

Creating Operational Culture Skills Capability within Conventional Force Leaders

**A Monograph
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Abstract

CREATING OPERATIONAL CULTURE SKILLS CAPABILITY WITHIN CONVENTIONAL FORCE LEADERS by LTC Mark D. Collins, US Army, 60 pages.

This monograph analyzes the Army's ability to implement operational culture skills to meet the intent of the vision set forth in the 2009 Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy. First, the monograph reviews Army operations since Vietnam. This is used to draw conclusions on how the conventional or general purpose force leader did or did not utilize language and culture in Army operations up to the 21st Century wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Then the monograph uses Department of Defense guidance to establish the need to change. Next the monograph looks at the Army's challenge of institutionalizing operational culture skills. It is done against the backdrop of the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq to find systemic issues that arise when conventional troops operate within foreign populations.

The U.S. Army gained a considerable amount of experience recently in Afghanistan and Iraq. In both wars, the Army had to come to grips with operating among foreign populations who were markedly different from typical American demography. This monograph promotes the concept of combining cross cultural competencies, nominal language proficiency or language use and regional orientation as operational culture skills. The monograph identifies the need to take Department of the Army level vision and turn it into action. It highlights the importance of cultural awareness and language use during the conduct of operations by conventional force leaders.

The monograph concludes with an analysis of lessons learned from Afghanistan and Iraq. The monograph points out that unless there are changes made to the way the Army trains and educates its conventional force leaders on operational culture skills it will not have the necessary operational capabilities to meet the challenges of future operational deployments. The monograph recommends that the Army institutionalize the acquisition of operational culture skills developing a cost effective comprehensive program to enable leaders in general purpose forces for future operations. It recommends changes to U.S. Army Human Resource Command policies and training strategy within Training and Doctrine Command to create a synergistic life-long learning approach. This approach links language and regional designations for individual leader career long study. Recommendations consider anticipated budget constraints while promoting the necessary investment in leader development.

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Introduction

General Pete Chiarelli, once said it is important that the hard fought lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan are not merely “observed” but are truly “learned”- incorporated into the service’s DNA and institutional memory. Which leads to the first major challenge I see facing the Army: How will it structure itself - train and equip - for the extraordinarily diverse range of missions it will face in the future?

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates

Recent U.S. operations in Central Asia, the Middle East, the Philippines, Haiti, the Horn of Africa and Libya, in the face of tightening budgets provide a realistic foreshadowing of what the future holds for the U.S. Army. Additionally, those conflicts highlight the need for a more culturally savvy and globally attuned force. The drawdown in Iraq is nearly complete and an expected drawdown of forces in Afghanistan is expected to be well under way within the next four years. The operations conducted by the U.S. Army since 2001 provide a glimpse of the challenges the Army is most likely to face in the next five to fifteen years.¹ Any changes to the current force must take into account the fiscal realities facing the U.S. military that may result from the current budget process.

The Army in a looming period of fiscal constraints has a number of critical choices to make especially when it addresses necessary investments in the training and education of its leaders. Dwindling budgets are nearly a given, but it is vital that the Army continues to place a

¹ U.S. Army, *TRADOC PAM 525-3-0 The Army Capstone Concept*, (Fort Monroe, Virginia: TRADOC, 21 December 2009), 15. Robert Gates, *U.S. Military Academy Speech*, (West Point, New York: OSD, February 25 2011). U.S Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Transcript-Hearing to Consider the Nomination of General Martin Dempsey, USA for Reappointment to the Grade of General and to be Chief of Staff, United States Army*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Senate, March 3, 2011), 20. Most recent documents published by the Army and in public statements from senior leaders point to the fact that the Army will not be able to revert back to a heavy focus on conventional major combat operations as it did post-Vietnam. The Army of the next two decades must be able to do everything from conflict preventative operations and major combat operations, sometimes simultaneously, which is driving the Army to review both its doctrine or employment of the conventional or general purpose force (GPF) as well as changing the way it trains and educates its’ GPF, particularly GPF leaders, to deal with the ambiguity and complexity of future operations. The proper preparation of leaders for future conflicts is probably one of the top three challenges facing senior Army leaders.

high premium on the education and training of its leaders. When it was faced with extensive budget cuts and lack of modern equipment the post-World War I the Army used education to keep the Army as capable as possible in the time leading up to World War II.² This investment in education facilitated the rapid and massive expansion of the Army that helped win the war. Placing an emphasis on education in operational culture skills is the surest way to develop a force with the tools to operate in nearly every future deployment scenario.

Overseas missions are by nature going to be conducted among the people and this requires the development of a number of operational culture skills. These key skills include: understanding of foreign cultures, communicating through local languages and understanding the regional dynamics that effect the operational environment are necessary to truly understand the mission environment. For brevity and to facilitate a more precise argument this monograph identifies the three skills of cultural understanding, use of local language skills and regional awareness as operational culture skills.

It is imperative that the U.S. Army develop effective and efficient programs to implement the 2009 Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy (ACFLS). Proper implementation of the ACFLS provides crucial operational culture skill sets facilitating Army operations globally. The creation of an effective Army wide program requires an approach that progressively builds capabilities in conventional leaders from initial entry thru ETS or retirement. Implementation plans must factor in cost and time leaders spend away from operational units and minimize the impact on institutional professional military education (PME).

² Peter J Schifferle, *America's School for War*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 7, 60. The success of the U.S. Army in WWII is often credited to the men who attend and taught at the Army Command and General Staff School because of their ability to understand doctrine, the conflict and the way they dealt with the challenges they faced. Many of these "Leavenworth men" served at the highest levels as commanders and senior staff officers. Their German enemies were often impressed and even surprised at the change in the professionalism of the "modern" American Army compared to its WWI predecessor.

Developing practical implementation plans and programs to pursue the intent of the ACFLS requires a comprehensive approach. Such an approach is the best method to develop a profession of leaders that are prepared to execute complex global full spectrum operations effectively in the 21st Century. Full spectrum operations as defined in this paper refers to the broad range of operations in which the U.S. Army is potentially utilized spanning conditions ranging from peace through all-out war.³ The exact nature of the next conflict is undetermined; however, that uncertainty is more easily mitigated with a force attuned to the dynamics of the local human terrain. Educating Army leaders to deal with people from other cultures and exploit the benefits of operation culture needs to come to the forefront in leader development.

This monograph explores and recommends service wide solutions for the Army to train and educate its conventional or general purpose force (GPF) leaders in operational cultural skills throughout their careers. The recent National Security Strategy (NSS) points to the importance of educating GPF leaders with the necessary skills, operational culture skills, in order to prepare them to execute operations globally to support national objectives.⁴ GPF leaders include all the three main cohorts of leaders: officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) whose career fields are not in a U.S. Army Special Operations career field. The intent of this paper is to recommend change: to applicable regulations like AR 600-3 and personnel policies,

³ U.S. Army, *FM 3-0 Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: HQDA, 2008), 2-1, 2-5. Both figures display states of the environment like peace at the stable end of the spectrum and general war at the opposite end. Increasing levels of violence changes the state of the environment pushing the spectrum toward increasing levels of conflict. Figure 2-2 page 2-5 is more in depth displaying in basic terms the type of operations as the spectrum of conflict increases.

⁴ U.S. White House, *National Security Strategy*, (Washington D.C.: White House Press, 2010), 7-14. The NSS addresses the need for the U.S. to act as a partner as part of future coalitions in all types of operations. U.S. Department of Defense. *National Military Strategy of the United States of America*. (Washington D.C.: DOD, February 8 2011). The NMS, which is nested with the NSS, discusses forward presence and enabling other nations who share common security goals on page 1. Throughout the document it reemphasizes the U.S. desire to establish partnerships and work with other nations in coalitions during operations. Working with other countries effectively is going to require a force that can bridge cultural and communication gaps to get missions accomplished. Developing across the GPF skills to bridge those gaps is the crux of the monograph's argument.

and suggests programs to implement the intent of the ACFLS. Areas for consideration include performance and academic evaluation reports, personnel management policies in the areas of culture, regional familiarity and language aggregated proficiency. This monograph takes the reader through historical examples with analysis to draw conclusions that point out a path for action by the Army.

Section one reviews the recent historical background of the Army's employment of culture, language and regional studies beginning with Vietnam through the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Section two covers the Department of Defense (DOD) policies and by exception discusses related sister service programs to meet DOD intent in the third section. Section four outlines current U.S. Army policies, initiatives and implementation instructions the integration of operational culture skills into the conventional force. The final section discusses options for improving the current Army plan, assesses the current Army posture, and proposes recommendations for implementation of the *2009 Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*.⁵ Governmental leaders, especially military leaders, of tomorrow must have the capacity to function across cultures and boundaries normally in a joint interagency and intergovernmental, multinational (JIIM) environment.⁶ Simply put, U.S. Army GPF leaders need operational culture skills to enable them to deal with the complexity of the future operational environment.

Historical and Operational Background

Thus it is said that one who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements. One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes be victorious, sometimes meet with defeat. One

⁵ U.S. Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, (Washington D.C.: HQDA, 2009). The ACFLS outlines a solid vision, but without a comprehensive implementation strategy that vision may need multiple sets of corrective lenses which would impair effectiveness of related programs across the force.

⁶ U.S. Army, *Army White Paper-The Profession of Arms*, (Fort Monroe, Virginia: TRADOC, 2010), 7. This integrates with the NSS and NMS which also envision the U.S. military conducting operations routinely as part of a coalition with partners as was noted in footnote 5.

who knows neither the enemy nor himself will invariably be defeated in every engagement.

Sun-Tzu

The U.S. military, including the Army GPF, struggles in accomplishing less kinetic missions like counter insurgency, disaster relief or nation building.⁷ Prior to the current conflicts it was structured to fight in major combat operations (MCO).⁸ MCO do not typically emphasize the cultural impact of military actions on the country and its populace nor was the importance of the local populace sentiments a part of institutional training until those operations necessitated the learning of those skills.⁹ The lack of Army wide understanding of missions typically labeled military operations other than war (MOOTW) is not reflective its historical narrative.

Given the Army's experience with multiple types of operations, one would think that over time the Army would have developed a keen understanding of the importance of the local

⁷ Walter E. Kretchik, Robert F. Baumann and John T Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention "Intervasion": A Concise History of the U.S. Army in Uphold Democracy*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S.: Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1998), 168. The authors discuss problems encountered by Marines and Soldiers of the U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division, a GPF unit, is deal with issues stability and security in Haitian cities in 1994. They also point out successes achieve by U.S. Army Special Forces in the more sparsely populated country side on page 169. Robert F. Baumann, Lawrence A. Yates and Versalle F. Washington, *My Clan Against the World*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 3. This points to how the lessons learned by 10th Mountain Soldiers in Somalia had negative effects in Haiti relief operations. David Halberstam, *War in A Time of Peace*, (New York, Touchstone, 2001) 259-260. Halberstam points out the difficulties troops experienced on the ground as leaders grappled with a solution to the escalating violence.

⁸ Gates, *U.S. Military Academy Speech*, 1. Secretary Gates outlines how the force that went to war ten years ago was essentially a smaller version of the one that contained the Soviet Union resourced and intended to fight another large state Army. Dempsey, *Testimony*. Richard M. Swain, "Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Army", In *The Operational Art: Development in the Theories of War*. ed. B.J.C. McKercher and Michael A. Hennessy, (Westport Connecticut: 1996), 162-165. Major combat operations typically are nation state on nation state conflicts that have an easily identified end state such as destruction of enemy forces or key infrastructure and often include surrender of the opposing nation.

⁹ Montgomery McFate, "Does Culture Matter? The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture", (Arlington, Virginia: 2005), 1-2. U.S. Marine Corps, *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare 1898-2007: Anthology and Selected Bibliography*, (Quantico, Virginia: Marine Corps University Press, 2008), v. The Army does have a planning tool called METT-C (Mission, Enemy, Troops, Time-Civilians) but it does not appear it was emphasized by GPF units in a way that fully integrated cultural responses to U.S. Army actions.

culture and populace.¹⁰ The Army's experience in Vietnam provided many lessons learned on the impact of native culture on operations. The Army, however, in its desire to put its failure in the Vietnam War in the background coupled with necessity to rebuild itself did not institutionalize those lessons learned.¹¹ Sadly lessons learned since Vietnam in MOOTW environments were relearned the hard way by the majority of the Army since 2003 and the cessation of major combat operations in Iraq.¹² Like the leaders deploying to Vietnam, today's Army conventional force leaders require a better understanding of the complex environments into which they are deployed.

The nature of the enemy and the regional situation in Vietnam challenged American leaders. Nuances, particularly in dealing with the dynamics of the vastly different culture of Vietnam, escaped senior Army leadership.¹³ In the end because it lacked the ability to understand the ambiguities of the region and the cultural dynamics of the Vietnamese people the U.S. withdrew under a cloud of failure in the early 1970s. U.S GPF units headed to Vietnam were not trained on fighting a counter insurgency and often executing operations within their MCO comfort zone. Like in Vietnam, when GPF units fought the initial Iraqi insurgents they reverted to their comfort zone MCO operations.

The Vietnam conflict, much like the Iraqi Insurgency of 2003, forced the Army to use GPF or conventional force units in roles that they had not envisioned, trained for, or executed in many years. GPF units executed the fight conventionally. While the U.S. Army achieved

¹⁰ Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1860-1941*, (Washington D.C.: Center for Military History, 1998), 280-281. Halberstam *War in A Time*, 264.

¹¹ Swain, "Filling the Void", 148-149.

¹² Michael Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: the Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 493. Gregory C. Meyer, *Comprehensive Regional Expertise in the United States Army*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph, 2007), 2. William E. Benson, *Leadership Lab IRAQ*, (New York: Raider Publishing International, 2010), 78.

¹³ David Johnson, *Learning Large Lessons*, (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2006), 200. Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 260, 268-273

significant tactical victories in Vietnam it is likely that those successes contributed much to losing the war because the counter insurgency fundamentals were not embraced. In doing so America's Army abandoned hard won institutional lessons learned and battlefield tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) that resulted from the Vietnam experience.¹⁴

The GPF TTPs used in Vietnam were developed over time at great costs of human life and capital.¹⁵ The nuances of culture and the need for language ability were readily embraced by U.S. Army Special Forces community before and after the Vietnam Conflict with relatively successful results. However, there were not enough Special Forces personnel to conduct operations across the whole of the country.¹⁶ Many of valuable lessons learned that applied to the importance of understanding the local culture and use of language operationally by conventional units were, for all practical purposes, lost, forgotten, or shelved until nearly thirty years later when the need arose within the conventional force to execute effective counter-insurgency strategy in Iraq.¹⁷ After Vietnam, the Army focused institutional energy and doctrine on the neglected defenses of Western Europe facing the Soviet threat.¹⁸

¹⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 260, 268-273. The author in his synopsis lays out his reasons for the problems that the U.S. Army experienced in Vietnam. First was learning was done at the tactical level by lower level officers and Cos not leaders in the mainstream. Second conventional operations were favored over counterinsurgency operations and without the migration of counterinsurgency doctrine to conventional units across the country success was never possible. Thirdly, the Army made little effort to learn the lessons of Vietnam and discarded them as quickly as it could. Lastly, that those that benefitted from their experiences in Vietnam were "mainstream" senior leaders and staff officers who had little experience in what the author called classic counterinsurgency warfare.

¹⁵ Ibid., 260.

¹⁶ Ibid., 55, 108 & 272.

¹⁷ Johnson, *Learning Large Lessons*, 201. Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 493. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 260, 272, 274.

¹⁸ Robert A. Doughty, Leavenworth Papers: *The Evolution of U.S. Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 2001), 44. Richard M. Swain, "Filling the Void", 148-149. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 272.

The post-Vietnam Army turned inward to rejuvenate the institution and refocus on priorities that were neglected as a result of the extended conflict in Southeast Asia.¹⁹ The Army's foundational doctrinal publication, FM 100-5 *Operations*, was a statement to the Army's renewed focus on major combat operations.²⁰ In this MCO renaissance, weapons like the Abrams Tank, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the Apache Helicopter and the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) were procured to enable an outnumbered Army to prevail against a Soviet onslaught against Western Europe.²¹ During this post-Vietnam renewal of the Army there was an institutional aversion within the Army's leadership to missions that did not look like major combat operations, especially any operation that closely resembled recent operations in South East Asia.²²

Post-Vietnam, the Army focus on Western Europe predisposed it towards missions with an easily identifiable end state like MCO, as opposed to MOOTW.²³ The years between the Vietnam War and the fall of the Soviet Union saw America enter into at least three small scale conflicts as well as participating in a number of humanitarian and disaster relief (HADR) missions overseas but these operations were not of any major consequence. The U.S. invaded the Caribbean island of Grenada in the Fall of 1983 and Panama in December 1989 in operations that

¹⁹ Doughty, *The Evolution of U.S. Army*, 40. Swain, "Filling the Void", 150-152. John L. Romjue, *The Army of Excellence: The Development of the 1980s Army*, (Fort Monroe, Virginia: TRADOC, 1993), 2.

²⁰ Doughty, *The Evolution of U.S. Army* 44.

²¹ Romjue, *The Army of Excellence*, 3.

²² Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations 1942-1976*, (Washington D.C.: Center for Military History, 2006), 481. Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 239. Halberstam quotes GEN Colin Powell, former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff who stated in his book *My American Journey*, "My generation, the career captains, majors and lieutenant colonels, seasoned in that war, vowed that when our turn came to call the shots, we would not acquiesce in halfhearted warfare for half-baked reasons..."

²³ Walter E. Kretchik, Robert F. Baumann, and John T Fishel. *Invasion, Intervention "Intervasion": A Concise History of the U.S. Army in Uphold Democracy*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1998), 28. Swain, "Filling the Void", 150.

were quick duration missions with easily identifiable and limited goals.²⁴ Army operations in Grenada and Panama are examples of a preference for specific missions with articulated goals and end states.²⁵ After Iraq invaded its tiny neighbor, Kuwait, in the summer of 1990, the Army got the MCO fight it was trained and resourced to execute.

The U.S. Army while operating as the senior partner in an expansive multi-national coalition, easily defeated Iraqi in early 1991 in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This was the major conventional war that the U.S. Army had trained for and it was the classic example of the type of operation the Army preferred to conduct.²⁶ The stunning success in Kuwait and Iraq validated, to many, the Army's institutional systems. Training and doctrine methods used to defeat the Iraqi Army in 1991 did not change much between Desert Storm in 1991 and OIF I in 2003.²⁷ The fall of the Berlin Wall did not significantly alter the Army's way of war.

The U.S. Army continued to train units in the post-Cold War Era in many of the same ways it had prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. The Army's Combat Training Centers at the time focused predominately on major combat operations against fictional nation state opponents that operated a lot like the defunct Communist Soviet Union with little regard to operating among foreign populations.²⁸ The fall of the Soviet Union reduced its influence and eliminated the global bi polar balance with the U.S. In the absence of this bi polar

²⁴ Michael D. Pearlman, *Warmaking and the American Democracy*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 397. Romjue, *The Army of Excellence*, 111.

²⁵ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 11. The authors discuss GEN Colin Powell while CJCS and his negative predisposition to sending U.S. Troops on missions with unclear military objectives. This is not uncommon for many senior leaders in the Army who fought as company grade leaders in Vietnam.

²⁶ Johnson, *Learning Large Lessons*, 4. Gates, *U.S. Military Academy Speech*, 1. Secretary Gates states, "The change has been wrenching for a service that a decade ago was essentially...a force mainly organized trained and equipped to defeat another large modern army". This indicates that the U.S. Army had not really come to grips with the changing face of modern war in the post-Soviet era.

²⁷ Gates, *U.S. Military Academy Speech*, 1. Douglas A. Pryer, MAJ USA, "Controlling the Beast Within: The Key to Success on 21st Century Battlefields", (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: *Military Review* January-February 2011), 2-3.

²⁸ Robert W. Cone, "The Changing National Training Center", (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: *Military Review*, May June 2006), 70.

dynamic created global conditions that increased in American involvement in MOOTW scenarios.

In the 1990s the U.S. Army saw itself involved in a number of MOOTW missions. However, it never really grasped the importance of these operations and failed to institutionalize lessons learned that applied to working amongst local populations. Operations conducted in Somalia and the Balkans were often seen as distractions from the core Army mission of fighting and winning our nation's wars.²⁹ This is a dangerous argument that is even heard today. At the time the institutional Army did not recognize that these types of operations might provide a foreshadowing of future conflicts. This precipitated a lack of intellectual preparedness and operationally challenged Army leaders inside the conventional force even before the attacks on the World Trade Center.³⁰ By not recognizing an evolution toward MOOTW after Operation Desert Storm the Army did not take actions to train and educate the GPF in the nuances of operating in the dynamic contemporary operating environment. The Army's experience in Somalia significantly affected its view on preferred types of future operations.

Army operations in Somalia, conducted from mid-1992 through early 1994 impacted the Army for years after the troops redeployed. Soldiers were initially sent on a humanitarian assistance mission to dissipate the effects of famine and strife in the conflict-torn East African nation. This mission progressively evolved, or crept, toward a more kinetic fight for the troops deployed to the series of U.N. and U.S. led missions in the Somalia.³¹ The Army struggled in dealing with the very nature of the conflict operating and interacting with a vastly different

²⁹ Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 251-252.

³⁰ Nadia Schadow, Charles Barry and Richard Lacquement, "A Return to the Army's Roots: Governance, Stabilization and Reconstruction", In *The Future of the Army Profession*, (Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw Hill Custom Publishing, 2005), 251.

³¹ Bauman, Yates and Washington, *My Clan Against the World*, 203. Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 258.

culture. The initial deployment to Somalia was met with resistance from military leaders especially from those who remembered the difficulties the Army encountered in Vietnam.³²

Senior U.S. military leaders, many of whom had served in Vietnam, wanted little to do with Somalia when President Bush sent in the first troops under a U.N. humanitarian mission in the summer of 1992.³³ To exacerbate the complex situation on the ground once the Army began to deploy in large numbers in the following year, American troops and their leaders were ill prepared to deal with the Somalis. Army leaders failed to understand the local cultural dynamics and regional forces at play. Furthermore, they could not piece together how culture affected the ongoing conflict and how to integrate those factors into operations.³⁴ U.S. military performance in the ambiguous and complex environment of Somalia dredged up the “ghosts” of the Army’s Vietnam experience.³⁵

The Army withdrew from the Horn of Africa under the cloud of failure with leaders overly oriented toward force protection. In the wake of Somalia operation the institution developed an obsession with force protection. This is due in part to the events surrounding Task Force Ranger and the shooting down of multiple Blackhawk helicopters in the two day Battle of Mogadishu. After that day the overriding priority for commanders was to ensure that the force received few or no casualties during operations.³⁶ Obsessing about force protection during

³² Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 201-202.

³³ Samantha Power, *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 286. Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 251-252. It is suggested that sending troops to Somalia presented, at the time, simpler and less problematic than sending troops to Bosnia for America’s military leaders specifically GEN Colin Powell believe that the U.S. mission in Somalia would do some good and at the same time keep the U.S. from sending to the more dangerous environment of Bosnia.

³⁴ Alex Davis and Dan Fu, *Culture Matters: Better Decision Making Through Increased Awareness*, (San Maeto, California: Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation, and Education Conference (I/ITSEC) 2004), 2. Bauman, Yates and Washington, *My Clan Against*, 2, 206-207.

³⁵ Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 265. Bauman, Yates and Washington, *My Clan Against*, 202.

³⁶ Kretchik, Baumann and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention “Intervasion”*, 168-169. The authors discuss the reluctance of 10th Mountain troops to patrol in the cities of Haiti particularly after dark. This is attributed to experiences of the unit in Somalia.

MOOTW puts far too much distance, physically and emotionally, between U.S. forces and the people they are sent to assist. Concentrating too much on force protection to avoid casualties separates Army personnel from the very people who matter most in MOOTW, the local populace. The American military establishment fresh from recent humiliating experiences in Somalia and Haiti saw multilateral humanitarian missions as nebulously risky endeavors.³⁷ The U.S. Army leadership after Somalia wanted to avoid mission creep and nation building at all costs. This is easy to understand given that institution's senior leadership grew up as young leaders fighting a war in the Republic of Vietnam.³⁸

The lessons of training leaders and their forces on operating among the populace are necessary for operational success. Training of U.S. Army leaders and troops on operational cultural skills prior to deployment could have helped the U.S. mission in Somalia. After action reports point to the struggles faced by leaders and Soldiers during the mission in regards to cultural gaps. In the book *My Clan Against the World* the authors state that most of what was learned about Somali culture was learned on the ground and that many of the troops as well as their leaders struggled with understanding the true nature of the society and its impact on operations.³⁹ American leaders often responded with ethnocentrism, impatience and indifference which created conditions that negatively impacted operational effectiveness. Training leaders on languages directly tied to regional awareness would facilitate greater understanding and tolerance. Less than two years after pulling out of Somalia the Army faced new challenges in the former Yugoslavia.

After years of ethnic cleansing, genocide, and forced repatriation of ethnic population, President Clinton decided to commit a reluctant the U.S. military, including Army troops, to

³⁷ Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 265. Baumann, Yates and Washington, *My Clan Against*, 194, 201-202, 206-207.

³⁸ Baumann, Yates and Washington, *My Clan Against*, 201-202.

³⁹ Ibid., 201-202 & 206-207.

respond to an ambiguous situation Bosnia in 1995.⁴⁰ They deployed as part of a NATO effort to stop violence and provide stability to the region under the Dayton Accords.⁴¹ Sectarian fighting had created huge chasms within the Bosnian society. Army leaders from the outset were challenged to understand the nature of the mission and the people involved and operate in a multinational environment.⁴² The ambiguity of the mission, a common trait in MOOTWs, was challenging and was one the Army's leadership had resisted participating in for over three years.⁴³ International politics played a role in further complicating the mission.

International political realities necessitated keeping Admiral Smith, a career fighter pilot, as the International Force Observers (IFOR) commander. This dynamic was directly related to French objections to creating another organization in the region under a U.S. command and control structure (C2). ADM Smith by nature of his experience was probably even less equipped experientially and conceptually to lead the mission than his counterparts in the Army who had served in Vietnam. Multinational politics affected the military C2 structure for the Bosnia campaign, which in turn had effects on ground operations.⁴⁴ The human dynamics of the region challenged the IFOR team.

The complexity of the region seemed to elude the IFOR planners and their leadership. The lack of appreciation of the nonmilitary aspects of the mission within the Dayton Accords mandate hindered the effectiveness of a whole of government approach within what was in essence a typical JIIM command.⁴⁵ Working in a JIIM environment requires effective

⁴⁰ Robert F. Baumann, George W. Gawrych, and Walter E. Kretchik, *Armed Peacekeepers in Bosnia*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press 2004), 37-38.

⁴¹ Ibid., 37. Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 251-252, 265.

⁴² Richard Holbrooke, *To End A War*, (New York: Modern Library, 1998), 325. Baumann, Gawrych, and Kretchik, *Armed Peacekeepers*, 37.

⁴³ Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 283-285. Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 251-252.

⁴⁴ Holbrooke, *To End A War*, 328. Baumann, Gawrych, and Kretchik, *Armed Peacekeepers*, 84.

⁴⁵ Baumann, Gawrych, and Kretchik, *Armed Peacekeepers*, 98. Holbrooke, *To End A War*, 328.

communication between from diverse agencies and national backgrounds in order to execute operations effectively. IFOR made mistakes by sending the wrong messages to the Serbians during the initial phases the Dayton Accords implementation. Belligerents continued to work against their enemies when they should have been complying with the signed peace agreement.⁴⁶ The intercultural dynamics were only a portion of the issues IFOR faced.

The challenges faced by U.S. troops in the Balkans were numerous. Among the more prominent of these were those directly related to cultural understanding and dealing with the ethnically disparate groups in the former Yugoslavia.⁴⁷ A force trained in operational culture skills might have taken time to step back and get a better understanding by looking at the region from a historical perspective. The complexity of conducting operations in a foreign country in multiplied when you operate with other nations and non-governmental organizations (NGO).

A multinational operation requires leaders to know not only the enemy inside and out, but also how their own culture impacts its allies and partners.⁴⁸ To be a good teammate the U.S. needs to understand those other national cultures within the multinational coalition to maximize operational effects.⁴⁹ Training our leaders in one of the recognized strategic languages and the associated region can assist in bridging cultures to create real communication. These capabilities would enable the U.S. Army to staff multinational coalitions with properly trained personnel who can communicate effectively, bridge cultural barriers, and quickly identify the essence of regional tensions impacting the mission. Army experiences in Vietnam, Somalia, and Bosnia provided key

⁴⁶ Ibid., 328-329. Baumann, Gawrych, and Kretchik, *Armed Peacekeepers*, 100.

⁴⁷ . Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, ii.

⁴⁸ Patrick Roberson, LTC, U.S. Army Special Forces, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, March 25, 2011. Derek Basinger, LTC Canadian Armed Forces, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth Kansas, March 25, 2011. Both officers interview had extensive experience in IFOR operations and both have combat experience in either Iraq or Afghanistan from which to draw their similar conclusions.

⁴⁹ Roberson, interview by author. Basinger, interview by author.

lessons on conducting operations among foreign populations that were, for the most part, not inculcated into institutional and unit training.

The Army entered the 21st Century with a depth of experience to formulate a comprehensive institutional understanding of the challenges of modern MOOTW. This is particularly true when it came to dealing with civilians while conducting operations as evidenced in Somalia and Haiti operations. The institution did not incorporate those lessons learned into a strategy for ensuring that leaders and troops within the conventional force could effectively deal with civilians on the battlefield. Formal education and training on operational culture skills can provide leaders with the intellectual skill sets that are essential to future operations.

The institutional Army must change the way it prepares leaders for future conflicts by comprehensively incorporating the teaching operational culture skills into leader education and unit training⁵⁰. The ghosts of Vietnam and Somalia were brought to the surface during operations in the Balkans, but the Army as an institution never made a concentrated effort to exorcise these demons by codifying lessons learned into widely known doctrine or PME to develop leaders. As a result PME continued to support the Army's training view that MOOTW was not as important as MCO.⁵¹ The Army needs a comprehensive approach to creating a force that is able to exploit human dimension of operations.

Development of an Army wide program that requires conventional force leaders to deal effectively with local populations in ambiguous constructs will prepare tomorrow's leaders for the challenges they are most likely to face. This is accomplished only in a career oriented construct that educates them in during PME courses, incorporates distance learning self-study regimens and provides practical experience opportunities within unit training scenarios. The Department of

⁵⁰ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, ii.

⁵¹ Halberstam, *War in A Time*, 511.

Defense is attuned to the need for adjusting the way the U.S. prepares its forces culturally for the next conflict.

Department of Defense Policies and Initiatives

Although not a new problem, the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted the need for operational forces to improve their foreign language and cultural awareness capabilities. The Department recognized this and its Strategic Planning Guidance for 2006-2011, issued in March 2004, one year after the commencement of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (the Second Gulf War), called for a comprehensive roadmap for “language transformation.

--Defense Transformation Road Map

Over the past several years the Department of Defense (DOD) has placed heightened emphasis on each service establishing programs that provide them with increased internal capabilities for cultural, language, and geographic region expertise. The driving document for DOD action at the time was the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap (DTRM). It was published after DOD conducted multiple reviews and studies on culture language and regional expertise. The DTRM points to the importance of operational culture skills.

The first goal listed in the publication was to create foundational language and regional expertise highlighting that those skills at the time were now essential war fighting skills. The Roadmap emphasized the urgency of the need by stating: “Post 9/11 military operations reinforce the reality that the Department of Defense needs a significantly improved organic capability in emerging languages and dialects, a greater competence and regional area skills in those languages and dialects, and a surge capability to rapidly expand its language capabilities on short notice.”⁵² The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan immeasurably influenced the DTRM.

Leaders beginning early in OIF discovered they had capability gaps particularly in the ability to communicate with Iraqis using the local language. The capability gap in language

⁵² U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*, (Washington D.C.: DOD, January, 2005), 1.

provided the catalyst for a 2005 DOD wide effort to transform the separate services.⁵³ Leaders coming out of Iraq understood the importance of language and that it was no longer a superfluous luxury. COL Peter Mansoor (Ret.), commander 1-1 AD, OIF I/II 2003-2004 addressed the importance of language and its' relevance to future operations. "In building an Army for the twenty-first century, we must assign a high priority to improving our language capabilities, for in the contemporary operating environment; such skills are as much a part of a soldier's kit as a rifle and a helmet."⁵⁴ The DTRM began the process of changing the different military branches approach to foreign language learning and the other components of operational culture skills.

Policy makers in DOD stressed the critical nature of improving separate service capabilities in cultural dynamics, language, and regional expertise since publishing of the *2005 Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*. In DOD's *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)*, the department placed emphasis on establishing dynamic partnerships and building partner capacity inside and outside the military. It used lessons learned from the then current conflicts as proof that the department desired better language and cultural awareness programs within the services. Additionally the 2006 QDR articulated how the use of language and culture could shape the future leader decision making: "Considerably improved language and cultural awareness to develop a greater understanding of emerging powers and how they may approach strategic choices."⁵⁵ DOD level emphasis in producing policy directives on language, culture and regional studies set the conditions for progress across the services in the formulation of nested policies and strategies.

⁵³ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁴ Peter Mansoor, R., COL (Ret.), *Baghdad at Sunrise*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington D.C.: OSD, January 2006), VI, 14, 31. The QDR is an internal DOD review, is conducted by the department every four years and the 2006 version places considerable weight to the importance of the services to improve their capabilities in the areas of cultural, regional, and language.

DOD actions provided a catalyst for intra-governmental action on cultural and regional education. In June 2007 DOD conducted a Summit on *Regional and Cultural Expertise: Building a DoD Framework to Meet National Defense Challenges*. A white paper produced from the summit served as the cultural and regional corollary to the language focused documents previously released by DOD. The document indicates that U.S. interagency operations and global partners are interconnected in facilitating future operational success. The summit white paper states, “Our vision is robust national defense strengthened through the application of regional and cultural competencies as integral capabilities of the 21st Century Total Force.”⁵⁶ DOD continued to emphasize the necessity of developing operational culture skills in *the 2010 QDR*.

The 2010 QDR supports ongoing programs that build operational culture capacities for deployed personnel to operate with global partners. *The 2010 QDR* recognizes that the possession of the skills mentioned above are not only important in current counter-insurgency operations (COIN) operations, but in counter terrorism, stability and peace keeping operations. In July 2009 the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (VCJCS) in a letter for the chairman directed the services directed to ensure that culture language and regional expertise were an integral component of service and joint officer primary military education. The memo called them “key war fighting enablers in traditional and irregular warfare.”⁵⁷ The Army must address how to prepare its leaders to give them these critical operational culture skills.

The 2010 QDR states that a culturally empowered force is necessary to impact others, allies and adversaries alike, through culturally appropriate messages.⁵⁸ It recognizes the challenge of building a force that is regionally aware, culturally educated and with the requisite language

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, Summit White Paper, *Regional and Cultural Expertise: Building a DoD Framework to Meet National Defense Challenges*, (Washington D.C.: DOD, June 2007), 4.

⁵⁷ Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *OFFICER PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION POLICY (OPMEP)*, (Washington D.C.: CJCSI, July 2009), A-2 to A-3.

⁵⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, *2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington D.C.: OSD, February 2010), VIII, 25, 26

training. The 2010 QDR directs the regional alignment of GPF units as the drawn down from current operations progresses and it provides guidance on increasing regional knowledge along with language acquisition.⁵⁹ The two recent QDRs, the DTRM and other DOD documents point to the need for operational culture skills pointing out to each service the need prioritize according to service requirements.

The 2010 QDR and the *Defense Transformation Roadmap* provide a good direction for the services to implement foundational changes to creating operational culture skills in their respective branches. The separate services each have their own approach compliance to DOD policies. The Air Force and Navy's emphasis is on building specialists and some leaders for in depth language and specific cultural education.⁶⁰ The U.S. Army and Marine Corps (USMC) are approaching DOD instructions for generating operational culture skills within their respective services based on their unique "among the people" ground perspective.⁶¹ The Army has MOS specialties that focuses on language and cultural issues, but out of necessity has a pressing need to migrate many of those skills into the conventional force.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 29-30.

⁶⁰ U.S. Air Force, *Air Force Region and Cultural Flight Plan*, (Washington D.C.: HQAF, 2009), 1-6. U.S. Navy, *U. S. Navy Language Skills, Regional Expertise and Cultural Awareness Strategy*, (Washington D.C.: Chief of Naval Operations, 2008), 7. The Air Force and the Navy because of their force structure and operational missions coupled with a lower potential for interaction with foreign populaces have less of a requirement for the bulk of their service to possess cross cultural competencies, regional awareness and language proficiency. Both of these services are concentrating on developing cross culturally aware forces. Their goals are to have limited personnel within their structures trained in language and regional issues

⁶¹ U.S. Marine Corps, *A Concept for Countering Irregular Threats: A Comprehensive Approach*, (Quantico, Virginia: Combat Developments Command, 2006), 27. U.S. Marine Corps, *Tactical Culture for MEF: Cultural Intelligence RIP Checklist OIF III*, (Monterey, California: Naval Post Graduate School, 2005), 1-17. U.S. Marine Corps, *Tactical Culture for MEF: Cultural Intelligence RIP Checklist OIF III: Iraqi Muslim Funerals and Memorials*, (Monterey, California: Naval Post Graduate School, 2005), 1-4. U.S. Marine Corps, *Tactical Culture for MEF: Iraqi Driving: Cultural Considerations for Rural/Urban Convoy Operations in OIF III*, (Monterey, California: Naval Post Graduate School, 2005), 1-8. Marine Corps, *Marines and Irregular Warfare*, v. The Army and Marine Corps need personnel in organizations at all levels that possess basic cross cultural skills because of their boots on the ground role, must deploy with a force that possess a solid knowledge of the human dimension of war. They must understand the regional dynamics they are operating in since they are more likely to have more frequent encounters with the local populace.

Language is the primary method for transmitting information between people, cultures and nations. Language as defined by Merriam Webster is: “a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings”.⁶² Language is a learned skill. Properly exploiting language and language enabling tools like: interpreters, hand held phrase machines, phrase books etc., are also learned skills. It is crucial that leaders receive language training to make them more effective communicators.

It is essential for leaders to understand and communicate with the native culture within their operational environment. Without such an understanding they cannot succeed on the modern battlefield. Culture as defined by Webster is “the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations and includes the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time.”⁶³ In other words culture is how a people sees themselves and how they live their daily lives. Being able to operate cross culturally is a key factor in future mission accomplishment.

U.S. Army Lessons Learned, Policies, Initiatives and Implementation Strategy

... Partnering is how we operate. Some civilian casualties result from a misunderstanding or ignorance of local customs and behaviors. No individuals are more attuned to the Afghan culture than our Afghan partners. Accordingly, it is essential that all operations be partnered with an ANSF unit and that our Afghan partners be part of the planning and execution phases. Their presence will ensure

⁶² Merriam Webster, *Merriam Webster Dictionary 2011*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/language, (accessed February 2, 2011).

⁶³ Merriam Webster, *Merriam Webster Dictionary 2011*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture, (accessed February 1, 2011).

greater situational awareness. It will also serve to alleviate anxiety on the part of the local population and build confidence in Afghan security forces. I expect every operation and patrol to be partnered.

General David Petraeus

The U.S. Army's approach to generating operational culture skills within the force, prior to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), was primarily geared toward creating capabilities in specific military occupational specialties (MOS). These specialists worked with foreign nationals when deployed on operations as designed for their specific MOS or officer career field. They were trained in languages and often educated on regional issues in order to execute their military duties within foreign populations. The 2001 conventional Army did not align many resources or have programs that educate its leaders in operational culture skills.⁶⁴ The training of linguists, foreign area officers, civil affairs specialists and Special Forces operators prepared those specialized forces for their specific military operational specialty. This training created capabilities that enabled them to operate among local populations easier than their conventional force counterparts.

The Army's GPF must possess some of those same operational culture skills currently resident in the Special Forces, civil affairs, and linguistic career fields if it is to operate effectively overseas.⁶⁵ The Army of today and tomorrow faces complex global challenges. Conflict is an inherent part of that future.⁶⁶ Senior leaders within the U.S. military establishment predict a future where the U.S. will conduct a wide range of operations from the very benign to all-out war,

⁶⁴ Gregory C. Meyer, *Comprehensive Regional Expertise in the United States Army*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph, 2007), 10.

⁶⁵ Gates, *U.S. Military Academy Speech*, 1. U.S Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Transcript-Hearing to Consider the Nomination of General Martin Dempsey, USA for Reappointment to the Grade of General and to be Chief of Staff, United States Army*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Senate, March 3, 2011), 9. DOD, *National Military Strategy*, 6, 10-14, and 20. The need for an Army that can work as a partner in coalitions, execute stability and security missions in other countries and build capability in other militaries points to the need for a GPF empowered with operational culture skills.

⁶⁶ DOD, *National Military Strategy*, 1.

potentially simultaneously.⁶⁷ Every Soldier needs a level of cross-cultural training and GPF leaders need special training in operational culture skills since they are the ones who will conduct engagements with local leaders in overseas operations.

Training everyone in basic cross cultural dynamics sets the conditions for building a broad foundation of Army-wide cultural capabilities. Author Allison Abbe states, “All Soldiers and leaders need some amount of cross-cultural competence and the Army may not be able to rely on a selection approach.”⁶⁸ The GPF requires more than just a few leaders capable of dealing with foreign cultures; it is a basic leader skill. Instituting cross cultural communication classes during pre-commissioning or in initial entry training for all Soldiers and leaders will provide them with skills necessary to operate in future deployments. Additionally, integrating cross-cultural scenarios into unit training, and predeployment training provides efficient methods to sustain and empower the force with the tenants of cross cultural interaction. It is critical that the Army create leaders who are trained in intercultural communication and regional awareness prior to any future deployment.

The *2009 Army Leader Development Strategy* (ALDS) advocates that the Army develop leaders who can operate with a global perspective.⁶⁹ Leaders must display cultural astuteness to create opportunities of advantage in an intercultural environment. Additionally the ALDS outlines the requirement for Army leaders to possess greater language skills and cultural capabilities so they can lead in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational (JIIM) environment.

⁶⁷ U.S. Army, *Army Posture Statement 2010*, (Washington D.C.: HQDA, 2010), 2-3. DOD, *National Military Strategy*, 2-4.

⁶⁸ Allison Abbe, *Building Cultural Capability for Full Spectrum Operations*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Sciences, January, 2008), 35.

⁶⁹ U.S. Army, *The Army Leader and Development Strategy* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Land Warfare, November, 2009), 4-5. The ALDS provides a good handrail for the Army to institute career long educational programs that develop the institution’s leaders into the intellectually capable, culturally savvy and regionally aware force needed for future operations.

Assigning every GPF leader a language and region of study early on in their career can create a stable of JIIM-savvy leaders.

Assigning a language and a region of study prior to a leader's arrival at their initial entry PME would provide the necessary direction for a leader's formal training and guide their self-development efforts. These efforts could be reinforced during operational assignments by their supervisors. Some leaders will have an inherent ability to learn languages. The key is to give everyone a basic level of skill and give a smaller percentage of the population increased training based on individual aptitude and desire. Creating language capable leaders requires maximizing leader training time.

It is economically imperative that the Army make the most of time available for leader training. The establishment of baseline standards for each rank for language proficiency and regional knowledge can provide the Army with increasing levels of proficiency among its' GPF leaders as their career progresses.⁷⁰ One option is for the Army to take leaders who are waiting for assignment to PME, like newly commissioned officers and warrant officers and send them to short duration immersion programs or assigning them for temporary duty at one of the existing language detachments.⁷¹ Additionally, during portions of the ARFORGEN process leader in all cohorts could be identified for concentrated language study at one of the language detachments. The Army could facilitate the implementation of the ACFLS by expanding the scope of responsibilities and number of languages taught at these detachments. Regardless of the program specifics it must incorporate a career based approach.

The ALDS confirms the importance of lifelong learning and the need to methodically train and educate future Army GPF leaders. The ALDS also points to the necessity for continued

⁷⁰ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 33-61.

⁷¹ Eric Stanhagen, COL(R) U.S. Special Forces and TRADOC Subject Matter Expert for implementation of ACFLS, Interview with the author, by phone 8 April 2011. The Army currently operates foreign language detachments to support current operations at several installations.

intellectual growth of junior leaders. “They will gain an increasingly more sophisticated understanding of geo-politics, culture, language, and information operations and in the process, recognize and manage the strategic impact that they and their units can influence. We want our junior level leaders to anticipate transitions within tactical operations and act upon opportunities.”⁷² Integration of these subjects into existing leader PME courses is a one way to meet the spirit of the ALDS. During PME seminars, instructors could form discrete geographically focused small groups for group projects. Students could then be evaluated based on individual contributions and group presentations to create exponential effects in learning.

The Army Culture and Language Program (CULP) served as the primary guiding document for culture and language acquisition in the GPF up until the December 27, 2010. It tied the importance of culture and language to operations.⁷³ The CULP served as the first comprehensive policy document addressing the necessity for cultural, language and regional skills within the GPF. Additionally the CULP set the foundation for future implementation strategies.

The CULP established DA task, conditions, and standards for individual leaders of all ranks, both in and out of uniform, in the areas of culture and language. The CULP provided foundational elements for the 2009 Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy (ACFLS). The CULP states that the understanding of a different culture, having the ability to communicate and possessing a level of regional awareness are fundamentally linked to military operations.⁷⁴ It

⁷² Army, *Leader and Development Strategy*, 8 and 12. The 2009 ALDS points out the direction, but an overall effective approach that takes into account the cost of generating capability within the GPF is necessary. Including operational culture skills in PME while necessary may and probably will cause something else also deemed necessary to get reduced or cut. Where possible educating operational culture skills into existing plans of instruction can generate some gains, however, in order to truly create the capabilities desired in the ALDS restructuring methods of instruction need review.

⁷³ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, ii. Roberson, interview by author. Basinger, interview by author.

⁷⁴ U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations, *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: DOD’s Challenge in*

served as the cornerstone for related U.S. Army policies until the recent release of 2009 ACFLS and the December 2010 *Department of the Army Execution Order (DA EXORD) for Army Culture and Language Strategy Execution*.⁷⁵

The ACFLS and recent DA EXORD on implementing the ACFLS recognize that conventional leaders and Soldiers today are not adequately equipped with the necessary operational culture skills.⁷⁶ Both documents point to the importance of having a GPF that is enable to exploit the local human dimension of operations. The ACFLS provides the broad vision whereas the DA EXORD is an initial attempt to pursue the ways and means to achieving such a daunting educational mandate. The ACFLS and the DA EXORD for turning the strategy of the ACFLS into reality recognizes the necessity to make systematic changes to the Army's education structure in order to create operational culture skills within the GPF.⁷⁷

The DA EXORD on the ACFLS provides a solid direction for the Army to develop practical methods for taking the strategy in the ACFLS and turning it into a long term Army commitment of resources. For ease of understanding and analysis the operational culture skills of culture, language and regional awareness are discussed separately within the examples of OEF and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) using the ACFLS as a guide. The ACFLS lays an azimuth for the Army to create a comprehensive career long program that teaches culture, language, and regional studies for all Army leaders. The DA EXORD on the ACFLS provides a number of

Today's Educational Environment, (Washington D.C.: Committee Press, November 2008), 13. Roberson, interview by author.

⁷⁵ U.S. Army, *DA EXORD for Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, (Washington D.C.: HQDA, 2010), 3-5. The Army identified that recent combat experiences point to the need for a greater language and culture capabilities within the GPF. The last part of the mission statement on the EXORD reads: "Develop policies and programs to institutionalize cultural knowledge and foreign language proficiency throughout the Army."

⁷⁶ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 1-5. Army, *DA EXORD for Culture*, 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

specific way points.⁷⁸ Cross-cultural competencies within the operational culture skill set help leaders understand cultures in general and facilitate effective communication between cultures.

The ACFLS links closely cross-culture competence and regional competence as important components of creating capabilities in personnel to effectively operate in foreign culture. The failure to properly understand the dynamics of culture seriously hampered missions in Somalia, Bosnia and most recently in OIF.⁷⁹ The ACFLS recognizes culture fundamentals that assist individuals in seeing themselves as: “norms, values, beliefs behaviors and other factors that help describe a culture.”⁸⁰ The ACFLS clearly ties cross cultural dynamics and regional competence as both essential components for successful mission accomplishment in the 21st Century. Army operations are inherently conducted in and around foreign culture and this can prove problematic to the unprepared.

The cultural dynamics of operations is a critical component to future mission accomplishment. Because in future conflicts the U.S. most likely will be a member within a coalition of partner nations, it is essential that GPF leaders understand the human dimension of their operational environment.⁸¹ Incidents arising from cultural mistakes can cause a rift in relations between the U.S. military, its allies, and or partner nations for that operation. Any friction between coalition members affects mission accomplishment by making it more difficult or even impossible to execute a combined effort. A force enabled with the proper mix of cultural, language, and local human dynamics skills can mitigate, forestall, or prevent such incidents from

⁷⁸ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 1-5.

⁷⁹ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, ii. Army, *DA EXORD for Culture*, 3.

⁸⁰ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 28-29.

⁸¹ White House, *National Security Strategy*, 1-10. DOD, *National Military Strategy*, 1, 6.

arising.⁸² The ability to speak or communicate using languages other than English is an important tool for any GPF leader.

Language ability is broken down by *the 2009 Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy* into two primary components. The first is foreign language competence where the Soldier possesses the ability to demonstrate language proficiency in an Interagency Language Roundtable (IRL) construct that addresses speaking, listening, and writing. Leaders are expected to gain proficiency through structured instruction, institutional training, self-development programs, distance learning modules, or through operational experience. Native speakers of a foreign language are typically considered language competent. The second component of language ability within the ACFLS is the ability to use language tools. Language tools listed include interpreters, language translation devices, accessible training resources and non-verbal forms of language communication like symbols, pictures, and music.⁸³ Currently across the globe GPF leaders are exploiting language tools and in some cases even speaking foreign languages to accomplish their missions.

The U.S. already operates in a multiple operational environments that require GPF leaders to utilize language skills. Language is seen by many operationally as the vehicle for transmitting ideas and intent between people to facilitate action.⁸⁴ The use of another culture's

⁸² Joan R. Rentsch, Allison Gunderson, Gerald F. Goodwin and Allison Abbe, *Conceptualizing Multicultural Perspective Taking Skills*, (Arlington, Virginia: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, November 2007), 11. Roberson, interview by author. Basinger, interview by author.

⁸³ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 63.

⁸⁴ Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through Dangers of Leading*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 61. The authors write about Lee Kuan Yew, the first post-colonial Prime Minister of Singapore, who during his first three years in office learned or improved his capability to speak the countries two dominate local languages. His language proficiency facilitated his success because he was able to conduct discourse and influence separate stakeholders in their own languages getting them to embrace capitalism at a time when countries in similar situations, to their detriment, did not. Basinger, interview by author. LTC Basinger as a leader in the Canadian Army Officer must attain certain levels of language proficiency in French because it is one of Canada's two official languages. He outlined multiple examples where he was more effective by speaking

language is a way to show respect and build trust. “If you at least try to speak their language it shows you care and builds trust.”⁸⁵ Recent and current operations signal the need for dramatic changes at the Army’s training and education system when it comes to language.⁸⁶ Major Kenneth Carey, Brigade S2 for 1st BCT, 1st CAV in OIF I/II highlighted the underlying necessity of language abilities. “If all our soldiers spoke Arabic we could have resolved Iraq in two years. My point is that language is obviously an obstacle to our success, much more so than cultural. Even a fundamental understanding of the language would have had a significant impact on our ability to operate.”⁸⁷ The Army’s lack of language capability in the GPF is in part impacted by American lack of language study in primary and secondary school curriculums.⁸⁸

The primary reason for America’s lack of language capability is directly tied to the lack of foreign language study in public and private schooling. The preponderance of American students do not receive extensive instruction in a foreign language. “The nation, as a whole, lacks an educational infrastructure that can produce the dramatically increased numbers of highly proficient individuals needed, not only for national security, but also for economic competitiveness. Moreover, the nation’s educational system has yet to fully recognize the importance of foreign language and cultural studies in our increasingly globalized world.”⁸⁹

French to French speaking Canadian soldiers than his peers who interacted with French Canadian troops in English.

⁸⁵ Roberson, interview by author. LTC Roberson as a Special Forces officer had to learn one language for his branch certification. Because of his assignment history he has had to learn a number of additional languages. He has seen first-hand in Bosnia, Eastern Europe and Iraq the positive effects of speaking the local language even if the one speaking is not proficient because simply trying to speak the local language shows respect.

⁸⁶ DOD, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*, 3.

⁸⁷ Donald P. Wright, and Timothy R. Reese, *On Point II, Transition to the New Campaign, The United States Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM May 2003-January 2005*, (Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 221. House of Representatives, *Building Language Skills*, 9.

⁸⁸ House of Representatives, *Building Language Skills*, 55.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 55. The public education system in the U.S. does not facilitate the learning of foreign languages. This fails to meet the needs of the nation for its public servants both in and out of uniform. In a November 2008 House Armed Services Committee report on the building language capability within DOD

Having a population that predominately only speaks English has negative serious implications for the U.S. inside and outside the military.

The strategic imbalance inherent in the gap in foreign language abilities of American students compared to the English abilities of those from other countries is remarkable. This gap is evident in both business and government.⁹⁰ DOD is partnering with specific universities, called language flagship universities to facilitate the acquisition of languages seen as critical to U.S. interests.⁹¹ The Army as it builds its internal language capability could use language proficient and language enabled personnel to volunteer with local K-12 school language programs near Army installations. This would help build more capability in the long term. The requirement for the Army to operate globally points to the urgency for the institution to begin training GPF leaders on operational culture skills now in order to develop capabilities over the long term because of time constraints it should not rely on the agility of its forces to adapt as it did in Iraq.

Dynamic world events do not afford the U.S. Army the luxury of drastically transforming forces during combat operations as it did from 2003-2006. Predeployment training is often just in time training that may or may not be adequate enough to accomplish the mission during.⁹² Army leaders must come to future operations ready to exploit language and maximize available language tools or risk the consequences. Language and the ability to effectively communicate outside American military culture with partners and other stakeholders play a critical role in

the panel acknowledged that the issues faced by the military, with respect to foreign language education, apply to the entire country. This failure to educate the nation's youth in foreign languages is seen as a national security issue.

⁹⁰ Dana Bourgie, *Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. House of Representatives, September 23 2008), 2.

⁹¹ House of Representatives, *Building Language Skills*, 57-58.

⁹² Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 11. Pryer, "Controlling the Beast Within", 8.

future operations.⁹³ Tied closely to competent language usage is the understanding of the region in which that language is spoken.

The complex global security environment highlights the necessity for creating regionally oriented leaders in the conventional force. It is foreseeable that future enemies of the U.S. will attempt to disrupt or take advantage of political instability for their own ends. The presence, reach, and capability of U.S. military forces across the globe, working with like-minded partners, will continue to be called upon to protect our national interests.⁹⁴ Educationally aligning GPF leaders with a region of focus along geographic combatant command (GCC) lines allows those leaders to look outside American dominated culture to assist them in understanding motives of potential international allies or partners as well as the enemy facilitating success in future operations.

The Army should assign one of the world's regions to every GPF leader as their region for career study. Regional dynamics play a role in deployment of forces and use of forces once deployed as it did in the Balkans. Understanding the complex dynamics within a geographic region is no longer the sole purview of MOS specific roles like linguists, foreign area officers, Special Forces operators, civil affairs specialists, or intelligence analysts. The ability to understand one region assists leaders when sent on operations in a GCC different than the one they are assigned to study. "It establishes within the leader a baseline and teaches them to look at the situation differently preventing mirror imaging."⁹⁵ Regional understanding is a necessary

⁹³ DOD, *National Military Strategy*, 16. DOD, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*, 3. Roberson, interview by author. Basinger, interview by author.

⁹⁴ U.S. Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operating Environment 2010*, (Norfolk, Virginia: JFCOM, 2010), 4. Army, *Culture and Foreign Language*, ii. Army, *DA EXORD for Culture*, 5.

⁹⁵ Roberson, interview with author. Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 10-11. William D. Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for U.S. Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle East Countries*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Combat Studies Institute Press 2006), 58. Mirror imaging is where a person who is operating in a foreign culture who uses their culture as a frame of reference for the actions and attitudes of that foreign culture, people and enemy.

component of all military operations overseas and requires some level of basic understanding resident within leaders at all levels in the GPF which makes the assignment of a region for life long study an effective policy.⁹⁶ By creating a comprehensive program that integrates the learning of: cross cultural skills, a foreign language, GCC regional study into a lifelong learning process the Army can generate the operational culture skills required to facilitate operational success.

The Army can develop conventional force leaders who become, in the words of the Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy, “regionally competent” in one region of the globe. Creating an Army of regional experts is expensive and unrealistic, but it is possible that by taking the long view the Army can build GPF leaders who are able to exploit operational culture. There are linkages to that tie regional understanding, to language and culture proficiency together for lifelong learning.⁹⁷ There is an element of synergy that can be gained through a comprehensive approach to build these operational culture skills. Learning and understanding the dynamics of a region, its culture, and language takes time. Current U.S. Army operations provide concrete examples of just how important operational culture skills are now and in the future.

A study of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq showcase need for a culturally trained regionally aware and language enabled GPF.⁹⁸ In Afghanistan the initial campaign was executed by special operations forces who by the nature of their profession integrated culture dynamics and foreign language use into their operations not by conventional forces.⁹⁹ The operational

⁹⁶ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 10-11, 31. DOD, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*, 3. Abbe, *Building Cultural Capability*, 10. Department of Defense, *Regional and Cultural Expertise: Building a DoD Framework to Meet National Defense Challenges*, (Washington D.C.: DOD, 2007) 4.

⁹⁷ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 10-12.

⁹⁸ Wunderle, *Through the Lens*, 66.

⁹⁹ Charles Briscoe, Richard L. Kiper, James A. Schroder, and Kalev I. Sepp, *Weapon of Choice*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2003), xv, 94-95. Donald P. Wright, *A Different Kind of War The United States Army in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM October 2001-September 2005*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 27, 71, 74-75. Roberson, interview by author.

conditions in Afghanistan were markedly different from Iraq in many areas, however, the lack of cultural awareness, deficient language ability and poor regional understanding within the conventional force challenged initial GPF leaders and their units in Afghanistan just as it had their coalition counterparts in Iraq.¹⁰⁰

The lack of cultural savvy demonstrated by the average GPF leader prompted changes to the way deploying units were trained at the CTCs.¹⁰¹ The culture and the importance of the local populace were major points made by GEN Stanley McChrystal, who assumed command of all U.S. and NATO forces operating in Afghanistan in the 2009. General McChrystal in a training guidance memorandum for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A) outlined the importance of cultural factors and the local populace multiple times. The second subsection of his memo titled “The People are the Prize” highlights the emphasis.¹⁰² Cultural challenges similar to those that faced the American GPF during troop surges in Afghanistan require a dramatic change in the way the Army prepares leaders for overseas operations.

The Army must be able to enter into future conflicts aware of cultural nuances, how those nuances impact operations in order to gain a decided advantage upfront.¹⁰³ America needs an Army that can prosecute operations with Soldiers and leaders who can work effectively without creating significant international incidents because of cultural ignorance. The 2007 DOD document produced as a result of a summit on regional and cultural capabilities speaks to the

¹⁰⁰ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 24.

¹⁰¹ Wunderle, *Through the Lens*, 57-59, and 62.

¹⁰² U.S. Forces Afghanistan/International Security Assistance Force, *COMISAF/USFOR-A Counterinsurgency (COIN) Training Guidance*, (Kabul, Afghanistan: HQISAF, November 10 2009), 1-4. When GEN McChrystal took over command for NATO operations in Afghanistan as the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander he focused the command on a more population centric counter-insurgency approach. His background as a special operations officer and recognizing the progress made in Iraq after the “surge” were probably major influencing factors on how he approached the Afghan mission.

¹⁰³ Wunderle, *Through the Lens*, 61.

criticality of having a culturally enabled force of leaders and executors for future engagement globally.¹⁰⁴ Exploiting cultural aspects early assists in shaping the operational environment to assist in gaining and maintaining the initiative in nearly any operational environment.

Afghanistan is a country that has confounded outsiders for years.

Afghanistan as a country does not possess a single identity or unifying culture. There are competing tribal and sub tribal factions each with a separate agenda. Historically, the one unifying element of the area's culture was how the various groups came together to fight a common enemy.¹⁰⁵ Early in Operation Enduring Freedom, conventional leaders and Soldiers were sent on missions that they were not prepared for intellectually or culturally.¹⁰⁶ A more culturally aware force trained to appreciate the cultural dynamics might have been able to better deal with the Afghan operational environment. Culturally enabled troops are the key to creating opportunities that affect the average Afghani today and critical to the ability to impact a local populace in some distant land for the deployments of tomorrow.¹⁰⁷ The Army's changes to predeployment training address the need for training a unit toward a specific mission, but the general lessons learned are not codified in institutions programs to address the systemic lack of operational culture skills in GPF leaders.

The Army currently provides cultural training and language tools necessary for deploying units to successfully deal with local populations. Much of this training on operational cultural

¹⁰⁴ DOD, *Regional and Cultural Expertise*, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁷ Abbe, *Building Cultural Capability*, 13. Wunderle, *Through the Lens*, 59. Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 31. The ability to understand a region is intertwined with understanding the local culture. The ACFLS clearly links those two sub skills of operational culture. Understanding a local language is clearly linked with culture. It is not unreasonable to make a common sense conclusion that regional competence is tied to language. Combining all three components of operational culture into a program of life long learn for GPF leaders creates a triad of mutually supporting efforts.

skills is conducted just in time as part of a structured predeployment training process.¹⁰⁸

However, there is no systemic solution to creating operational culture skills in conventional force leaders. The key is to enable the leaders of the Army early on in their careers with broad cultural tools that bridge common cross cultural divides. In future operations, rapidly deploying units may not have the luxury of extensive predeployment cultural awareness and language training. The Army needs to institutionalize related cultural, language and regional awareness training in leader primary military education (PME) in order to develop a conventional force ready for future operations.

The ability to develop a basic understanding of the complex web of regional and local relationship dynamics tied with language exploitation enables GPF leaders to accomplish missions that require engagement of local leaders and citizens. Acquiring these abilities takes time and requires a long term approach to build capability. The emphasis on cultural and language training received today by the GPF Soldier prior to and during their overseas deployments focused on a particular operational environment within a country or province meets the current need but it may not be enough in future contingency or HADR operations.¹⁰⁹ The Iraq War differed from that in Afghanistan in that the bulk of the initial deployed force was composed of GPF units fighting a conventional nation on nation war.

The invasion of Iraq was primarily executed by GPF units in a MCO type operation called Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Invasion forces were not afforded broad based cultural or language training. They did not comprehend the necessity of understanding human terrain for the planned area of operations like the special operators that facilitated the ousting of the Taliban

¹⁰⁸ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 20. Cone, “The Changing National Training Center”, 70, 73-74. Wunderle, *Through the Lens*, 62.

¹⁰⁹ Wunderle, *Through the Lens*, 62-63. Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 20-22. If the unit is a DEF force culture and language training during ARFORGEN cycles that are focused on a country or region of intended deployment. CEF forces that are apportioned to a COCOM focus on the region much the same way as the

from power.¹¹⁰ The Army as a whole did not appreciate the cultural aspects of the human terrain.¹¹¹ Additionally, America invaded Iraq in 2003 with significantly fewer troops than it did in 1991.¹¹²

The second U.S. war with Iraq was waged with a fraction of the numbers the first.¹¹³ This disparity in force structure raised considerable concern in and out of the U.S. Army. The initial taking down of the Iraqi Government and occupation of the country went fairly smooth the troop numbers were not sufficient to conduct post conflict operations. American civilian leadership underestimated the numbers of troops required to keep Iraq stable after the transition from major combat operations to stability and security operations.¹¹⁴ The underestimation of the forces required coupled with a conventional force not attuned to keeping the pulse on local sentiments set the conditions for a full-fledged insurgency to grow once MCO ceased creating surprise in GPF units from platoons all the way up into corps levels.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 493-494.

¹¹¹ House of Representatives, *Building Language Skills*, 5. Benson, *Leadership Lab IRAQ*, 151 and 156.

¹¹² Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 98.

¹¹³ Robert M. Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 289-290. Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2004), 401.

¹¹⁴ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 97-98. Benson, *Leadership Lab IRAQ*, 80. There has been a lot of discussion about the troop levels for OIF. GEN Eric Shinseki, then Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, during his testimony to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee on 25 February 2003 in response to a question about possible OIF troop levels from a committee member stated: "something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers are probably, you know, a figure that would be required. We're talking about post-hostilities control over a piece of geography that's fairly significant, with the kinds of ethnic tensions that could lead to other problems. And so it takes a significant ground- force presence to maintain a safe and secure environment, to ensure that people are fed, that water is distributed, all the normal responsibilities that go along with administering a situation like this." Michael E. O'Hanlon, "History Will Credit Shinseki", (Washington D.C., *The Japan Times*, 2003).

¹¹⁵ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 99, 152 and 171.

The fall of Baghdad caused the virtual collapse of any effective resistance to the U.S. led collation.¹¹⁶ Up to this point the deficiency in GPF leader's understanding of the cultural dimension of the conflict was not an issue. Initially regarded as liberators, the Americans were unable to deal with the spontaneous lawlessness and criminal activity that resulted from the regime's disintegration, causing many Iraqis to question the ability of the American troops.¹¹⁷ Troops trained in cross cultural skills, the first element of operational culture, might have seen the subtle changes as they occurred there by taking proactive measures to adapt to and alter the environment.

Understanding the impact of local culture is the key enabler to cross culture communication.¹¹⁸ In retrospect too little time had been focused on the reactions of the various Iraqi peoples once the oppressive era of Saddam Hussein fell because the post conflict plan was superficial at best.¹¹⁹ Many GPF leaders on the ground had little, if any, conceptualization of how the fall of the Iraqi Government would affect the disparate groups within Iraqi Society. This may not have been the case had the GPF possessed trained leaders, at all levels, who were savvy to the cultural factors of the human terrain. Culturally trained and adept leaders could have processed input from the operational environment to quickly incorporate that knowledge into unit planning and operations.

Training leaders in cultural nuances of the operational environment is important. Senior unit commanders that for years focused on perfecting MCO and armored warfare struggled

¹¹⁶ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 379-389. The author discusses the easy at which a brigade commander was able to penetrate and drive through Baghdad in what was called a "Thunder Run."

¹¹⁷ Tommy R. Franks, *American Soldier*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 524-525. The average Iraqi believed if the Americans were so powerful that they could remove the Iraqi Regime so easily then they should be able to provide law and order along with providing basic services to the people like water and electricity.

¹¹⁸ Abbe, *Building Cultural Capability*, 1.

¹¹⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 152.

fighting the insurgency.¹²⁰ Quite often GPF leaders in Iraq, much like in Somalia, put force protection policies in place and treated the local populace in a manner that separated their units from the Iraqi people as opposed to embracing them.¹²¹ The Army in Iraq eventually realized that it had to change the way it operated in and among the Iraqi people if it was to gain the upper hand against anti-collaboration forces.

The Iraqi Insurgency radically impacted the way American units conducted combat operations. The U.S. Army adapted its tactics and operations and over time gained a level of trust of the Iraqi people within the first two years of the war. It took nearly four years until the full effects of the counter insurgency strategy took hold. Gradually shifting its tactics, techniques, and procedures the Army put greater credence into training cultural aspects of conducting operations.¹²² These changes aided units in the integration of the cultural factors impacting the local area into unit operations. Leaders, like 3rd Armored Cavalry Regimental Commander, H.R. McMaster, made a more concerted effort to understand the nuances of cultural issues. The Iraqi people in general gained a greater trust and confidence in the 3rd ACR and the respect for Iraqi culture showed by regimental personnel gained them leverage developing solutions for security issues with local leaders.¹²³ Back in the U.S. the Army changed training in order to better prepare deploying units for the complexity of COIN operations.

The Army changed the way it trained leaders headed into COIN fights in Iraq and Afghanistan to set the condition for operational success. Back at home it mandated more pre-deployment tasks training individual Soldiers, leaders and units on culture. The CTCs began to change their training construct focusing more on the importance of operational environment

¹²⁰ Benson, *Leadership Lab IRAQ*, 78.

¹²¹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 192. Benson, *Leadership Lab IRAQ*, 153.

¹²² Wunderle, *Through the Lens*, 62-63. Cone, "The Changing National Training Center", 70, 74-75. Benson, *Leadership Lab IRAQ*, 80-81.

¹²³ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 420-423.

cultural issues, urban operations, reenergized counter-insurgency doctrine, created training realistic scenarios where the populace became a focal point and mandated key leader training engagements with role players of Iraqi descent to ensure leaders were exposed key intercultural skills prior to deployment.¹²⁴ GPF leaders who properly exploited operational culture were force multipliers in Iraq.

The use of operational cultural skills assisted in winning in Iraq and can facilitate success in future operations as well. Adopting operational cultural skills provided the means by which the U.S. moved from battling the insurgency to working with the Iraqi people. This change in operational approach marginalized the insurgency. Operational cultural skills are not exclusive a COIN fight. They are skills necessary anywhere the U.S. deploys troops. In order to understand the local culture it is necessary to place it in context with the dynamics of the surrounding region.

The limited understanding of the human dynamics in the Iraqi land scape and historical narrative of the region caused leaders and their unit's operational difficulties.¹²⁵ As insurgent type activity increased the reaction by U.S. ground forces often went beyond simple force protection and fanned the fires of the growing insurgency.¹²⁶ A force more locally attuned with leaders and staffs that were educated in basic regional issues may have seen the indicators earlier as the people turned away their initial support from the U.S. toward the insurgents. Such a force could have even taken steps to proactively mitigate or correct the situation in the first place. The back lash and escalating violence forced the U.S. Army to adapt to these new challenges as it

¹²⁴ Cone, "The Changing National Training Center", 70-71, 74-75.

¹²⁵ Benson, *Leadership Lab IRAQ*, 148-149.

¹²⁶ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 177.

conducted operations in Iraq.¹²⁷ The use of language was one area where the U.S. adapted effectively.

Language is the primary way messages and intentions are communicated making competent use of local languages an essential deployment skill. Proper use of language and language enablers, like interpreters, enhanced military operations in Iraq. The GPF entered into the current conflicts, particularly in Iraq with little or no language capability.¹²⁸ This forced the GPF to rely on a significant number of interpreters for the duration of OIF. The 2006 QDR stated, “Developing broader linguistic capability and cultural understanding is also critical to prevail in the long war and to meet 21st century challenges.”¹²⁹ Simply having access to translators and other language tools is not enough. GPF leaders need regular training on the use of language tools in order to most out of whatever tools are available.

The use of language enablers like interpreters requires training and experience. Interpreters played a critical role serving as a conduit for information and idea sharing between the cultures.¹³⁰ However, using interpreters is an art. Utilizing an interpreter forces leaders to rely heavily on that interpreter for information and key cultural cross communication nuances. Conventional leaders focused on MCO were not trained on how to utilize the interpreters. This put conventional leaders and their units at a decided disadvantage in communication because of the inability to speak the local language and the lack of training on interpreter use. Properly exploiting an interpreter’s true capabilities for unit mission accomplishment and requires a level

¹²⁷ Michael J. Meese and Sean M. Morgan, “The New Requirements for Army Expert Knowledge: Afghanistan and Iraq”, In *The Future of the Army Profession* (Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw Hill Custom Publishing, 2005), 349.

¹²⁸ Briscoe, Kiper, Schroder, and Sepp, *Weapon of Choice*, 43-45.

¹²⁹ DOD, *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review*, 78.

¹³⁰ Grace Edinboro, “California and the Global War on Terrorism: The 49th Military Police Brigade in Iraq”, <http://www.militarymuseum.org/GWOT49MPBde.html>, (accessed February 2, 2010).

of training that goes beyond simple translation.¹³¹ It is possible for the Army to leverage internal capability by creating basic language capability among GPF leaders.

The U.S. Army has the potential to build a more capable force by designating a designated strategic language for each leader to study throughout their career. Time is a scarce commodity and it is expensive to send every GPF leader to resident language school, not to mention the cost of sustaining proficiency. Leaders during operations often come into contact with local leaders, both civilian and military. Engaging influential local stakeholders effectively highlights the necessity for leader training in foreign language skills. Distance language learning is currently available online using Rosetta Stone Language software on the Army Knowledge Online site. As a part of any Army wide program to create language skills leaders could continue through modules according to standards set by the Army under the supervision of their rater to gain basic language skill in their designated language. Additionally, the same distance learning tools can prepare leaders deploying to an area where their career focus language is not the primary language. Incorporating foreign language use during unit training is essential.

Language training is now an important component of unit predeployment training particularly at the CTCs.¹³² Currently the head start program enables Soldiers to learn foreign language tactical words and phrases prior to deployments.¹³³ Many deploying units sent Soldiers to months of language training prior to their entry into theater in order to gain internal capability.¹³⁴ As addressed previously the need for language does not reside solely in COIN operations because it is an essential full spectrum operational skill. Assigning a career designated

¹³¹ Bourgie, *Testimony*, 2.

¹³² Cone, "The Changing National Training Center", 70-71, 73 and 77. Todd C. Lopez, "Language Program Gives Soldiers Head Start on Deployment", (Fort Huachuca Arizona, *The Fort Huachuca Scout*, December 11, 2008).

¹³³ Cone, "The Changing National Training Center", 77.

¹³⁴ Stanhagen, interview by phone.

language for leaders can help to prepare the new generation of leaders for future operations in ways the Army has not done for their predecessors.¹³⁵ The requirement for conventional leaders who understand the importance of truly understanding the different regions across the globe will not diminish.

It is time to place more emphasis Army wide to develop leaders who are more regionally prepared intellectually than their predecessors for overseas operations. The future will most likely place units in time constraints for operational response. The force must execute movement in response to a combat contingency or humanitarian assistance disaster response or peace keeping mission where training on local culture, regional factors and language may come too little too late or not at all. Leaders that study a GCC with an associated language increase the ability for commanders to utilize them as internal resources to gain a real appreciation of the operational environment. Aligning leaders with a GCC for career study the Army creates the internal capability necessary to operate globally in an effective manner.

Developing an Army of leaders and Soldiers trained in cross cultural competences is the first step. Designating a percentage of the GPF's leaders to remain focused on each global geographic region for career self-study is the next step. Training leaders how to exploit a designated strategic language in their assigned GCC is an absolutely necessary step to empower Army leaders to succeed well into the 21st Century.¹³⁶ Developing GPF leaders into operational culture expert requires the Army to modify the way it trains and educates its leaders.

The Army must change leader training and education leaders if it is to meet the intent of the ACFLS. Exposing the leaders to operational culture basics at their initial PME courses and combining it with distance learning self-study establishes the foundation for GPF leaders. Once the leader is sent to their operational assignment supervisors can assist in their development.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 328.

Combining distance learning and collaborative tools with leadership supervision provides a vehicle to further their proficiencies. Changing the methods in which leaders are trained challenges the force to develop the leaders envisioned in the ACFLS.

The critical element in developing culturally savvy, language enabled and regionally aware leaders is supervision. Leaders within the chain of command must make sure leader development executed properly; reinforce the junior leader self-development, providing guidance and create opportunities for even further progress. Annotation of progress on evaluation reports is necessary if the program is to have emphasis at the lower levels. Integration of operational culture skills in to routine unit field training, using unit leaders who focused on the region in the scenario as training enablers is a relatively inexpensive way to sustain and even improve these skills at lower echelons. As envisioned this process continues for the duration of a leader's career as they attend successive levels of PME and then are posted back into the operational force. Over time this process produces leaders with refined operational culture skills making it easier for them to integrate their knowledge of the environment into unit planning and operations.¹³⁷ The Army must transform its training and education of GPF leaders in the 21st Century to maximize the use of operational culture skills during deployments.

The ACLFS notes Army needs more depth in the force when it comes to the skills of language, culture, and regional awareness.¹³⁸ Army wide capability is built over years as opposed to weeks or months. It is impossible to make every GPF leader in the Army language and cultural experts for each of the over 170 countries, but it can enable leaders with a strategic language and make them an expert on one country over the course of their career. The skills learned in one region can open the minds of leaders and prevent mirror imaging if they are deployed to different cultural setting. It is not feasible for every GPF leader to have familiarity with the dynamics in

¹³⁷ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, ii.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 7.

each of the six geographic combatant commands worldwide, however over time it can create a leader that knows one particular GCC well. The process starts with opening up leader to the importance of cross cultural dynamics.

The Army can set the conditions for cultural openness and develop cross cultural competencies across the entire force over time by including that type of training into leader initial entry PME as well as mandating hands on supervision at unit level. Building the necessary skill sets in culture regional awareness and rudimentary language ability through a comprehensive program that promotes cross cultural competencies through a lifelong learning process is the way ahead. Such a process requires a comprehensive adjustment to how we train, educate, and develop leaders across the GPF.

Conclusion

Operational experiences in Somalia, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq have highlighted critical gaps in the Army capability to influence and operate effectively within different cultures for extended periods of time. Battlefield lessons learned have demonstrated that language proficiency and understanding of foreign culture are vital enablers for full spectrum operations.

--2009 Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy¹³⁹

There is a pressing need to institutionalize the operational culture skills of cultural awareness, foreign language exploitation and the understanding of regional dynamics into a lifelong training and education program for conventional force leaders of all ranks. This monograph recommends service wide solutions for the Army to train and educate its conventional or general purpose force (GPF) leaders in operational cultural skills throughout their careers. This type of educational philosophy provides the tools that empower GPF units to positively influence the operational environment. The Army's need is readily apparent. Producing the force

¹³⁹ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, i.

envisioned in the ACFLS requires a comprehensive but measured approach because of projected budget constraints and limitations of other resources.

The challenge is that it is impossible to train and educate every leader in the GPF to possess the cultural details and language of every potential country where American troops might conduct operations. Implementing the AFCLS requires a practical long term approach that incrementally builds the necessary cultural, language, and regional awareness skills over the course of a leader's career. Increased capability in specific culture, languages and regions combined with refined cross cultural capabilities in each leader can produce a force ready to deal effectively with the ambiguity and complexity of future operations.¹⁴⁰ DA has produced the necessary vision and policies, however the hard part is putting vision into action.

The 2009 ACFLS and the December 2010 DA Execution Order set the conditions for establishing a firm foundation for the Army to institutionalize cultural awareness, foreign language education, and global region awareness. The DA Execution Order on implementing the ACFLS and the ACFLS provide a good cornerstone for the Army to improve its 21st Century operational capabilities. However, those two documents do not articulate comprehensive Army-wide implementation policies or the supporting infrastructure. It is essential that the Army exploits this seminal opportunity provided by the ACFLS and DA EXORD on language, culture, and regional alignment to change institutional policies and structure. TRADOC as the executing agent could be tasked to develop and monitor the execution of formal training strategies and support structure. Additionally, there needs to be tasks given to the operational force and HRC. This requires integration of operational culture skills into PME, modifying human resource policies, and establishment of support mechanisms for the necessary structure to implement

¹⁴⁰ Army, *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 3.

service wide. This will help create general purpose force leaders that can effectively conduct any mission anywhere while under the watchful eyes of the world community.

The importance integrating culture, regional dynamics and language into military operations applies as much to conducting major combat operations they do for conducting HADR or counterinsurgency operations. They are vital skill across the spectrum of conflict. After Vietnam a preponderance of missions like those in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo were not focused on major combat operations. Recently in Iraq and Afghanistan, immediately following major combat operations there was a necessity to transition to conduct post combat stability and support operations. In MCO it is essential to ensure that when American forces either transition to stability operations or depart after concluding operations that a vacuum of power or an environment is not created for exploitation like was created in Iraq after the fall of Baghdad. Leaders with refined operational culture skills can help manage those transitions into and out of combat abroad.

Changing leaders education is a difficult task. Implementing culture and language training into the leader PME is easier said than done. The alignment of that leader with a region of interest is easy to designate, but not as easily managed. Addressing all three skills properly requires institutional support during PME, distance learning collaborative tools, active involvement of operational supervisors, as well human resource policies that track, manage, reward and assign personnel, provides the Army with leaders prepared to effectively operate across the globe. Changes in policies to create an all-encompassing operational culture skills program are necessary to provide the Army with trained and educated GPF leaders in these critical operational enabling skills.

Any program created to address current deficiencies should include institutional component, a self-developmental component, a collaborative component, and leadership oversight of progress during PME and operational assignments. The operational component plays a prominent role as it is where leaders get practical experience and there are the opportunities for

senior leaders to shape development through unit leader development programs. Any effective program must have regulatory support in the form of changes to AR600-3, HRC policies, and supporting infrastructure. Additionally, that same program must hold leaders as well as their raters and senior raters accountable through the evaluation report process. Changing policies at DA level, transforming PME and adding some supporting infrastructure can set the conditions for developing a culturally savvy, language enabled and regionally aware conventional force necessary to operate anywhere in the world throughout the 21st Century.

Recommendations

In short, Army leaders in this century need to be pentathletes, multi-skilled leaders who can thrive in uncertain and complex operating environments... innovative and adaptive leaders who are expert in the art and science of the profession of arms. The Army needs leaders who are decisive, innovative, adaptive, culturally astute, effective communicators and dedicated to life-long learning.

Secretary Of The Army Francis J. Harvey

Developing a comprehensive plan to implement the ACFLS requires changing the way the U.S. Army Human Resources Command tracks individual leader data. First the Army needs to know what assets it has by mandating HRC level tracking on ORBs and ERBs of language enabled Soldiers/leaders (currently studying a language), the language proficient Soldier/leader (passed the DPLT at a designated level of proficiency), as well as identifying all heritage speakers currently in service. Once identified the assignment of an HRC code enables the Army to react quickly in time constrained situations. Having personnel records coded with language and region of study would greatly enhance the Army's ability to provide the right Soldiers for use in contingency scenarios or in short notice disaster relief situations like the recent earthquake in the Haiti relief mission. The same recommendation is found in the December 2010 House Armed Services Committee Report *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military*:

Bridging the Gap.¹⁴¹ Units should track language data on unit status reports USR. Additionally the Army should assign a language and regional orientation to all GPF leaders upon accession.

The study of a language, the culture in which that language is used and the country it is spoke are all interconnected. This inherently ties the study of a language to the study of a country within a GCC. The designation of a language and regional orientation for all conventional force leaders in the Army provides organizations at all levels with internal resources that are better able to operate globally than are currently in the force. Additionally, the assignment of an HRC additional skill identifier codes to track GCC, language and country orientation for all GPF officers, warrant officers, and senior non-commissioned officers is necessary for personnel tracking and assignment considerations as those leaders progress in their careers.

The goal of an Army wide program is to build capability in leaders over time so that as they mature in their career so do their skills. It is recommended that the Army utilize regional alignment and language ability in assignment determinations for: officers in the grade of major and above, warrant officers at or above the grade of CW3 and for NCOs who are at least MSGs particularly in joint or combined assignments. This is practical even if a leader deploys to a region other than their area of study because learning one area well reduces the potential of mirror imaging when encountering a different culture by negating mirror imaging. The designation of a career language, country of study, and geographic regional orientation only works if performance is integrated leader's periodic evaluations.

Currently, there are no systemic methods to include remarks on language and regional progress during PME or self-study progress as well as any relevant operational observations into leader evaluation reports. To make systemic changes it is recommended that the Army modify the OER, AER, and NCOER include comments language proficiency and pertinent operational

¹⁴¹ House of Representatives, *Building Language Skills*, 3.

culture skills information. The responsibility of individual leader's supervisors plays an important role in the success of any program to develop operational culture skills. Holding raters and senior raters accountable for subordinate self-study progress on their evaluation reports assists in Army wide implementation. Changing HRC policies set the cornerstone for foundational changes to the way the Army trains and educates its leaders.

Training and education are the primary methods to develop operational culture skills. Any effective operational culture skills program requires mandating the completion of specific communication and cross culture communication classes at the time they enter into a leader cohort. These skills provide the foundation for the acquisition of rudimentary cross-cultural competence skills particularly communications skills providing insights on U.S. culture giving young leaders perspectives of how U.S. culture is seen by other countries and the potential operational effects of those impressions. Officers the training could receive their training as a part of pre accession process. Warrant officers, if they did not receive it as NCOs could receive their training at WOBC. NCOs would need theirs after graduation from the Warrior Leaders Course. General culture training combined with basic language skills acquisition is necessary to develop leaders ready for 21st Century conflict.

The education of GPF leaders in a language is going to be largely dependent on the desire of the individual leader to learn their assigned language. Using distance learning tools like Rosetta Stone® on the Army Knowledge Online is currently the easiest method for the average leader to develop basic foreign language skills. It is essential that this type of capability be continued. Additionally, there are opportunities for the Army to create imaginative incentives and opportunities for personnel to expand their language capability. The Army could make use of leader time particularly while they are waiting for PME courses to start to enhance their language abilities. This could be done by assigning them to an applicable language detachment for concentrated study for newly commissioned officers and warrant officers to make the most of

potentially underutilized time. Creating opportunities and incentives is a method to build language proficient leaders.

Incentives and unique opportunities not only provide the Army with ways to build a deeper language bench it is also a way to intellectually challenge young leaders and could play a role in leader retention. For the bulk of the GPF leaders developing special tuition assistance programs for leaders to attend colleges and universities near their installations is a fairly unobtrusive way to build internal capacity. For those leaders who are particularly predisposed to learning languages funded study at a language flagship university or an immersion sabbatical create opportunities to provide the Army with added in the conventional force while challenging young leaders. Allocating funds for a small percentage of active component leaders in all cohorts to work or study at an academic institution or in their country of interest, probably in an interagency fellowship role, for 6 months to a year is a good way to intellectually challenge them as well as work retention of certain critical languages. It is further recommended that the Army initiate programs that encourage reserve component leaders to acquire languages at governmental expense to provide an operational ready reserve of language experts. Adjustments to PME are necessary for the success of any operational culture skills program.

Integrating operational culture skills training into all resident PME courses in the form self-study requirements and group projects provides an effective method to expanding individual knowledge without wholesale altering of existing PME course ware. Current operational needs and follow on assignments may drive a portion of the class toward studying an operational language outside their prescribed regionally aligned language. Those students who do not have a driving operational requirement would have the opportunity attain higher levels of knowledge on their assigned region through group projects and language proficiency through institutionally resourced self-study in the form of language labs during and after duty hours. A 2009 poll of three MI Basic Officer Courses showed that on the average 55% of those questioned would like a

structured language study program integrated into their course.¹⁴² Soldiers and leader with basic language proficiency can use those skills to assist their communities.

Installations across the U.S. currently partner individual units with local schools to enhance their curriculums. Utilizing existing partnerships for expanding language programs in schools near Army installations is an easy way for individuals to hone their operational culture skills while giving back to the community. Instituting an Army wide initiative for installations to work with local schools to implement the federal government K-12 foreign language programs is a way where both the schools and the Army could gain. Such a program would facilitate the language development and regional awareness of dependent children attending those schools as well as the local student population. This is another area where units and volunteer Soldiers can work with area schools. Language and regional orientation are closely linked so it is intuitive that the Army aligns the two as part of a comprehensive program.

Because of the likelihood that the character of future U.S. military operations are inherently joint and combined it is prudent to assign all leaders in the conventional force a region of study that is directly tied to their designated language early on in their leader development process. Assigning GPF leaders a GCC and a country within that region for concentrated career study builds capability at all levels. These operational culture skills are then available for use during training and operations. Each leader has the opportunity to develop progressive levels of regional competency throughout their career thereby making them a valuable asset during unit scenario based training and operational deployments. Personnel decisions and PME adjustments are important, but they are ineffective without supporting organizational structures.

The Army needs to build on the current language detachments located at a number of installations to maximize their potential. Transforming the currently operating language

¹⁴² Lauren Merkel, *Language Training in MIBOLC*, (Fort Huachuca, Arizona: University of Military Intelligence, 2009), 4.

detachments that are supporting deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan into organizations that facilitate learning multiple strategic languages, their culture and regional dynamics creates the structure necessary to apply comprehensive methods to truly creating operational culture skills in the GPF. Assigning and manning a regionally focused interpreter detachment for each geographic GCC as a part of the language detachment mission is a way to make fundamental change. This change in force structure provides GCC commanders with a secure, habitual, and internal capability which decreases the requirement for contract interpreters which are expensive and not as reliable as Soldiers.¹⁴³ In addition to interpretation duties these detachments would execute educational and training missions for forces assigned, apportioned or transiting to and from PME. Department level implementation guidance is necessary to ensure that efforts are synchronized and that bureaucratic resistance is kept to a minimum.

It is important for the Army to issue department level guidance and fund initiatives that establish cross culture competencies, language acquisition, and regional competency into the GPF leader training and education. Conducting an inventory of language skills currently resident in the force is needed to begin. Establishing control codes and assigning leaders specific languages and regions based on the needs of the service is prudent. The Army should establish metrics and track the integration of language and GCC/regional awareness familiarization into quarterly brigade and battalion USRs. The Army must deploy a conventional force composed of culturally astute warrior leaders. This makes it imperative that the Army adopt a comprehensive of operational culture program for leaders in the GPF.

¹⁴³ Stanhagen, interview by phone.

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