

U.S. Marine Corps sniper with Task Force Southwest sights in with rifle combat optic on M4 carbine during security post for advising mission with 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, Afghan National Army 215<sup>th</sup> Corps, as they conduct Operation *Maiwand* 12 at Camp Shorserack, Afghanistan, March 13, 2018 (U.S. Marine Corps/Conner Robbins)



# Enhancing Global Security Through Security Force Assistance

By Keith D. Smith

We have consistently heard that the future joint force has to be postured to deal with an increasingly complex security environment. Today's adversaries continue to threaten our peace with rudimentary weapons that indiscriminately take civilian lives. They also attack our computer networks in ways that, while not

impossible to defend against, present new challenges. Additionally, the ever-looming threats from near-peer state actors require our time, attention, and resources. In the midst of these challenges, our nation's security institutions are facing the reality that there is no panacea, no secret weapon, no magic wand to wave that would make all of our security challenges go away. However, Security Force Assistance (SFA) can help address these challenges by enabling U.S. partners and allies to carry larger portions of the burden. While the joint force has made tremen-

dous strides in developing its capability to train, equip, and advise foreign security forces and build institutional capacity to sustain those efforts, there is still more work to be done.

SFA creates a framework for improved partnerships and stronger alliances, and our national security guidance is clear about its importance. Our nation's leaders have consistently echoed these sentiments in press conferences, speeches, and policy documents. While campaigning—and even since he has been in office—President Donald Trump has openly discussed his desire for our global

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partners to carry a greater share of the security burden. Additionally, due to the changes in the global security environment, both the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have had to place a higher priority on partner and ally contributions than their most recent predecessors.

As recently as October 5, 2017, Secretary James Mattis published a memorandum to all Department of Defense personnel focusing them on his top three priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Among those, he highlights the importance of partners and allies by directing the following: “strengthen Alliances and attract new partners . . . [in order] to reinforce the safety and security that underpins the peace and economic prosperity for all nations.” With these words, Secretary Mattis makes clear that partner nations’ ability to contribute to global security is among his most urgent concerns.

Furthermore, since assuming his position as Chairman, General Joseph Dunford has repeatedly reminded the joint force of the importance of partners and allies to the future of continued peace and prosperity around the world. Recently, he conveyed this notion in a *Joint Force Quarterly* article titled “Allies and Partners Are Our Strategic Center of Gravity.” In this article, General Dunford discussed the strategic legitimacy and operational access gained by our global partnerships since World War II. More importantly, he described the network of U.S. alliances and partnerships as the strategic source of power for the joint force to successfully execute the National Military Strategy. Finally, he ended his article by stating, “Given the nature of the threats we face today and the challenges we are likely to face in the future, I cannot imagine a scenario in which the United States would not be standing alongside allies and partners across the globe.”

Like the United States, our partners, allies, and aspiring partners benefit from these relationships, too. More capable security forces enable national governments to repel attacks from outside their borders and quell insurgencies that might rise up from within. In many cases, the result would be a nation more fertile

for economic development and less receptive to violent extremist ideologies. However, with smaller defense budgets and fewer defense experts available to solve these problems, some of our aspiring security partners stand in need of our help. SFA offers the United States the opportunity to export peace and security to such countries. For example, U.S. aid to Colombia during their fight against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, National Liberation Army, and United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia helped reduce the harmful effects of their transnational drug and human-trafficking problems. As their security woes lessened, their economic prosperity grew. Today, while Colombia’s internal security problems are far from over, they now have the expertise to make greater contributions to regional and global security. Lessons from Colombia and other places are being incorporated into doctrine to improve the joint force’s ability to conduct these types of missions.

More specifically, joint doctrine was advanced in May 2017 when Joint Publication 3-20, *Security Cooperation*, was published. It contained a robust appendix on SFA. *SFA* is defined in JP 3-20 and the Department of Defense Dictionary as “activities that support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions.” A fair criticism levied by many over the past few years is that train and equip missions fall short of building any meaningful capability or capacity because the receiving nation rarely has the desire or know-how to maintain it. Our current doctrine in JP 3-20 addresses this problem with the executive, generating, and operating (EGO) construct as a way for planning and executing SFA missions to promote sustainability. Specifically, EGO highlights the essentialness of each function of a foreign security force: the executive function, generating function, and operating function are roughly analogous (in their U.S. equivalents) to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, military Services, and operating/tactical forces. While the operating function (training tactical-level forces) is where much of U.S. SFA

current efforts lie, enduring capability and capacity require an executive function to provide policy guidance and funding as well as a generating function that recruits, organizes, and trains newly assessed personnel to a universal standard that can be depended on to produce an enduring military capability.

These updates to doctrine are important. They begin to create a path to building more enduring capacity and capability in our global security partners that is consistent with the previously mentioned national security guidance. Additionally, if the EGO construct is followed, it helps satisfy the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) requirement for “institutional capacity-building” in train and equip missions. According to the 2017 NDAA, the purpose of institutional capacity-building is “to enhance the capacity of such foreign country to organize, administer, employ, manage, maintain, sustain, or oversee the national security forces of such foreign country.” Institutional capacity-building can also be likened to *defense institution-building*, which is the doctrinal term used in JP 3-20 to describe SFA at the executive and generating functions of a foreign security force.

In addition to these doctrinal updates, the Army and Marine Corps are making their own investments to the joint solution. In the fall of 2011, the Marine Corps merged two separate commands to create the Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group (MCSCG). Headquartered in Fort Story, Virginia, MCSCG has the mission of “executing and enabling Security Cooperation programs, training, planning, and activities in order to ensure unity of effort in support of USMC and Regional Marine Component Command objectives and in coordination with the operating forces and Marine Air-Ground Task Force(s).” Furthermore, MCSCG offers numerous courses that help prepare Servicemembers who will be working in training, advising, and assisting missions. Examples of MCSCG’s offerings are the Marine Advisor Course, Security Cooperation Trainer’s Course, and Basic Engagement Skills Course.



Soldiers assigned to 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Security Forces Assistance Brigade, pull security duty during patrol in Bermal district of Paktika Province, Afghanistan, April 27, 2013 (U.S. Army/Mark A. Moore II)

Similarly, the Army has made recent changes that will contribute to the joint force's ability to build capability and capacity in foreign security partners. Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) are the Army's way of using existing force structure in a more effective and efficient way to contribute. The benefit to the Army and the joint force is twofold. First, SFABs relieve Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) from SFA operations, increasing BCT readiness for more conventional missions. Second, SFABs will develop greater proficiency to conduct training, advising, and assistance missions in a small cadre of professionals who can focus exclusively on that mission. In an Army article from May 2017, C. Todd Lopez states that the "SFAB is designed to rapidly deploy into a theater of operations in support of a combatant commander . . . [and] begin to work with, train, advise, and assist those partner nation security forces on anything they need help with, be it logistics, be it communications, be it maneuver. Anything they need help with to improve their capacity and capability, that's what the SFAB is designed to do." In a subsequent article from December 2017, General Mark Milley, Army Chief of Staff,

told defense reporters at the Association of the United States Army's 2017 annual meeting that "It is my assessment, and the assessment of the Secretary and the assessment of the Army staff, that we are likely to be involved in train, advise, and assist operations for many years to come."

While these Army and Marine Corps contributions are important, there is still work left for the joint force. Namely, we need better training for our senior-level advisors. In response to the need for ministerial-level advisor training, the Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance called together prominent members from the communities of interest to examine the problem of training for ministerial-level advisors. General John W. Nicholson, Jr., is concerned that most U.S. advisors deploying into Afghanistan in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) *Resolute Support* mission are not properly trained to advise—the very job that they have been assigned to do. For example, many advisors coming from other contributing nations attend classes at the NATO Joint Forces Training Centre in Bydgoszcz, Poland. However, the United States has yet to develop a formal senior advisor training

curriculum that would prepare ministerial advisors or require such advisors to attend classes at Bydgoszcz. The United States should not expect the highest return from its advisor investment until institutional processes for fielding and training personnel assigned to these missions are improved.

The United States must continue to find ways to enhance its SFA capabilities so that we are postured to build our partners and allies well into the future. The joint force has made recent improvements in this area with the Army's SFAB, Marine Corps' MCSCG, and improvements to joint doctrine, but there is still more that needs to be done. Improvements to interoperability between current and future coalition forces is a must. Also, the need for training of senior-level ministerial advisors has to be addressed.

The security challenges that we face in the future will only threaten our peace and prosperity if we allow it. With continued focus and determination, the United States can help build more capable global security partners through SFA, thereby facilitating more enduring peace, security, and stability throughout the world. JFQ