

Security Force Assistance Brigades: A Permanent Force for Regional Engagement and Building Operational Depth

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Security Force Assistance Brigades: A Permanent Force for Regional Engagement and Building Operational Depth by MAJ David W. Griffith, US Army, 49 pages.

Today's Army is fiscally constrained, and is being asked to do more with less to meet the demands of a complex global environment ranging from conventional threats such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran, as well as facing unconventional threats as posed by non-state actors like ISIS. To meet these demands, the Army is creating six regionally aligned Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) to provide Combatant Commanders additional flexibility and forces to counter emerging threats. This monograph argues that these SFABs offer several benefits. These six brigades will allow the Army to increase its depth by having additional assets with which to conduct host-nation advising, in order to shape the environment and deter potential threats. Additionally, the creation of these brigades will allow the Army's fifty-six Brigade Combat Teams to focus on conventional operations, maintaining the military's flexibility to respond to full-scale conflict. Finally, these brigades will have the capacity to expand into BCTs in the case of major or multiple conflicts when the Army needs additional combat forces quickly. If the Army can mitigate the risk involved with creating and employing these brigades, it can better meet its vision to prevent, shape, and win our nation's wars in the near future.

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Acronyms

AAB	Advise and Assist Brigade
ABCT	Armored Brigade Combat Team
AFRICOM	Africa Command
ANDSF	Afghanistan National Defense Security Forces
ARFORGEN	Army Forces Generation
BCA	Budget Control Act
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
CENTCOM	Central Command
COHORT	Cohesion, Operational Readiness, and Training
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CONUS	Continental United States
CTC	Combat Training Center
CTE	Culminating Training Event
DOTMLPF	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities
EF	Essential Function
EUCOM	European Command
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
HRC	Human Resources Command
IBCT	Infantry Brigade Combat Team
IRR	Individual Ready Reserve
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JCIDS	Joint Capabilities Integrations Development System
JRTC	Joint Readiness Training Center

KD	Key-Developmental
KSF	Kurdish Security Forces
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MNC-I	Multi-National Corps-Iraq
MNSTC-I	Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officers
NTC	National Training Center
OCT	Observer Controller Team
PACOM	Pacific Command
RAF	Regionally Aligned Forces
RS	Resolute Support
SBCT	Stryker Brigade Combat Team
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SFAAT	Security Force Assistance Advisory Team
SFABs	Security Force Assistance Brigades
SOUTHCOM	Southern Command
SME	Subject Matter Expert
STT	Security Transition Team
TAAC	Train, Advise, and Assist Command
TT	Transition Team
US	United States
WIAS	Worldwide Individual Augmentation System

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Introduction

In a complex, unsafe world, with increasing global demands on American leadership, it's our people – our soldiers – and their unmatched ability to seize and dominate physical and human terrain – that's what soldiers do – shape the strategic environment, and prevent conflict.

—Ash Carter, Secretary of Defense

The United States (US) Army has recently announced that it is creating Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) in order to perform military-to-military advising missions abroad, in response to the growing need for capable allied partners around the globe. The US Army's interest in advising host-nation security forces is not a new concept considering its history with such advisors in the Philippines War, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, El Salvador, Afghanistan, and Iraq. What is new about this concept is the creation of a permanent force structure of regular Army units with a focus on Security Force Assistance (SFA).

The creation of SFABs is a recognition of the vital importance of advising operations in today's complex security environment, and is meant to build capable partners in key regions. This approach is similar to how US Army Special Forces teams build capability with their Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions. Unfortunately, the need of military-to-military engagement operations such as advising efforts have outgrown the capacity of the small US special operations community, necessitating the use of general-purpose forces to meet the current demands of national security. The need to establish SFABs was recently recommended by the Atlantic Council, a prominent US policy think tank, in a publication titled, "The Future of the Army Report."¹ This report provided over fifteen ideas on how to prepare the Army for combat operations from now until 2040; adjusting the current force structure to better meet operational

¹ David Barno and Nora Bensahel, "The Future of the Army: Today, Tomorrow, and The Day After Tomorrow," The Atlantic Council, Brent Scowcroft Center On International Security (September 2016), 11-12.

demands requires dedicated military advisor units.² To understand why this mission has grown in significance, first it is important to examine the current state of the US Army.

In today's complex operating environment, the US Army is under enormous pressure to counter growing threats around the globe ranging from near-peer actors, such as those posed by Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, to non-state actors, as represented by the Islamic State of Levant (ISIS), Al Qaeda, and other violent extremist groups. Unfortunately, the Army is also operating in a fiscally constrained environment brought about by the effects of the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011, which is reducing the overall size, capacity, readiness, and modernization of the Army.³ The impact of the BCA is effectively forcing the Army to downsize to 980,000 Soldiers across its Active, Reserve, and National Guard forces with 450,000 Soldiers in the Regular Army, 335,000 in the Army National Guard, and 195,000 in the Reserves.⁴ More importantly, this reduction will shrink the active-duty Army from forty-five Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) in 2011 to thirty-one BCTs in 2017.⁵ This decrease in BCTs is significant, because BCTs represent the Army's primary unit of action for combat and noncombat deployments, and they are a credible measure of the US Army's ability to respond to diverse concurrent threats.

To understand why the Army is being forced to downsize, it is important to examine how the Army's budget has been reduced over the recent years. In 2010, the Army's budget was \$140 billion as it fought two wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan, but five years later, in 2015, the

² David Barno and Nora Bensahel, "The Future of the Army: Today, Tomorrow, and The Day After Tomorrow," The Atlantic Council, Brent Scowcroft Center On International Security (September 2016), 11-12.

³ Budget Control Act of 2011 (Washington, DC: United States Government Publishing Office, August 2011), S. 365-17- S. 365-18, accessed November 16, 2016, www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112s365enr/.../BILLS-112s365enr.pdf.

⁴ Department of Defense, *Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request Overview* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 3-5.

⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

Army's budget was \$121 billion despite ongoing operations in Afghanistan, as well as the start of new operations in Iraq and Europe following the rise of ISIS, and countering activity to Russian operations in Ukraine.⁶ At the BCA's time of passage in 2011, the Army was withdrawing from Iraq and operations in Afghanistan were forecasted to close out by 2014; conditions have since changed. Despite the increased demands for the Army, from Fiscal Year 2011 to 2016 its budget has been reduced by 16% while its number of BCTs has been reduced by 31%.⁷ Even with the budget increases proposed by President Trump, one of the biggest concerns for the US Army is the uncertainty of future funding and associated personnel demands.⁸ Given these austere fiscal realities and the expectation of increasing demands in the future, the Army needs to develop unique solutions to counter growing threats without overextending the Army.

Reductions in both manpower and budget have reduced the Army's ability to respond to future conflicts, especially when conflicts erupt in more than one theater or global region. As the Army reduces its active-duty BCTs from 45 in 2011 to 31 in 2016, this 32% reduction in readily deployable forces reduces the Army's capacity to operate in two simultaneous conflicts in different theaters.⁹ Moreover, the Army is beginning to be described as a 'hollow force' by many senior leaders, such as former Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno, as its ability to provide

⁶ Department of the Army, *National Commission on the Future of the US Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 39-40.

⁷ 2017 Index of US Military Strength: Assessing America's Ability to Provide For the Common Defense, The Heritage Foundation (Washington, DC: 2016), 13, accessed November 30, 2016, http://ims-2017.s3.amazonaws.com/2017_Index_of_Military_Strength_WEB.pdf.

⁸ Association of the United States Army, "Top Threat Facing the Army is Budget Uncertainty," AUSA (March 14, 2017), accessed March 21, 2017, <https://www.ausa.org/news/top-threat-facing-army-budget-uncertainty>.

⁹ Tom Vanden Brook, "Army Plans to Cut 40,000 Troops," *USA Today* (July 8, 2015), accessed September 22, 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/07/07/army-plans-to-cut-40000-troops/29826423/>.

presence abroad to support America's long-term goals during intense conflicts begins to wane.¹⁰

If the Army were to execute major operations in the Middle East in response to ISIS, its ability to also execute major operations against Russia, China, Iran, or North Korea would be extremely limited over a prolonged duration.¹¹

Currently, the Army has a limited number of BCTs available to meet a wide range of threats, which necessitates that most BCTs have to be ready for both Decisive Action and irregular warfare requiring SFA skills. To discuss the differences between Decisive Action and SFA, it is important to look at the Army's definition of both. Decisive Action is the "simultaneous combination of offensive, defensive, and stability operations appropriate to the mission and environment," per Army Doctrine Publication 3-0.¹² Typically, offensive and defensive operations are used in conventional conflicts. While Decisive Action also incorporates stability operations, and nested within that, SFA operations, SFA is also often used outside of conventional conflicts. SFA operations are more cumbersome than many would like to admit because they involve the time-consuming task of relationship building to establish rapport and influence, which requires a set of skills not commonly associated with general-purpose forces. SFA, according to Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 3-05, Special Operations, is defined as "Department of Defense activities that contribute to unified action by the US Government to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their

¹⁰ Reuters, "Hollow Force," *The Washington Free Beacon* (March 26, 2014), accessed September 22, 2016, <http://freebeacon.com/national-security/hollow-force/>.

¹¹ The Heritage Foundation, *2017 Index of US Military Strength: Assessing America's Ability to Provide For the Common Defense* (Washington, DC: 2016), 13, accessed November 30, 2016, http://ims-2017.s3.amazonaws.com/2017_Index_of_Military_Strength_WEB.pdf.

¹² Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 6.

supporting institutions.”¹³ By joint doctrine, SFA encompasses Department of Defense activities that “contribute to unified action by the US Government to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces.”¹⁴ Both definitions highlight the need for developing partner capacity and capability to support US operations in meeting policy aims.

While BCTs can be used for advising missions, deploying BCTs to conduct SFA operations is costly and subtracts from the Army’s ability to conduct Decisive Action in major conflicts. There is a strong demand for BCTs to participate in other operations, as the Army is currently under a high deployment tempo to meet growing security concerns, as represented by recent deployments of BCTs in Afghanistan, Europe, Iraq, Kuwait, and South Korea.¹⁵ Using BCTS for SFA is also inefficient, because SFA operations usually only need a small portion of a BCT’s total personnel; these engagement missions typically require sizeable amounts of senior leaders within the BCT but little requirements for junior personnel, leaving most junior Soldiers with minimal leadership and limiting their usefulness for other missions.

To counter both near peer threats and non-state actors, the Army is forced to divide its limited resources to prepare for both Decisive Action and SFA operations, with the result that units receive less than optimal levels of training on either . To counter this, the current Army Chief of Staff, General Mark Milley, recently proposed the creation of six Security Force

¹³ Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 2-5.

¹⁴ Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 213.

¹⁵ Michelle Tan, “Back-to-back rotations to Europe could stress the Army’s armored BCTs,” *Army Times* (February 11, 2016), accessed September 22, 2016, <https://www.armytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2016/02/11/back--back-rotations-europe-could-stress-armys-armored-bcts/80243786/>.

Assistance Brigades (SFABs), whose primary responsibility will be SFA operations, with the goal of continual Army presence and engagement around the world.¹⁶ These new SFABs would deploy to their assigned geographic area to conduct host-nation advising to build capacity and capability in response to regional threats. Moreover, the creation of these new SFABs would allow the Army's fifty-six BCTs to focus primarily on Decisive Action and the associated core competencies of offensive and defensive operations.

To build further depth in the Army's combat capability, General Milley also proposed that these new SFABs also be expandable in times of major conflict to create BCTs in minimal time. To accomplish this feat, leaders who have already completed successful command at the Brigade, Battalion, and Company level will lead these brigades.¹⁷ By design, these brigades would serve as additional leadership opportunities for both officers and non-commissioned officers. In times of need, the Army could produce Soldiers in Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training to fill these new brigades, but experienced leadership would command these new Soldiers, thus decreasing the time necessary to train a BCT. This decrease in time is achievable because junior Soldiers only require four to six months of training during Basic and Advanced Individual Training, while experienced officers and NCOs would need approximately three to six months of leadership training for the transition to conventional combat operations.¹⁸

¹⁶ Jen Judson, "Milley: Advise-and-Assist Brigade Pilot To Take Shape in a Few Years," *Defense News* (June 23, 2016), accessed September 22, 2016, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2016/06/23/milley-advise-and-assist-brigade-pilot-take-shape-few-years/86287816/>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Jim Smilie, "A Parent's View of Army Basic Training," *The Town Talk* (October 3, 2015), accessed December 4, 2016, <http://www.thetowntalk.com/story/life/2015/10/04/parents-view-army-basic-training/72990358/>.

The SFAB's expandable capability therefore could grow the Regular Army from thirty BCTs to thirty-five BCTs in minimal time as opposed to the current model, which requires thirty months to fully man, and train a new BCT once the Army decides to expand.¹⁹

The purpose of this monograph is to examine what contributions SFABs can provide to the US Army and US policymakers in today's complex global environment. This monograph argues that the creation of SFABs will provide several benefits to the ability of the Army to adapt to a changing operational environment by providing additional depth for Combatant Commanders, but there are some risks that must also be addressed. The creation of SFABs allows the Army to extend operations in time, space, and purpose by conducting host-nation advising during phases zero and one in order to shape the environment and deter potential threats. Furthermore, SFABs can train regional allies to meet US policy objectives while preserving US combat power by allowing the Army's BCTs to prepare for conventional combat operations instead of focusing on SFA missions. In times of need, the SFABs can transition into conventional BCTs to provide additional combat forces in minimal time. However, in addition to these benefits, the creation of SFABs also poses some risks, notably the perception that SFA will escalate US involvement with future conflicts, and that SFA is a solution to solve non-military problems. In the following sections, this monograph reviews the theory and practice of Army advising that led to development of the SFAB concept, and then analyzes the SFAB model in terms of the benefits and risks it offers the Army. The monograph concludes with recommendations for the implementation of this new type of brigade.

¹⁹ Department of the Army, *Army Force Posture Statement 2015* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Officer, 2015), 8.

Literature Review

For literature review, this monograph will look at the competing theories of SFA that the Army used to develop advising from its early emergence in in the Middle East following September 11, 2001 into today's more mature Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) concept. During the past fifteen years of limited, protracted conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army has struggled with its institutional approach to SFA. As the conflicts in both theaters progressed, the Army debated whether it needed specialized, dedicated advisor units or whether general-purpose forces could provide adequate SFA capabilities. As the force became more experienced in SFA operations, the Army improved its SFA doctrine to facilitate better training and implementation of advisors and their specialized skill set. Today's concept of RAF owes much of its development to the hard lessons learned during the course of fighting two counterinsurgencies.

Units to Conduct SFA

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the US military initiated combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq that eventually progressed into counterinsurgencies in both countries as the United States attempted to build stable more stable, pro-western governments despite strong opposition from multiple insurgency groups. Because these counterinsurgency (COIN) operations included efforts to develop the host-nation's government and security forces, the US military became aware of the necessity of providing military advisors, and in response, created ad hoc programs to provide SFA training to host-nation forces. After over a decade of experience in Afghanistan and Iraq conducting advisor operations, much has been published on SFA detailing the issues faced in these two countries. There are two main schools of thought on

how to conduct SFA. The first theory recommends that specialized, permanent units are needed while the second theory argues that generalists (which in the US Army would be regular Army units such as BCTs) can accomplish these tasks while also being prepared for conventional combat operations. Up until the recent announcement by General Milley, the second theory seemed to be the Army's preferred course as represented by the multiple deployments of BCTs to serve as SFA Brigades in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2008 to the present. To understand why the Army is changing course, the section below describes the arguments made in recent years that prioritize SFA as a mission for the US military.

In 2007, Dr. John Nagl published an article calling for the creation of a permanent 20,000 person US Advisory Corps organized into 750 teams of twenty-five, responsible for the execution of SFA for the Army. This idea was further refined by Major Michael Mason, who published an article in the US military's professional journal, recommending that the Army create three 240-person advisor teams capable of deploying rapidly to advise entire divisions while also providing each BCT with five 10-person teams for additional depth.²⁰ Initially, many within the military, to include then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, rebuked these ideas because the military did not have the resources to allocate for these concepts.²¹ After much criticism towards these ideas, the US Army would eventually prioritize SFA by designating some BCTs as Advise and Assist

²⁰ Michael D. Mason, "Integrating the Advisory Effort in the Army: A Full-Spectrum Solution," *Military Review* (September-October 2008), 30.

²¹ Louis Jacobson, "After a Long Delay, Signs of Movement," *Politifact* (December 12, 2012), accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/promises/obameter/promise/138/create-a-specialized-military-advisers-corps/>.

Brigades (AABs) for Iraq in 2008 until 2011, and as SFABs for Afghanistan in 2011 until present.²²

To implement SFABs, the Army will likely incorporate many of the recent writings focused on advisor operations in the Army's history. Some of these lessons learned are well documented from sources such as the Combat Studies Institute Press and their occasional papers like Robert Ramsey's "Advice for Advisors." Ramsey's paper is a collection of short essays that offer suggestions and observations from Lawrence of Arabia to the present, and focuses on many of the qualities that make for effective host-nation advisors such as cultural awareness and respect, language skills, and establishing good relationships. What is important to note from this work is the understanding that not all personnel in the Army make good advisors.²³ Good combat advisors require a certain personality and maturity that the Army must identify in order to staff future SFABs. Simply assigning personnel without consideration of the special skills needed to be a good advisor will limit the effectiveness of these new brigades and undermine their ability to achieve their operational and strategic objectives.

Much of the literature regarding how such minimally-staffed brigades can expand to create BCTs in short notice was developed during the Cold War when the Army needed the ability to quickly grow to counter a massive Soviet Army threat in Europe. Additionally, some literature was written following the end of the Cold War when the Army experienced a rapid drawdown and many were concerned that this could jeopardize national security. Recently, since

²² David M. Wood, "Advising Host Nations and Host Nation Security Forces: The United States Military Advisory Efforts Through 2020" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2014), 5.

²³ Robert Ramsey, "Advice for Advisors: Suggestions and Observations from Lawrence to the Present," Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 19, Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006, 146-147.

the passage of the BCA in 2011 and the drawdown of the Army to the smallest size since before World-War II, the Army has prioritized more research into how it can provide additional depth on short notice. The Army is also experimenting with a new concept of integrated units that blend Regular Army, National Guard, and Reserves to create additional depth and more forces.²⁴ This concept of integrated units uses manpower from the reserves to make up for a shortage of active-duty personnel. Unfortunately, this concept only further strains the Reserves, as they have also been required to perform multiple missions with a smaller force since 2011. Ultimately, integrating units from across the Army is a zero-sum gain since the number of Soldiers in the force is a finite quantity.

The SFAB concept is different from the integrated unit concept because the SFABs do not require the same number of personnel as a regular brigade during regular advising operations; they will only be brought up to full strength if their mission shifts from advising to combat operations. As noted above, the experienced leadership structure present in SFABs would allow the Army to simply add junior officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and enlisted Soldiers to quickly transition to a BCT in minimal time. Once the SFAB has added personnel, they would then conduct combat-focused training, from individual through collective skills, before being certified at a Combat Training Center (CTC) for deployment worldwide in support of national security.

Security Force Assistance Skills

To conduct SFA, combat advisors need a myriad of skills to allow them to influence their partners. This influence can only be established if advisors have credibility and strong rapport

²⁴ Cory Dickstein, “Army to Pair National Guard, Reserve Units With Active-Duty Units,” *Stars and Stripes* (March 22, 2016), accessed on October 1, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/army-to-pair-national-guard-reserve-units-with-active-duty-units-1.400570>.

with their host-nation partner. To establish credibility, it is important that advisors have a strong understanding of combat skills in their associated military occupation and are subject matter experts in both individual and collective tactical tasks.²⁵ This is typically built by experience, which is why it is imperative that advisors be more senior personnel such as Captains and higher for officers and Staff Sergeant and above for Non-Commissioned Officers. Fortunately, we have a more combat experienced force that is familiar with the fog and friction of war and thus can provide a base of credibility needed to influence host-nation forces. What makes SFA difficult is the associated sub-tasks that allow US advisors to influence host-nation partners in supporting US objectives as discussed in Army doctrine.²⁶

SME	Combat	Advisor		Situation Specific
MOS Training Experience	Common Skills Warrior Skills Survival Skills	ENABLING Understanding Human Nature Building Rapport Influencing Negotiating Interpreter use	DEVELOPING Teaching Coaching Advising	Culture Language

Figure 1. Individual Advisor Skills. Field Manual (FM) 3-07.10, *Advising Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures For Advising Foreign Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 24.

Experienced combat advisors who are subject matter experts in their military occupation facilitate training that builds partner capability in individual tactical skill sets such as marksmanship, individual movement techniques, communications, medical training, and calling

²⁵ Field Manual (FM) 3-07.10, *Advising Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, And Procedures For Advising Foreign Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 58.

²⁶ Field Manual (FM) 3-07.10, *Advising Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, And Procedures For Advising Foreign Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 24.

for fire.²⁷ Like basic training within the US military, advisors typically find themselves focused on teaching the basic blocking and tackling skills needed to be effective in combat. To conduct this training, advisors must be experts in these basic Soldier skills while also being patient to understand that small gains are major victories. Combat advisors must also be subject matter experts in combat skills to also train collective skill sets such as small unit tactics and operational planning.²⁸ Just as US forces start with individual training and then move on to collective training starting at the fire team, advisors must also be prepared to train all echelons at the tactical level from fire-teams to battalions.²⁹ As training moves to higher and higher organizations, advisors should find themselves less focused on the actual execution of training and more focused on the planning and preparation of training.

To conduct this training, combat advisors also need language proficiency and interpreters to communicate with host-nation forces.³⁰ Both aspects require advisors to invest time in both learning a new language along with learning how to properly use an interpreter to relay information. For any of this training to have any value, combat advisors must also build rapport and trust with their host-nation forces.³¹ To accomplish this, advisors must have cultural awareness of their respective host nation and understand how to influence human behavior. Advisors must have a foundation of training that allows them to incorporate individual needs

²⁷ Field Manual (FM) 3-22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), 4-9.

²⁸ Field Manual (FM) 3-07.10, *Advising Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, And Procedures For Advising Foreign Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 18.

²⁹ Ibid., 58.

³⁰ Field Manual (FM) 3-22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), 6-2.

³¹ Ibid., 6-1.

along with the motivational factors associated with different cultures.³² This art is difficult to teach and requires a certain personality to ensure its success. All of these skills build to allow advisors the ability to negotiate.³³ This art is necessary because advisors must understand that they are not commanders and have no direct authority to make demands.³⁴ With the right personality, this skill set improves through experience and eventually develops into a talent that achieves positive outcomes in support of US policy goals.

In sum, in order for Army personnel to be successful at advising, they require specialized skills that are usually not developed within the BCTs. There are two main reason why general-purpose forces are limited in a SFA capacity. First, personnel within the BCTs typically have little training on these skills and instead focus on their military occupational skills such as combined arms maneuver. Second, not all personnel within the Army are the right personality to be a good advisor. Good advisors are patient, humble, open minded, professionals who are subject matter experts within their occupation but are also people oriented and good at building diverse teams. While some leaders within the BCTs may possess these attributes, not all personnel do, which can be a liability that impacts the relationship and influence with host-nation counterparts.

The Army attempted to build this advising skill set when they created RAFs. The Army's concept of RAF attempts to codify these SFA skills into a model that provides Combatant Commanders a tailorable force capable of providing combat advisors. RAF provides the Army a

³² Field Manual (FM) 3-07.10, *Advising Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, And Procedures For Advising Foreign Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 31.

³³ *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

better model to build SFA skills in the BCTs by focusing the unit on a specific regional area to build SFA skills once the unit has completed training for conventional warfare.

Regionally Aligned Forces

In 2012, the US Army began to experiment with a new concept known as RAF, which takes BCTs prepared for traditional combat missions and aligns them with Combatant Commands for use as SFA units when necessary.³⁵ RAF represents a new approach to advising because it attempts to use engagement activities proactively, versus reactively as happened in Afghanistan and Iraq. According to Army doctrine, RAF provides Combatant Commands with scalable, tailorable capabilities to enable the commander to shape the environment.³⁶ This concept recognizes the impact advisors had in Afghanistan and Iraq and takes advantage of the many lessons learned during those wars. RAF is a step in the right direction for the Army due to the improvements in SFA doctrine, defined legal authorities, refined SFA guidance, and improved interagency cooperation between the Department of State and the Department of Defense.³⁷

The concept of RAF is a refreshing view of SFA advising because it seeks to set the conditions in phase zero – shape and phase one – deter of theater campaign plans to prevent hostilities before they occur. By being proactive with engagement operations, the Army is better suited to anticipate threats and shape the environment before a conflict can emerge. Conflict prevention is one of the biggest aspects of this concept. The goal of RAF is to allow Combatant

³⁵ Rowan Scarborough, “Army looks for global partnerships: Obama strategy shifts role from fighting to training,” *Washington Times* (July 2, 2012), accessed February 18, 2017, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/jul/2/army-looks-for-global-partnerships/>.

³⁶ Field Manual (FM) 3-22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), 1-6.

³⁷ Timothy McAteer, “The US Army and Future Security Force Assistance Operations” (Monograph, United States Army War College, Carlisle, PA: 2013), 12.

Commanders to improve conditions in weak or failing states to help counter extremist organizations before those states completely collapse thus requiring the US military to intervene.³⁸

The RAF concept has performed successfully in several missions. In the first use of RAF, the Army aligned 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division to Africa Command (AFRICOM) as the first RAF Brigade in mid-2012.³⁹ During this brigade's deployment to Africa in 2013, it conducted many missions across the region that varied in scope and scale. Most these missions involved less than fifty personnel—mainly officers and NCOs and mostly involved training in basic field craft, mortar training, and even implementation of small Unmanned Aerial Vehicles—and all focused on countering extremist organizations.⁴⁰ During the brigade's ten-month deployment, it conducted over one hundred missions in over thirty countries and provided AFRICOM a significant effort to help achieve policy aims to bolster support to allied states.⁴¹ In Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), RAF is providing capabilities using Army National Guard BCTs to support the Combatant Command's efforts to train and advise host-nations to interdict and decrease drug trafficking from the region.⁴² Pacific Command (PACOM) is also using RAF to build interoperability with US forces across the region in order to counter China and violent

³⁸ Ibid., 10.

³⁹ C. Todd Lopez, "Dagger Brigade to 'align' with AFRICOM in 2013," Army News Service (June 22, 2012), accessed February 18, 2017, https://www.army.mil/article/82376/Dagger_Brigade_to__align__with_AFRICOM_in_2013.

⁴⁰ Andrew Beal, "United States Army Regionally Aligned Forces: Opportunities For The Future" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2014), 13.

⁴¹ Robert Dawson, Robert Coon, "RAF and ARFORGEN," Strategic Studies Institute (February 2015), 111, accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/carlislecompendia/issues/mar2015/RAF8.pdf>.

⁴² Angel Rabasa, Christopher Schnaubelt, Peter Chalk, Douglas Farah, Gregory Midgett, Howard Shatz, "Counternetwork: Countering the Expansion of Transnational Criminal Networks," RAND Corporation (January 2017), 131-132.

extremist organizations such as al-Qaeda through an initiative called the Pacific Pathways program.⁴³

While RAF is a positive development for SFA, there are several problems associated with using BCTs to conduct advising engagements. First, Combatant Commands cannot always justify the need for an entire BCT of four thousand Soldiers for RAF missions and therefore cannot count on the Army to provide them one for their SFA needs.⁴⁴ Second, for BCTs to deploy in a RAF function, first they must train up for Decisive Action and conduct a Culminating Training Event (CTE) at one of the Army's three CTCs.⁴⁵ This train-up typically consumes ten to twelve months of training at a minimum before the BCT can even begin the time-consuming task of training for SFA specific tasks needed for advisors.⁴⁶ Using this model, it is easy to see that the primary training focus for the BCTs is not SFA but instead conventional offensive and defensive tasks. As discussed previously, SFA skills require focus and must be prioritized to train advisors properly. By focusing primarily on conventional operations, RAF brigades assume more risk on SFA competency, which could reduce their overall effectiveness in training capable host-nation partners. However, training credible and capable host-nation partners is critical, as the United States is indirectly building its operational depth through its allies, which in turn will help

⁴³ Michelle Tan, "Army grows Pacific Pathways, ties with Asian," *Army Times* (August 24, 2016), accessed February 19, 2017, <https://www.armytimes.com/articles/army-grows-pacific-pathways-ties-with-asian-partners-partners>.

⁴⁴ Robert Dawson, Robert Coon, "RAF and ARFORGEN," Strategic Studies Institute (February 2015), 114, accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/carlislecompendia/issues/mar2015/RAF8.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Timothy McAteer, "The US Army and Future Security Force Assistance Operations" (Monograph, United States Army War College, Carlisle, PA: 2013), 31.

⁴⁶ Andrew Beal, "United States Army Regionally Aligned Forces: Opportunities For The Future" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2014), 29.

Combatant Commanders pursue US policy aims. Finally, by using BCTs in a RAF capacity, the Army is ultimately losing BCTs capable of responding to major conflicts.

Despite these issues, the advantage of the RAF approach is that it serves as a foundation for the Army's new SFABs to work from.⁴⁷ SFABs can build upon the lessons learned from RAF over the past few years to provide the Army a better SFA model. What remains to be determined is the future of RAF. If the Army dedicates the SFABs to conduct regional SFA missions, it is hard to determine if the Army will continue to need the RAF BCTs for additional SFA capacity. Fortunately, both models can reinforce each other; as SFA skills become more prevalent across the Army it will allow the Army to cross pollinate RAF and SFAB personnel, according to competency and demand.

Advising Efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq

To understand what SFA can provide to the Army, next this monograph will examine the use of Army advisors in Afghanistan and Iraq to determine some lessons learned on how to employ combat advisors. First, this monograph will discuss the early use of advisors to conduct phase four – stabilize for both Afghanistan and Iraq from 2003 to 2011. During this time, the Army experimented with the advisor concept as it attempted to build proficiency with SFA in two prolonged counterinsurgencies. Next, this monograph will discuss the use of advisors in Afghanistan from 2011 to today during phase four – stabilize and phase five – enable civil authority as the Army began to master SFA doctrine and application in a mature theater. For Iraq, this monograph will discuss the use of advisors from 2014 to today in defeating ISIS during phase three – dominate. This will highlight that advisors today play a critical role in theater by

⁴⁷ Department of the Army, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command. *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World* (Fort Eustis, VA: Government Printing Office, 2014), 10.

providing a force capable of enabling ground combat, while also limiting the risk to US political leaders and their policies. By analyzing our history with advisor organizations, this monograph hopes to better inform leaders of what SFABs can provide the Army, Combatant Commanders, and our nation.

Advising Operations 2003-2011

During the initial attempts to conduct SFA operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army created ad hoc Transition Teams (TT) whose names evolved during both conflicts. During Iraq, the Army used the term Military Transition Teams during Operation Iraqi Freedom before finally using the term Stability Transition Teams during the transition to Operation New Dawn. In Afghanistan, the term Embedded Transition Team was used before progressing to Security Force Assistance Teams and Security Force Advise and Assist Teams. These squad-sized teams typically ranged between 11-16 personnel and consisted of a field-grade team leader with additional officers and NCOs assigned to fill key staff and specialty roles by war fighting function.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the selection of these personnel to serve as advisors was never based upon individual skills in support of the requirements needed for advising operations but instead due to their dwell time or lack of deployments.⁴⁹

To select advisors across the Army from general-purpose forces, Human Resources Command relied upon the Worldwide Individual Augmentation System (WIAS), the Army's individual placement system, to fill these critical billets. This system selects individual Soldiers to

⁴⁸ William Taylor, "Transition Teams: ADAPT AND WIN," *Military Review* (May-June 2008), 83.

⁴⁹ David M. Wood, "Advising Host Nations and Host Nation Security Forces: The United States Military Advisory Efforts Through 2020" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2014), 12.

deploy overseas to fill critical assignments based on various data such as dwell time, or the lack of combat experience. Because both the transition teams and the BCTs drew from the same pool of officers and NCOs to fill their ranks, the toll these Transition Teams took upon the Army was significant, and resulted in BCTs deploying with less than their required manning.⁵⁰ Furthermore, by selecting personnel based on deployment history rather than applicable skill sets, the Army appeared to only offer half-hearted support in accomplishing SFA operations, even though their success was vital to the US military's strategic objectives. One example of poor personnel management was the selection of a Second Lieutenant just out of the Signal Corps basic course to advise an Iraqi Brigadier General.⁵¹ Unfortunately, the Army must learn the hard lessons that rank and experience matters when dealing with other cultures. Not many senior military officers are going to be influenced by a junior officer no matter how smart, capable, or talented they are.

One of the biggest limitations with transition teams in both Iraq and Afghanistan was the numerous command and control issues that existed between regular combat forces and advisor team.⁵² In Afghanistan, advisors could either be assigned to support Task Force Phoenix or the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, which fell underneath the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mission. Similarly, in Iraq, advisors either reported to the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) or the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I) headquarters. Both theaters therefore lacked unity of command within not only the advisors, who could be working for two different organizations, but also in relationship to the

⁵⁰ Donnelly Thomas and Fredrick W. Kagan, *Ground Truth, The Future of US Land Power* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute Press, 2008), 56.

⁵¹ David M. Wood, "Advising Host Nations and Host Nation Security Forces: The United States Military Advisory Efforts Through 2020" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2014), 13.

⁵² Joe Fox and Dana Stowell, "Professional Army Advisors-A Way Ahead," *Infantry Bugler* (Winter 2007), 12.

combat forces whose controlling authority was through typical command and support relationships such as brigades, divisions, and corps level headquarters.

At the tactical and operational level, these command and control issues created the conditions to prevent unity of effort between US ground forces and the host-nation forces.⁵³ Advisor teams often reported to their higher authority, which left tactical leaders at the Brigade and Division out of the communication loop. This created a natural seam where US ground forces typically executed unilateral operations while host-nation forces pursued their own objectives. To make operations to appear multilateral, US ground forces would simply place a few host nation security forces into their patrol and execute the mission as if the operation was equally supported by both commands.⁵⁴ While these actions allowed US ground forces to claim integration with host-nation forces, the truth is day-to-day counterinsurgency operations lacked thorough coordination between coalition forces.

The US Army continued to use the Transition Team concept in Iraq until 2008 when the Army transitioned to the AAB model to mitigate some of the command and control issues that existed, while also emphasizing the transition of ground forces to a more supportive role with less combat focus. This concept used the BCT as its foundation and augmented it with forty-eight field grade officers to serve as twenty-four advisor teams within the formation.⁵⁵ Under this model, advisors were renamed Security Transition Teams (STTs) and were responsible for

⁵³ David M. Wood, “Advising Host Nations and Host Nation Security Forces: The United States Military Advisory Efforts Through 2020” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2014), 33.

⁵⁴ Based on the author’s personal experience while deployed as a Platoon Leader during Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2007-2009.

⁵⁵ David M. Wood, “Advising Host Nations and Host Nation Security Forces: The United States Military Advisory Efforts Through 2020” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2014), 24.

partnering with Iraqi Security Forces such as the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and Iraqi Border Patrol, while the combat formations within the Brigade provided support to the STTs and their partners in both transportation in theater and force protection during mission. This model allowed the AAB the flexibility to deal with unknown security situations while also unifying US Army objectives with the advisory effort.⁵⁶

To fix the command and control issues in Afghanistan, Embedded Transition Teams were eventually replaced by SFABs.⁵⁷ Like the Iraq AAB model, the SFABs were BCTs augmented with additional officers and NCOs with various military specialties who could mentor the local forces on each of the war fighting functions. Under this concept, the advisor teams were called Security Force Assistance Advisory Teams (SFAATs). These larger teams of up to 16 personnel allowed for SFAATs to provide a more robust advisory effort than the Stability Transition Teams in Iraq and like the AABs in Iraq, the SFABs provided support and security for the SFAATs, which allowed them to operate within the operational environment. While these efforts achieved some success in Iraq and Afghanistan, the use of augmented BCTs to serve as advisor brigades also had drawbacks, including a lack efficiency with personnel, which is a major concern in today's smaller Army.

One of the major drawbacks to using BCTs as advisor brigades is the waste of personnel not needed to support the mission from these brigades. Under both the AAB and SFAB model, these brigades deployed with their most senior personnel, and left many of their junior soldiers at home station due to force capacity limitations in theater that prevented entire brigades from

⁵⁶ Robert D. Morschauser, "The Brigade Combat Team-Stability and Security Force Assistance Operations" (Monograph, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks: PA: 2010), 5-6.

⁵⁷ David M. Wood, "Advising Host Nations and Host Nation Security Forces: The United States Military Advisory Efforts Through 2020" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2014), 36.

deploying. These limitations forced commanders to prioritize personnel slated to deploy, which generally meant that higher-ranking personnel were required due to the operational demands of advising host-nation forces. While the brigade deployed with a smaller number of combat troops augmented with these advisors, there were hundreds and sometimes thousands of lower ranking Soldiers left at home station with little to do. General Milley described this phenomenon in December 2015, noting that “We’re sending train and advise teams to Afghanistan and Iraq – and we’ve been doing this for years – those teams are in fact the leadership of brigades and battalions, we’re just ripping them out and sending them over.”⁵⁸ Today this model is still being used in Afghanistan as the Army continues to advise Afghans currently, and for the near future.⁵⁹ With today’s smaller Army, this lack of efficiency prevents the Army from utilizing its entire force, thus requiring its more senior personnel to endure the most of deployments while limiting the development of junior Soldiers thus creating less experienced leaders in the future.

For Afghanistan and Iraq, the training of advisors from WIAS-sourced personnel was conducted during short training periods and focused on combat skills such as marksmanship, communications, and medical training.⁶⁰ This training originally occurred at Fort Riley, Kansas from 2006 until 2009 until a permanent advisor training capability was established at Fort Polk, Louisiana. In 2009, Army stood up the 162nd Infantry Brigade whose sole responsibility was training advisors in the infamous “Tigerland” where many Soldiers trained for jungle warfare

⁵⁸ Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., “Army Mulls Train and Advise Brigades: Gen. Milley,” *Breaking Defense* (December 14, 2015), accessed on October 02, 2016, www.breakingdefense.com/2015/12/army-mulls-train-advise-brigades-gen-milley/.

⁵⁹ David Burge, “1500 Fort Bliss soldiers to deploy to Afghanistan,” *El Paso Times* (December 8, 2016), accessed on April 08, 2017, <http://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/military/ft-bliss/2016/12/08/1500-soldiers-deploy-afghanistan/95145506/>

⁶⁰ Brennan Cook, “Improving Security Force Assistance Capability in the Army’s Advise and Assist Brigades” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2010), 29-30.

before deploying to Vietnam in the 1960s. Unfortunately, the cadre responsible for conducting the training at both locations typically lacked any experience in advising or SFA, thus preventing the trainees from receiving experienced-based lessons on the art of building rapport, negotiations, and influencing. This deficiency would slowly be corrected as more advisors returned from deployments to serve as experienced trainers, and as the 162nd Infantry Brigade fully developed into a more mature training organization. In fact, one of the key features that the 162nd Infantry Brigade provided was deployable advisor teams who, upon redeployment, updated the Program of Instruction while also serving as experienced cadre.⁶¹

To fix some of the deficiencies of Continental United States (CONUS) training at Fort Riley and Fort Polk, the Army also established in-theater counterinsurgency academies in Kabul, Afghanistan and Taji, Iraq.⁶² These academies provided the advisor trainees critical situational awareness about their new operational environment while also teaching the advisor the necessary skills concerning cultural awareness, religion, and customs.⁶³ Unfortunately, this training still consisted of only a few weeks of training at most, and did not allow the individual advisors to test their skill sets in a real-world simulation prior to utilization.

The 162nd Infantry Brigade not only trained individual advisors but, starting in 2011 also began to train AABs and SFAB before their deployment overseas. During this training, trainees were provided SFA seminars on topics such as key leader engagements, using an interpreter, cultural awareness, religion, influencing, negotiations, history, and building rapport. At this point,

⁶¹ Based on the author's personal experience while serving at the 162nd Infantry Brigade and Fort Polk Joint Readiness Training Center, 2013-2015.

⁶² David M. Wood, "Advising Host Nations and Host Nation Security Forces: The United States Military Advisory Efforts Through 2020" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2014), 28.

⁶³ Ibid.

the 162nd provided a more robust training program that included training events with actual role players from either Afghanistan or Iraq all under the observation of trained Observer Controllers Teams (OCTs). These training events were videotaped and then thoroughly reviewed to determine improvements that the advisor team could make before the next training event. Following these training academies, the 162nd Infantry Brigade would integrate with a CTC to conduct a CTE focused on SFA certification before the unit deployed. Overall, the 162nd Infantry Brigade provided the institutional expertise on advising operations, which created better-trained advisors and units to support stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Unfortunately, the Army decided to deactivate the 162nd Infantry Brigade in October 2014 and instead maintained one battalion from the organization controlled by JRTC.⁶⁴ The 3-353rd Regiment is a battalion of 175 personnel that replaced the 162nd Infantry Brigade, which during its peak had six battalions and over 800 personnel.⁶⁵ This reduction in SFA training cadre is a result of two changing conditions. First, the Army is no longer intensively producing advisors for Iraq and Afghanistan as it did during 2009-2013. Second, the Army as a whole has become smaller following the BCA of 2011; the 162nd Infantry Brigade was a casualty when the Army was forced to scale down to 490,000 troops by Fiscal Year 2015. Today, the 3-353rd deploys numerous training teams across the Army to prepare units for advising missions in Afghanistan

⁶⁴ Based on the author's personal experience while serving at the 162nd Infantry Brigade and Fort Polk Joint Readiness Training Center, 2013-2015.

⁶⁵ Paul Purpura, "Fort Polk to keep Army training brigade through 2014, Sen. David Vitter says," Nola.com (January 30, 2014), accessed February 02, 2017, http://www.nola.com/military/index.ssf/2014/01/army_training_brigade_to_remai.html.

and Iraq.⁶⁶ Their expertise on best practices for advisors deploying worldwide is critical to the Army in today's demanding security environment.

Current Advising Operations in Afghanistan

In mid-2016, then-President Obama announced that the United States would maintain 8400 troops in country to help advise and assist the Afghanistan government until the end of his term.⁶⁷ These forces augment another 6,000 plus additional troops from NATO allies and partners supporting Afghanistan's government.⁶⁸ In Afghanistan, the United States continues to support NATO's Resolute Support (RS) Mission by conducting two nested missions.⁶⁹ The first mission is supporting counterterrorism, targeting key individuals associated with al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremist organizations. The second mission is the training, advising, and assisting of the Afghanistan National Defense Security Forces (ANDSF). Both missions are the results of a long war where advisors are operating in phase four – stabilize and phase five – enable civil authority to support Afghanistan and the central government in Kabul.

To support operations in Afghanistan, the Army is deploying BCTs as SFABs responsible for advising conventional host-nation forces, and after mixed results in 2015, advisors appear to be making progress in improving some of the significant deficiencies for the ANDSF.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Abigail Meyer, "Preparing To Deploy 1st BCT Trains For Upcoming Mission To Afghanistan," *Fort Bliss Bugle* (December 15, 2016), accessed February 02, 2017, <http://fortblissbugle.com/preparing-to-deploy-1st-bct-trains-for-upcoming-mission-to-afghanistan/>.

⁶⁷ Mark Landler, "Obama Says He Will Keep More Troops in Afghanistan Than Planned," *The New York Times* (July 6, 2016), accessed February 04, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/07/world/asia/obama-afghanistan-troops.html?_r=0.

⁶⁸ Department of Defense, *Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 3.

However, as of today, the ANDSF is limited in its ability to maintain security and stability due to shortages in aviation, combined arms integration, intelligence collection, intelligence dissemination, and sustainment. Furthermore, Afghanistan forces are constrained due to a reactionary ANDSF strategy, force allocation, and posture limitations.⁷¹

While the ANDSF is limited in certain areas, they continue to show progress in incorporating organic fires, establishing direct fire plans, and using intelligence to conduct intelligence-driven operations.⁷² Additionally, they frequently demonstrate competence in planning large offensive operations. One area of concern for advisors is the overuse of Afghanistan Special Forces as regular troops to fill shortages of conventional ANDSF forces during major operations.⁷³ Advisors, in support of their mission to build capabilities and long-term sustainability of ANDSF, are concerned that the overuse of Special Forces will burn out this elite organization, thus limiting their long-term effectiveness.

To manage and control advising across Afghanistan between conventional and special operations, NATO has established five regional Train, Advise, and Assist Commands (TAACs) in the capital, north, south, east and west regions of the country in addition to the central hub of operations in Kabul.⁷⁴ In the capital region, advising is focused at the ministerial and Corps level, while the regional commands focus only on the Corps. To support each regional command, the United States, Germany, Italy, and Turkey have responsibility over certain TAACs to provide

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Department of Defense, *Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 4.

⁷³ Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "Not their job: Turning Afghanistan special forces into regular troops," *The Washington Post* (October 7, 2016), accessed February 17, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/10/07/not-their-job-turning-afghanistans-special-forces-into-regular-troops/?utm_term=.ffa708406cec.

⁷⁴ Department of Defense, *Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 10.

coordinating support and serve as the “framework nations” to monitor the conditions of ANDSF capabilities.

Advising in all areas occurs at three levels.⁷⁵ Level one advising provides advisors daily from an embedded or close-proximity base. Usually this level indicates that an ANDSF unit lacks basic organizational capability and requires constant or persistent advising for mission success. Level two advising is regular but less frequent than level one and is used when ANDSF units are further along in capability and progressing towards independence. The frequency of this level of advising is based on coalition resources, proximity to the advisors, and risk associated to coalition personnel. Level three advising is the final assessment level, and is used when advisors are no longer needed on a regular basis. Advising for these units usually occurs only during major operations or when a crisis occurs.

Advising operations in Afghanistan have been occurring since 2003 and the host-nation is more mature than other theaters such as Iraq. In Afghanistan, advising has progressed towards a focus on eight essential functions (EF) all concentrated on developing long-term solutions for Afghanistan.⁷⁶ Overall advising in Afghanistan is progressing across all EFs. Retention rates for the ANDSF have increased to well over 90 percent, which suggests advising operations are having a positive impact on personnel in the ANDSF.⁷⁷ However, fighting in Helmand province has highlighted some of the limits to coalition advising operations. Despite an intensive advising effort in Helmand province involving more than 500 advisors from late 2015 through mid-2016, the Taliban has retained control of their stronghold and resisted the government’s attempts to

⁷⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁶ Department of Defense, *Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 12.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 56.

control that region and the poppy fields that supply Taliban funding.⁷⁸ In fact, it is estimated that the Taliban controls about ten percent of the population and contests control with the Afghanistan government for another twenty percent.⁷⁹ In summary, the current advising efforts in Afghanistan are helping to make the government's forces more capable and better able to meet the demands of security. However, the success of Afghanistan security forces is largely dependent upon the political conditions created by the central government, since military force cannot solve economic and social issues in the vast areas far from Kabul.

Current Advising Operations in Iraq

In Iraq, the United States has been pursuing a partner-based strategy to defeat ISIS and return control of northern Iraq back to the central government in Baghdad.⁸⁰ The key to this strategy is relying upon partners in theater to degrade and defeat ISIS and to clear and hold disputed territory. By claiming to be an Islamic caliphate, ISIS requires territory to remain legitimate in accordance with Islamic beliefs.⁸¹ To counter this claim to legitimacy, the US military has partnered with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Kurdish Security Forces (KSF) to conduct ground operations and gain control of contested lands. The only alternative to this partner-based strategy to defeat ISIS is instead a direct approach requiring large-scale US military

⁷⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁹ Bill Roggio, "US Commander in Afghanistan Downplays Taliban Control of 10 Percent of Population," *The Long War Journal* (September 23, 2016), accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/09/us-commander-in-afghanistan-downplays-taliban-control-of-10-percent-of-population.php>.

⁸⁰ Linda Robinson, "Assessment of the Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL and Options for Adaptation," RAND Corporation (2016), 1.

⁸¹ Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic* (March 2015), accessed February 17, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

operations involving thousands of combat troops to clear and seize ISIS territory.⁸² Unfortunately, this alternative poses too much risk for US political leaders and instead encourages the incorporation of US airpower, special operations, intelligence sharing, and other key enablers to allow US allies to conduct necessary ground operations. With these conditions, SFA operations with ISF and KSF elements are the cheapest and least risky strategy the United States can take.⁸³

To understand how ISIS defeated the Iraqi military and gained control of northern Iraq in the summer of 2014, it is important to see what happened to the Iraqi military following the withdrawal of the US military from Iraq in late 2011. Before their defeat in 2014, the ISF had significantly deteriorated once US funding was decreased starting in 2009.⁸⁴ By 2013, the ISF had suffered years of chronic absenteeism and many effective commanders were replaced with political appointments favorable to the Shia regime. These new commanders eroded unit cohesion and significantly contributed to the collapse of Mosul in June 2014, when nineteen Iraqi Army Brigades and six Federal Police Brigades disintegrated once ISIS went on the offensive.⁸⁵ In fact, many of the Iraqi Army units were significantly understrength and filled with “ghost soldiers” whose salaries went to Iraqi Army commanders.⁸⁶ In this context, it is easy to see why the critics of SFA are pessimistic that advising operations can have long-term effects considering the amount of resources spent to establish and train the ISF from 2003-2011. However, the impact of

⁸² Linda Robinson, “Assessment of the Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL and Options for Adaptation,” RAND Corporation (2016), 6.

⁸³ Michael Knights, “The Long Haul: Rebooting U.S. Security Cooperation in Iraq,” The Washington Institute For Near East Policy (2015), 6.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Michael Knights, “The Long Haul: Rebooting U.S. Security Cooperation in Iraq,” The Washington Institute For Near East Policy (2015), 7.

⁸⁶ Linda Robinson, “Assessment of the Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL and Options for Adaptation,” RAND Corporation (2016), 27.

not conducting SFA operations with the Iraqi government far outweighs the risk involved with a partner-based strategy.

The risk of not supporting SFA operations in Iraq against ISIS comes from two primary concerns. First, if the United States allows Iraq to disintegrate into separate ethnic states, other Gulf States may question US long-term resolve and capacity in regional affairs.⁸⁷ Second, by not supporting the ISF with SFA advisors, the United States is creating an assistance void, which could be filled by another regional actor like Iran due to religious identity and geographical proximity. Currently, Iran is attempting to take advantage of Iraq's crisis, and is providing military support and approximately 100,000 Iranian fighters to help create a stronger Iraq-Iran alliance against US policy goals.⁸⁸ By providing airpower, special operations, and SFA advisors to the ISF, the United States is meeting its policy goals of defeating ISIS and limiting Iranian influence in the region, while also signaling to other Middle East allies that the United States is committed to their security and stability against extremist organizations and Iranian aggression.

To defeat ISIS, the United States is partnering SFA advisors down to the battalion level to allow ISF and KSF elements to seize territory during classical phase three – dominate operations.⁸⁹ The impact of advising operations in Iraq has allowed the ISF to reclaim Ramadi

⁸⁷ Michael Knights, "The Long Haul: Rebooting U.S. Security Cooperation in Iraq," The Washington Institute For Near East Policy (2015), 3.

⁸⁸ Lucas Tomlinson, "US officials: Up to 100,000 Iran-backed fighters now in Iraq," Foxnews (August 16, 2016), accessed on February 17, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2016/08/16/us-officials-up-to-100000-iran-backed-fighters-now-in-iraq.html>.

⁸⁹ Andrew Tilghman, "U.S. combat adviser mission in Iraq expands to battalion level," *Military Times* (July 27, 2016), accessed on February 17, 2017, <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2016/07/27/us-combat-advisor-mission-iraq-expands-battalion-level/87625432/>.

and has reduced ISIS's territory by over 45 percent since mid-2016.⁹⁰ Currently, ISF and KSF elements integrated with US advisors are attempting to regain control of western Mosul, a city key to ISIS's legitimacy and finances and have trained over 20,000 host-nation Soldiers since 2014 to defeat this radical non-state actor.⁹¹

The requirement to train and equip conventional ISF and KSF elements has exceeded the capacity of the US special operations community, requiring the Army to use conventional forces to train these elements.⁹² These conventional forces advisors have been so successful that some senior leaders are considering the expansion their efforts into Syria, where success so far has been limited.⁹³ Unfortunately, the use of conventional BCTs for training missions, while effective, does have its drawbacks. As discussed above, the use of BCTs as SFA elements largely requires only officers and NCOs to deploy in support of advising missions and leaves many junior Soldiers at home station without leadership, which in turn stifles their development and experience.

Additionally, a huge constraint on current BCTs conducting SFA operations in Iraq has been force protection concerns due to not only ISIS threats but also to the antagonistic relationship with Iranian backed Shia militias fighting alongside the ISF.⁹⁴ By working closely

⁹⁰ Jim Michaels, "ISIL loses 45% of territory in Iraq, 20% in Syria," *USA Today* (May 17, 2016), accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/05/17/exclusive-isil-loses-45-territory-iraq-20-syria/84499682/>.

⁹¹ Linda Robinson, "Assessment of the Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL and Options for Adaptation," RAND Corporation (2016), 44, 47.

⁹² Michael Knights, "The Long Haul: Rebooting U.S. Security Cooperation in Iraq," *The Washington Institute For Near East Policy* (2015), 15-16.

⁹³ Andrew deGrandpre, Michelle Tan, Shawn Snow, "The Pentagon could send conventional military forces into Syria," *Military Times* (February 15, 2017), accessed February, 16, 2017, <http://www.militarytimes.com/articles/us-troops-syria-pentagon>.

⁹⁴ Linda Robinson, "Assessment of the Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL and Options for Adaptation," RAND Corporation (2016), 53.

with the ISF, US advisors are placed in danger from ISIS mortar and rocket attacks, improvised explosive devices, and small arms attacks. Furthermore, since US advisors are sharing basing locations in close proximity to the Shia militias, they are at risk of attacks similar to the insider attacks being conducted by the Taliban in Afghanistan. These concerns have limited the buildup of conventional advisors in the region and delayed the integration of advisors down to the tactical level while also forcing US personnel to reside in separate facilities apart from their counterparts. In summary, the advising efforts in Iraq are working to defeat ISIS. The ISF has reclaimed much of northern Iraq and is projected to retake Mosul within the coming months, thus allowing them to eventually reestablish the border in Ninawa province. Once these military aims are completed, long-term success in Iraq will depend upon the politics in Baghdad to form an inclusive government for to appease disenfranchised Sunnis.

Development of the SFAB Concept

Both Afghanistan and Iraq appear to be enduring problems for the United States, necessitating the need for long-term advising efforts to maintain the fragile security in both nations. Unfortunately, additional SFA demands are appearing in other theaters to counter Russia, China, North Korea, as well as other non-state actors. Deploying BCTs in a RAF capacity to meet these persisting demands is over-taxing the Army. By creating a new type of deployable brigades focused on SFA, the Army hopes to create a permanent force structure that provides additional depth both for advising and during conventional conflict. To create depth within readily available combat power, these brigades will provide Combatant Commanders better-trained allied forces to compliment US military power within the region. These brigades can preserve combat power by allowing the fifty-six BCTs within the total Army to focus entirely on Decisive Action, thus providing better-trained forces for conventional combat. Additionally, these new Brigades can provide additional depth due to their ability to expand when needed to meet additional

requirements for more BCTs in case of major conflict or multiple threats. Finally, the creation of SFABs fills the gap between Special Forces advising in a FID capacity and the BCTs performing conventional operations by providing a force capable of training conventional host-nation forces on SFA.

The creation of SFABs also provides the Army with additional depth by extending operations in time using military advising during phase zero – shape and phase one – deter in accordance with joint doctrine and notional theater campaign plans.⁹⁵ SFABs have the potential to deal with the growing security concerns associated with a complex operating environment, also referred to as the “grey zone.” These “grey zones” are security issues not considered issues entirely requiring warfare, but which instead demand a response that is both military and diplomatic in nature. The number and scale of these events far outpace the resources available to the nation, and instead require SFA operations, because the US cannot typically confront these threats directly or independently, thus requiring the United States to leverage competent foreign partners.⁹⁶ Unfortunately, the US military has traditionally placed little effort into these phases and instead placed its resources in phase two – seize the initiative and phase three – dominate.⁹⁷ Establishing SFABs would provide the US military a credible and capable resource to build competent foreign partners during phases zero and one to better combat grey zone security issues

⁹⁵ Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), III-39.

⁹⁶ Nicholas Hermberg, “The Danger of the Gray Zone: Flawed Responses to Emerging Unconventional Threats,” *Small Wars Journal* (December, 2016), accessed December, 7 2016, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-danger-of-the-gray-zone-flawed-responses-to-emerging-unconventional-threats>.

⁹⁷ Antulio Enchevarria II, “Operating in the Gray Zone: An Alternative Paradigm for US Military Strategy,” Strategic Studies Institute and US War College Press (April, 2016), 12-13.

such as Russia in Eastern Europe and violent extremist networks in the Middle East such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Al Qaeda.

According to the Army's operating concept, the Army seeks to operate by engaging regionally to ensure interoperability with US forces and build relationships based on common interests while also assuring our allies and deterring our enemies.⁹⁸ The Army envisions advising engagements to include SFA by both special operations and conventional forces to set favorable conditions for the commitment of follow on forces if needed because deterrence and diplomacy have failed. By building credible and capable allied forces that are interoperable with the US military, SFABs can indirectly build operational depth. This additional depth is necessary today due to the budget constraints that have reduced the Army to fifty-six total BCTs in an ever-increasing complex environment. Today's complex security concerns ranging from near-peer threats such as Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea and from violent extremist organization such as ISIS and al Qaeda, and their affiliates demands that the US Army develops stronger coalitions aligned with US foreign policy objectives.

In Europe, Russian operations in Ukraine have threatened regional security at a time when the Army has only two permanently based BCTs on the continent and about 65,000 troops to counter twenty-two Russian maneuver warfare battalions located in the western military district.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Russian aggression threatens numerous eastern European states like Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland placing a strain on Army ground forces and requiring the deployment of CONUS Armored Brigade Combat Teams (ABCT) in theater to improve

⁹⁸ Department of the Army, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World* (Fort Eustis, VA: Government Printing Office, 2014), 17.

⁹⁹ Andrew Tilghman, "Pentagon plans for more troops in Europe," *Military Times* (July 14, 2016), accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2016/07/14/pentagon-plans-more-troops-europe/87078792/>.

conditions.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, three BCTs total in Europe is not enough ground forces to counter the Russians and the United States must rely on other NATO states along with concerned eastern Europeans states to build credible combat power. With a strong coalition of capable ground forces, Russia cannot achieve favorable conditions as they achieved in 2014 against Ukraine. Unless the United States is willing to build-up its forces in Europe similar to its posture during the Cold War, it must rely on SFA to set favorable conditions for European Command (EUCOM).

In the Middle East, Central Command (CENTCOM) faces three primary threats. First is the threat of violent extremist organization like ISIS and al-Qaeda. The second threat is the Taliban in Afghanistan, which attempts to undermine the central government in Afghanistan in order to impose a non-secular, Islamist government in control. Finally, the last major threat is Iranian aggression, which seeks to undermine regional stability due to their antagonistic relationship with Saudi Arabia.¹⁰¹ In fact, many consider the current conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen as proxy wars between Saudi Arabia and Iran both supporting their sect of Islam either Sunni or Shia.¹⁰² Unfortunately, for CENTCOM, the United States no longer has the ground forces in the region to directly defeat ISIS and stabilize Afghanistan while also countering possible Iranian aggression in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. As discussed before, BCTs serving as

¹⁰⁰ Michelle Tan, "Back-to-back rotations to Europe could stress the Army's armored BCTs," *Army Times* (February 11, 2016), accessed February 20, 2017, <https://www.armytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2016/02/11/back--back-rotations-europe-could-stress-armys-armored-bcts/80243786/>.

¹⁰¹ Ibrahim Fraihat, "Keeping Iran and Saudi Arabia From War: Getting Riyadh and Tehran to Talk," *Foreign Affairs* (May 30, 2016), accessed February 20, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2016-05-30/keeping-iran-and-saudi-arabia-war>.

¹⁰² Simon Mabon, "After years of proxy war, Saudi Arabia and Iran are finally squaring up in the open," *The Independent* (January 5, 2016), accessed on February 20, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/after-years-of-proxy-war-saudi-arabia-and-iran-are-finally-squaring-up-in-the-open-a6797001.html>.

SFABs are punching above their weight as they train thousands of Afghans and ISF soldiers to fight insurgencies while other BCTs are stationed in Kuwait ready to respond against an unexpected crisis. Here, SFABs can play a critical role by strengthening ANDSF and ISF elements to preserve the BCTs for deployment against other threats.

For the Pacific region, PACOM also faces a complex security environment with China seeking hegemony in the South China Sea and North Korea developing nuclear capabilities for use against the United States and its allies. Furthermore, PACOM must also deal with violent extremist organizations and the hostile relationship between the nuclear-armed states of India and Pakistan. Here PACOM could benefit from SFABs to help possibly train concerned states in the South China Sea and to help augment South Korea with additional advisors to prepare the Republic of Korea's army to counter North Korean aggression. In Pakistan, SFABs could bolster the government's attempts to control the Federally Administered Tribal Areas region, which directly affects security concerns in Afghanistan while also stabilizing Pakistan against violent extremist organizations. Furthermore, SFABs can play a critical role in helping to counter al-Qaeda across numerous states in the region. These efforts can indirectly build depth for the PACOM to help stabilize the most populated region in the world like how RAF is currently advising across the region to build interoperable militaries through the Pacific Pathways program.¹⁰³ However, if indirect approaches to building depth are not enough, SFABs can expand into full BCTs capable of directly building additional combat power.

In times of national emergency or necessity, SFABs can expand to become BCTs in less time than attempts to create one from scratch. This concept is based on a model used during the

¹⁰³ Paul Lushenko and Jon Lushenko, "PACOM's Role in Sustaining Indo-Asia-Pacific Security," East-West Center (November 4, 2015), accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/system/tdf/private/apb328.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=35373>.

Cold War known as cohesion, operational readiness, and training (COHORT) which sought to provide the capability of rapid expansion during a major war with the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁴ The premise of this concept was for the Army to maintain units primarily composed of experienced NCOs and officers who could serve as cadre if the Army decided to man them with junior Soldiers to make additional combat power. This model, at its peak, formed eighty-two battalions and was an overall success until the Army determined that they were no longer needed due to a reduced risk with the Soviet Union following the end of the Cold War. In today's complex security environment, the Army is attempting to regain the ability to rapidly expand due to the smaller stature of the current force.

Currently the Army needs about thirty months to create an Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) out of hide but the Army can significantly reduce this timeline by using expandable SFABs.¹⁰⁵ Using the model of rapid expansion from the Army's Modular Conversion and the Grow the Army initiative which maintains mid-grade leaders for this very purpose, a SFAB could create an IBCT in as little as eighteen months thus removing a year from the overall timeline to create a BCT.¹⁰⁶ This reduction in time is significant if the Army finds itself in a major war requiring the use of more BCTs to replace combat losses or prevent culmination due to a high operations tempo. Additionally, IBCTs require minimal equipment compared to Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCT) and ABCTs, which reduces the amount of time needed to equip and train these formations. Unfortunately, the Army only has enough Stryker vehicles to field the current

¹⁰⁴ David Barno and Nora Bensahel, "The Future of the Army: Today, Tomorrow, and The Day After Tomorrow," The Atlantic Council, Brent Scowcroft Center On International Security (Washington, DC: September, 2016), 21.

¹⁰⁵ Department of the Army, *Army Force Posture Statement 2015* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 8.

¹⁰⁶ James Gallivan, "Smaller but Expandable: Assessing Options to Regenerate the Army of 2020" (Monograph, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA: 2013), 19.

nine SBCTs that it maintains which means creating additional SBCTs would first require the Army to purchase hundreds of additional platforms. However, to create additional ABCTs, SFABs would likely need an additional three months of training time to conduct gunnery and mounted training exercises before being certified at a CTE.

Currently the US Army only has nine ABCTs on active duty with another five in the National Guard.¹⁰⁷ Even with the announcement to create an additional ABCT at Fort Stewart, Georgia, the Army lacks depth with these formations if it ever faces a serious conflict with a near peer competitor in a conventional war. Even today, the Army and US allies have seen a significant increase in the need for armor forces in today's complex security environment.¹⁰⁸ Here SFABs can play a decisive role by serving as skeletal ABCTs ready to be manned during major conflicts. If these brigades can create additional ABCTs within twenty-one to twenty-four months, they can help to mitigate the risk the Army has accepted by only having fifteen ABCTs in the future and provide a timely reserve to a Combatant Commander if needed. This function would also address the recommendations made by the National Commission on the Future of the Army that the Army should build additional ABCTs to prepare for an unknown security environment.¹⁰⁹ Finally, during protracted, limited wars, SFABs could improve the dwell time between BCTs by providing additional depth which lessens the overall demand on each BCT and provides more time for training and reset before the next deployment.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Michelle Tan, "New in 2017: Armored BCTs start new deployments to Europe," *Army Times* (December 29, 2016), accessed February 20, 2017, <https://www.armytimes.com/articles/new-in-2017-armored-bcts-start-new-deployments-to-europe>.

¹⁰⁸ James Gallivan, "Smaller but Expandable: Assessing Options to Regenerate the Army of 2020" (Monograph, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA: 2013), 24-25.

¹⁰⁹ Department of the Army, *National Commission on the Future of the US Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 114.

¹¹⁰ James Gallivan, "Smaller but Expandable: Assessing Options to Regenerate the Army of 2020" (Monograph, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA: 2013), 18.

In summary, across the globe the United States is being challenged by multiple, diverse threats without the military force structure or budget to respond in a conventional manner. To counter these growing threats, the Army can use the SFAB model to develop better regional allies to meet US policy objectives at a much cheaper cost than deploying BCTs in a RAF capacity. By providing additional depth to our Army both directly and indirectly, SFABs could have a positive impact on the Army if the lessons from the past can be applied appropriately.

Risks Associated with SFABs

Despite the ability of SFABs to provide the Army with a better SFA model, there are some risks with this new type of brigade that need to be mitigated. These risks range from increased military intervention, misuse of the SFABs to solve non-military issues, transitioning the SFAB to a BCT, and, finally, establishing the culture that encourages the right personnel to pursue advising assignments. Each of these concerns represent historical problems for the Army during previous conflicts that must be discussed if the SFABs are to be successful.

First, some theorize that by creating SFABs the United States may become more involved in future conflicts by placing boots on the ground thus escalating US involvement. One example that leads to this reasoning is the use of advisors in South Vietnam during the early 1960s. While it is true that US forces originally relied upon advisors to achieve policy objectives, it was President Johnson's decision to directly use US ground forces in a combat role that ultimately led to an escalation. However, President Johnson's decision to use ground forces directly was likely based on a flawed strategy of using military means to fix a complex political issue. Furthermore, the decision to use the military for direct combat in the countryside of rural Vietnam against the North Vietnamese Army did little to earn the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese during an

intense insurgency. Ultimately, the choice to escalate any conflict does not reside within the military but instead within the nation's political leadership. Therefore, the Army's use of advisors in any conflict is due to the demands required by current policy along with the political desire to reduce risk by conducting traditional ground combat operations. These conditions, best explained by Robert Putnam's two level game theory, suggest that politicians must consider domestic desires when considering policy in international affairs.¹¹¹ The creation of capable SFABs provides political leadership with more credible options to counter regional instability as demonstrated currently in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Eastern Europe.

Currently, the US Army is providing combat advisors on ground in Iraq to help Iraqi forces defeat ISIS due to the previous Presidential administration's resistance towards deploying regular combat troops in a combat role to fight ISIS directly. This decision could be attributed to the fact that Iraqi ground forces being advised by the United States are accomplishing the mission by slowly retaking key areas from ISIS control. Unlike the situation in Vietnam, advisors along with our strategy of nesting airpower to support them seem to be the right solution to help the Iraqis without requiring the United States to take a more decisive role on the ground. Additionally, the use of advisors in Iraq has helped the Iraqis to degrade ISIS therefore increasing their legitimacy as a sovereign power both internally within Iraq and externally within the international community. If the United States attempted to defeat ISIS using the direct approach of conventional US ground operations, the legitimacy of Iraq's central government would be eroded therefore perpetuating the problems of Iraq to stabilize in the end.

A second issue that should be discussed is the use of SFABs to solve "grey zone" security issues that may not be military problems and instead demand a more whole of government

¹¹¹ Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988), 429-430.

approach. In the case of ISIS, many believe that the current issues are not military problems but instead economic and political problems.¹¹² In fact, some suggest that military operations perpetuate the problem by legitimizing ISIS's ideology and propaganda proclaiming that the armies of Rome are massing to meet the army of Islam in Northern Iraq as a final showdown during a religious apocalypse prophesized by the Koran.¹¹³ While these issues may be true with ISIS, the truth is that no whole of government approach can work without the military due to its overwhelming assets and capabilities. By creating SFABs, the US Army can provide credible options to help other states in achieving shared security goals like the defeat of ISIS. By training and assisting Iraqi forces, the US Army is helping to defeat ISIS without using conventional military forces, thus denying the credibility of their religious propaganda that infidels are invading Muslim lands as prophesized in the Quran.

The third risk that needs to be addressed is the transition from a SFAB to a BCT. While these brigades potentially offer a faster way of establishing the manpower they will need to conduct combat operations, what is not addressed is how quickly these brigades can train the necessary collective skills needed for Decisive Action. One way this risk can be mitigated is the use of experienced leaders to staff these brigades. By staffing these brigades with commanders and senior NCOs who have already served in key leadership positions within BCTs, the Army can negate some of the growing pains associated with establishing new units. For example, a successful Battalion Commander within a BCT who is then hand-selected to serve again as a

¹¹² Zoe Savellos, "Military Action Against ISIS is Only a Fraction of the Solution," *Stanford Political Journal* (January 2015), accessed December 2, 2016, <https://stanfordpolitics.com/military-action-against-isis-is-only-a-fraction-of-the-solution-c7aed86bb163#.7pvna6c6g>.

¹¹³ Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic* (March 2015), accessed December 6, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

Battalion Command in a SFAB can more effectively lead that organization into a combat role due to their prior experience leading combat troops in preparation for Decisive Action.

Finally, the fourth risk that should be addressed is the concern that these brigades may be detrimental towards the careers of the personnel that serve in them. In the past, the Army recognized officers serving as advisors in Afghanistan and Iraq as a ‘soft’ key developmental position.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, these positions were often looked down upon by the regular Army, which limited the desire of many officers and NCOs in pursuing these assignments.¹¹⁵ General Milley has stated that officers who have already commanded at their respective rank should command these billets.¹¹⁶ This will ensure that more mature, experienced leaders man the brigades after they have completed their key-developmental assignments for promotion and will allow the Army to treat these assignments as a broadening opportunity that can help diversify an officer’s skill set. These second command nominations should be treated as a privileged opportunity to receive additional command experience and help the Army sell these vital assignments to the very best and brightest. If the Army selects quality personnel to serve as advisors, it will effectively communicate to the force that assignments to SFABs will not hinder their career, but instead make them more competitive than their peers due to the additional command opportunities and rounded skill set in both conventional and unconventional warfare.

A Way Ahead – Recommendations for SFABs

¹¹⁴ Dave Dilegge, “Big Thumbs Up to General Casey,” *Small War Journal* (June 17, 2008), accessed April 08, 2017, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/big-thumbs-up-to-general-casey>

¹¹⁵ Based on the author’s personal experience while serving with advisors in Iraq and training advisors at Fort Polk, Louisiana, 2007-2015.

¹¹⁶ Gary Sheftick, “CSA Explains How Skeletal Advisory Brigades Could Regenerate Force,” *Army News Service* (June 23, 2016), accessed October 1, 2016, https://www.army.mil/article/170344/csa_explains_how_skeletal_advisory_brigades_could_regenerate_force.

To mitigate the risks involved with establishing SFABs, this monograph will suggest some solutions to facilitate better results. These recommendations range from creating a better culture for SFA activity, using the SFABs in the right capacity, and finally diversifying the SFABs to counter multiple threats in the event they are asked to expand into BCTs. These solutions are presented in order according to their potential impact on the SFAB concept.

The biggest challenge associated with the SFABs is the way the Army values and perceives SFA compared to how it values traditional BCT assignments.¹¹⁷ As discussed previously, the Army has attempted to conduct SFA with personnel from general-purpose forces who typically were not specialized in SFA skills nor incentivized to pursue advisor assignments. The earlier ad hoc approach to manning advisor formations through the WIAS method limited advising efforts due to the lack of SFA skills associated with general-purpose personnel.

To address this issue, the Army needs to establish systems at Human Resources Command (HRC) to identify the right personnel to serve as potential advisors while also creating an environment that rewards personnel who staff these brigades.

To address these issues, first HRC must select personnel to serve as advisors who are quality Soldiers within their Military Occupational Specialty and competitive for promotion to the next rank. This means that these personnel have completed their Key Developmental (KD) assignment for their current grade and are experienced in conventional operations in case the SFAB is required to expand into a BCT on short notice. Next, once these personnel complete an SFAB assignment, they should be assigned an additional skill identifier with regional affiliation

¹¹⁷ Leslie Adrienne Payne and Jan Osburg. "Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations," RAND Research Report, (2013), 1, accessed on February 23, 2017, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR416.html.

for future assignments in an advisor capacity. This identifier will ensure that experienced advisors, with regionally developed language and cultural skills, are continually reassigned to the right SFABs following their completion of KD assignments in the BCTs. Additionally, by continually rotating these personnel from BCTs to SFABs, the Soldier is always competitive with their peers for promotion, and is able to cross-pollinate SFA skills into the conventional BCTs, which increases their ability to conduct the full range of DA activities including stability operations. This model is demonstrated by the figure below.

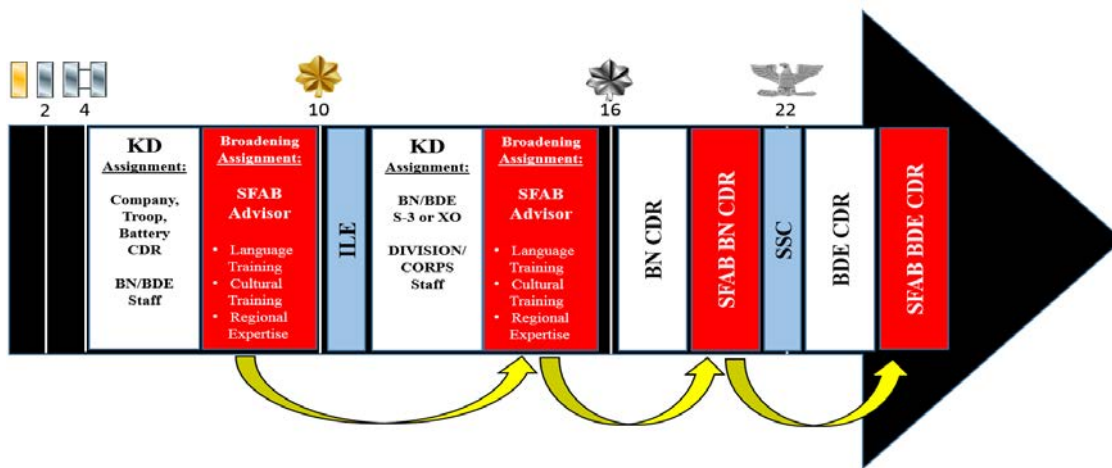


Figure 2. Proposed timeline for officers identified as SFAB advisors (figure created by the author)

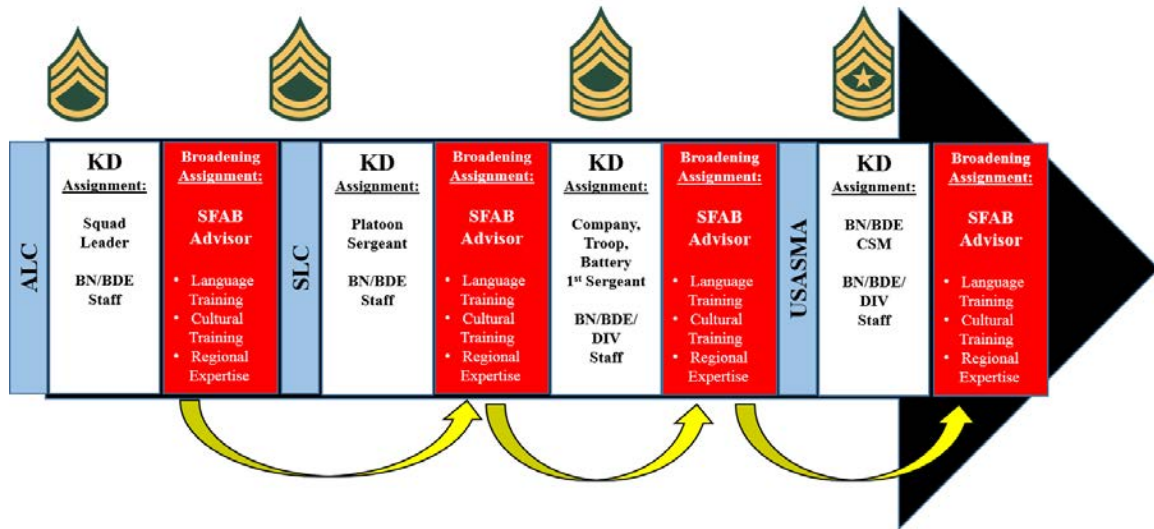


Figure 3. Proposed timeline for NCOs identified as SFAB advisors (figure created by the author)

By establishing this system at HRC, the Army can build an experienced advisor corps across the Army that is competent in language skills and has regional expertise. This model is similar to how the US Army's Special Forces community manages its personnel through regional groups.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, this system ensures that personnel within SFABs are competitive for promotion and will likely result in the right personnel volunteering for a SFAB assignment to gain language skills and additional leadership opportunities. If the Army really wants to reward these personnel, it would instruct its promotion and selection boards to consider personnel with leadership assignments in both BCTs and SFABs to be more competitive than others. This would encourage the best personnel to volunteer for SFABs in order to receive extra leadership assignments in their respective grade. By staffing the SFABs with the right personnel, the Army is establishing the right structural organization to ensure that these brigades can meet their regional policy aims abroad.

¹¹⁸ Isaac J. Peltier, "Surrogate Warfare: The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2005), 10.

The next challenge the Army must address with SFABs is operational with how the Army is using advisors. Advisors cannot resolve all US policy issues abroad and must instead focus on military issues. Ideally, SFABs should be given clear, achievable goals to ensure that they appropriately build host-nation capability and capacity to address the security environment. Unfortunately, previous advising operations in Afghanistan and Iraq did not establish clear achievable military goals for advisors. The continual fluctuating of military end-states in both conflicts, combined with the lack of training and proper personnel, demonstrates some of the issues advisors have had to deal with for the past decade.

For the SFABs to have a real impact on national policy aims, the Army needs to leverage their ability to conduct advising during phase zero and one through the establishment of enduring regional engagement. This allows the SFABs the ideal opportunity to shape the environment before the security situation results in conflict thus reducing risk for both the military and US political leaders.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the use of advisors on ground signals US resolve and commitment to the region, which ideally deters regional threats from pursuing conflict. For these reasons, the opportunity for SFABs to have a decisive role in US foreign policy is worth the risk associated with placing advisors on the ground. By using talented, trained personnel as advisors in a proactive posture, the Army can achieve its aspirations for SFA.

Finally, if the SFABs are required to expand into BCTs due to major or multiple conflicts, the Army needs to diversify the SFABs with both ABCTs and IBCTs. As discussed before, the Army lacks ABCTs and is currently deploying three at a time to meet operational needs in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and in South Korea. To create the right expandable formations, the Army should devote at least three of the SFABs to serve as skeletal ABCTs. This

¹¹⁹ Timothy McAteer, "The US Army and Future Security Force Assistance Operations" (Monograph, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA: 2013), 17.

would allow the Army to have three SFABs capable of creating IBCTs in as little eighteen months while also having three SFABs capable of creating ABCTs in twenty-four months. Furthermore, in many regional areas, US allies are increasingly pursuing heavier forces with more armor capability to focus on regional concerns rather than lighter forces with more global reach.¹²⁰ For these reasons, the SFABs would be better prepared if their personnel possessed armored expertise to better train these mechanized partners in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Additionally, by establishing SFABs as both skeletal IBCT and ABCTs, the Army is ensuring that a greater population of personnel are interested in volunteering as advisors while also highlighting that SFA is not just for COIN, but also focused on more conventional threats such as Russian aggression in Europe.

Conclusion

In times of fiscal uncertainty, the Army is being asked to do more with inadequate resources. The Army can better use its limited forces by developing the SFAB concept to meet the growing demands of SFA. This concept has the potential to be cheaper and more efficient with personnel than the current RAF model. With today's smaller Army, these six SFAB brigades may only require a few thousand soldiers to man them but their cost will be well worth the results. For a small cost, SFABs can build additional depth across the Army in multiple ways while preserving the BCTs' ability to respond to other demands.

In recent history and through current operations today, the Army has needed robust SFA operations in two protracted wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Through hard lessons learned, the Army has recognized the long-term need for SFA and developed the RAF concept to fill this

¹²⁰ James Gallivan, "Smaller but Expandable: Assessing Options to Regenerate the Army of 2020" (Monograph, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA: 2013), 24-25.

void. This concept is expensive in terms of operational demand, but provides a model for the SFABs to draw lessons from. By creating regionally aligned SFABs, the Army can provide a reliable force structure to meet SFA demands for each Combatant Command while mitigating some of the issues that RAF brigades pose.

These six SFABs will each consist of about 500 experienced leaders capable of serving as the cadre of a potential BCT when called upon. They will be subject matter experts within their military occupational field, while also being masters of SFA skills such as cultural awareness, language skills, building rapport, and negotiating. They will be patient, humble, open minded, professionals who can build diverse teams to achieve results in demanding circumstances. As these qualified personnel complete assignments within the SFAB, they will cross-pollinate these skills into the regular Army, building its ability to conduct COIN or partner with regional allies when required.

The SFAB concept benefits the US Army in a number of ways in today's complex global environment. These six brigades will allow the Army to increase its depth by extending operations in time, space, and purpose by conducting host-nation advising during phases zero and one in order to shape the environment and deter potential threats. Their mission, focused on SFA, creates capable regional allies to assist the United States in achieving its policy aims. Furthermore, these brigades will also enable the Army's fifty-six BCTs to focus on conventional operations to allow the United States to maintain maximum flexibility to counter emerging security threats. Lastly, these brigades will have the capacity to expand into BCTs in the case of major or multiple conflicts when the Army needs additional combat forces quickly.

Some of the biggest risks with the SFAB concept is that these brigades will be used to escalate US involvement overseas against non-military problems. Additionally, these brigades may have difficulty expanding into BCTs during times of needs. Finally, the SFABs may suffer

from a culture within the Army that undervalues SFA contributions to national security. To mitigate these risks, the Army and Combatant Commands need to deploy the SFABs with clear guidance and military aims. Also, the Army needs to select highly competent personnel to man these brigades to enable their expansion into BCTs and counter the culture within the Army that fails to recognize their potential. By setting the right conditions, the Army can hopefully build their depth and capacity to counter its increased operational demands.

The SFAB concept has the potential to be a force multiplier across the Combatant Commands. If the US Army can mitigate the risks involved with creating and employing SFABs, the opportunity for them to provide a high payoff is worth their small cost. By creating well-resourced SFABs and deploying them proactively with clear goals, the US Army can better meet its vision to prevent, shape, and win our nation's wars against diverse threats for the foreseeable future.

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