



Pararescuemen practice personnel recovery mission during PJ Rodeo Competition near Patrick Air Force Base, Florida, September 20, 2016 (U.S. Air Force/Brandon Shapiro)

Building Joint Personnel Recovery Through Multinational Collaboration

By David Gayvert

In *Joint Force Quarterly* 88 (1st Quarter 2018), an article titled “Born Multinational: Capability Solutions for Joint, Multinational, and Coalition Operations” introduced the Multinational Capability Development Cam-

paign (MCDC), a Joint Staff J7 multinational force development initiative focused on collaboratively developing and assessing concepts and capabilities to address the challenges associated with conducting coalition and multinational operations.¹ This article provides additional information about how the MCDC enables effective collaboration among like-minded partner nations

(PN) in the vital mission area of personnel recovery (PR).

The Integrated Coalition Personnel Recovery Capability (ICPRC) is one of nine projects undertaken during the current 2017–2018 MCDC program cycle, the theme of which is Rapid Aggregation of Coalition and Partner Forces. Personnel recovery is included within this theme as a high-interest subject area.

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Pararescuemen assigned to 83rd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron observe medical procedures performed by members of U.S. Army Aviation Reaction Force, Task Force Brawler, on flightline at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, February 22, 2018 (U.S. Air Force/Gregory Brook)

Joint Publication 3-50 defines *personnel recovery* as the “sum of military, diplomatic, and civil efforts to prepare for and execute the recovery and reintegration of isolated personnel.”²

Several studies have assessed that multinational forces and operations are at risk due to a lack of an effective and enduring global PR network, using a common lexicon, and cooperation and synchronization mechanisms to optimally employ nations’ capabilities across the full PR spectrum—diplomatic, military, and civil domains. This hampers the ability of commanders and other decisionmakers to prevent or respond effectively to isolating events.

The ICPRC project aims to address this problem by creating an international guidebook that will provide nations and governmental or nongovernmental organizations a tool to assess and address gaps in PR capability and interoperability, as well as to educate senior leaders about the importance and basic elements of personnel recovery. Doing so will enable more efficient preparation, planning,

execution, and adaptation functions of personnel recovery among allies and partners, providing common principles, terms and definitions, capability standards, best practices, and processes. The guidebook will be a descriptive rather than prescriptive product and is not intended to be a doctrinal manual; its recommendations are not binding on any nation.

As with all MCDC projects, the ICPRC seeks to implement the guidance contained in key policy documents, from the National Defense Strategy to Chairman of the Joint Chief (CJCS) issuances, joint publications, and derivative Service doctrine, all of which echo the Department of Defense (DOD) emphasis on multinational cooperation. As noted in CJCS Instruction 2700.01F, *Rationalization, Standardization, and Interoperability Activities*, for example, leveraging the capabilities, capacities, and shared interests of partner nations is a key force multiplier for U.S. military planners and commanders.³ Furthermore, strengthening our allies and forging new

multinational partnerships is among Secretary of Defense James Mattis’s top priorities.⁴ Reinforcing this emphasis, General Joseph Dunford recently affirmed that “allies and partners are our strategic center of gravity.”⁵

Clearly, the volatile global security environment will continue to require—more than ever before—a comprehensive approach to effectively counter collective threats, one that must include political, diplomatic, military, civil, and nongovernmental activities conducted via partnered coalitions of like-minded nations and organizations. Yet in many mission areas—and personnel recovery is certainly one of these—the lack of compatible, interoperable policies and doctrine; education and training; tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP); capability standards; and strong, functional relationships inhibits optimal partnering with our allies and partner nations.

In regions like Africa and the Pacific, where the United States has only limited PR-capable assets available, this situation

can create significant risks to DOD and other U.S. and PN personnel operating in those areas. In short, the United States simply does not have the capacity to handle all current and potential future PR requirements. Therefore, PN support is essential to reduce risk and ensure sustained PR coverage for U.S. and coalition missions, as well as guarantee adequate response to future operational threats that may require military response. Thus, growing the PR capability and capacity of willing partners and improving interoperability through shared doctrine, training, and TTP are certainly in the interests of the United States and its allies and partners.

Why is this so important? Aside from reducing the direct risk to our people, past experience illustrates that when personnel are held captive, or otherwise isolated in hostile areas or conditions, the lack of a timely and effective recovery operation—or an adversary’s exploitation of isolated personnel through public media—can prompt changes in policies that place collective strategic aims at risk and may even threaten the stability of coalitions. Still burned into our minds, the images of U.S. personnel being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1993, directly led to the U.S. decision not to intervene in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.⁶ The more recent press photographs showing the horrific fate of the Jordanian pilot executed by terrorists in Syria similarly had massive impacts on public opinion and subsequent political decisions made.⁷

Accordingly, to address this gap in PR capability and interoperability and provide multinational force commanders with an improved capability to quickly and effectively plan, synchronize, execute, and assess joint and combined PR operations, the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA) teamed with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Allied Command Transformation (ACT) to co-lead the ICPRC project. The project provides a means for both organizations to achieve several key strategic objectives and has already produced value for project partners who are using parts of the guidebook (published in October

2018) to educate leaders within their nations about personnel recovery, as well as influence the curriculum of their PR education and training programs.

The ICPRC Project Team and Objectives

Currently, 20 nations and multinational organizations from around the globe are participating in the project in some capacity.⁸ In addition to specific information explaining how to effectively prepare, plan, and execute personnel recovery, the ICPRC project promotes several key concepts:

- PR capability, whether material (platforms, equipment) or nonmaterial (policy, doctrine, education, training), cannot be produced overnight; it must be developed, acquired, and maintained well in advance of the operational need.
- Personnel recovery is truly a whole-of-nation responsibility requiring involvement of political, diplomatic, civil, and military leadership and capabilities; as such, it is an inherently joint mission area.
- The need for interoperability—both internationally and among national components—in joint PR (JPR) capabilities is paramount and should be factored into all force development decisions.
- Mutual trust and working relationships among allies and partner nations must be developed and intensified over time through training, exercises, and other collaboration at all levels.
- Preparing, planning, and effectively executing personnel recovery is a responsibility for all nations and leaders.
- Personnel recovery is a moral obligation that will only provide reassurance to and trust among at-risk personnel if leaders adequately prepare and plan to ensure adequate and available capabilities when required.
- Every nation can contribute something to PR.

This last message is in fact key: leaders—within both DOD and our

international partners—must have a common understanding of the wide range of activities and expertise that comprise personnel recovery and be prepared to contribute something—whether it be equipment, recovery platforms, or simply well-trained personnel—to the collective mission. Political, diplomatic, civilian, and military leaders alike must continuously collaborate to effectively prepare, plan, and execute personnel recovery so as to be able to locate, support, recover, and reintegrate isolated personnel. They must recognize that requisite capabilities cannot be established overnight, or in the immediate aftermath of a PR event. The tendency to postpone commitment of time and resources to this critical mission “until we need it” must be avoided. Preparation and planning for isolating events must be done well in advance of need; history proves that virtually all nations will experience a PR event sooner or later.

The guidebook emphasizes that among the most important activities is development of national and organizational policies for PR/JPR that establish priorities for capability, capacity, and interoperability development, along with ways and means to achieve them.

The good news is that nations have a wide range of ways in which they may contribute to and improve the effectiveness of combined PR activities. In addition to developing and implementing formal policies that articulate the desired endstate (and that specify ways and means for the conduct of personnel recovery both unilaterally and within coalitions of allies and partners), other associated activities include but are not limited to providing key mission enablers such as intelligence, public affairs, strategic communications, and medical support.

The guidebook urges that relationships, communications networks, and written agreements among partners be established early, then maintained and strengthened throughout the preparation, planning, execution, and adaptation phases of personnel recovery, whether as part of a coalition, military operation, or within a diplomatic or other nonmilitary context. It calls attention to the fact that



Airmen with 23rd Special Tactics Squadron and Soldiers with 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) team up for personnel recovery training utilizing alternate infiltration and exfiltration training, on Wynnehaven Beach, Florida, April 9, 2013 (U.S. Air Force/Christopher Callaway)

the sensitivities surrounding a particular isolating event may require the lead for recovery decisionmaking, planning, and execution to shift among military, diplomatic, and civil teams, depending on the political environment at the scene, assets available, and leaders' need to coordinate and offer guidance, planning, and information support across the domains.

Throughout the planning and project execution (February 2017 to present), the ICPRC team has consistently contributed time and expertise to create a practical, compact reference, focused on the core components and activities of the PR system, providing enough information to understand how personnel recovery works—and how essential it is to national interests—without drowning the reader in detail.

ICPRC Working Session 2, Almagro, Spain

Envisioned users of the guidebook include not only partner nations that

wish to build or improve their PR capability, capacity, and interoperability but also security assistance/cooperation and force development program officers and planners developing PR concepts, doctrine, and training strategies.

Measures of effectiveness for the project include:

- Increase in (commitment to) user-nation PR capabilities: Guidebook provides a useful roadmap for PR/JPR capability and interoperability evaluation, preparation, planning, and development.
- Improvement in PN PR participation: Every nation can (and does) contribute some capability.
- Improvement in coalition interoperability: Partner nations ready to contribute value to PR mission on day one (plug and play capability).
- Demand signal for the guidebook: Have the right users asked for it and what is their feedback?

The fact that some of the project team nations are already using the current draft guidebook to convey key aspects of personnel recovery to senior commanders as well as to influence the curriculum of their PR education and training programs is an early indicator that the ICPRC will produce a valuable tool for the global PR community. Particularly among developing nations, the guidebook will provide ready access to the cumulative expertise and relevant operational experience resident within NATO, European Union, JPRA, and other ICPRC project partners.

However, publication of the guidebook aside, the most important long-term outcome of the ICPRC project will certainly be the expansion and strengthening of many key bilateral and multilateral relationships. For example, through collaboration on the ICPRC, JPRA has significantly increased its understanding of and support to complementary capability development

activities under way in other nations, as well as key organizations like the European Personnel Recovery Centre and European Defence Agency Project Team Personnel Recovery. This increase in shared understanding constitutes real progress toward the ultimate goal of a truly global PR federation of capable, willing, and active partners.

ICPRC Supports JPRA Multinational Outreach Objectives

The JPRA mission is to lead DOD personnel recovery, providing strategic direction, oversight, operational support, analysis, capability integration, and education and training to improve PR interoperability and enable DOD, multinational partners, and the interagency community to prevent, prepare for, and respond to isolating events.

As a CJCS-controlled activity and the DOD office of primary responsibility for personnel recovery (less policy), building and sustaining an international network of willing and capable partners is a major objective and mission-essential task for JPRA, as the agency pursues its strategic vision of achieving seamless, full-spectrum personnel recovery through enduring global integration and interoperability.⁹

The JPRA charter includes three separate references that give it specified authority and responsibility in the area of multinational engagement.¹⁰ The charter:

- directs JPRA to “provide a team of recognized experts to support DOD, interagency [community], and allied efforts to identify and meet current and future PR challenges”
- directs JPRA to “maintain direct liaison with DOD components, the interagency [community], and multinational partners”
- authorizes JPRA the “appointment of allied personnel to serve in JPRA” (after coordination with Air Force Manpower, Personnel, and Services).

In addition to the charter, DOD Directive 3002.01, *Personnel Recovery in the Department of Defense*, further establishes that JPRA shall:

- “assist other U.S. Government departments and agencies, *partner nations*, and others, as directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense with PR-related education and training programs”
- “[d]evelop and manage a capability to share appropriate lessons learned with interagency [community] and *partner nations*”
- “[a]ssist in developing and coordinating NATO doctrine and other NATO operational publications to distribute personnel recovery guidance and encourage synchronization with U.S. personnel recovery doctrine.”¹¹

To carry out these important specified tasks, JPRA has developed an international engagement strategy that is outcome-oriented, enabling the targeting of resources in a way that ensures force multiplication without duplication of effort and maintains a clear path toward the development of an enduring global PR community.

The strategy is organized into five major multinational lines of effort (LOE), all derived from the agency’s authorities; essential, specified, and implied tasks; and aligned with the priorities of the Joint Staff J7 Director’s Campaign Plan for Joint Force Development:

- LOE1: Strategy and Planning
- LOE2: Bilateral Engagement
- LOE3: Multilateral Engagement
- LOE4: Strategic Communication
- LOE5: Education and Training.

The MCDC program is a major LOE3 activity and helps JPRA advance its organizational goals in significant ways. By providing a structured and proven forum to collaboratively develop and introduce new nonmaterial capabilities, the program is an ideal venue through which JPRA can execute its directed responsibilities in the multinational arena. Among the foremost of these is ensuring that senior leaders—military, diplomatic, and civil—recognize the importance of the PR mission area and appropriately prepare and plan accordingly. The ICPRC guidebook does just that.

Finally, while there are established MCDC planning, approval, and reporting processes, project teams are able to plan, develop, and complete their work largely unfettered by the bureaucratic requirements that often characterize government-sponsored activities. The ICPRC project will be completed in November 2018, closing out the MCDC 2017–2018 cycle. Concept development for additional PR-related projects are currently under way for the 2019–2020 cycle.

Another critical element of this strategy under Bilateral Engagement (LOE2) is the nascent JPRA Foreign Liaison Officer (FLO) program, which aims at further strengthening key bilateral relationships by posting allied PR specialists as FLOs at JPRA headquarters. This would enable them to share their nations’ PR experiences, expertise, and perspective while simultaneously developing expertise in the U.S. PR system. These exchanges serve to better align bilateral and multilateral approaches to improving capability, capacity, and interoperability and in the process, strengthen the global JPR community.

Lieutenant Colonel Georg Stauch of the German army arrived at JPRA in January 2018 and is JPRA’s first FLO. On May 8, 2018, this valuable relationship was formally recognized with a ceremonial posting of the Federal Republic of Germany’s flag at JPRA headquarters. JPRA looks forward to welcoming additional allied FLOs from the United Kingdom and Poland in mid-fiscal year 2019.

ICPRC Supports NATO Commitment to JPR

In 2015, NATO ACT, through its Capability Development Division, initiated efforts to establish JPR as a key developmental focus, to be pursued through a number of interrelated activities. These included analysis of whether JPR should become a defined discipline within the Alliance as a means to better establish standards of training and professionalize execution of this essential mission area. In February 2016, NATO formally promulgated Allied Joint Publication 3-7, *Allied*

Joint Doctrine for Recovery of Personnel in a Hostile Environment. In March 2017, it submitted the Action Plan for Joint Personnel Recovery in a Hostile Environment to NATO headquarters for military committee approval, and in October 2017, submitted a draft JPR policy for NATO for North Atlantic Council review. Over the past 3 years, NATO has also developed and ratified a number of JPR-related standardization agreements within the Alliance. These address survival, evasion, resistance, and extraction training standards, PR staff education, and PR TTP.

These are major milestones in the effort to improve JPR capability, capacity, and interoperability within the Alliance, as well as its operational partners. The action plan in particular is significant, as it describes the path to achieve a long-term vision of an integrated JPR capability in NATO. It contains 30 action items organized under 4 strategic objectives (SO) and related LOE:

- SO1/LOE1 Doctrine: Agreed Policy, Doctrine, Plans, and Documentation
- SO2/LOE2 Training: Trained and Qualified Forces, Trained Command and Control Structure
- SO3/LOE3 Organization: Integrated Command and Control Structure
- SO4/LOE4 Material: Force Structure Fielded and Operational.

The ICPRC project is completely complementary to the action plan and will help it accomplish many of its objectives, particularly in the doctrine and training SO/LOE.

NATO also co-leads three other projects within the MCDC 2017–2018 cycle. The Federated Mission Networking/Mission Partner Environment addresses capability development requirements for civil-military information-sharing. The International Cyberspace Operations Planning Curricula will create interoperable educational planning curricula that will effectively build courses to train cyberspace planners to conduct operations as an integral component of multinational force operations and exercises. And the

Medical Modular Approaches project is developing a concept for modular, interoperable medical capabilities that provides a flexible, agile, and mission-tailored configuration and enhancement of an end-to-end multinational medical support system. Clearly, the MCDC program provides NATO with a vehicle through which it may address a wide range of capability development challenges.

Conclusion

The ICPRC project will enable greater standardization and harmonization of JPR TTP, doctrine, and policy, and shared understanding among project partners of the JPR capabilities and capacity of coalition partner nations. It will provide a useful tool for other nations and organizations that wish to create, develop, or simply improve their JPR program and interoperable capabilities. Most important, it will underscore the importance of effective personnel recovery to all nations and the necessity that senior decisionmakers factor PR considerations into all operational preparations and planning.

Ultimately, the project aims to increase operational participation and burden-sharing among allies and partner nations as a means to sustain combined JPR capability and improved personnel and equipment interoperability. An ambitious goal to be sure, but one that is within reach because of programs like MCDC that harness the creativity, experience, and hard work of multinational partners to collaboratively, quickly, and affordably identify, analyze, and *solve* common problems. JFQ

Notes

¹ Charles W. Robinson, “Born Multinational: Capability Solutions for Joint, Multinational, and Coalition Operations,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 88 (1st Quarter 2018), 128–132.

² Joint Publication 3-50, *Personnel Recovery* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, December 20, 2011).

³ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 2700.01F, *Rationalization, Standardization, and Interoperability Activities* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, March 18, 2015).

⁴ James Mattis, “Memorandum for All Department of Defense Personnel,” October 5, 2017, available at <www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/GUIDANCE-FROM-SECRETARY-JIM-MATTIS.pdf>.

⁵ Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., “Allies and Partners Are Our Strategic Center of Gravity,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 87 (4th Quarter 2017), 4–5.

⁶ Steve Baldauf, “Why the U.S. Didn’t Intervene in the Rwandan Genocide,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 7, 2009, available at <www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2009/0407/p06s14-woaf.html>.

⁷ Adam Chandler, “I Expect the Jordanian Government to Seek Revenge,” *The Atlantic*, February 4, 2015, available at <www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/02/jordan-pilot-ISIS-execution-unity-Mouath-al-Kasaesbeh-King-Abdullah-revenge/385147>.

⁸ Australia, Austria, Denmark, European Personnel Recovery Centre, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

⁹ CJCSI 3270.01B, *Personnel Recovery* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, January 23, 2015).

¹⁰ Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, “Realignment of the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA) Under the Department of the Air Force, with Attachment,” November 25, 2011. Emphases added.

¹¹ Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 3002.01, *Personnel Recovery in the Department of Defense* (Washington, DC: DOD, April 16, 2009, Incorporating Change 1, April 4, 2013). Emphases added.