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14. ABSTRACT In 2012, the Marine Corps Plans, Policy, & Operations Branch published the Marine Corps Approach to 21st Century Theater Security Cooperation. Highlighted in this document is the Commandant of the Marine Corps' charge to develop innovative ways for the Marine Corps to conduct Theater Security Cooperation. The Marine Corps can meet this challenge and improve Theater Security Cooperation activities with the establishment of a headquarters Command element for SPMAGTF-SCs. This additional organizational structure change will allow the Marine Corps to conduct more effective Theater Security Cooperation engagements during the post Iraq and Afghanistan Wars period. This subject is relevant because security cooperation enables access and promotes U.S. interest abroad. By establishing non-rotational, standing Security Cooperation MAGTF headquarters, to plan and administer security cooperation activities, the Marine Corps will improve its ability to support the Geographic Combatant Commanders.					
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

SPMAGTF-SC of the Future: Creating a Permanent Regionally based Special Purpose MAGTF-Security Cooperation Headquarters

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: SPMAGTF-SC of the Future: Creating a Permanent Regionally based Special Purpose MAGTF-Security Cooperation Headquarters

Author: Major Darren G. Allison, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: The establishment of a permanent TSC headquarters cadre will enable the Marine Corps to sustain efficient regional military-to-military relationships by, increasing partnership capacity, improving and assessing security cooperation efforts engagements, while maintaining flexibility and effectiveness.

Discussion: In 2012, the Marine Corps Plans, Policy, & Operations Branch published the Marine Corps Approach to 21st Century Theater Security Cooperation. Highlighted in this document is the Commandant of the Marine Corps' charge to develop innovative ways for the Marine Corps to conduct future Theater Security Cooperation. The Marine Corps can meet this challenge and improve Theater Security Cooperation activities with the establishment of a headquarters Command element for SPMAGTF-SCs. This additional organizational structure will allow the Marine Corps to conduct more effective Theater Security Cooperation engagements. This paper will discuss the importance of USMC Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) engagements during the post Iraq and Afghanistan Wars period. This topic is important because the decisions made in the current restructuring of and reduction of forces will affect the Marine Corps ability to match the growing request for increased Theater Security Cooperation engagements. This paper will challenge the current idea of security cooperation as a second tier mission set. This paper will formulate new ideas and strategies to the way the USMC currently conducts TSC. This subject is relevant because security cooperation enables access and promotes U.S. interest abroad; the U.S. Department of Defense, particularly the USMC must remain relevant in today's world while making innovative changes in manpower and capability.

Conclusion: The Marine Corps should consider the importance of a permanent TSC headquarters unit as it prepares for phase O operations post the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. As a result of relatively small force structure adjustments, the new SPMAGTF-SC Command Element will enable the USMC to conduct TSC operations more efficiently.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

I initially considered writing and researching about the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force-Security Cooperation during my assignment to 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division in Okinawa, Japan. While assigned to the “Oldest and Proudest”, I was assigned by the Regimental Commander, Col. Stephen Neary USMC to be the lead planner and then subsequently the Landing Force Commander for Landing Force Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training 2012 aboard the *USS Germantown* LSD 42. Attending the USMC Command and Staff College forced me to consider the future of the Marine Corps and reflect on previous experiences. I concluded that many of the issues TSC planners and operators face in the planning and conduct of Theater Security Cooperation exercises are a result of an inefficient unit structure. In short, small but effective task organizational constructs would result in a significantly improved mission. The establishment of permanent SPMAGTF-SC headquarters elements under each of the three Marine Expeditionary Units will enable the Marine Corps to vastly improve the quality of TSC engagements.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Danielle for supporting me during many hours of research. I would also like to thank Dr. Douglas Streusand of the Marine Corps University for his guidance and commitment to my MMS paper and overall experience here at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College. Without the help and support of these two, I would not have been successful in my endeavors.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the future size, posture, programs and missions of the US armed forces in general, and the Marine Corps specifically are uncertain. There is a consensus, however, that theater security cooperation will be a major mission. The Commandant of the Marine Corps has identified the development of “innovative, rotational solutions to meet theater security cooperation requirements in support of geographic combatant commanders (GCC)”¹ as a top priority. This paper argues that establishing non-rotational, standing Security Cooperation MAGTF headquarters, to plan and administer security cooperation activities will improve the ability of the Marine Corps to support the GCCs.

STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY

This paper discusses the advantages of standing up permanent, regionally based SPMAGTF-SC's. This paper is based in qualitative research utilizing military doctrinal and reference publications, concept papers, periodicals, after-action reports, and interviews to support the papers' thesis. The paper begins by identifying the Marine Corps' stake in TSC. The paper identifies potential issues and decisions the USMC must make after Afghanistan. Next, the paper describes and highlights recent SPMAGTF-SC unit deployments and exercises. The paper attempts to analyze key issues with the current SPMAGTF-SC construct and provide recommendations for the establishment of an innovative unit. In closing, the paper identifies issues for future consideration and provides opposing arguments.

WHY IS SECURITY COOPERATION IMPORTANT TO THE MARINE CORPS?

The Joint Pub 1-02 defines Security Cooperation as, “ All 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.”² The Marine

Corps has conducted these types of interactions and engagements throughout its history. After all, the Marine Corps' most valuable asset is its Marines. Theater Security Cooperation is a "people business", a business that requires an experienced expeditionary, modular, amphibious, and professional military force. The Marine Corps should be the service of choice when it requires overseas security cooperation missions and should not revert to a forcible entry only mindset.

For this reason, the Marine Corps should not accept the "break glass in time of emergency" force.³ Granted, over the next few years, services will be competing for dollars and missions in order to maintain credibility and usefulness. With a little thought and creativity, the Marine Corps can take advantage of its organizational structure and flexibility. While the Security Cooperation is on the low end of the continuum of operations, it can be argued that it may be the most important phase. The Marine Corps has already taken steps to better position itself in conducting phase zero operations with the adaptation of the SPMAGTF-SC. The Marine Corps is the nation's expeditionary force, and theater security cooperation is an expeditionary mission.

In terms of importance, many of the issues the Marine Corps faced during the Iraq and Afghanistan War stemmed from a lack of cultural sensitivity and knowledge of, different customs and ways. To be sure, cultural training alone will not win a war. Still, the experience resulting from Security Cooperation operations will prepare the American force for future phase four and phase five operations. For example, as forces become more familiar within a region, their ability to engage with foreign militaries and promote diplomacy will facilitate the military use of power among cultures much different from America. As an institution, the Marine Corps has postured itself for the transition to phase zero operations. For example, the Marine Corps has

increased the number of foreign area and regional area officer opportunities in the Marine Corps. As a result, an increased level of regional expertise will add to the capabilities of the forward deployed forces. The establishment of the Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group (MCSCG) and the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) will further strengthen the Marine Corps security cooperation capability as a whole by, increasing the knowledge and experience base of the Security Cooperation units.

MCDP 1-0 outlines five interrelated tasks the Marine Corps of today must accomplish: Conduct military engagement, respond to crisis, project power, conduct littoral maneuver, and counter irregular threats.⁴ Security Cooperation operations enable and support these tasks. Military engagements have always been a part of security cooperation. These engagements allow for access and help build partnerships and friends throughout the world. The ability to respond to crisis is greatly enhanced when United States forces are familiar with the country and populace. Countries that conduct operations with Marines security cooperation units will be more willing to allow access to their country during natural disaster and humanitarian assistance operations. The relationships built over time enable a faster response, thus a reduction of suffering and strife. In a word, security cooperation is a projection of soft power. “The Marine Corps forces leverage and contribute to larger ‘whole of government’ system of projecting ‘smart’ power across the range of military operations.”⁵ On a macro-level, every engagement is important. America’s ability to influence its partners and leverage collective strengths is vital. The presence of Marines in highly populated littoral areas throughout the globe is another key task mentioned in MCDP 1-0. TSC provides an opportunity for Marines to embark aboard amphibious ships. Many of the security cooperation engagements are in the littoral areas of partnered nations. It follows that, as the deployments to Afghanistan decrease, the deployments aboard amphibious ships will

increase. Because of this, the amphibious nature of many TSC exercises makes the Marine Corps the bi-lateral force of choice for many countries.

Finally, security cooperation directly affects the ability for irregular threats to cause instability in a region. The access gained by military to military engagements opens the door for whole of government opportunities and influence. The training of foreign forces enables them to protect their own countries and promote security in their region. The Marine Corps must continue to promote security cooperation as a first tier operation and not as a placeholder until the next kinetic war.

THE CONCEPT OF THE SPMAGTF

The concept of a standing SPMAGTF-SC headquarters would mark a new phase in the evolution of the SPMAGTF-SC concept. In order to, establish a clear understanding of the overall Security Cooperation headquarters concept, it is important to discuss the evolution of the SPMAGTF-SC. In 1992, the Marine Corps created the acronym “SPMAGTF” to describe the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force; this force was developed to be a temporary, task-organized, equipped, trained, and manned unit that conducted regionally based exercises and missions.⁶ The Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 5-12D defines the SPMAGTF as “a non-standing MAGTF that is temporarily formed to conduct a specific mission.”⁷

The 2008 Headquarters Marine Corps’ *Send in the Marines: Long War Concept* publication introduced the Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force (SC MAGTF) concept of force employment.⁸ This guidance document describes the SC MAGTF concept as a force, “Similar to a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), but task organized for security cooperation and civil military operations...having capabilities, mobility, and sustainability commensurate with its requirements to provide training to less developed military forces.”⁹ The

Marine Corps thus recognized that the dynamic security environment required a more flexible task organization for security cooperation. In 2011, the United States Marine Corps approved the term Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force-Security Cooperation (SPMAGTF-SC) in place of Security Cooperation-Marine Air Ground Task Force (SC-MAGTF).¹⁰ The doctrinal change highlights the purpose and roles of the SPMAGTF-SC and “provides clarity of organization and mission, as well as doctrinal consistency.”¹¹ For the basis of this paper, the change in doctrinal term also provides an opportunity to discuss the mission, task-organization, and ad-hoc nature of the SPMAGTF-SC. The term SPMAGTF-SC states the mission and the temporary nature of the organization. The proposed standing headquarters would change neither; it would, however, make the temporary MAGTFs more efficient and more effective at TSC.

SECURITY COOPERATION AND THE FUTURE OF THE MARINE CORPS

In 2012, the Plans, Policies and Operations (PP&O) branch of Headquarters United States Marine Corps issued the *Marine Corps Approach to 21st Century Security Cooperation* document. This document synchronized the 2010 35th *Commandant of the United States Marine Corps Planning Guidance* and the 2012 *National Defense Strategy* response to the changing security environment and the security cooperation mission.¹² In order to establish a foundation for all Marine Corps operations, The Commandant of the Marine Corps listed the following priorities:

1. Continue to provide the best trained and equipped Marine units to Afghanistan.
2. Rebalance our Corps, posture it to the future and, aggressively experiment with and implement new capabilities and organizations.
3. Provide innovative, rotational solutions to meet theater security cooperation (TSC) requirements in support of geographic combatant commanders (GCC).

4. Better educate and train our Marines to succeed in distributed operations and increasingly complex environments.

5. Keep faith with our Marines, our Sailors, and our families.

Above, the Commandant provided priorities and guiding tenets for Marine Corps operations. The SPMAGTF-SC's focus on interoperability and security force assistance fully supports the CMC's priorities.¹³ However, in the conduct of TSC today, the Marine Corps is not without challenges. The most recent reading and news suggest that the challenges are both internal and external. First, the Marine Corps must design a creative way to meet the continuous request for TSC engagements with fewer resources. Second, the Marine Corps must downsize its force numbers while increasing the effectiveness of bi-lateral engagements while maintaining capability and forward presence. In short, the Marine Corps can conduct TSC more efficiently.

The solution is the development of a regionally based (Marine Expeditionary Force subordinate), SPMAGTF-SC headquarters unit; the headquarters type organization will greatly increase TSC effectiveness. In other words, this headquarters will facilitate rotational issues with a non-rotational element. With attention to, the after-action reports of past TSC engagements, one can argue that, the current TSC mission construct is inefficient. The rotational and non-permanent nature of the current SPMAGTF-SC concept limits overall effectiveness, and the current USMC SPMAGTF-SC unit concept lacks the capability to conduct valid assessment of U.S. partnered militaries.¹⁴ Particularly, this is significant because the reduction of military budgets will force prioritization of engagements and possibly limit the frequency of bi-lateral missions. By and large, the ad-hoc creation of TSC command elements reduces the effectiveness and capability of military-military cooperation; the effects of this inefficiency will arise during the conduct of a real-world mission, whether humanitarian assistance or stability operations.

With this in mind, the increased instability throughout the world has presented a unique problem for the military today. The military today must be flexible and creative in its problem framing and task organization in order to meet today's challenge. It follows that the National Security Strategy 2010 provided clear guidance for future TSC operations throughout the world. It states, "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."¹⁵ The Marine Corps is best suited to conduct these missions.

Currently, the USMC tasks Marine Expeditionary Units, general-purpose forces, and ad-hoc SPMAGTF-SC's to support Combatant Commander's Theater Security Cooperation Campaign. The June 2010 *Marine Corps Operating Concepts* states,

Additionally, each MEF will form a Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force for Security Cooperation, or SC MAGTFs of up to 500 Marines and Sailors. Drawn from subordinate commands and focused on different regions, SC MAGTFs will be formed for a designated period on a rotational basis, within the larger framework of the overall training, exercise and employment plan for Marine Corps forces (this includes forces assigned to the Unit Deployment Program supporting PACOM).¹⁶

Granted, the concept of rotational forces has many positives; however, the lack of a SPMAGTF-SC headquarters creates a gap in engagement opportunity and does not allow for unit cohesion and continuity of actions between engagements. The recognition of this organizational problem and the unplanned affects it will have on the Marine Corps' future, assist in the formulation of assumptions and support research for this thesis. With this in mind, the following assumptions support this paper. First, the Marine Corps will make Security Cooperation a top priority as it transitions out of Afghanistan. Secondly, the downsizing of the Marine Corps and post-war budget restrictions will not hinder the resources and manpower utilized to enhance the SPMAGTF-SC concept. The third assumption is that, after Afghanistan, the Marine Corps will

revert back to its expeditionary and amphibious based tenets. The fourth assumption is that the renewed focus in Asia will provide opportunities for increased engagements and cooperation.

During the next few years, the United States military will begin re-deploying many of its forces back to the United States while restructuring the force for post-war operations. The leadership of the Marine Corps championed the operations in Afghanistan as priority number one. What will be the priority for the USMC during the inter-war period? As the nation re-sets its resources and re-examines stability efforts around the world, the United States Marine Corps must prioritize Security Cooperation as a significant mission set. The *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025* highlights priorities and offers hints for the future structure and capabilities of the USMC. The Marine Corps must posture itself afloat and ashore to conduct continuous engagement in regions of instability.¹⁷ Wherefore, the ability to respond will depend on the level of resources and organizational structure of the MAGTF. The Unit Deployment Program (UDP) will again become an important training and deployment opportunity for the infantry battalions and units involved in the revolving Afghanistan deployment cycle. The Marine Expeditionary Units will become the priority for the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) as they support the Geographic Combatant Commanders' ability to react rapidly to crisis and disasters.

While the traditional USMC deployments and MAGTF employments re-emerge, the USMC will face challenges fulfilling these missions. The reduction of manpower and resources will challenge the USMC's ability to be the service of choice when it comes to TSC. In 2011, the Marine Corps conducted hundreds of TSC activities in more than 75 countries and continue to be the main effort in GCC coordination and execution.¹⁸ The long-term effectiveness of these engagements will depend on the persistent presence of Marines and Sailors in the future.

RECENT SPECIAL PURPOSE MAGTF-SC DEPLOYMENTS

As evident in Table 1, the USMC's current TSC approach is both global and dynamic. Two recent SPMAGTF-SC deployments are the Black Sea Rotational Force 2011 and Landing Force Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training 2012 (LF CARAT 12). These are examples of SPMAGTF-SC that operated within the European Command (EUCOM) and the Pacific Command (PACOM) AOR (Area of Responsibility). The paper will further examine both of these SPMAGTF-SC's in order to support the thesis.

In 2010, EUCOM expressed interest in security cooperation efforts in its area of responsibility, specifically the Black Sea, Balkan, and Caucasus region.¹⁹ This interest resulted in the deployment of Marines to the Black Sea region of Romania for military to military exchanges and building of partnership capacity.²⁰ The Black Sea Rotational Force (BSRF) was officially formed. Of note, the initial BSRF was manned by active duty and reserve Marine Corps units. Following the success of BSRF-10, BSRF-11 deployed to the region for a five month deployment. Unlike BSRF-10, force requirements in Afghanistan required BSRF-11 to be manned predominantly by Marine Forces Reserve Units.²¹ Following its pre-deployment training at Camp Pendleton, BSRF-11 deployed to the permanent forward operating site (PFOS) of U.S. European Command (EUCOM) Task Force-East (TF-E), located in Constanta, Romania.²² While deployed, BSRF-11 participated in events with partner nations from throughout the region; training was provided in such areas as combat marksmanship, nonlethal weapons, patrolling, and Marine Corps martial arts. The participating nations included Romania, Bulgaria, the Republic of Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Macedonia, Serbia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Bosnia, Albania, Montenegro, and Croatia.²³

Security Cooperation engagements like BSRF-11 will become increasingly important as the Department of Defense reduces its military footprint in Europe and Asia. The reduction of Army forces in the EUCOM AOR will force the prioritization of USMC TSC efforts in the region as the nation re-focuses the instruments of national power on the Pacific Area of Responsibility AOR.

Landing Force Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training 2012 (LF CARAT 2012) is a USMC unit tasked with fulfilling the Landing Force and security cooperation mission aboard amphibious shipping during the conduct of the annual CARAT TSC exercise. Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) is an annual Commander United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) TSC engagement in support of the USPACOM Theater Campaign Plan. Since 1995, CARAT has consisted of a series of bilateral exercise and training events with Southeast Asian nations of Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei, and Malaysia.

In March of 2012, Marines from 4th Marine Regiment, 3d Marine Division deployed to Darwin, Australia as the Headquarters element for the initial Australian Rotational Force. This headquarters would also become the (CE) for LF CARAT following the Australian mission and oversaw all U.S. forces for both exercises. The CE was an adhoc organization that sourced Marines and Sailors from 4th Marine Regiment and throughout the 3d Marine Division. The Australian rotational force GCE consisted of Company Fox, Second Battalion, Third Marines (F2/3). F2/3 conducted unilateral training on the bases attached to the Robertson Barracks Australian Army base. After a month of field training exercise and community relation events, the entire Australian Rotational Force deployed to Thailand to begin their CARAT TSC mission. Marines of 2d platoon, Company Fox, 3d AAV Battalion embarked the USS Germantown along with additional CE Marines in Okinawa and sailed to Thailand to meet the GCE. The Marines

conducted TSC exercises in Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia partnering with South East Asia nations. The training consisted of bi-lateral amphibious landings, field exercises, community relations events, civil affairs training, and legal symposiums.²⁴

Table 1: Marine Corps Security Cooperation in 2011²⁵

Service-Level / Institutional	Select Major Exercises	Other Support to GCCs
• Australia MAGTF. Supported Presidential posture initiative in Australia to provide rotational MAGTFs. • Service Staff Talks. Held talks in 2011 with UK, Netherlands, France, Japan, and Australia. • Marine Corps Leaders of the Americas Conference. Co-hosted by USMC and the Peruvian Marine Corps, this year's conference focused on countering threats to security and supporting HA/DR. • Foreign Military Sales. Sales included the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle and Amphibious Assault Vehicle. Maintained	• BALIKITAN (PACOM) • COBRA GOLD (PACOM) • CARAT (PACOM) • TALISMAN SABRE (PACOM) • KEY RESOLVE (PACOM) • ULCHI FREEDOM GUARDIAN (PACOM) • SHATRUJEET (PACOM) • PHIBLEX (PACOM) • IRON MAGIC (CENTCOM) • INFINITE MOONLIGHT (CENTCOM) • ECHO MOUNTAIN (CENTCOM) • AFRICAN LION (AFRICOM) • NOBLE SHIRLEY(EUCOM) • AGILE SPIRIT (EUCOM) • UNITAS ATLANTIC (SOUTHCOM) • TRADEWINDS	Named Operations • Operation TOMODACHI (Japan) • Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR (Libya) Special Purpose MAGTFs • SPMAGTF-Black Sea Rotational Force • SPMAGTF-12 (Africa) • SPMAGTF-Africa Partnership Station • SPMAGTF-Amphibious Southern Partnership Station SC Teams for Enduring SFA Efforts • United Arab Emirates • Mexico • Philippines • Liberia • Saudi Arabia Global SFA Efforts • Non-Lethal Weapons • Counterdrug • Intelligence • Marine Corps Special Operations

ISSUES WITH THE CURRENT SPMAGTF-SC CONSTRUCT

There are two major issues with the current SPMAGTF-SC unit construct. First, the current plan forgoes the need for a permanent command staff in order to maintain flexibility in mission. The second issue is the increased requirement to conduct steady state security, engagement, and relief reconstruction activities, with no increase in force structure or resources.²⁶ Many of these exercises are repeated either annually or bi-annually; there is no

mechanism in place to maintain the momentum or relationships established during TSC. The Future Operations sections move on the next exercise on the slate. If the DOD aims to maintain the current levels of access and experience in PACOM and EUCOM, the need to create a permanent command element capable of planning and coordination is clear. The headquarters element would be similar to the MEU CE but on a much leaner scale. Most if not all of the problems and after-action reports highlight the lack of continuity or planning on the front end of these SPMAGTF-SC deployments. The ad-hoc nature of the SPMAGT-SC units equates to a continuous turn-over of experience and knowledge. The Marines and Sailors assigned to the SPMAGTF-SC are more than likely unfamiliar and new to the mission and environment. Many of these units are manned by reservists that are limited by Intermediate Location (ILOC) re-deployment and activation guidelines.

Under the current SPMAGTF-TSC construct regional knowledge and area experience are a key component in developing a manning document.

Regionalization is the process through which individual Marines and specific U.S. Marine Corps units develop intellectual focus and expertise relative to a specific geographic region.²⁷

The expectation is that Marines assigned to these SPMAGTF will become experts in the region and maintain the level of knowledge and relationships to be effective over time. However, true regionalization cannot be achieved through the current unit sourcing concept.

In order to respond to the engagement requirements throughout the world future SPMAGTF-SC units will have to do more with less. The wars in Afghanistan and most recently Iraq required most active Marine units to deploy overseas. Quite naturally these deployments required most of the resources and manpower of the MEFs. In response, Marine Forces Command identified the Marine Forces Reserve as a potential solution to the sourcing problem. The reserve units performed at an incredibly high rate. However, the complex reserve unit

command relationships and deployment limitations hinder unit and mission success. As the Marine Corps transitions into the inter-war years, active duty units will become the main effort in TSC efforts throughout the world. In order to efficiently accomplish the mission of building partnership and engagement, the Marine Corps must make doctrinal changes to the SPMAGTF-SC unit structure.

THE NEW SPMAGTF-SC RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations should be considered by the Marine Corps leadership in order to improve the USMC TSC task. First, the newly established SPMAGTF-SC HQ will be a subordinate unit to the Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters. For example, III Marine Expeditionary Force SPMAGTF-SC headquarters will be stationed out of Okinawa. The headquarters element will consist of an Officer in Charge, an Operations Officer, a Foreign Area Officer, an Operations Chief, and a command element consisting of administration, operations, and logistics clerks. Each officer and staff non-commissioned officer will undergo cultural and educational training via the Marine Corps Tactical Advisory Group (MCTAG) and Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned. The additional ancillary staff will likely consist of a Public Affairs Officer, Staff Judge Advocate, Civil Affairs officer or staff non-commissioned officer, and Advisors from MCTAG. The final manning document will be relative to the mission and task assigned thus maintaining the “Special” nature of the force.

Secondly, the headquarters unit will conduct all of the initial planning conferences, site surveys, Office of Defense Cooperation and Marine Advisory Group coordination with the host country and associated exercise. The Officer Conducting the Exercise (OCE), the Commanding Officer of the battalion or company tasked with executing the TSC exercise will conduct a hand-over with the SPMAGTF-SC HQ staff. An operations representative will attend the required

planning conferences prior to execution. Similar to the MEU CE, the SPMAGTF-SC HQ unit will remain in place and continue to execute regional TSC through the MEF. Add to this, the Marine Corps will continue to utilize its rotational model when developing the TSC training exercise and employment plan. This will allow for the maximum number of units inside the MEF to conduct TSC exercises resulting in a spread loading of experience and regional knowledge. This construct takes advantage of the positive aspects of the current structure while diminishing the ad-hoc nature of the current force. Gene Germanovich suggests, “To alleviate the burdensome planning requirements associated with Security Force Assistance (SFA) missions, OSD should work with the State Department to engineer a modest increase in the number of SCO personnel at U.S. Embassy Country Teams.”²⁸ The proposed increase of SC personnel at the embassy level and the dedicated planning efforts of the SPMAGTF-SC headquarters element will minimize current planning deficiencies.

A secondary course of action would be tasking the Special Operations Training Group of each MEF with managing and synchronizing the TSC engagements in each MEF. Currently, this synchronization and TSC management is done at the MEF headquarters level. This change is similar to the previously mentioned permanent headquarters however; this force structure change takes advantage of an already existing organization. Under this new construct the SOTG will guide the GCC, MARFOR, and MEF level SPMAGTF-SC mission via the Training Exercise Employment and Plan model. The MEF level Training Exercise Employment Plan will identify units from the Marine Air Wing, Marine Logistics Group, and Marine Division to stand up and assume the role of SPMAGTF-SC for a designated period. This document would task logistics, aviation, and ground units down to the squadron and battalion level to train and prepare for a deployment as a SPMAGTF-SC. This concept is very similar to the current Afghanistan unit

rotation model; however this model is in support of TSC operations. While this is not ground breaking, nothing like this currently exists in the MEFs.

Many of the problems associated with TSC exercises occur from a lack of continuity in the planning teams and the executing units. The Special Operations Training Group (SOTG) currently conducts specialized skills training and certification for the Marine Expeditionary Units. The expansion of SOTG's role will allow the unit to train, coordinate, and support all SPMAGTF-SC deployments. Currently, the most important TSC exercises are amphibious based. Previously discussed examples are the BSRF, LF CARAT, and the SPS. The increased tasks assigned to the SOTG will validate an increase in unit personnel, however; the basic training and certification process will remain the same. Finally, the SOTG re-organization will result in increased unity of effort and will streamline the current SPMAGTF-SC training and certification process.

THE VALUE OF THE STANDING SPMAGTF-TSC HEADQUARTERS

Why should the Marine Corps adopt this new SPMAGT-SC model? These changes reflect the importance of TSC as it is directly tied to the increased engagement demand signals from partnering nations. If the Marine Corps is not committed to maintaining a forward presence, other militaries will fill the void. By establishing a permanent headquarters unit, the Marine Corps will enable the continuity of relationships and build trust with its bi-lateral partners. The more permanent structure allows for a consistent military presence while at the same time minimizing the force structure and boots on the ground.

These new proposals also allow for a more efficient relationship with embassy Security Cooperation Organizations (SCO), in particular, the Offices of Defense Cooperation (ODC) and the Joint United States Military Advisory Groups (JUSMAG) staffs. These staffs develop and

coordinate all military exercises and events internal to partnering nations. These staffs work with the US Embassy country teams and closely with foreign militaries in the conduct of all TSC activities.²⁹ The consistency proposed by the headquarters model closely aligns with the rotation times of the ODC and Defense Attaché officials at the US Embassies abroad. As a result, military to military cooperation will improve resulting in a more accurate assessment of partnering nations' capabilities and interoperability.

Another advantage of a permanent headquarters is the increased opportunity for assessments. Many of the current TSC exercises repeat the same schedule of events and schemes of maneuver from year to year. The regionally aligned SPMAGTF-SC will enable the implementation of a formal bi-lateral partner assessment tool. This tool would allow planners at the planning conferences to make suggestions to improve and increase the level of training when compared to previous year performance. For example, the revamped exercises will become more complex while at the same time increasing interoperability. The improved flow of information from the SPMAGTF-SC headquarters to the executing units will advance bi-lateral military interaction and identify areas of improvement for both the United States and partnered military.

Currently, most of the knowledge and information learned from previous engagements develop directly from After-Action reports and the Center for Marine Corps Lessons Learned (MCLL). While these documents are valuable for the executing unit, they cannot substitute experience and localized knowledge. Instead, the lessons learned, country and cultural experiences are shared among the staff of the SPMAGTF-SC headquarters vice redeploying with the rotating units once they return to their home stations.

Direct experience equals efficiency and the better use of the TSC budget. This level of efficiency is a by-product of continuous interaction among the ODC and the regionally based

SPMAGTF-SC headquarters. The current state of the economy will force GCC to make tough decisions on what countries and to what end do we engage in the TSC realm. According to Gene Germanovich, “Scarce resources should be allocated to the countries and indirectly the militaries that support our national policies in the region.”³⁰

Traditionalists will oppose the proposed changes to the way in which the USMC conducts TSC. The most prominent argument will be against the standing up of a permanent headquarters. They will highlight the increased manning and budget requirements of establishing new units. The current budget reductions may decrease the US military engagement frequency. Opponents will argue that establishing a permanent is an inefficient way to maximize resources. Others will question if abrupt changes are needed at all. They will point to the many successful TSC events and exercise conducted year to year throughout the world. Those that support these arguments will not view TSC as a front tier mission in our inter-war years.

CONCLUSION

The SPMAGTF-TSC is a new concept that will continue to evolve over time. The Marine Corps is America’s expeditionary force and must continue to be the lead in DOD security cooperation efforts. The Marine Corps cannot afford to remain fixed on the counter-insurgency and irregular warfare operations of the last decade. In fact, the United States Marine Corps must be open-minded in its approach to the inter-war years. The competition for access and military-to-military partnership, specifically on the African continent and the Asia-Pacific has increased.³¹ Over the last decade, the United States Navy has directed resources to its Security Cooperation efforts throughout the world. Certainly, these changes were a result of an under-utilized fleet during the land-dominated operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The USN made innovative changes in its usage of resources and materials by identifying their grey hull ships as

a significant source of influence and power in TSC. As a result, the USN has maintained influence by adapting to the current environment. The Marine Corps can learn a lot from its blue water brothers. TSC is the most effective vehicle to utilize the Marine Corps greatest asset during the inter-war years. The creation of a permanent headquarter unit for the SPMAGTF-TSC will greatly enhance the partnership capacity and military effectiveness of the Unites States partnered countries, and maximize the limited United States Marine Corps resources of the future.

ENDNOTES

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¹³ Headquarters United States Marine Corps Plans, Policies,& Operations (PP&O) *Forward Deployed and Engaged: The Marine Corps Approach for 21st Century Security Cooperation*, (Washington, D.C. , 2012) p. 1

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Defense. Defense Security Cooperation Agency. *Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Estimates Report*. (Washington, D.C: DSCA, February 2012), 21.

¹⁵ White House. *National Security Strategy 2010*. (Washington, DC: White House, May 2010), 11. http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf (accessed Jan 2013)

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¹⁸ Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. *The Marine Corps Approach for 21st Century Security Cooperation*, 10.

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<http://www.mccll.usmc.mil/pdfs/newsletters/MCCLL%20February%202012%20Newsletter-CDR-9723.pdf>

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²¹ MCCL, *Monthly Newsletter*. 3.

²² MCCL, *Monthly Newsletter*. 3.

²³ MCCL, *Monthly Newsletter*. 3.

²⁴ Personal notes from authors time as LF CARAT 2012 Commander

²⁵ Ibid, 10.

²⁶ Headquarters U.S.M.C. *Marine Corps Operating Concepts.*, 55

²⁷ II MEF, Standing Operating Procedures for SPMAGTF.,7

²⁸ Gene Germanovich, "Security Force Assistance in times of Austerity", Joint Force Quarterly-67(4th Qtr 2012) <http://www.ndu.edu/press/security-force-assistance.html> (accessed 7 April 2013)

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³² Comment from the author. If the SPMAGTF-SC headquarters is adopted by the Marine Corps, then it stands that the Special description of the current SPMAGTF-SC term may be removed to reflect the permanent nature of this headquarters organization.

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