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Special Operations Forces Engagement: A Framework for Successful Security Cooperation

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

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Building partner capacity is widely accepted as being in the national interest and is routinely part of our national security and defense guidance. Determining what capacity to build though is not always straightforward. Understanding the requirements and existing capabilities of the partner nation, coordinating guidance among national, alliance, combatant command, and the US embassy, as well as navigating the resourcing challenges of our security assistance funding streams add to the difficulty. This paper posits that a useful way to manage these challenges is to orient the security cooperation program, at least initially, on host nation Special Operations Forces (SOF). It provides a case study of security force assistance to the Slovak 5th Special Forces Regiment as the core of a larger security cooperation program.

Special Operations Forces Engagement: A Framework for Successful Security Cooperation

Building partner capacity is widely accepted as being in the national interest and is routinely part of our National Security Strategy, "Our military will continue strengthening its capacity to partner with foreign counterparts, train and assist security forces, and pursue military-to-military ties with a broad range of governments."[1]; our National Defense and Military Strategies, "We will strengthen and expand our network of partnerships to enable partner capacity to enhance security."[2]; and defense guidance writ large, "Building partnership capacity elsewhere in the world also remains important for sharing the costs and responsibilities of global leadership".[3] Determining what capacity to build though is not always straightforward. Even after deciding with whom to partner and what resources are available, the task of constructing a coherent framework of military engagements, training, equipping, and deployment of useful and sustainable host nation forces remains complex. Understanding the requirements and existing capabilities of the partner nation, coordinating guidance among national, alliance, combatant command, and the US embassy, as well as navigating the resourcing challenges of our security assistance funding streams add to the difficulty. This paper posits that a useful way to manage these challenges is to orient the security cooperation program, at least initially, on host nation Special Operations Forces (SOF).

There are several sound institutional reasons for as well as some side benefits to focusing on host nation SOF. The first is that US SOF, which should continue growing over the next few years, traditionally trains other national security forces and is especially well suited to train other national SOF forces; furthermore, as of 2008 US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is specifically assigned the task of

coordinating security force assistance globally. Second, US general purpose forces (GPF) are also tasked with building partner capacity (BPC) and are embracing the mission through force structure changes such as foreign training units and regionally aligned units; however, they need the guidance and focus that USSOCOM provides. Third, most nations have some kind of SOF and it is normally to lowest Joint level element; therefore, engaging with them provides an opportunity to interact with a wide range of warfighting functions in a relatively small entity. The benefit here is the ability to see across the breadth of the host nation armed forces to determine, in an informed manner, where to engage with remaining assistance resources or where to refocus once SOF reaches a steady state. Fourth, and perhaps most important, as SOF continues to grow in importance, using them as the core of a security cooperation program not only helps focus security force assistance, it actually produces a product in global demand.

Background

It is clear the United States values partnerships as part of its overall security strategy. The president's 2010 National Security Strategy uses the term 'partner' or 'partnership' more than one hundred times in its sixty pages. Global partnerships are one of the primary tools the United States uses to maintain international stability, influence, and a shared vision of the future; they create a community of like-minded nations and reinforce common interests by giving countries a stake in the global order. Among the most important of these partnerships are our international military relationships, which provide a useful avenue to national leadership on issues of security policy and often provide us with a toolbox of military capabilities for use in future operations and contingencies. Because the United States enjoys such an enormous

military advantage over most countries, those relationships very often include ‘capacity building’ – developing and/or strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources to perform certain military mission sets. In fact, entire military specialties are devoted to ‘building partner capacity’ as part of security cooperation, including entire defense agencies devoted to the topic – like the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) among others.

Building partner capacity has some pre-requisites. There must be a partner who is both willing and able to cooperate. There must be some agreement on what capacity to build; the partner must want the capacity and, ideally, there should be clear tie-in between the capacity and US policy goals. And, of course, there must be available resources on both sides and the end product must be sustainable. There are other engagement activities beyond capacity building, such as key leader visits, international exercises, and staff talks to satisfy requirements for relationship building. There may be occasions when engagement with a partner nation in the form of capacity building is a goal in and of itself; however, as budgets constrain and operational requirements continue to grow, *capacity building* should focus on those activities that provide the United States with a useable product.

The mission of determining the nature of partner capacity building normally falls to the defense team, primarily senior defense officials (SDO) and security assistance officers (SAO) at US embassies around the world. In conjunction with the geographic combatant command (GCC), they are most knowledgeable of the host nation’s current capabilities, requirements, and willingness to participate. Still, the challenge of

constructing a capacity building program that produces something of value, contributes to the overall engagement plan, and is feasible within resource constraints can be daunting. Very often the result is a disjointed set of activities (sometimes referred to as 'random acts of engagement') that do not lead to a useful end product and, worse, squander valuable resources.

One aspect of BPC meeting with a high degree of success is in the Special Operations Forces arena. For example, Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) recently conducted a highly successful capacity building program oriented on NATO SOF elements. As of early 2013, the support to NATO SOF Headquarters resulted in over 2200 NATO SOF operators deployed to support the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan.[4] Another is the efforts of Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines, which helped to improve the capabilities of Philippine forces. Ultimately these forces were used to substantially degrade the Abu Sayef and other terrorist organizations.[5] In addition to the proven track record of engaging with foreign SOF, there are three institutional adjustments in recent years that make this a more promising field of engagement. The first is the global requirement of SOF forces for counterterrorism, training and mentoring, and flexible force deployment. The second is the emphasis within DOD and the services on security cooperation generally and on security force assistance specifically. And, the third is the planned growth of US SOF itself.

Ultimately, the purpose is to encourage senior defense officials (SDO), security assistance officers (SAO), and those desk officers at Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC), the Joint Staff (JS), and the Office of the Secretary of Defense

(OSD) involved in developing Country Cooperation Plans (CCP) for friendly countries to consider SOF engagement as a means to accomplish several tasks. First and foremost, to develop partner capacities that will be useful in operations. Second, use limited security assistance funds efficiently across all of the warfighting functions. Budget cuts are coming, yet globally SOF will likely suffer the least and is even likely to grow. Third, gain access to a wide variety of military offices and interagency departments. Importantly, this paper does not recommend strictly SOF to SOF engagement; it recommends engaging with host nation SOF with all available tools – including conventional forces – as a means to focus the DOD effort in country.

Security Cooperation

> The U.S. cannot address the challenges of tomorrow alone. It will require a global partnership of like-minded entities that can come together to address mutual security concerns. These relationships cannot be built through sporadic or episodic encounters. It will require an increased capacity of U.S., allies, and partner forces to assist nations in building the institutions needed to provide immediate security to their populations.[6]

Security Cooperation (SC) describes all Department of Defense (DOD) interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific US security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide US forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation.[7] Though not delineated in any one source, the following is a categorized list of DOD-authorized security cooperation programs[8]:

- Security assistance administered by DOD
- Global train and equip
- International armaments cooperation
- Humanitarian assistance

- Training and education
- Combined exercises
- Military-to-military contacts

Of note, there are several opportunities for the defense team to engage with foreign partners short of security assistance programs directly related to capacity building. This is a critical point as budgets shrink and the impetus to extract real value from our efforts increases.

Which security cooperation tools to use is captured in the geographic combatant command's country cooperation plans. Using insight about the host nation's military, the SDO in conjunction with Security Assistance Officer, inform the GCC on realistic goals that are also in line with the Ambassador's priorities and guidance. The GCC and the embassy defense team then work together to develop a coherent plan using all available tools to align resources with US, GCC, and host nation objectives. Normally, the most expensive and complex aspect of the engagement plan is security force assistance.

Security Force Assistance

> USSOCOM owes much of its recent success to the network of partners that play a critical role in every operation conducted by U.S. SOF. The old adage that "you need a network to defeat a network" remains particularly germane. In an era of increasing responsibilities, competing priorities, and reduced resources, it is imperative to build a lateral network of partners and allies that proactively anticipate threats and enable cooperative security solutions in cost-effective ways.[9]

Security Force Assistance (SFA), a subset of Security Cooperation, describes those DOD activities that contribute to unified action by the US Government to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions.[10] The term itself is relatively new and is described in detail in

Department of Defense Instruction 5000.68 dated 27 October 2010.[11] The purpose of the term and the accompanying instruction were largely driven by the lessons learned from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and counterterrorism operations with partner nations in other parts of the world.[12] Furthermore, an important and specified reason for refining this aspect of security cooperation is to enable partners to participate in such operations, which were and still are largely oriented on training, mentoring, and focused direct action – missions very much in line with traditional Special Operations Forces. It is no accident that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities (ASD SO/LIC&IC) is designated as the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) for SFA policy. It seems to follow that the term and policies of SFA were created with SOF in mind. That is, for the traditional US SOF model of training and mentoring foreign partners. And the model should extend to host nation SOF as the focus of our SFA efforts whether those efforts come from US SOF or from conventional assets.

Although the term is relatively new, the mission of SFA is not and is traditionally associated with SOF. But now, all services have the task and it is perfectly appropriate to engage most foreign SOF with US conventional forces where suitable. For example, most foreign SOF do not have dedicated air assets along the lines of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, so conventional Army aviation can play a critical role. Marksmanship, medical, and communications among others can be taught by non-SOF trainers. So, orienting on foreign SOF does not mean only SOCOM or the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC) gets tasked. In fact, all of the services are

making strides in developing institutions specifically for SFA, such as the Army's 162nd Infantry Brigade, the Air Force Air Advisor Academy, the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force – Security Cooperation, and the Navy's Maritime Civil Affairs and Security Training Command. The contention here is that interaction with foreign SOF – initiated by the country defense team and managed by US SOF –be expanded to a more holistic security cooperation program that includes the entire armed forces. In other words, host nation SOF is the best place to begin and US SOF is best positioned to inform the country defense team on the way ahead.

The Case for Focusing on Special Operations Forces

> Expanding the SOF network is about increasing and strengthening our partnerships throughout the global SOF enterprise. With current fiscal constraints, not only in the U.S. but worldwide, we have to find new solutions to effectively operate in the current strategic environment. In the U.S., particularly over the last 10 years, the nation has recognized the value of SOF in this ambiguous operating environment. I want to assist in building other nations' SOF capabilities to help deal with the myriad of emerging threats…There is a clear recognition that developing enduring partnerships is a key component of our long-term military strategy.[13]

In a 2012 GAO review of Combatant Command efforts to build partner capacity through SFA, three major challenges were noted: 1) Lack of common understanding of SFA, 2) Limitations in tracking SFA activities, and 3) Ability to develop and execute long-term SFA plans.[14]

The first problem is likely a matter of confusion over terminology. Terms such as security cooperation, security assistance, building partner capacity, and security force assistance are often used interchangeably despite some important differences between them. The second problem stems partly from the lack of a user friendly and useful database to track activities. For example, the Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System (TSCMIS), which is cumbersome to the user and, in

general, tracks past events vice guiding future events or helping build a long-term and sustainable engagement program. The result is many activities are never recorded at all or are recorded with very little analysis as to their merits. The third problem, lack of long-term SFA plans, results partially from the patchwork of funding authorities that make long term planning difficult. But more importantly, it results from both a lack of vision about how to engage with the host nation and from a lack of focus leading to a patchwork of random acts of engagement. Focusing on host nation SOF helps the defense team with all three of these problem areas – especially the last and most important issue of long-term, informed planning.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, identifies US SOF as one of three areas almost certain to see growth over the next decades even as budgets decline – the other two being cyber and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR).[15] Additionally, the September 2012 Joint Force 2020 identifies these three areas of future growth in the context of "globally integrated operations".[16] The number of available allies and partners able to integrate with our cyber and ISR capabilities is most certainly limited by technology, classification restrictions and global scope. The number of partners able to integrate SOF capabilities is much higher, as nearly all nations have those forces available to greater or lesser extent. Some countries are able to integrate their SOF forces at near peer status and across the entire spectrum of SOF missions, while others may be available for train and assist missions only. In any case, nearly any friendly country is able to contribute something to the global SOF network and effort. And USSOCOM acknowledges their contributions: "Globally, Special Operations Forces are contributing well beyond their

numbers, and are known for their high return on investment. In the future, I see great benefit in developing a global SOF network. We are working through the geographic combatant commands. And bolstering our ties with the interagency and the allied SOF partners, we can react even more rapidly and effectively against our enemies. My number one priority is winning the current fight, while maintaining the health of the force. But close behind that priority is expanding this global SOF and interagency network to deal with future challenges."[17]

As for the United States, over the course of 2013 USSOCOM is expanding from its current manning of just over 63,000 to nearly 67,000.[18] Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta commented specifically, "As we reduce the overall defense budget, we will protect and in some cases increase our investments in special operations forces…"[19] Furthermore, as of October 2008, SOCOM was designated as the DOD proponent for Security Force Assistance and tasked with the mission of synchronizing global training and assistance.[20] In this vain and through many of the lessons learned from the establishment of the highly successful NATO SOF HQ in 2010, SOCOM is developing plans to establish similar coordinating institutions at each of the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC) to build what the SOCOM Commander describes as the "global SOF network".[21] This network is based largely on the experience of NATO: "Europe's NATO SOF Headquarters (NSHQ) serves as an example of how SOF has adapted to the realities of today as it typifies the potential of an integrated multinational approach. Secretary Panetta's recent comment that, "most European countries are now producers of security rather than consumers of it" helps to validate the success of NSHQ and recognizes the contribution that our NATO partners have made to the

current fight. Consequently, USSOCOM will continue to bolster and strengthen the vitality of U.S. SOF's contribution to NATO through our increasing role as the NSHQ lead component and advocate to the Joint Staff and Office Secretary of Defense."[22]

The DOD push for Security Force Assistance, the Chairman's emphasis on globally integrated operations, and SOCOM's desire for and charter to form international partnerships provide the institutional framework for focusing our defense teams' security cooperation efforts on host nation SOF. But, in addition to institutional momentum, there are excellent reasons to build our engagement programs around the core of Special Operations Forces. These are conclusions of a highly engaged US defense team about SOF engagement based on described institutional changes, lessons from the most recent and ongoing conflicts, and direct observations after four years of working security cooperation efforts and indirect observations of counterparts:

- Because SOF normally encompasses all warfighting functions[23] (command and control, intelligence, fires, movement and maneuver, protection, and sustainment), it informs a coherent engagement plan across the armed forces.
- SOF is easier to deploy and, in all likelihood, more relevant to future operations.
- As SOF is often a national asset, engagement provides the country team with access to the highest level of the military, as well as police and intelligence.
- Building partner SOF capacity is generally less costly than conventional forces.
- SOF is easier to involve in multinational exercises, thereby keeping the network and alliances connected.

Case Study: Slovakia

The following account highlights the advantages of focusing security cooperation efforts around Special Forces. To be clear, engagement efforts must be tailored to the

particulars of the host nation and US interests and focusing on Special Operations Forces absolutely does not preclude engagement across the breadth of military forces. In fact, because of the breadth of warfighting functions found in SOF, focusing on them will often provide benefits across the host nation military and may highlight other areas of engagement. In many circumstances SOF provides a unique avenue for streamlining cooperation efforts and, importantly, resources.

> SOCEUR and the Slovak 5th Special Forces Regiment engagement remains a significant success story worth greater study. In two short years SOCEUR and 5th SFR labored together to build a fully interoperable, competent and capable special forces unit. Today 5th SFR provides invaluable security assistance in Afghanistan, expanding the security umbrella and saving valuable US resources. The US Special Forces operators, almost to a man, have praised their Slovak counterparts as highly professional, motivated and competent. It is a relationship that demonstrates the power of engagement when done correctly.[24]

Following a year as Army Attaché and de facto Security Assistance Officer to Kosovo from 2008-2009, as Senior Defense Official (SDO) to the Slovak Republic from 2009-2012, the author, in close coordination with the Chief, Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC), was responsible for developing and implementing a long range security cooperation effort – with a heavy, short range focus on preparing host nation forces for deployments to ISAF. Our immediate challenge in 2009 was to engage with the Slovak military to simply increase the level of allied contributions in Afghanistan; more numbers next to more flags. But, we wanted to provide a useful capability in the current fight as well as for future operations, meet EUCOM's country campaign plan (CCP) guidance, and affect the widest array of warfighting functions. All of this had to be accomplished with limited resources, had to fit into the requirements of the host nation and, critically, had to be sustainable by the Slovaks. All of these requirements simply highlight the dilemma facing nearly all security cooperation efforts; however,

ISAF requirements added urgency. For the ODC Chief and myself the clear answer was to engage with the 5th Special Forces Regiment (5th SFR), Slovakia's only SOF unit.

> SOCEUR worked with the Slovak 5th SFR for more than two years with excellent results. This cooperation started in the most important area which was and still is intelligence. SOCEUR, NSHQ and 5th SFR developed together a Program of Instruction keeping in mind that intelligence drives all SOF operational deployments. Once the 5th SFR intelligence operatives and staff was trained, SOCEUR, based on military and political agreement to deploy SOF to ISAF, developed a program for SVK SOF strategic development. This plan is drafted through the first half of 2015. SVK AF plan to deploy an SOTG in May 2014 to support the ISAF campaign. After slowly building capability, we deployed with US forces in Afghanistan and did excellent work. The exposure to US and other international SOF forces is invaluable not just for the regminent, but also for the Slovak Armed Forces and the Alliance more generally. Our ability to deploy is now well proven and our regiment is now solidly part of the global SOF network."[25]

The push for additional contributions to ISAF during this period was driven largely by NATO's requirement for additional training and mentoring teams – a mission well suited for SOF. The EUCOM CCP guidance called for us to engage across several areas: NCO development, maneuver forces, intelligence sharing, explosive ordnance disposal, and Special Forces. Both ISAF and EUCOM requirements could be engaged simultaneously by focusing on the Special Forces Regiment, thus substantially streamlining or efforts and resources while building deployable units that could easily be sustained within the Slovak defense budget. This is not to say other units were ignored, far from it. But it did allow us to create a coherent program with SOF at the core and other engagements in support where possible or extending the program to non-SOF units where feasible. Additionally, two rather unexpected benefits became apparent as the program proceeded. The first was that preparing the SOF units for deployment forced the Slovak government to drop restrictive caveats that kept their units from

leaving the confines of protected bases much less allow active combat. The second was the substantial increase in access to the highest levels of the General Staff and Ministry of Defense. This was due to the SOF Regiment being subordinated directly to the General Staff and the high profile of engaging with them as an elite, national asset; a situation not unlike many other SOF units worldwide.

The program began in fall 2010 and was designed around preparing three 20-man Special Operations Task Units (SOTU) for sequential six-month deployments from fall 2011 through spring 2013 – we had one year to prepare. As the program progressed and the Slovaks became more confident in the training, the project was adjusted to include preparing 150-man Special Operations Task Groups (SOTG) for two sequential six-month deployments beginning in early 2014[26]. Certainly having the deployments as calendar targets was useful for planning, but the most important aspect of this program is the focus on sustainable capability useful to both the US/Alliance and the host nation. And, while the project was largely driven by necessity, it soon became exceedingly clear that focusing on SOF came with several additional benefits.

We began with a year-long intelligence and communications training program provided by SOCEUR. With the goal of deploying Slovak SOF to Afghanistan, SOCEUR J2 developed an ISAF-tailored intelligence analyst course, supported by communications specialists able to connect to the NATO's secure network, and brought the course to the Slovak 5th Special Operations Regiment (5th SFR). Straightaway the benefits of engaging host nation SOF became apparent beyond the immediate goals. With the 5th SFR subordinate to the General Staff (akin to the US Joint Staff), all coordination for the deployment and related training was directly with the joint staff or

ministry, thus providing the defense team with unusually frequent and broad contact with high-level defense officials. The access accorded to the US defense team in support of SOF training provided valuable, bird's eye views of several other requirements within the larger Armed Forces and oriented any additional assets available to ODC in the most efficient areas.

More specifically, the use of classified networks for intelligence training at 5th SFR, located some two hours north of the capital, required special dispensation from the military intelligence service. Again, the coordination required provided very frequent contact and access. Furthermore, we quickly recognized that intelligence training for the Regiment was applicable to a wider audience – including the military intelligence service. The communications teams sent to establish the secure connections to NATO were initially simply training enablers for the intelligence section, until we recognized that once the network was established we now had the opportunity to engage with SOF communicators and later with others – including Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC) who are part of the Slovak Air Forces. This opportunity training was so successful, the JTAC units were recognized for their excellence and additional US Air Force training was provided for them. Another benefit was the recognition by Slovakia of the value of the US-produced Harris AN/PRC-152 radio resulting in additional purchases through Foreign Military Sales. More broadly, the recognition that SOF training involved the wider armed forces was a seminal moment in our security cooperation planning awareness. It showed how broad of an aperture SOF provided to the wider armed forces.

The intelligence and communications training program concluded with the Regimental intelligence section travelling to SOCEUR. There they built targeting packets using real-world, ISAF products and then briefed the Special Operations Fusion Center (SOFFC) in Kabul via NATO secure communications. This type of training, which also, in effect, served as reach-back intelligence support, was only possible through interaction with SOF. Once this program was well underway, the focus shifted to pre-deployment training.

In addition to the above, preparations for deployment included a myriad of training events, such as MRAP driver training, counter-IED courses, marksmanship, airborne operations, cargo preparation and loading, sensitive site exploitation (SSE), biometrics, HUMINT and SIGINT operations, imagery analysis from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), and use of interpreters, among many other areas. All of these apply across the armed forces; they are not specific to SOF, but they are all requirements within SOF and can be extended to non-SOF units. When building an engagement plan with a host nation, the fact that these areas of military interest are collocated within a single element makes comprehensive, coherent planning manifestly easier. Of course, a solid security cooperation program should and must engage across a broad cross section of capabilities. Using SOF to package the training and then expand to include the rest of the armed forces is an efficient approach.

Consider also joint and multinational exercises where SOF can participate at a much reduced footprint and, therefore, cost. And, while in the case of the 5th SFR the exercises served the side benefit of pre-deployment training, they contributed directly to USSOCOM's effort to build a Global SOF Network. Two regularly scheduled SOF

exercises in which Slovakia participated over the described period were Jackal Stone and Night Hawk. In 2011 they participated in Jackal Stone in Romania as observers; the costs were per diem and travel for the commander and his chief of staff, the benefit was exposure to the SOF network in action. In 2012 in Croatia, they participated fully with an SOTU and command elements of an SOTG; the costs were one bus to Croatia and two deployed Mi-17 helicopters, the benefit were advanced training for the SOTG designated to deploy to ISAF in spring 2014, Slovak integration into the global SOF network, and recognition of Slovak Air Force assets to US SOF aviation planners. This was our first real-world example of SOF engagement showing benefits beyond SOF. In mid-2011 they participated in Exercise Night Hawk in Denmark; the cost was minimal as they deployed with the US SOF team with which they intended to deploy in early 2012, the benefit was their first operational exposure to the global SOF network and extremely realistic pre-deployment training with their paired US unit. Finally, in late 2011 they participated in a full spectrum training exercise in support of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team at our Joint Multinational Training Center in Germany. Here the cost-benefit analysis became stark. In addition to the SOTU, an entire Slovak battalion (minus) of mechanized forces deployed by rail to act as the opposing force. The cost of deploying the battalion was roughly half a million dollars of US exercise assistance funds, while the cost of the SOTU was one bus and one month partial per diem. This is, of course, comparing apples and oranges. But, as budgets decrease, funding international exercises will not support hundreds of thousands for mechanized battalion sized participation; it may still support a few thousand for SOF participation.

Our security cooperation program, with SOF as the framework, resulted in a plethora of benefits.

- Dropping of national caveats in order to accommodate SOF deployments.
- Contribution of three Slovak SOTUs to ISAF with two SOTGs planned.
- Integration of Slovak SOF into the Global SOF Network.
- In-depth understanding of all warfighting functions across the armed forces and the resulting ability to intelligently expand the security cooperation program.
- Extensive access to Joint Staff, Ministry, and even national leadership.

And, while some of the benefits described are certainly unique to the circumstances in the Slovak Republic and the current imperative of ISAF, many of the lessons are almost certainly transferable to a number of other countries.

> Sending the SOTG contributes to the fulfillment of the commitments to build defense capabilities within NATO. Implementation of militarily and technically demanding tasks by the Armed Forces will enhance the transformative effect and pass on the benefits to Slovakia. Implementation of training and counseling can also provide space for comprehensive engagement in SR reconstruction of Afghanistan after ISAF in 2014. Slovak government and non-governmental entities will gain experience and knowledge used in the preparation and the actual implementation of civil reconstruction in Afghanistan[27.]

Conclusion

Global threats, doctrinal changes, budget realities all highlight the continued importance of SOF in the future. Our most recent Defense Strategic Guidance in 2012 says, “Whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives, relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities. This requirement directly aligns with U.S. SOF strengths and core capabilities.’[28] Threats from extremist organizations, unstable or ungoverned spaces that need trained security forces to make safe, and the ability to rapidly respond

to unforeseen crises are all suited to the capabilities of SOF – both US and partner. Doctrinal changes, driven largely by the lessons learned over the last decade of conflict, will see continued emphasis on building partner capacity through security force assistance. It is a mission suited to and mandated to USSOCOM; and, while US SOF can engage across services and branches, working SOF to SOF has built-in efficiencies. And while budgets will almost certainly fall across DOD, SOF along with cyber and ISR are likely to suffer the least and may even expand.

These are the institutional advantages of building a security cooperation program around building partner SOF capability, but there are numerous further advantages. SOF normally represents the lowest joint element in a military structure, thus offering a microcosm of the armed forces in a compact unit. The ability of the defense team to develop a coherent, comprehensive, and sensible engagement strategy is significantly simplified. It becomes much easier to expand specific programs to a broader audience. Intelligence training to the 5th SFR S2 shop expands to the military intelligence service; communications training to SOF operators expands to the signal battalion and leads to additional military sales; individual SOF soldier training is opened to the entire force; and, joint SOF training exercises requires participation of conventional air assets and logistics units.

As a practitioner of security cooperation planning, the recent changes in security force assistance and the global focus on SOF come with a small price and a huge benefit. The price is SOF becomes the institutional focus by sheer bureaucratic force. The benefit, which far outweighs the price, is the emphasis on SOF provides huge benefits in terms of focusing the engagement plan, creating forces useful for global

deployment, facilitating access to the highest military and political levels, and providing a holistic view of the wider warfighting functions enabling an intelligent and coherent engagement plan well beyond SOF. A plan to address US interests in all its complexity.

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