

¹⁷² Petit, "OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID," 11.

¹⁷³ Robert D. Kaplan, "Imperial Grunts," *The Atlantic Magazine*, October 2005, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/10/imperial-grunts/4266/>.

¹⁷⁴ Kevin Baron, "Pentagon Sees Training Allies as Its Greatest Hope," *Stars & Stripes*, July 30, 2010, <http://www.stripes.com/news/pentagon-sees-training-allies-as-its-greatest-hope-1.112875>.

¹⁷⁵ Mong, "America's Forgotten Frontline: The Philippines."

By emphasizing host-nation leadership and employing modest numbers of U.S. forces, the United States can sometimes obviate the need for larger-scale counterinsurgency campaigns. For example, since 2002 U.S. forces have trained and advised elements of the Philippine armed forces working to secure areas of the southern Philippines that had been a haven for the Abu Sayyaf terrorist organization and other terrorist elements. Over the past eight years, U.S. forces and their Philippine counterparts have trained together and worked to understand the organization and modus operandi of the adversary. As their equipment and skills have improved, Philippine forces have patrolled more widely and more frequently, bringing security to previously contested areas.¹⁷⁶

The QDR Report cites other areas where this model is currently being used successfully, including the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and Colombia.¹⁷⁷ Operations, such as these, provide economy of force while maintaining partner nation primacy, which is often necessary based on the internal (and international) political climate, making them more desirable than larger-scale troop presences. However, one of the main differences between U.S. assistance to the Philippines and efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq is the initial status of the forces we were sent to assist. Although the AFP is chronically underfunded (the Philippines devotes only 1% of its Gross Domestic Product to defense and security),¹⁷⁸ and is widely considered to be among the weakest militaries in Asia,¹⁷⁹ the 130,000 member AFP¹⁸⁰ has been improving steadily in terms of competence since the beginning of OEF-P. This improvement is most likely the result—at least in part—of

¹⁷⁶ United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 28.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ “Philippines Gets Military Aid,” *The Straits Times*, June 29, 2010, http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/SEAsia/Story/STIStory_559459.html.

¹⁷⁹ Jim Gomez, “S. Philippines Grapples with Crisis after Crisis,” *SDNN.com*, December 13, 2009, <http://www.sdn.com/sandiego/2009-12-13/ap-stories/s-phillippines-grapples-with-crisis-after-crisis>.

¹⁸⁰ “Philippines Gets Military Aid.”

constantly operating in an active COIN environment, but U.S. assistance (a large part of which is provided by JSOTF-P) has surely had a positive impact on the AFP as well.

Although U.S. Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alphas (SFODAs) typically operate independently when conducting most of their core tasks, the nature of Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions generally makes it desirable to integrate other disciplines around a Special Forces core. This technique is being widely applied in the Philippines, with SFODAs split into two elements, each of which is then augmented with Civil Affairs, Military Information Support Operations (formerly Psychological Operations) soldiers, Joint Service enablers, and logistics personnel. The resultant organizations are known as Liaison Control Elements (LCEs), and are generally partnered with Philippine forces at the battalion, brigade, and division level. Although the focus of this study is on ground forces, the same method is employed with U.S. Navy SEAL platoons, which operate with Philippine Marine forces.¹⁸¹

The cooperation between U.S. military forces and the AFP provides benefits to both the GRP and the U.S. government, contributing to the overall security of the Philippines and, by virtue of occupying groups allied with al-Qa'eda, to the security of the United States as well. However, as Petit asserts, the mission of the U.S. Special Forces units currently operating in the Philippines is not to conduct counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, but to enhance the capabilities and capacity of the ARP while *they* conduct COIN operations.¹⁸² As such, U.S. units in the Philippines are conducting FID in support of the GRP. This is not to say that they are *not* conducting Security Force Assistance (SFA) because, as discussed in the introduction to this work, the doctrinal distinctions between FID and SFA do more to confuse than clarify, and FID is best described as a type of SFA specifically meant to address internal threats, including insurgencies. Furthermore, although U.S. assistance to the Philippines is being

¹⁸¹ Petit, "OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID," 14.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 12.

conducted by SOF personnel, the designation of the mission as a FID effort is due not to the type of troops involved, but in the threat against which they partner nation forces to which they are providing assistance are focused.

C. ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE MEASURES IN THE PHILIPPINES

In addition to providing “boots on the ground” support, U.S. SFA operations typically include a technological and/or financial element. In the case of the Philippines, both of these mechanisms are used to provide additional aid to the typically underfunded AFP. The U.S. provided \$38 million in financial assistance to the Philippines in 2001, but that amount has increased steadily since the beginning of OEF-P, up to \$94 million in 2009. In 2010, the U.S. is scheduled to provide \$118.5 million in aid to the Philippines.¹⁸³ In addition to providing economic aid, the U.S. recently pledged to provide the Philippine government with \$18.4 worth of precision-guided missiles in 2010.¹⁸⁴ Military and technological contributions are not the only means by which the U.S. can assist partner nations, however. As discussed earlier, Security Force Assistance cannot be successful if it relies solely on military efforts. Since OEF-P began in 2002, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has contributed more than \$500 million to development projects in Mindanao. These programs have sought to improve education, health care, infrastructure, governance, law enforcement, and other areas.¹⁸⁵ Without enabling efforts, such as these, resulting in improved stability, and therefore greater population support, SFA efforts—especially those conducted during periods of conflict, and particularly those in competition with insurgencies—cannot be successful.

As discussed earlier, the success of any FID or SFA effort requires the support of the population, which is contingent on their perception of the

¹⁸³ Al Labita, “Filipinos Aim to Give U.S. Army the Boot,” *Asia Times Online*, October 20, 2010, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/LJ20Ae02.html.

¹⁸⁴ “Philippines Gets Military Aid.”

¹⁸⁵ Mong, “America’s Forgotten Frontline: The Philippines.”

indigenous government as legitimate. Even if the population of a given country perceives its government as legitimate prior to it requesting or allowing a foreign military to operate within its borders, the presence of that foreign military—however brief—may erode that perceived legitimacy. Furthermore, the longer a foreign military assists a partner nation—regardless of the reason for their presence, or the results they produce—the greater the chance that the population will begin to see them as an unwelcome intrusion, if not an occupying force. The small “footprint” maintained by U.S. forces currently operating in the Philippines is a deliberate attempt to forestall this from happening, but it cannot remain effective indefinitely. Although the Philippine government continues to allow the presence of U.S. forces in the Philippines, the relationship has not been without problems, or detractors. Citing incidents involving U.S. forces, including at least one rape and the death of a Filipino interpreter working for the U.S., some groups have called for the GRP to void the VFA and remove all U.S. forces from the Philippines.¹⁸⁶ As a result, members of the Philippine Congress recently filed a joint resolution calling for the abolition of the VFA, and newly elected President Benigno Aquino has been calling for a review and refinement of the agreement for some time.¹⁸⁷ Although the AFP have improved markedly as a result of years of U.S. assistance, as well as operational experience, the removal of U.S. forces from the Philippines would likely cause a decline in the AFP’s effectiveness, as well as denying the U.S. direct access to an important front in the fight against Islamic militants.

D. SUMMARY

U.S. assistance to the Philippines, although relying on a small number of mostly Special Operations Forces soldiers, is almost certainly the most

¹⁸⁶ Germelina Lacorte, “Group Demands Junking RP-U.S. Visiting Forces Agreement over Death of Filipino Interpreter,” *Bulatlat.com*, July 15, 2010, <http://www.bulatlat.com/main/2010/07/15/group-demands-junking-rp-us-vfa-over-death-of-filipino-interpreter/>.

¹⁸⁷ Al Labita, “Filipinos Aim to Give U.S. Army the Boot,” *Asia Times Online*, October 20, 2010.

successful ongoing SFA effort. Similar to U.S. assistance to El Salvador during the 1980s and 1990s, this effort is centered on developing the Armed Forces of the Philippines into an effective military force, but one with a primarily internal focus, due to persistent insurgency. Furthermore, providing assistance to the Philippines, like El Salvador, supports not only the partner nation's goals, but U.S. goals (specifically, countering Islamic extremist groups, in support of the GWOT). Perhaps most importantly, U.S. assistance to the Philippines is subject to strict limits established not only by the partner nation, but by the U.S. as well. However, unlike assistance to El Salvador (but similar to current assistance to Afghanistan and Iraq) continued U.S. assistance to the Philippines is contingent more upon the continued permission of the GRP than on the U.S.'s approval of the GRP's actions.

From its inception, OEF-P has had the benefit of a previously established relationship between the 1st Special Forces Group and the AFP (comparable to the relationship the 7th SF Group enjoyed with the ESAF), as well as the mission to develop an already existing military, unlike SFA efforts currently underway in Afghanistan and Iraq, where U.S. (and NATO) forces are building partner nation militaries from the ground up. Furthermore, the forces involved in OEF-P have not had the mission of developing Filipino security forces in general, instead having the benefit of focusing solely on the military. For this reason, as well as their demonstrated ability to yield results in restrictive operating environments that require limited U.S. force presence, Special Forces have proven to be the right choice to assist the AFP in conducting COIN operations. As Robert D. Kaplan, based on his observation of Special Forces operations in the Philippines, asserts, "The most crucial tactical lesson of the Philippines war is that the smaller the unit, and the farther forward it is deployed among the indigenous population, the more it can accomplish."¹⁸⁸ Another characteristic of Special Forces that has contributed to their success in assisting the AFP is their language capability. Although English is one of the Philippines' official languages (the other being

¹⁸⁸ Robert D. Kaplan, "Imperial Grunts," *The Atlantic Magazine*, October 2005.

Filipino),¹⁸⁹ since the 1st Special Forces Group comprises the core of JSOTF-P, they have been able to take advantage of their language skills to a far greater degree than their counterparts in Afghanistan, the 3rd and 7th SF Groups. However, in order to allow 1st SF Group subordinate units to maintain competency at other SF core missions, they have been deployed to Iraq as well.

The assistance provided by the U.S. to the Philippines for the last several years, although it continues to receive less media coverage than ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, has in some respects been more successful than those larger operations. The lack of media coverage is most likely the result of the minimal presence of U.S. forces in the Philippines (and the commensurately low casualties U.S. forces have suffered there), despite the tactical and operational successes, U.S. and Filipino forces have had there. However, despite the differences between OEF-P and operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, it does share some common characteristics with these operations, especially with respect to the political environment in which each operation is being conducted. U.S. presence in Afghanistan recently exceeded nine years, and is nearing eight years in Iraq, and the longer U.S. forces remain in each country, the more strained U.S. relations seem to become. At the request of the Iraqi government, the U.S. has agreed to remove all military forces from Iraq by December 31, 2011.¹⁹⁰ While there is no obvious animosity between the two governments, the mere establishment of a “deadline” for the U.S. to withdraw its forces, rather than basing such a move on the performance of Iraqi Security Forces is suspect. Afghanistan, however, has become even more complicated, especially in recent months.

¹⁸⁹ “Philippines,” *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*, November 9, 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html>.

¹⁹⁰ “Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq,” 15.

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V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the majority of the U.S.'s military effort has been focused on the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) for nearly the last decade, we must also be prepared to assist partner nations in other regions to develop their own security capabilities, so they are capable of securing their respective countries against both internal and external threats. It is not reasonable or prudent to assume that once our current commitments in the CENTCOM AOR have concluded (or at least been significantly reduced), we will no longer be required to assist partner nations to develop their security capabilities. Recent U.S. SFA efforts have been based on ad hoc organizations, composed of individuals with little advisory training or experience who are typically taken out of their career field to perform advisory duties, which has likely limited their effectiveness. In order to be truly successful, SFA operations need to be based on enduring organizations and processes that focus not on post-conflict reconstruction, but on preempting the need for such reconstruction.¹⁹¹

After over nine years in Afghanistan, it is clear that we must adjust our approach to SFA operations in the future. The ad hoc approach we have consistently employed in Afghanistan has undoubtedly undermined the success of the SFA mission there, most likely prolonging U.S. involvement there. In order to avoid repeating the same mistakes we have made in Afghanistan in the future, we must therefore apply new standards to future SFA operations.

A. CLEARLY DEFINED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Although the most obvious goal of any SFA operation is the development of a partner nation's security capability, such efforts must also contribute to the achievement of U.S. goals and objectives. Ideally, a partner nation should

¹⁹¹ Scott G. Wuestner, *Building Partner Capacity/Security Force Assistance: A New Structural Paradigm* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College, February 2009), 7.

establish its own goals for the development of its security forces. Without the establishment of clear goals and objectives—agreed upon by both the U.S. and partner nation governments—we run the risk of not only becoming subject to “mission creep,” but also to the subordination of U.S. interests and objectives to partner nation objectives. Ideally, the objectives for SFA will support the partner nation’s IDAD program. However, in Afghanistan, the government did not have such a program, and U.S. forces there found themselves not only taking the lead to develop these objectives, but virtually doing so on their own. Although the U.S. is unlikely to share all of its objectives with a partner nation, they must be well founded in U.S. national interests. The assistance the U.S. provided to El Salvador was undertaken not because of a particularly close alliance between the U.S. and El Salvador, but because the U.S. had a vested interest in preventing the spread of communism into the Western Hemisphere. The continued presence of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, however, seems to have become focused more on satisfying the GIRoA’s goals than on protecting U.S. interests.

Although the military goal of U.S. assistance to El Salvador was based in part on numerical growth, a far more important aspect of that goal was improving the competency of the El Salvadoran Armed Forces to such a level that it would be able to defeat a strong insurgency, which it ultimately was. Furthermore, in El Salvador, the U.S. had the benefit of advising an already established military, rather than establishing a military from “the ground up,” as we have had to do in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, however, there appears to be an increasing level of emphasis on numerical growth of the ANSF, as well as the establishment of ancillary security organizations, in response to the central government’s inability to govern rural areas.

In Afghanistan, we did not establish clearly defined goals and objectives for the development of the Afghan National Security Forces until several years after initiating this assistance, and as a result, we have been faced with constantly increasing thresholds for the growth of the ANA (and commensurate

increases in U.S. troop levels). According to Robert D. Kaplan, “The U.S. approach to El Salvador showed that as much help as the U.S. gives a besieged ally in a small war, ultimately, military and humanitarian assistance must operate under a reasonably strict ceiling, so that the war remains the ally’s to win or lose.”¹⁹² However, this conclusion assumes a minimum level of partner nation competence, which, although present in El Salvador, was clearly lacking in Afghanistan at the outset of U.S. assistance there. Even the highest goals thus far established may not be sufficient to secure Afghanistan, and as a result of not conducting a clear assessment of Afghanistan’s security needs, and then focusing more on numerical growth than on competency, the U.S. has found itself in what seems to have become an open-ended commitment.

Just as important as the goals and objectives for U.S. Security Force Assistance being agreed upon by the U.S. and a partner nation and clearly stated, they must be realistic, achievable goals that are critical to the partner nation’s ability to achieve its own security. One example of an objective upon which the U.S. tends to place too much emphasis is the establishment of professional NCO corps in partner nation security forces we are assisting. In both El Salvador and Afghanistan, a significant level of effort was/is being leveraged against establishing professional NCO corps in the security forces. Although NCOs play a critical role in the U.S. military, cultural and societal differences in partner nations may not be conducive to develop such a model. In the case of El Salvador, the U.S. military was tasked with developing an existing military, but one that did not have a professional NCO corps. Despite this, however, U.S. advisors—based on their experience—attempted to affect a radical change in the ESAF’s internal culture by imposing such a capability. Their efforts, however, were met with resistance, if not derision, and were ultimately less than successful. In the case of Afghanistan, where there were essentially no security forces, the U.S. and its NATO partners were forced to fully establish these

¹⁹² Robert D. Kaplan, *Imperial Grunts: On the Ground with the American Military, from Mongolia to the Philippines to Iraq and Beyond* (New York, Vintage Books, 2005), 45.

forces. It would seem that the establishment of a professional NCO corps would be more easily accomplished under such circumstances, but this effort was initially resisted, and has only recently begun yielding results. This is just one example of a developmental objective that, although valuable from the perspective of the U.S., may not be critical to—and in fact may detract from the effort to assist—a partner nation.

Critical to the determination of the goals and objectives of SFA is the conduct of an assessment of conditions and requirements in a partner nation before initiating SFA operations. In Afghanistan, where there were no existing security forces to use as a starting point, this assessment seems to have been delayed several years, which has certainly hampered the development of the ANSF. Conversely, in El Salvador, both the ESAF and their U.S. advisors clearly benefitted from the “Woerner Report,” which established a baseline upon which to base the goals of U.S. assistance. Although it will not always be possible to conduct such assessments prior to initiating all future SFA efforts, an effort must be made to do so in as many cases as possible.

B. UNITY AND CONTINUITY OF EFFORT

Once clearly defined objectives for a Security Force Assistance operation are established, it is critical that all parties involved work toward common goals (unity of effort), and that these goals are pursued with a consistent approach (continuity of effort), rather than one that explores too many options, or moves on to new options too quickly. This is another one of the shortcomings of our ongoing assistance effort in Afghanistan, that we must correct in future assistance operations.

United States assistance to El Salvador was characterized by unity of effort—both within the U.S. government and between the U.S. and the partner nation—unique among historical (and current) U.S. advisory efforts. Although the U.S. (at the government, ministerial, and advisor levels) at times had to goad the GOES and ESAF into agreeing to certain measures related to the assistance

being provided, as well as to the prosecution of the civil war against the FMLN, the U.S. advisory effort in El Salvador was generally characterized by unity of effort. In Afghanistan, however, there is increasing evidence that unity of effort between Afghanistan and the U.S. and its NATO partners is beginning to erode. In addition to Afghan President Hamid Karzai's initially secret negotiations with the Taliban, he recently requested that the U.S. reduce its special operations missions in Afghanistan, but the U.S. leadership seems unwilling to oblige him.¹⁹³ Furthermore, Karzai himself recently described the relationship between the U.S. and Afghan governments as "grudging."¹⁹⁴ Based on these and other recent developments, it is clear that Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan is beginning to suffer from a lack of unity of effort, which may have been avoided if the U.S. government and the GIRoA had developed a more unified vision for the conduct of simultaneous and counterinsurgency and SFA operations years ago.

Continuity of effort in SFA operations is very dependent on the establishment of clearly defined goals and objectives. By knowing the desired endstate of an SFA effort, U.S. forces can avoid initiating projects that do not contribute to, or even undermine, that effort. United States assistance to El Salvador exhibited continuity of effort, because, although the advisory methods used evolved to meet changing conditions in El Salvador, there were very few major adjustments to the effort. Conversely, advisory efforts in Afghanistan have been hampered by a tendency for the GIRoA and/or NATO to explore establishing new security organizations and methods before ongoing efforts have been fully developed. The result is a lack of continuity of effort, manifested in significant resources being dedicated to programs that barely get off the ground. This is at least partly the result of the changing priorities that have resulted in a fractious effort, manifested in the attempted development of several different

¹⁹³ Justin Fishel, "U.S.: No to Karzai's Demand for Less Military," *FoxNews.com*, November 15, 2010, <http://liveshots.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/11/15/us-rejects-karzai-demand-to-slow-military-o/?test=latestnews>.

¹⁹⁴ "Karzai: U.S. Must 'Reduce Military Operations,'" *FoxNews.com*, November 14, 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/11/14/karzai-says-reduce-military-operations/?test=latestnews>.

capabilities (CDI, LDI, AP3, ANCOP, etc.) in addition to the ANA and ANP. Although the U.S. cannot limit the number and scope of organizations that the GIRoA wishes to establish and employ to maintain security within its borders, the greater the number of distinct organizations that require training and assistance, the less focused and more resource intensive U.S. assistance becomes. Furthermore, not only do these additional entities detract from the focus of U.S. and NATO troops with respect to advisory priorities, they also dilute the already tenuous influence of the GIRoA in rural areas. In future SFA operations, in order to ensure both unity of effort between the U.S. government and a partner nation, as well as enduring continuity of effort, the U.S. must establish well-defined limits on the scope of the assistance it will provide, as well as the type of programs to which it will contribute forces.

C. PLACING CONDITIONS ON U.S. ASSISTANCE

United States SFA efforts in Afghanistan (as well as in Iraq) began after the conclusion of major combat operations (MCO) against the military forces of the regimes previously in power in those countries. However, this is not (and should not be considered in the future) the norm. At any given time, there are several other U.S. SFA operations in progress in partner nations around the world, which are undertaken only at the request of the partner nation. Although U.S. interests are served by conducting SFA missions, given that our partner nations request U.S. assistance to develop their security forces, we would be fully justified in making our continued assistance contingent upon the partner nation government adhering to certain standards of conduct.

Future U.S. SFA efforts must be made contingent upon prescribed standards of conduct to which the partner nation government must adhere if it wishes to continue to receive assistance. These conditions must be agreed upon by both the U.S. and partner nation governments prior to the initiation of U.S. assistance, and must be closely monitored throughout the course of such assistance. What makes U.S. assistance to El Salvador differ from our current

SFA mission in Afghanistan is the fact that it was contingent upon clearly defined standards of conduct, to which the government of El Salvador had to adhere in order to continue receiving U.S. assistance. In Afghanistan, we have not established criteria that the GIRoA must meet, or behaviors that they must avoid, in order to continue receiving our assistance. As a result, regardless of the actions of the GIRoA, the U.S. government and NATO have no formal mechanisms through which to influence the GIRoA. Since no agreement on standards of conduct for the GIRoA (and its various components, including the ANSF) was not established prior to the initiation of assistance to the GIRoA, such a framework cannot be established now without damaging already strained U.S.-Afghan relations.

Based at least in part on the perceived ineffectiveness of the GIRoA (exacerbated by mistrust caused by widespread corruption), the Taliban has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in recent months. As a result of this renewed popularity, the task of pacifying rural areas of Afghanistan has not only become more difficult for ANSF, but for U.S. and NATO forces as well. Although a certain level of corruption is not considered unusual in Afghanistan (as well as in other countries), had the U.S. and the GIRoA agreed to limits on such behavior—as well as prescribed consequences for it—we would now be in a better position to prevent the GIRoA from engaging in conduct that has the potential to undermine the success not only of assistance to Afghanistan, but the overall counterinsurgency effort there as well.

D. ADVISOR SELECTION AND QUALIFICATION

The individual advisor, having the most direct contact with partner nation personnel and units, is perhaps the most important factor in any U.S. assistance effort. Until recently, Special Forces (SF) units had all but exclusive claim to advisory duties, but the requirements of ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq made it necessary to employ GPF as advisors. However, merely assigning advisory duties to GPF personnel does not give them the skills necessary for

such duties. According to JCISFA's *Security Force Assistance Planner's Guide*, "Successful SFA operations require a detailed understanding of the operational environment, both the human elements like culture, tribal affiliations, politics, language and religion, and the more physical elements like geography, threat, infrastructure and economics."¹⁹⁵ Even a very skilled tactician will be an ineffective advisor if he is unable to build rapport with and relate to his counterpart. However, although GPF personnel (and, recently, units) have been tasked to conduct SFA missions, it is questionable whether they are receiving the training necessary to successfully accomplish these missions. In nearly every U.S. advisory effort, there has been no formal selection process to identify candidates with the skills necessary to be a successful advisor. With the exception of El Salvador, where previous experience in the region and Spanish language ability were viewed as advantages—but not requirements—for assignment as an advisor (although Special Forces qualification was desirable, it was not a prerequisite), availability for assignment seems to have been the main determinant of assignment as an advisor. This is certainly true with respect to the way GPF personnel are used to train security forces in as part of Military Transition Teams (MiTTs) or Embedded Training Teams (ETTs) (hereafter collectively referred to as TTs) in Afghanistan (as well as in Iraq).

In addition to the apparent gap in advisory training and qualification, TTs are subject to several other factors that can reduce their effectiveness as advisors. As a result of the selection process to which they are subjected, and the extensive training they must complete, Special Forces personnel possess "unique skills in language qualification, regional orientation, cultural awareness, and interpersonal relations," which are "keys to the successes experienced by SF units in the field."¹⁹⁶ Although GPF personnel who have been slated for a TT

¹⁹⁵ Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, *Security Force Assistance Planner's Guide* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, February 14, 2008), i.

¹⁹⁶ United States Department of the Army. *Field Manual 3-05: Army Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, September 2006), 3–3.

assignment receive minimal training in the culture and language of the area in which they will be performing advisory duties, their training is not nearly as detailed or relevant to actual advisory missions as the training all SF personnel are required to complete. The training TT personnel must complete prior to deploying is weighted far more toward survivability and soldier skills than developing advisory skills.¹⁹⁷ Evidence of this imbalance exists in JCISFA's *Transition Team Handbook*, wherein less than 20 pages are devoted to advisory considerations (the balance—nearly 200 pages—is devoted to survival skills, battle drills, and equipment manuals).¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, the training TT personnel receive is not meant to assess candidates' suitability to serve as an advisor, or to disqualify those who do not possess the right attributes for such duties. Rather, this training is perfunctory in nature, and personnel who attend it have already been selected for a TT assignment, rather than being candidates for it, as SF volunteers are until they complete their training.

Although TTs are usually (but not always) told before beginning their training what partner nation's security forces they will be advising, they often receive no greater resolution about their destination until late in their training.¹⁹⁹ As a result, these TTs deploy without detailed knowledge about the area of operation (AO) they will be occupying, or the current status of the unit they will be advising.²⁰⁰ Although SF units often advise foreign security forces in countries outside their traditional areas of responsibility (AORs) (e.g., the rotation of battalions from the 35rd and 7th Special Forces Groups in Afghanistan since 2002), SF units are able to maintain their focus on their traditional AORs by conducting JCETs when they are not deployed to the CENTCOM AOR.

¹⁹⁷ Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Advising Iraqi Security Forces: Collection and Analysis Team Initial Impressions Report* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Center for Army Lessons Learned, January 2007), 4.

¹⁹⁸ Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, *Transition Team Handbook, 2nd Edition* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, December 4, 2007).

¹⁹⁹ Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Advising Iraqi Security Forces: Collection and Analysis Team Initial Impressions Report*, 9.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

Furthermore, although it is outside their traditional AORs, the long-term utilization of the 3rd and 7th SF Groups in Afghanistan has afforded them a degree of predictability and familiarity with where they will be operating. Personnel assigned to TTs have no such benefit, since they are not assigned official, or even habitual, AORs.

Although SF units, like nearly all military units, are subject to personnel rotation, the low density of the SF career field allows many Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alphas (SFODAs) to serve multiple deployments with generally little personnel rotation. Conversely, TTs serve only one tour as a unit. Furthermore, most TT members only serve one tour performing advisory duties, and even those who serve additional TT tours do not typically do so in the same area, if even the same country. As a result, institutional knowledge and advisory experience are seldom retained at the tactical level, where it is arguably needed most.

Although GPF personnel and units have enjoyed some success training the security forces of Afghanistan, some argue that conditions exist where mission success in FID or SFA cannot be achieved without SOF participation, if not exclusivity. According to John Mulbury, “in operations that require a force capable of working closely with a local population, working as an interagency player or working under an extremely sensitive political situation, ARSOF (Army Special Operations Forces) will remain the force of choice.”²⁰¹ Mulbury cites current operations in the Philippines as an example of this type of environment, but Afghanistan fits his criteria just as well, if not more so. However, the massive scope of SFA operations in Afghanistan and Iraq has made GPF participation in the SFA efforts in those countries necessary. Unfortunately, the necessity to conduct or participate in such missions does not necessarily correlate to competence in the critical skill sets required for them.

²⁰¹ John Mulbury, “ARSOF, General Purpose Forces, and FID: Who Does What, Where, and When?” *Special Warfare* 21, no. 1 (January–February 2008): 20.

Special Operations Forces espouse several “SOF Truths” that apply to their development and employment. Among these “truths” are “quality is better than quantity” and “Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced.” However, it is arguable that tasking GPF with missions traditionally performed by SOF units violates these principles. Although we are not mass-producing SOF, we may in fact be sacrificing quality for quantity by using an already abundant source of manpower to take the place of SOF for certain missions. Under circumstances that do not require the unique skill sets provided by SOF personnel or units, it would be inappropriate to employ them. However, it is perhaps even more inappropriate to employ GPF in circumstances that require capabilities that only SOF can provide. Special Operations Forces are “well suited to conduct or support FID because these forces have unique functional skills and language and cultural training,”²⁰² and this is especially true of Army Special Forces. Although FID is only one of the core tasks of Special Forces, because of the extensive training these personnel receive, they are arguably the best choice for advisory missions. Special Forces personnel receive extensive training in foreign languages, as well as cultural education, that GPF personnel typically do not receive.

Another important distinction between SOF and GPF, which can have an impact on the ability to train foreign forces, is SOF’s unique ability to operate in “hostile, denied, or political sensitive areas of the world”²⁰³ with “little or no external support”²⁰⁴ when necessary. Although this capability refers in part to SF’s ability to infiltrate, operate, and exfiltrate undetected, the more important aspect of this characteristic of SF operations (as it relates to training foreign forces) is their ability to conduct extended operations independent of both

²⁰² United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.202: Special Forces Foreign Internal Defense Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, February 2007), 1–1.

²⁰³ United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20: Special Forces Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, June 2001), 1–1.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

significant logistical support and oversight from higher headquarters. This is one characteristic of SOF to which GPF can make no claim. GPF personnel do not receive adequate training to operate in such environments, nor are they capable of independent operations for extended periods of time, even (and perhaps especially) if they are organized into small units, such as TTs.

A small minority advocates the establishment of a permanent, specially trained “Advisor Corps” to conduct the Army’s portion of SFA missions.²⁰⁵ This corps would be manned by personnel culled from GPF units, in something of an extension of the TT concept currently employed in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, rather than advisor duty being a short-term (and possibly one-time, which most TT assignments currently are) commitment, most soldiers would serve a three year tour in the Advisor Corps (only one year of which would be spent advising partner nation forces), then return to a GPF unit. Other soldiers would remain in the Advisor Corps to serve as mentors for new advisors and doctrine writers.²⁰⁶ However, according to the template Nagl recommends, this unit would assume a structure similar to a standing corps, consisting of 20,000 soldiers, as well as having a lieutenant general as its commander, and three major generals to command its divisions, which would be the standard deployable unit within the organization.²⁰⁷ Although this would alleviate the ad hoc (if not haphazard) way in which advisory teams have heretofore been established, it would also require the dedication of 20,000 soldiers, out of an authorized active duty strength of 569,400.²⁰⁸ Nagl acknowledges that the establishment of such an Advisor Corps would require the sacrifice of four Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs). He argues, however, that “an advisor command dedicated solely to the mission of raising, training, employing, and sustaining

²⁰⁵ John A. Nagl, “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for an Army Advisor Command,” *Military Review* (September–October 2008): 24.

²⁰⁶ Nagl, “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for an Army Advisor Command,” 26.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁰⁸ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 (HR5136) (Washington, D.C.: 111th United States Congress, 2d Session, May 21, 2010), 122.

host-nation security forces that can defend freedom abroad” more closely represents “the Army our country needs now.”²⁰⁹ However, while the U.S. military must undoubtedly remain prepared to conduct large-scale advisory efforts for the foreseeable future, it must also maintain units capable of executing their traditional missions, because we cannot afford to focus exclusively on one type of mission over the other. Given the robust requirements to resource and conduct advisory efforts around the world, the U.S. military must develop a professional—and more importantly a competent—advisory capability. However, we cannot afford to shift the focus of brigade combat teams (BCTs) to a purely advisory role, at the expense of their collective competency in their traditional roles.

Joint doctrine prescribes that “Both conventional and SOF units have a role and capability to conduct FID missions. ARSOF’s primary role in this interagency activity is to assess, train, advise, and assist HN military and paramilitary forces with the tasks that require their unique capabilities.”²¹⁰ Since SOF possess unique capabilities, it is arguable that they should not be employed for missions that do not require these capabilities. However, neither should General Purpose Forces (GPF) be considered the default force for SFA missions, since their strengths still lie in more conventional tasks.

Although the tempo and nature of U.S. operations over the last several years has highlighted the need for GPF to play an increased role in advising partner nation security forces, it is equally clear that GPF cannot take the place of SOF in conducting such tasks, despite the relative scarcity of available SOF. The training SF soldiers and units receive makes them particularly (and sometimes uniquely, depending on conditions in the operating environment) qualified to conduct advisory missions. In order for GPF personnel and units to be adequately trained and qualified to conduct advisory missions, more stringent

²⁰⁹ Nagl, “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for an Army Advisor Command,” 26.

selection processes must be established. Furthermore, although GPF personnel assigned to advisory missions need not receive SOF training, the training they do receive in preparation for advisory deployments must be modified to emphasize not “warrior skills,”²¹¹ but *advisor* skills.

From an organizational perspective, a standing organization—regardless of purpose—would likely produce better results than an ad hoc organization established in response to an emergency. The advisory effort in El Salvador was undoubtedly enhanced by the fact that OPATT members served multiple tours there. Although this repetition at least contributed to the success of that mission, it would be a mistake to use it as a basis for establishing a permanent advisor corps. Furthermore, establishing a permanent Advisor Corps would entail too great a cost in terms of readiness, because of the significant impact it would have on the ability of the Army to maintain proficiency at its traditional tasks. Although still ad hoc, the current TT model may be the most effective method to conduct the military aspects of SFA while maintaining the overall readiness of the Army to conduct conventional missions. However, a significantly more stringent screening and selection process—similar to that currently employed for Special Forces candidates—must be undertaken before soldiers are assigned advisory duties.

²¹⁰ United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-05: Doctrine for Joint Special Operations Doctrine* (Arlington, Virginia: United States Department of Defense, December 17, 2003), II-7.

²¹¹ Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Advising Iraqi Security Forces: Collection and Analysis Team Initial Impressions Report*, 5.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to show that United States Security Force Assistance (SFA) to partner nations is necessary to achieve the national security objectives of the United States. However, such efforts must be approached with certain conditions and criteria in mind. Based on recent operations, and the emergence of non-state actors as global threats, we are currently in an era of “persistent conflict.”²¹² Therefore, although the scope of U.S. SFA requirements will undoubtedly be reduced after U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is complete, we must remain prepared to execute similar operations in support of shaping operations in other partner nations, to prevent the necessity of becoming involved in long-term SFA commitments in those countries.

Although SOF are the only military forces required by law to conduct Foreign Internal Defense (FID), the role of General Purpose Forces (GPF) in assistance missions has necessarily grown exponentially in the last several years, and each of the Services was recently directed the capability to conduct FID. Despite the ongoing debate over the differences between SFA and FID, the distinction between the two terms is an arbitrary one, which causes more confusion than clarification. Although the two missions were developed independently (and although FID is a more established, recognizable term), FID is actually a specific type of SFA, employed under certain conditions in pursuit of specific goals.

The U.S. military clearly needs to develop greater capacity to conduct Security Force Assistance. Special Operations Forces—despite their success in El Salvador and the Philippines—simply do not exist in sufficient quantity to fulfill all of the advisory requirements with which the U.S. can expect to be confronted in the future. However, merely re-tasking GPF to conduct advisory duties will not

²¹² United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-07: Stability Operations* (Washington, D.C., Headquarters, Department of the Army, October 2008), 6–1.

imbue them with the capability to adequately perform these functions, especially in denied or politically sensitive areas. Furthermore, increasing the number of missions for which GPF units must be prepared will likely reduce their competency in all of their assigned tasks. Requiring GPF units to focus on tasks beyond those for which they are designed and equipped will only dilute their ability to perform their doctrinal missions. Although GPF require additional training to conduct SFA operations, the U.S. cannot afford to establish a separate advisory corps to carry out such missions.

Regardless of where U.S. forces are sent to conduct SFA, and the type of forces we employ to do so, it is imperative to conduct a thorough, honest assessment of not only the security situation, but also the challenges and limitations of the partner nation government, prior to initiating an assistance mission. United States assistance to El Salvador during the 1980s and early 1990s is often cited as one of our most successful assistance missions. Although there were several factors that contributed to this success, the emphasis placed on conducting an assessment of El Salvador's government and military forces, and on making U.S. assistance dependent on their performance in such areas as human rights, was critical in securing that success. Furthermore, although this effort evolved over time in response to changing tactical and operational conditions, there was significantly more continuity of effort than we have seen in more recent assistance efforts. In Afghanistan, no such initial assessment was made prior to the initiation of SFA operations, which has undermined the continuity of effort, and U.S. assistance was never tied to the conduct of the GIRoA, which has allowed questionable conduct—which may be undermining success there—to occur unchecked.

Legitimacy is a necessary condition for SFA efforts to be successful, but it is not sufficient by itself. United States assistance to El Salvador was successful in large part because of the perceived legitimacy of not only the presence of U.S. forces in the eyes of the Salvadoran people, but also because of the increasing legitimacy of the Government of El Salvador, as viewed by the people of El

Salvador and the international community. The former was aided by the low signature of U.S. forces in El Salvador, and the limited role they played in the civil war, including the official prohibition on their participation in actual combat operations. The latter was aided by the U.S. making its continued assistance to El Salvador contingent on observable improvements in human rights and other areas. The problems the U.S. is facing now in Afghanistan are largely a result of the perceived lack of legitimacy not only of the GIRoA, but of the presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The Government of El Salvador, despite having problems of its own, was recognized as a legitimate sovereign power before the arrival of U.S. forces. Conversely, the U.S. removed the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, and ostensibly installed the GIRoA leadership, which may make the continued presence of U.S. forces there suspect in the eyes of the public. Although the Taliban did not enjoy international recognition, because of its record of atrocities, the GIRoA, although its transgressions are far less egregious than the Taliban's, is not being held accountable, either to its U.S. and NATO benefactors or to its own constituency, the Afghan people.

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