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ADVISING AS A CAPABILITY FOR SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND TRAINING

Introduction

The fragility of transitioning or conflict countries can be addressed by effective capacity building conducted by advisors strategically recruited, selected and trained. Advising is a tool of international assistance which promises of strengthening host country institutions, systems and processes. In order to deliver on that promise, countries who deploy advisors need to make informed decisions on who to entrust with this assistance, how to prepare them and how to support their activities to maximize the potential of the mission. Progress has been made in the last decade but much remains to be learned and institutionalized. As was discussed in the workshop, advisors are often selected without consideration of their background, experience, or training, which has been found to severely hinder the advisory effort. And often, pre-deployment training fails to expose advisors to local processes, doctrine, and/or history. And training is neither standardized across providers of assistance nor are they

Report

Drafted by
Capt. Ludovica Glorioso and
Dr. Nadia Gerspacher

focused on advising as they still privilege combat training at the SFA level. To contribute to that remaining need for additional knowledge and insights, the **NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence (NATO SFA COE) organized a Workshop on Advising as a Capability for SFA on 6-7 December 2018 at the Centre for High Defence Studies (CASD), in Rome.**

The workshop was co-chaired by Colonel Franco Merlino, the Director of the Centre, and Dr. Nadia Gerspacher, Academic Director of the MODA program, author and expert. The workshop was designed and implemented by Cap. Ludovica Glorioso and Dr. Gerspacher with the aim to address the strategic advisor profile in the SFA environment from a multidisciplinary perspective and to have an arena of discussion on the issues regarding training and education and lesson identified. The goal of the workshop was to further the knowledge of advising of the SFA community and others who work to build the capacity of security forces. The 2-day workshop brought together managers of capacity building programs from a variety of countries as well as experienced practitioners and training professionals. Their presentations and the discussion with the workshop attendees inventoried the existing lessons and reflections around how to set up advising missions for sustainable capacity building activities.

All the material (slides and videos) relevant to the workshop has been published on the NATO SFA COE website at the following link:

www.nsfacoe.org/documents&publications/documents

Opportunities in Recruitment, Selection and Tasking

Planning for advising missions requires first and foremost to gain an in-depth understanding of what advising tasks can deliver as opposed to training, mentoring and even monitoring. Advising consists of sharing of expertise to develop solutions to capacity gaps. If institution building at either national or local levels is the aim, planning advising missions is appropriate and can deliver stronger systems that function more effectively to manage logistics, human resources, contracting, and strategy development, etc... Alternatively, if the transfer of skills, whether on how to maintain equipment or populate databases, is determined to be a gap to be addressed, a training effort is more adequate.

Tasking requires a good understanding of the enabling context needed for advising activities to effectively build sustainable capacity. Thus, the language of the tasking and the approach which underpins it must integrate lessons of the past 20 years of advising. Namely, advising should be understood as a political as well as a technical endeavour, respecting local ideas for change is the only way to make room for it, guarding against making things worse and doing as little harm as possible, looking for viable and sustainable solutions to capacity gaps and being mindful of absorptive capacity.

Mandates of advisors need to give them enough time to develop constructive, peer-to-peer relationships with counterparts who will have to take the lead towards change.

Insights for curriculum design

Mandates also need to include the parameters of the advisors' mission which includes what advisors can/should do and what is outside of the purview of the advisor and needs to be referred to other actors. This is especially important to ensure that advisors don't use equipment transfers as leverage for getting access to institutional processes and systems. The importance of coordination was also discussed several times during the workshop, highlighting the need for taskings to include a context of collaboration across relevant international assistance providers.

Tasking that comes from informed planning then lays the foundation for recruitment and selecting guidelines. Developing the profile of advisors that can be effective at SFA and Security Sector Reform (SSR) in general was signalled as an area needing further work.

Advisors are recruited along the lines of the tasking and based on their technical knowledge and expertise. Advising, it was argued, is a fundamentally fluid and political endeavour.

Therefore, professionals who are technical and lack the ability to develop relationships, read a room, have the sensitivities needed to understand what is not being said and have the patience and curiosity to engage in many consultations with counterparts and stakeholders will have a difficult time advising effectively.

In addition, effective advisors are able to identify the components of their expertise which can be viable in the host country context and understand that their goal is to customize a solution to fit in the environment through both buy-in and existing capacity.

The element of cultural awareness, consisting from the knowledge of the host culture and the sensitivity towards cultural differences, was deemed to be necessary but not sufficient for preparing advisors for their capacity building tasks. While understanding the cultural norms and habits of counterparts and other stakeholders is important and technical expertise is key, providing the advisors with relationship building skills and mission management aptitudes. In addition, it is key to equip advisors with the advising mindset which privileges the leadership and the interests of host country's counterparts as it is important to understand what change is possible in a specific time and place. Essentially, advisors must create a space for themselves and gain credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of host country counterparts.

The speakers demonstrated the importance of comprehensive training which includes the advising skills mentioned above, operational readiness, country study including language instruction and key concepts of international assistance such as governance, rule of law, corruption, and mission knowledge including the ability to map a mission.

Additional areas required for preparing advisors adequately include the tools for mitigating dilemmas that arise frequently, how to address complex problems.

Overall, military and civilian officers all need to exemplify behavioral changes. The request for checklists and concrete procedures was also

mentioned several times during the workshop. Training programs who provide either tips (earn trust with the counterpart) or checklists for how to go about advising are not equipping advisors effectively. In effect, advisors need to reflect, assess, evaluate and identify viable solutions on their own while working hand in hand with the host country's counterparts. There is no effective importable model, so advisors need all the skills to identify what can work in a specific context and have the tools to support the development of those unique solutions.

The presentation of an evaluation of advising programs revealed the importance of teaching the complex web of knowledge, skills and information. Interestingly, evaluation of advising instruction months after it occurred and well in the deployment cycle of advisors reveal that advisors trained to behave differently after a mindset shift do not report having made this transition even when their actions demonstrate effective advising efforts.

This suggests that an integration of the mindset of advisors characterized in part by the fact that they are outsiders with no authority to make change is regularly achieved and in use by advisors.

One of the key points made throughout the workshop is the importance of institutionalizing training curriculum. The lack of standardization and of the professionalization of advising as a capacity building task is partly due to a lack of institutionalization.

Training programs change in accordance to the managers of programs more often than is productive for advising. Instead, it is important for programs of capacity building nature to have a process to integrate the various content areas in the way of doing business rather than allow the logistical and implementation challenges to dictate the content from iteration to iteration. While progress is paramount in training content, a general sense of good practices and a theory of change are important to maintain consistency from advisor to advisor.

Methodology and Approaches to Training

Methodology was also deemed one of the key decisions of training which will lead to effective advising. It is conventional wisdom that interactive, adult learning principles-driven training provides the opportunity to trainees to practice the skills learned, know when to use a specific tool and how to combine skills and knowledge to arrive at the fluid and customized approach that is necessary for effective advising. Several presenters showed the importance of scenario-based exercise, the use of role players and small group work. This practice needs to reflect the real-life challenges and opportunities of advising missions and offer trainees the time to integrate the various tools given to them during training.

Lecture-based sessions are key to teach content but should be kept at key concrete messages and instruction needs to incorporate most instruction time to experiential learning. The benefits of bringing together a wide range of nationalities, from different working experiences and genders were also part of the discussion. A heterogeneous group creates the environment for challenging ideas, concepts and discussions. Advising can also be about introducing new concepts about fundamental rights and principles that are not usually on the counterpart's horizon.

Standardization is another key component of the curriculum designed for courses that have to be harmonized in the main core parts in order to avoid discrepancies and confusion by the counterparts. Standardization also contributes to cooperation and continuity between the advisors, especially during rotation periods or handovers.

Advising in Capacity Building programs

The last part of the session addressed the importance of Capacity Building programs as part of SFA, examining NATO's approach and in particular the process for generating Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to provide tailored support. Part of the debate was focused on the NATO crisis responses system and the new approach in planning activities, looking at the flexibility and an analysis of the environment and the conduct of SFA in the different phases of a crisis.

The discussion highlighted a number of shortcomings of the current approach related to SMEs, including lack of common selection criteria, training requirements, and understanding of a duty of care provisions as well as undefined legal liabilities. On the positive side there have been steps taken to promote the development of a community of interest, as well as identification and evaluation of Subject Matter Experts in same areas such as good governance SMEs identified through NATO's Building Integrity Programme.

The discussion concluded by stressing the need for: identifying NATO's requirements, developing a transparent process to make it clear what NATO has done and where we are going.

Other International Organizations (IOs) have a similar challenge and it may be worthwhile to reach out to other IOs to learn from their experience.

The NATO BI Policy endorsed on 9 July 2016 by Heads of State and Government of Allied nations at the Warsaw Summit recognises that corruption and poor governance complicate every security challenge we face and undermine our peace,

security and operational effectiveness. The discussion examined NATO's good governance efforts as set out in the NATO Building Integrity Policy and BI's contribution to the Alliance's three core tasks, collective defence, crisis management and cooperation with partners.

SFA provided to NATO's partners include the conduct of risk assessment review of current practices, peer to peer consultations, as well as education and trainings delivered via residential course, mobile training teams and ADL courses.

Conclusions

- Need to know what you want to get out of advising missions and then clearly mandate what needs to be accomplished and provide parameters (what can/should be done and what should not);
- Standardize, if not coordinate, the professionalization of advisors across programs and across countries to ensure advisors work with each other as expert teams;
- Training needs to be holistic and prepare advisors for both what they will need to accomplish (SFA/SSR) and how they will do it so that it is sustainable and a sound investment;
- Investing time in training of advisors will translate into greater levels of capacity building;
- Recreating the environment in which advisors will need to operate and give them the opportunities to practice operating in that environment as advisors is a key component of preparation;
- Evaluations of training content and methodology are key to further informing training programs as well as advising program management as a whole.

Subject Matter Expert's List

Mr. James M. Cunningham, Project Lead, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR).

Mr. George Dryden, Program Manager MODA Program.

Col. Michele Facciorusso, Commander of the 7th Carabinieri Regiment "Trentino Alto Adige" stationed in Laives (Bozen).

Ms. Nadia Gerspacher, Academic Director of the MoDA training Program, US DSCA Defence Security Cooperation Agency.

Cpt. Ludovica Glorioso, NATO SFA COE Legal Adviser.

Mr. Jürgen Illig, International Expert in bilateral projects and European Union civilian CSDP.

Col. Mário Leal Gouveia, Head of the Republican National Guard (GNR-Portuguese Gendarmerie) on Training International Cooperation.

Ms. Natacha Meden, Security Sector Governance Advisor.

Col. Franco Merlino, NATO SFA COE Director.

Ms. Susan Pond, Senior Officer, Head Building Integrity Programme at NATO.

Ms. Victoria Walker, Assistant Director DCAF and Head of International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT).

Ms. Vlasta Zekulic, NATO HQ, Operational Preparedness Officer.



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