



SFA OPERATOR PROFILE

Prepared by NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence
in collaboration with an international group of experts

NATO SFA COE
ANALYSIS REPORT

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**NATO Security Force Assistance
Centre of Excellence Rome, Italy**

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NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence

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By virtue of its high potential deriving from multiple military and civilian professionals and the use of a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, the Centre is a hub of reference in the Security Force Assistance field at the national, international and NATO level.

It provides expertise to contribute to the development and experimentation of concepts and doctrines. The Centre also acquires and elaborates lessons learned, contributes to the definition of development models in support of local forces in crisis zones where there is a North Atlantic Council approved NATO operation or mission and conducts educational and training activities for instructors, mentors and personnel belonging to other nations.

To broaden its spectrum and benefit from a different perspective, the Centre also collaborates with universities and international civilian and military organizations to provide a unique capability to the Alliance and NATO Partners.

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Foreword

Following an Allied Command Transformation (ACT) request for support to ‘analyse a specific area of expertise to develop an analysis report either in support of ACT and JALLC or to lead the Study’, the NATO SFA COE, augmented by an Italian Army General Staff team of psychologists, launched this project to produce a recognised SFA Operator Profile.

The SFA Operator Profile seeks to offer a profile definition for advisors, mentors and trainers in the SFA environment, in support of NATO Allied Command Operations (ACO) and ACT, documenting lessons identified and best practices to enhance NATO HQs and NATO nations’ ability to select, recruit, train and deploy personnel in SFA operations. The development process is articulated in four sequential phases: the planning phase, the collection phase, the analysis phase and the production phase.

The project focuses on the job descriptions and human and professional requirements to define, in a strategic, operational and tactical environment, the psychological traits and competencies necessary for an advisor, mentor or trainer. Overall, the project seeks more broadly to maximise human capital capabilities to perform SFA activities.

I am confident that this report, which analyses lessons learned and best practices, will be a useful tool in understanding the complexity of the SFA field and the pivotal role of the human dimension in building rapport, trust and confidence amongst advisors, mentors, trainers, local forces and authorities while pursuing defence capacity building in crisis zones.

While the views expressed by this report contain the opinions of a team of subject matter experts in the psychological and human resources fields, they do not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of NATO, any agency, any government or international organisation.

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This comprehensive report has been produced by the NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence (SFA COE) in support of ACT. The material has been collected from subject matter experts from 11 NATO and Partnership for Peace nations, involved in a broad range of SFA operations. The report is an answer to NATO's need to identify the SFA operator profile to enhance NATO's ability to recruit, select, train and deploy its personnel to SFA operations. The report should be used as a background study when planning SFA operators' education and training solutions.

Soft skills are the key attributes of SFA operators working alongside Local Forces. The findings of this report should be used to draft the job description of SFA operators and to identify the core competencies and the training they need. The NATO-accredited SFA training should be described in AJP 3.16 as a reference for planning and delivering pre-deployment training.

LTC Harri Paldanius

**Department Head of Military
Contribution to Peace Support**

FINCENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper presents the outcome of the field research conducted by the SFA COE across the spectrum of NATO SFA activities to identify trends, lessons learned and best practices. The study presents facts and figures emerging from data collection, assessment of gaps and areas for improvement or sustainment, with a particular focus on identifying a standardised strategy in the selection, education, and training domains.

The findings from the analysis highlight redundancies, coupled with wider inconsistencies which point to a need to also run a review of existing NATO policy documents. Identified discrepancies sit within the NATO SFA arena, particularly in the education and training sector, noting that instructional programs appear not to be entirely aligned with the guidelines as set out in extant published NATO doctrine. This misalignment is assessed as the possible root cause of wider misunderstandings among the targeted sample. All SFA education and training stakeholders have their place within the Alliance, and their tasks and roles are clearly defined. Their commitment to the development and preparation of personnel deploying on NATO SFA missions must be harmonised and their efforts optimised to avoid a waste of resources due to duplications and inefficiencies.

The recommendations in this report will serve as a baseline for the execution of the next phase of the project, namely the elaboration of the SFA operator profile and job description. In the first part of the document, after a brief presentation of the project, the paper will address the differences and peculiarities of the SFA functions of advising, mentoring and training. This section will be followed by considerations concerning the SFA training offer in the context of NATO Global Programming. The final part will focus on the results of the analysis of behavioural aspects and core competencies conducted on the statistic population.

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH OUTCOMES ANALYSIS

SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE OPERATOR – ANALYSIS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This Project has followed three lines of effort – selection, education and training and professional development – and is based on five decisive activities – data collection, data analysis, SFA advisors’ enhancement week, SFA specialist, training and doctrine update and innovation. This Analysis Report represents a key milestone to enable other follow-up activities.

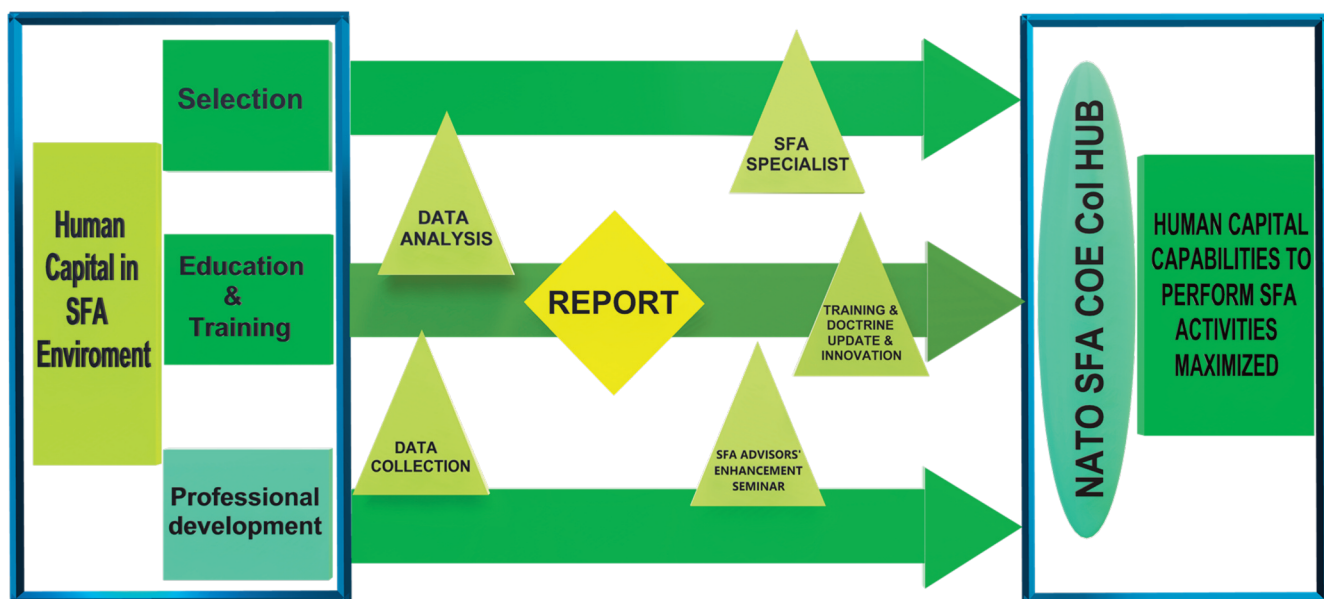


Figure 1

Planning Phase

The planning phase was characterised by the design of the entire project. The starting point addressed one fundamental consideration, namely the importance of human capital in the SFA environment. This was identified as a key element and multiplier in conducting SFA activities and reflects the Alliance’s desire to look beyond the traditional standpoint of Human Resource Management to explore all aspects of human capital optimisation across the organisation. The Alliance recognises the paramount importance of the human dimension in its continuous innovation process, focusing on personnel enhancement efforts. As a result, building on human capital as scope for reflection, the planning phase of the project touched on three lines of ef-

fort mentioned above, namely selection, education and training and professional development, to frame the wider process development. This phase took place from January 2019 to April 2019.

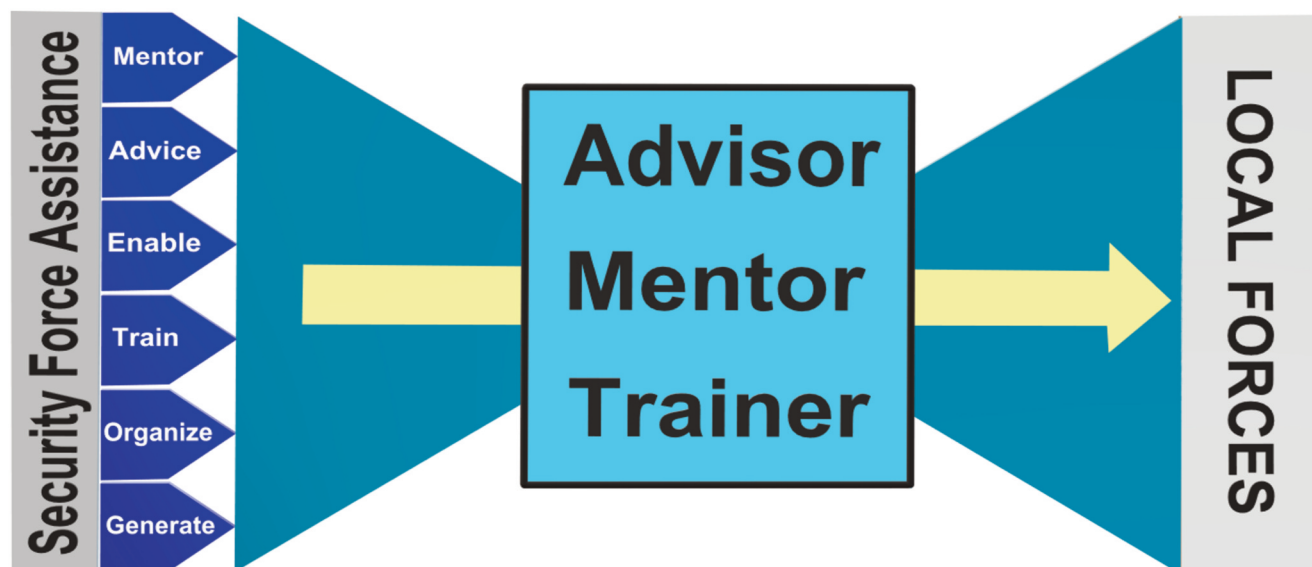


Figure 2

Collection Phase

In light of the importance of human capital, the project sought to gather the experiences of military and civilian personnel deployed worldwide as advisors, mentors and trainers who worked alongside local forces (LF), by asking them to identify fundamental aspects of their job and foreign experiences. This stage aimed to collect the experiences of such personnel by obtaining a suitable number of records characterised by objective and subjective types of data. The most appropriate methodology to collect this type of information was in the form of surveys, single interviews delivered in persona and virtually and focus groups conducted by the COE's team augmented by an Italian Army General Staff Psychologist.

The collection method was based on a .xls data entry matrix, derived both from the survey items and standardised questions during the single interviews. This matrix had seven subsections.

- a. **Personal data.** The first subsection gathered personal information, including nationality, age, rank, armed forces, gender, duty during SFA activities, deployment abroad as an advisor, mentor or trainer, education and whether the individual had undertaken any selection, training, exercises or courses.
- b. **Core Competencies.** The second collected core competencies that an advisor, mentor or trainer should have to be able to perform the essential responsibilities of the job. This subsection was sub-divided into four categories: technical competencies, relational and behavioural competencies, psychological traits and physical requirements.

- c. **Networking.** The third subsection recorded answers about networking, identifying any key personnel whom the interviewees had interacted with as an advisor, mentor, or trainer and what kind of networks and relationships they had to establish to successfully perform their duties.
- d. **Interviews.** The fourth subsection recorded the issues that emerged from the focus groups and any other considerations emerging from the interviews that did not fit into any of the predefined questions.
- e. **Selection.** The fifth subsection collected information concerning the selection process, with specific attention to psychological traits and physical requirements. This subsection applied only to the subjects who had been selected.
- f. **Courses and exercises.** The sixth subsection encompassed courses and types of exercises that individuals had attended. It applied only to subjects that had completed a course or exercise.
- g. **Suggestions.** The seventh subsection collected all the suggestions provided by the interviewees about courses, experience and training that could be beneficial to successfully perform their role as advisors, mentors, or trainers.

During the data collection phase, more than 120 interviews were conducted in countries including Poland, Finland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, the United States, Italy, Albania, Canada and Turkey: a total of 253 records. The statistical sample was characterised by women and men with different cultural origins, with a distinct background of interactions, different approaches and mindsets. The records encompass a wide range of ranks from OR-2 to OF-5, a wide range of deployments (Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Belize, Trinidad, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Mali, Botswana, Kosovo, South Africa, Ukraine, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Nigeria, Central Africa Republic, South Korea and Tunisia) and a range of nationalities.

Analysis Phase

Starting with the collected data, in close coordination with professional analysts and cultural awareness SMEs, the analysis phase aimed to design a model of the SFA Operator tailored for the geographic areas where the Alliance might carry out SFA activities. It provided recommendations, insights and lessons to share to enhance NATO's human capital efforts. The phase aimed to achieve five analysis objectives that would enable attainment of the overall goal:

A.O.1: Isolate the key aspects outlining and differentiate the three functions of advising, mentoring and training.

A.O.2: Recognise and isolate core competencies and relevant networking aspects.

A.O.3: Identify elements to serve as guidelines to develop standardised selection processes across the NATO SFA community.

A.O.4: Identify and analyse training options with bespoke approaches and methodologies in the NATO SFA training spectrum.

A.O.5: Identify possible gaps in the existing NATO SFA doctrine and SFA training and education offer.

To achieve these objectives, the analysis phase was articulated into four sub-phases:

- a. **Phase 1.** Virtual coordination meetings. Working with all participants to collate required data (survey, focus group and interview outcomes with a summary sheet).
- b. **Phase 2.** Periodic updates. Conducted remotely by email/VTC as required.
- c. **Phase 3.** Analysis review and final adjustments.
- d. **Phase 4.** Delivery of documented analysis outcomes.

The analyst was tasked with providing a study paper based on the analysis results collected which included a narrative summary enabling the Lessons Learned branch to draft the Report. Additionally, psychological profiling and contribution were to be produced by the Italian Army Psychology and Psychiatric Office.

Production Phase

As an output, the SFA COE was to draft a report and share it amongst NATO partners to present a valuable tool to assist concept and doctrine development and provide a useful tool to assist personnel being deployed in SFA operations. The report would also support the production and review of current doctrine while providing a baseline for developing a model that applies to courses and tutorials. It and the related follow-up activities would also provide a toolset for strategic, operational and tactical level planning and trigger the development and integration of further NATO SFA COE projects.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Advisors' Enhancement Seminar. This is an annual event hosted by the SFA COE to enhance advisor capacities and capabilities in interacting with their counterparts. The activity is based on the active review of the SFA Operator Profile Analysis Report, through a vignette-led exercise with the following objectives:

- a. To test the SFA Operator Profile and training to identify gaps and recommend improvements.
- b. To assess the document's adherence to current operational requirements.

The NATO SFA COE will be a *training lab* where advisors can experiment and test tools and techniques to better work in the LF system.

SFA Specialist. The SFA Specialist is a new figure that is being proposed based on data collected during the study. They will be selected and trained to produce a highly-skilled person with the requisite competence and knowledge in the SFA field and to gain experience so that they are capable of performing and supporting SFA activities permanently.

ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH STUDY

This paper seeks to present the outcomes of the field research conducted by the SFA COE across the spectrum of NATO SFA activities to identify trends, lessons and best practices. The study presents figures from the data collection, assessment of gaps, areas for improvement and items to be sustained, with a particular focus on identifying a standardised strategy in the selection, education and training domains. The findings from the analysis conducted highlight redundancies and wider inconsistencies which point to a need to review existing NATO policy documents. Identified discrepancies sit in the NATO SFA arena, particularly in the education and training sector, noting that instructional programmes appear not to be entirely aligned with the guidelines set out in current NATO doctrine. This misalignment may be the cause of wider misunderstandings among the targeted sample. All SFA education and training stakeholders have their place in the Alliance and their tasks and roles are clearly defined. Their commitment to the development and preparation of personnel deploying on NATO SFA missions must be harmonised and their efforts optimised to avoid resource waste due to duplication and inefficiencies. The recommendations in this report will serve as a baseline for the next phase of the project, namely the elaboration of the SFA Operator Profile and job description.

In the first part of the document, after a brief presentation of the project, the paper will address the differences and peculiarities of the SFA functions of advising, mentoring and training. This section will be followed by considerations concerning the SFA training offered in the context of NATO global programming. The final part will focus on the results of the analysis of behavioural aspects and core competencies of the target population.

Methodology

The research targeted 253 personnel formerly deployed on SFA missions from 11 NATO and Partnership for Peace nations. All project activities were conducted either onsite or remotely depending on target audience availability and travel limitations and restrictions due to COVID-19. The final dataset, after removing unactionable entries, refers to the outcomes from the screening of 209 subjects as follows.

- a. **Individual interviews.** Some 79 semi-structured interviews were conducted in which the main topic and questions were predefined, but were adaptable and modifiable. The interviewer had a list of topics and questions to be asked and collected the information thought useful. The interviewer may also decide the order of the questions and formulate them in the way thought most suitable based on the subject and the relationship established. Through this technique, it is possible to obtain complete and in-depth information.
- b. **Focus groups.** Six focus groups were conducted. A focus group is a qualitative research methodology consisting of a group interview to bring out the opinions of the interviewees on a specific topic. This allows an in-depth interpretation of results obtained through quantitative instruments.

The following charts show the breakdown of the statistic population

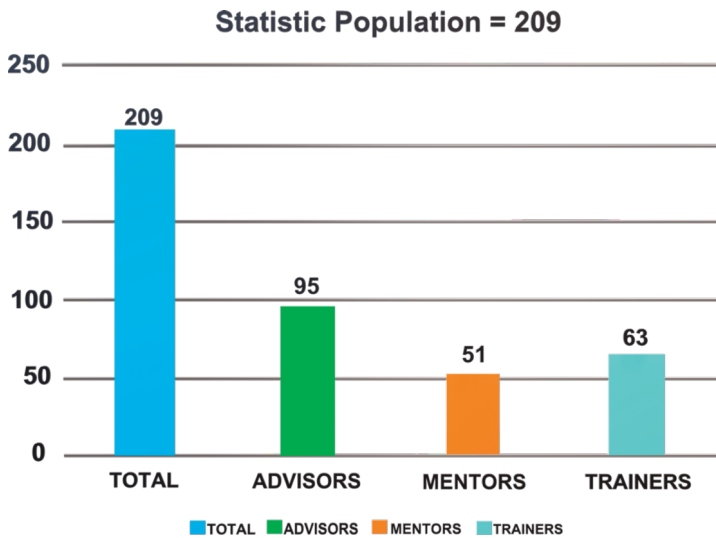


Figure 3

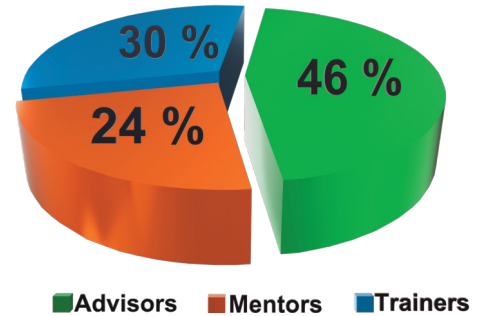


Figure 4

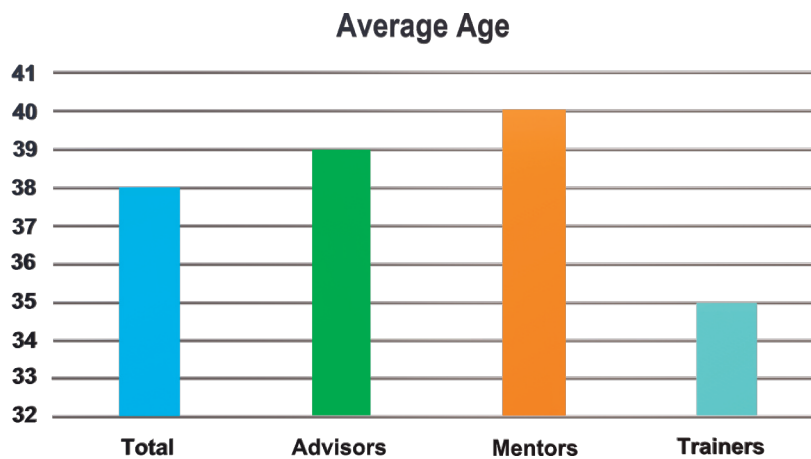


Figure 5

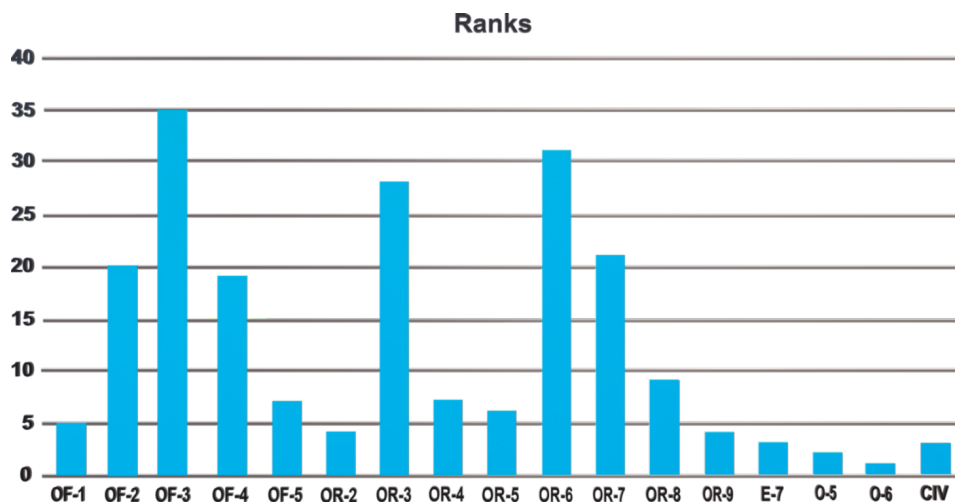


Figure 6

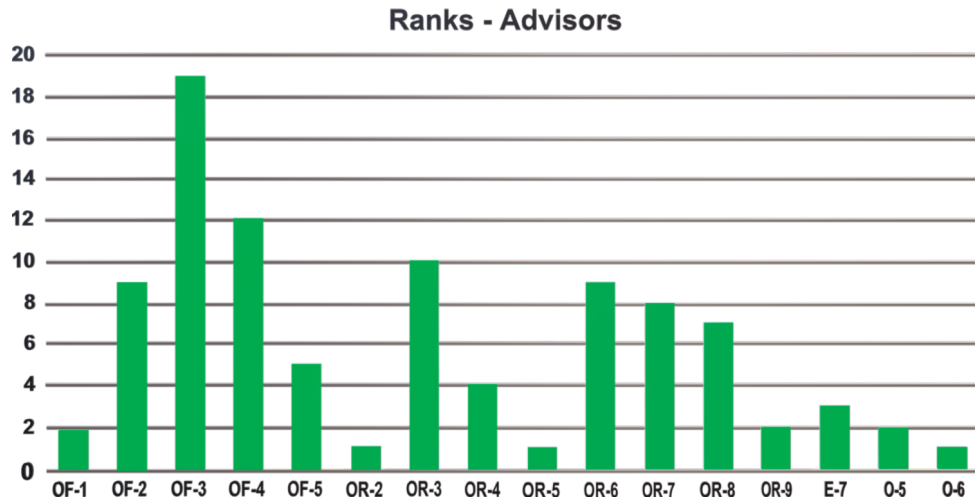


Figure 7

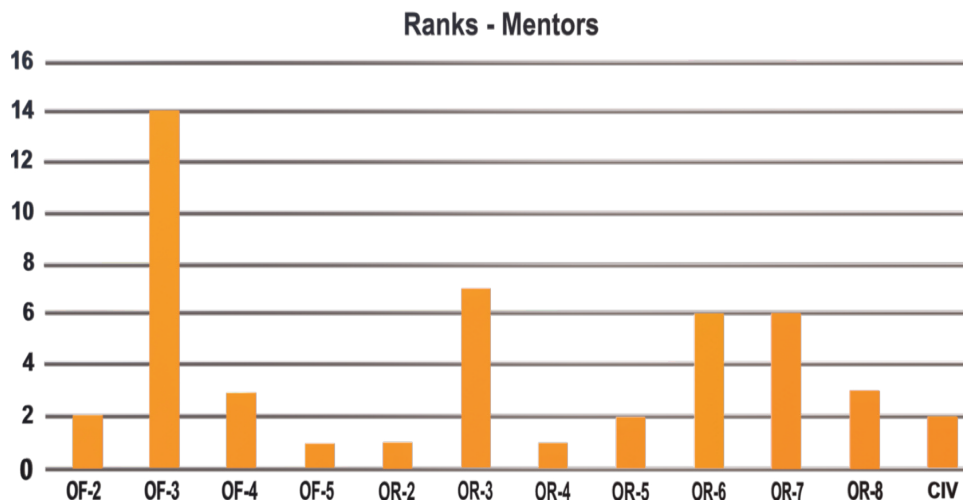


Figure 8

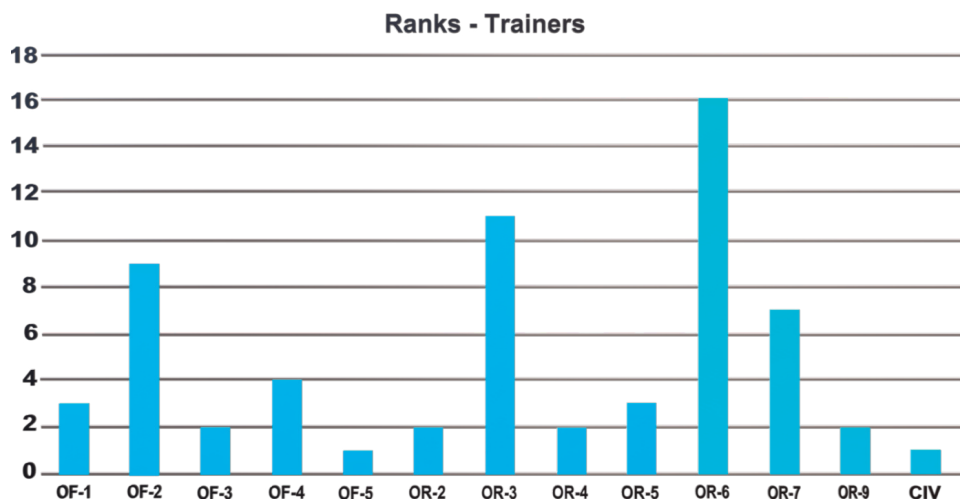


Figure 9

ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

Because the primary goal of this study was to gather information to support the drafting of the job description for the role of personnel employed in an SFA post, it was important to analyse their functions individually. To build a suitable profile, the researchers started from the definitions in AJP 3.16,¹ examined them and isolated the main characteristics of each role. The following paragraphs address those by the level of complexity associated with each function and the wider array of competencies required for the position. For a future evolution towards more efficient solutions in the SFA training arena, it is important to develop a deeper understanding of the requirements in education and training and the requisites for employment in each role.

Functions are extensively described in the AJP 3.16. Expected outcomes, type of activities and aspects of the targeted individuals from the LF are well defined. However, the directive does not contain detailed profiles of the operators performing different functions which could serve as a guideline for the recruitment of the most appropriate personnel for the job. Although the AJP 3.16 states that ‘advisors should have the required skill-sets and experience and should be selected carefully’, or more generally that ‘not everyone is suited to perform SFA functions’, a list of characteristics to be referenced by the national selection processes is missing. This is left to the job description of each post. However, given the peculiarities of the SFA domain which, more than others, is primarily centred on the human factor, such guidelines indicating the core competencies requested and the training pipeline to be followed before deployment is deemed necessary to harmonise activities across NATO. AJP 3.16 should also state the cluster of NATO-accredited SFA training and education providers to assist pre-deployment training (PDT).

ADVISING

Advising activities comprise improving the performance of designated actors by providing active participation and expertise to achieve strategic or operational objectives. An advisor can recommend a course of action, offer advice, or inform another party about a fact or situation.²

An advisor primarily operates at the strategic level, offering advice that can contribute to the development of policies and procedures. The target audience is decision-makers or those who influence them. They facilitate and influence using counsel and achieve improvement of the security forces through the creation of a professional relationship based on trust. Advising also includes observation, evaluation and reporting on the performance to focus efforts and resources. Additional information useful to further describe the nature of the role of the advisor can be drawn from the academic environment.

An advisor is normally a person with deeper and more extensive knowledge in a specific subject area, usually with cross-functional and multidisciplinary expertise. Their role is that of a mentor or guide and differs from any task-specific role. In organisations an advisor’s role is to typically sit on the leadership and executive boards:

¹ NATO AJP 3.16 – Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Force Assistance (SFA).

² AJP 3.16, p. 2-5.

- a. **Advisor:** a person whose job is to give advice, especially to government or business or to students.
- b. **Advisory:** giving advice; having the power or duty to advise.
- c. **Advisory body:** an organisation which has the authority to make suggestions about other organisations, especially in a certain field, should behave and run their affairs.³

Together, these definitions confirm that the role of the advisor is associated with somebody whose profile is suitable to cover positions at the top of organisational structures. The level of expertise expected from individuals in such a role implies not only the knowledge but also the skills necessary to interact with senior leadership and possibly the ability to influence them in critical decision-making processes.

An advisor can be considered a counsellor. Their expertise must be extensive to best assist the advisee by providing advice on critical matters and help the counterpart to perform better and more effectively in their duties. To this extent, it is probably not a coincidence that the *NATO Bi-SC Education and Individual Training Directive (E&ITD) 075-007* uses the words 'enable' and 'advisor' to indicate the Expert Proficiency Level which defines the job performance expected to be reached at the end of any 400 level programme on a scale from 100 to 500.

MENTORING

Mentoring is about leadership and relationships. A mentor should focus on developing and enabling personnel in leadership and command positions to achieve a sustainable capability. A mentor is an experienced and trusted individual who provides counsel and leadership to another person, or organisation, by agreement [...] Mentoring activities are summarised as teaching, guiding, influencing and supporting.⁴

These can be activities conducted by small teams of subject matter experts who are tasked to work closely with designated personnel and provide direction and guidance which may concern the conduct of military or security operations. Mentors tend to work at the operational level. They assist in the accomplishment of tasks focusing primarily on developing systems, processes and procedures and the implementation of various decisions and policies. This may include activities such as planning policies and programming development.

Many organisations want to establish a mentoring-type culture so that employees can engage with those who have the experience and knowledge and provide advice that can help the employer along their career path. Put simply, mentoring takes place when the individual seeks advice from someone who has the knowledge that they are looking for. It is something that cannot be forced. The person who is approached for the provision of mentoring advice is usually someone who is respected because of their track record and competence. Another critical factor that would influence the willingness of someone seeking mentoring is whether the prospective mentor would be open and trustworthy rather than judgemental, and ready to disclose the challenges they had in the same area. The last aspect that determines if someone is a good mentor is whether they are available when needed, which implies a requirement for constant proximity with the mentee as being paramount.

³ Longman: Dictionary of English Language and Culture.

⁴ AJP 3.16, p. 2-6.

TRAIN AND EDUCATE

The aim of training and education is to teach a person (or organisation) a skill, or type of behaviour, through regular practice and instruction. Training may include the development and execution of programmes [sic] of instruction and training events. NATO may train and educate the local forces and may also contribute towards establishing a sustainable HN training capability [...] Training and education involve developing leadership and management skills and building confidence, ethos and professional pride.⁵

Once specific policies or procedures have been adopted, the training function contributes to increasing the capacity of those concerned so that they can effectively implement such policies and procedures. It also seeks to develop programmes and educate, instruct and prepare individuals and organisations to maintain effective and enduring capabilities. Training also includes assessment and evaluation in conjunction with the counterpart to focus effort and resources.

Coaching

AJP 3.16 states that ‘the main responsibilities of the training activity staff can be summarised as train, guide, coach, observe and evaluate’. Coaching, which is not to be confused with mentoring, is used to indicate a practice in the field of personal development, finding application in multiple domains including careers, financial planning, health and wellness, education, life, sports and the arts.

Although nowadays the activity is regulated by several professional associations which ensure that practitioners perform to recognised standards and follow a code of conduct, coaching is originally defined as to ‘train or teach, especially not in a place of formal education; give instruction or advice to (a person or a group of people)’⁶ and a coach is a person who trains sportsmen and sportswomen for games’.

The concept of coaching perfectly applies to the SFA activities focused on education, possibly even better than the term ‘training’ because coaching indicates a form of development in which an experienced person – the coach – supports a learner or client in achieving a specific personal or professional goal by providing training and guidance.⁷

Coaching Vs Training

It is worth considering whether substituting *coaching* for *training* could be a more suitable choice. This is because, in general terms, training is more focused on gaining experience and better performance through practice, whereas the term coaching better highlights the dimension of human closeness that the role implies while assisting someone committed to a path of personal development. The next paragraph presents a brief analysis of the responses provided by the target when asked to list the core competencies that an advisor, a mentor and a trainer, should

⁵ AJP 3.16, p. 2-3.

⁶ Longman: Dictionary of English Language and Culture.

⁷ Passmore, Jonathan, ed. (2016) [2006]. *Excellence in Coaching: The Industry Guide* (3rd ed.). London; Philadelphia.

possess to effectively perform in their job. The aim was to assess whether the interviewees had a perception of the three roles as very distinct or, on the contrary, tended to consider the three as mainly overlapping.

AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF THE SFA FUNCTIONS

The following answers from the interviews and the focus group sessions indicate that some of the selected interviewees recognise that there is no marked line to separate the three and that very often the job requires a requirement to shift from one to the other:

The work is continuously morphing in all the 3 levels (trainer/mentor/advisor) without a fixed condition.

There is a blurred line between Advisor/Mentor/Trainer. To have success you have to have all these 3 characteristics.

It is good to have all these 3 figures just in one person.

Not so defined lines between the 3 duties.

Often there are blurred boundaries.

The role changed based on conditions.

However, this sub-group represents 1.02% of the whole set of answers. Only 6 out of 761 individuals commented on the necessity to have a flexible approach in their role based on the situation and conditions.

Comments pointing out crossfunctionality

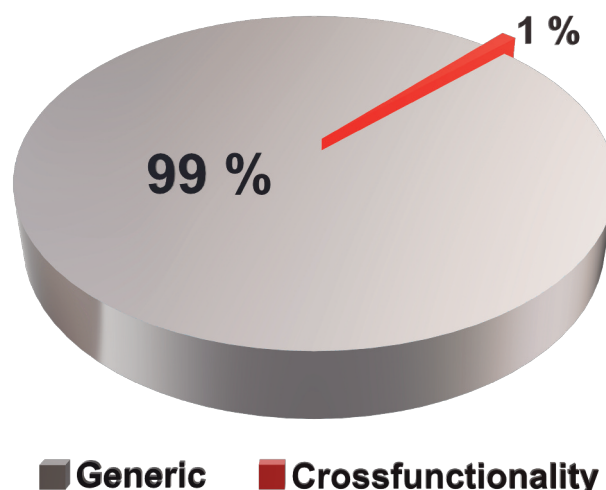


Figure 10

Indicators that interviewees have a perception of the three functions as clearly distinct are very limited. The following words were identified as plausible clues suggesting that interviewees would identify one of the roles as operating at a very specific level. The results were obtained through a screening of the word of choice used in the open answers.

- a. Strategic: 1
- b. Operational: 1
- c. Political: 2
- d. Diplomatic: 1
- e. Basic: 6
- f. Tactical: 6
- g. Technical: 6

Choice of specific words to describe the function

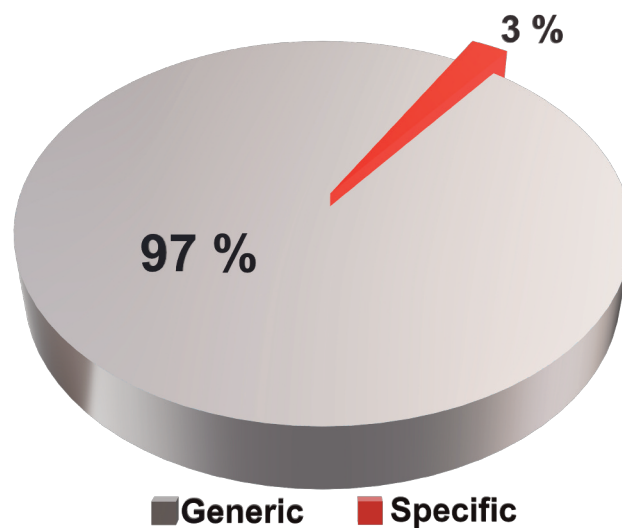


Figure 11

None of those interviewed made any comments suggesting a link between their role or function to specific outcomes, objectives, end-state or effect to be achieved by the counterpart. This simple analysis shows that although the different interpretations of the function were not polarised among the sample, still, a clear, common and shared definition of the role of advisor, mentor and trainer did not emerge.

As shown by the analysis of the standing doctrine and from the outcomes of the survey, the three functions could be perceived to be and at times be overlapping. The ability to master the whole

set of competencies and skills necessary to shift from one to another when required is key. However, a clearer distinction between the three functions should be made and considered long before the employment of personnel in specific tasks. The differences between the respective roles must be understood and should guide not only the development of the tailored education programme to be completed as part of PDT but also the careful shaping of bespoke selection and recruiting processes. For every role, a dedicated training path should be designed to reflect the peculiarity of each role. This particularly applies in the case of the advisors, whose tasks sit at a higher level than those of mentors and trainers and whose profile comprises a wider and deeper level of knowledge. Such training curricula should be standardised throughout the whole NATO community and, in the case of national solutions, receive the accreditation of the designated subject matter competent authorities from the Alliance. Modules must be aligned to NATO doctrine and their completion should be a prerequisite either to deployment into theatre or to move to the more advanced level if required by the position to be covered in the crisis establishment (CE). Thus, the problem should be tackled from the perspective of the expected outcome. This should be the leading principle to allocate or employ the resource. To better understand the placing of someone to cover a specific function, it is necessary to shift the focus to the target audience once their specific needs have been assessed – their needs in terms of effects in the domains of advising, mentoring, or training assistance. To conclude this overview about the three roles, let us now summarise the main distinctive traits of each one to be considered for future training, selection and appointment.

Advisor

The focal point of the role is well depicted in AJP 3.16 with the expression ‘improve the performance of designated actors providing active participation and expertise to achieve strategic and operational objectives’. The assumption is that the advisee is a trained professional already capable of performing assigned tasks independently. The counterpart is expected to operate at the highest level of their own organisation and will ideally have a decision-making role or, at the very least, duties in support of decision-makers. An advisor should, in principle, have extensive expertise in counselling and influencing a counterpart, with no requirement for professional training required and hence no additional training and education required. Training or education are not to be considered a core task for the advisor, whose role is to conduct the advising activity to help the advisee perform more efficiently. However, the experience of past deployments confirms that things may well be different in reality. Although the individuals identified as the receiver of advising assistance should have a higher and more complete education, very often their level of training does not meet expectations. For this reason, although not among their primary responsibilities, advisors should be ready to confidently carry out teaching and training tasks to address possible shortfalls in their counterpart’s preparation.

Key Words/Functions

Advisor:

- extensive expertise.
- counselling and influencing.
- ready and able to confidently carry out also teaching and training tasks.

Advisee:

- improve the performance.

- strategic and operational objectives.
- trained professional.
- capable to perform independently.
- highest level.
- decision-making role.
- preparation expected to be complete.

Mentor

A mentor must provide advice when and if needed by the mentee. In this case, the activity is linked to the support provided to the assisted individual in achieving personal development goals by providing guidance and correction if deemed necessary. While the mentee is ideally already able to perform their task, the level of proficiency possessed shows a significant margin for improvement which may require the direction of an expert. Mentoring is mainly performed within a context where the counterpart is conducting assigned activities or tasks. The mentor is supposed to assist the mentee and intervene with corrective actions. This includes the option to carry out teaching and training, when necessary, to fill preparation gaps that could hamper the desired performance. The mentor's role is strongly characterised by the implicit proximity with the counterpart. The effectiveness of the guidance could significantly diminish if the expert is not available when required by the mentee.

Key Words/Functions

Mentor:

- Provides advice when and if needed.
- Provides guidance and correction.
- Intervenes with corrective actions.
- Retains the potential to conduct teaching and training.
- Remains in proximity with counterpart(s).

Mentee:

- Achieves personal development goals.
- Is already able to perform their task.
- Has a margin for improvement.
- Requires the direction of an expert.
- Conducts either assigned activities or tasks.

Trainer

A trainer carries out instructional activities in their specific field of expertise. Regardless of whether the final aim is training or education, the initial evaluation is that the trainee has not yet acquired the basic set of practical skills required to fulfil their tasks. The activity generally takes place in a training context and the assumption is that the trainee cannot yet perform independently. The job of a trainer is therefore to plan and execute training activities that will allow the trainee, through practice, to reach a sufficient level of preparation to be considered ready to operate. Because the recipient of the training function is identified with personnel not yet fully educated or trained, the natural assumption is that the target audience and therefore the trainer's context of employment

should be considered as being at the lower levels of the LF organisation. Although the objective of the training function is reached through education and practice, in this case, coaching is considered to be a better word choice to identify the function. The word 'coaching' better highlights the implied human aspects involved, from the perspective of both who is providing and receiving the instruction, along the path to achieving personal development goals.

Key Words/Functions

Trainer:

- Carries out instructional activities.
- Has specific field of expertise.
- Plans and executes training activities.
- Accepts that implied human aspects are involved.

Trainee:

- Has not yet acquired and therefore does not possess the basic set of practical skills.
- Is in training context.
- Cannot yet perform independently.
- Has reached a sufficient level of preparation.
- Is not yet fully educated or trained.
- Has attained lower levels of the LF organisation.
- Maintains goals of personal development.
- Aspects common-to-all roles are:
 - Requirement for teaching and educational skills.
 - Existence of subject matter expertise.

If not already possessed by the selected personnel, teaching and educational skills should, at the very least, be subjects for education across the training programmes delivered to personnel being deployed to SFA posts, similar to how negotiation and influence techniques already are. With regards to subject matter expertise, this paper will expand on the concept of 'expert' in a later section. Being 'competent experts on their own field' is already indicated as a prerequisite to attending the existing NATO-accredited SFA specialised courses, namely the SFA Operator's Course and the Institutional Advisor Course.

All this considered, the peculiar traits of each function would suggest an approach that leads to the fusion and implementation of different training and selection programmes reflecting the different requirements of the three roles. Once again, a particular mention has to be made of the role of advisor, as it is the most often misinterpreted by the personnel, even expressing a certain misuse of the terminology in official documents and training programmes. This quite often causes misunderstanding, if not confusion, about the role itself, as we will see in the following paragraphs. The role of the advisor is a critical task, requiring a very peculiar profile, which comprises a broad professional experience and sound personal traits necessary to deal with staff in highly sensitive environments. In general, Troop Contributing Nations (TCNs) should take into consideration what is indicated by AJP 3.16 with regards to the selection of personnel, which states that 'not everyone is suitable to work in SFA'. The topic of personal and behavioural requisites will be addressed in the section dedicated to the psychological aspects of the profile.

THE MATRYOSHKA MODEL

Once we have defined the distinctive aspects of each role, the conclusion is that the overlap of the three functions appears more evident in the training and education domain. Experience from past deployments has often shown how the LF counterparts do not possess the expected level of preparation. This has translated into a need to provide instruction more often than initially assessed, in particular to counterparts who were expected to not need such instruction. As a result, training LF has become a common practice across all levels, whereas all the other specific activities expected to be conducted by the different SFA roles have become more blurred. This has somehow led to the mistaken belief that trainers, mentors and advisors are called to execute the same tasks. However, although teaching skills and some behavioural traits are common-to-all roles, the inherent nature of each does not make shifting from one to another possible in every case. We can assume that an advisor, because of their professional background, potentially possesses the whole set of necessary skills to perform across the whole SFA tasks. This includes the ability to conduct training tasks for their advisee and mentoring if required.

However, someone who has been selected because of their suitability to serve as a trainer or mentor may not have the required level of knowledge to perform as an advisor. It is also possible that an individual meeting all the requirements of an advisor could be employed in training and mentoring functions. But even if that were the case, the tasks, duties and level of employment of the LF counterpart would define the type of SFA role required and it would be highly unlikely this would fall in the category of advising-type support.

The Matryoshka model suggests that while personnel selected and trained as an advisor have the competencies to also cover mentoring and training tasks, mentors and trainers cannot necessarily serve as advisors, unless this is confirmed by their professional backgrounds and certified by their attendance to appropriate training curricula.

A competent expert and the understanding of the Advisor role

As we have seen, being a 'competent expert' is a requirement to serve in one of the SFA functions. This section will show, through a few brief considerations, a certain misperception about the roles that emerged from the interviews. This introduces the idea of the necessity to have a procedure in place to thoroughly assess the level of expertise of the personnel selected to serve on any NATO SFA mission.

A competent expert could be identified as someone who possesses a certain knowledge that is significantly higher than an average standard. Furthermore, in the case of advisors, knowledge requisites should even match reasonable criteria of seniority for obvious reasons linked to the positions covered by their advisees. Nowadays, a widely accepted and controversial rule of thumb to define an expert is Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000 hours rule. Without going into details and technicalities, Gladwell's theory is raised here to highlight that although the theory needs to be matched with several other aspects, time is one of the key factors to develop consolidated expertise. In other words, 'it takes many years of concerted effort and practice to become a true expert in a field'⁸ and here, defining an expert is crucial to assess the profile of SFA personnel.

⁸ Miller M., 'The Great Practice Myth: Debunking the 10,000 Hour Rule', Six Seconds.

Someone serving as a trainer on an SFA mission, may (and should) be a competent expert in their own field by definition. Consider, for example, a mortar operator. In this case, the experience can be purely related to practice. Regardless of the years spent in that specific role or the age of the individual, the right amount of practice together with the right predisposition could be enough to perform outstandingly when operating the weapon systems and, therefore, to train someone else to do it. Young professional athletes are another good example of how age is not a discriminating factor in outperforming senior competitors. However, the definition of advisor suggests that the number of different situations experienced throughout the years contributes to generating a professional background broad enough to enable the person to influence and possibly guide the decision-making process of someone in a key organisational position. With experience and seniority also comes a bigger comfort in interacting with senior leadership which, for sure, is not so natural for junior personnel.

What has been said so far might look obvious. However, from the data collected, it emerged that 49 interviewees (aged between 24 and 29), who declared that they had deployed as advisors may bring our assumptions into question, noting our proposed notion that older advisors appear better placed to advise based on experience and time in the military. To better understand this concept, consider the graphics of the military age in each of the 11 countries forming the statistic sample.

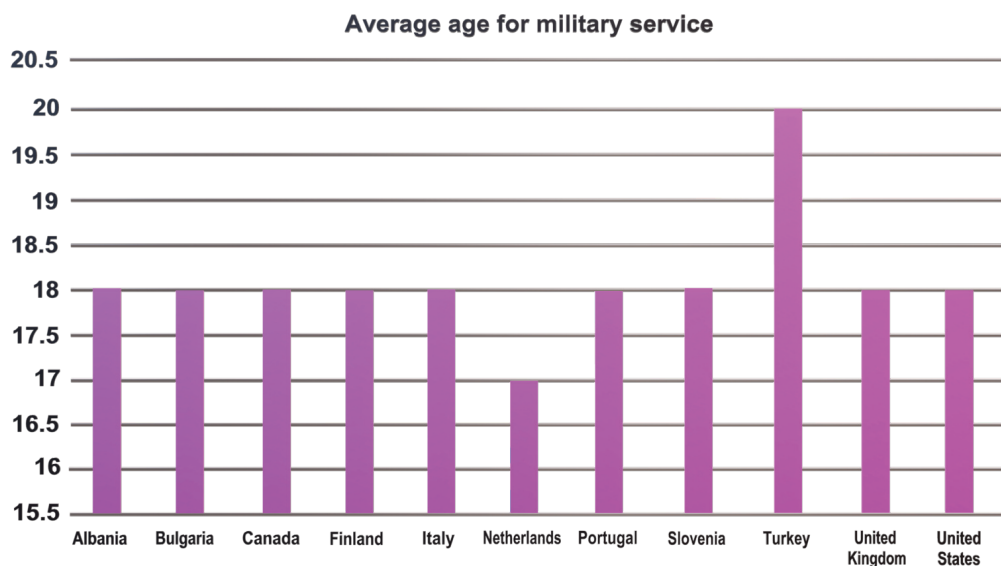


Figure 12

The average age is just over 18. If we consider a period of about two years for an individual to get to a level of professional preparation sufficient to run assigned tasks independently from the moment of enlisting, it is reasonable to affirm that the subject could not yet be considered operational until the age of 20. An additional period of two years is likely to be considered necessary to reach a level of expertise that could be assessed as advanced. At the age of 22, the individual has not only completed basic training, but also possesses a history of professional employment that at least equals 50% of their professional career. Following this simple reasoning, among the 49 interviewees, in the best case, we have a timeframe of seven years of experience of autonomous work, which could not be considered enough for the standards requested of someone assigned to serve as an advisor. In absolute terms, seven years could already suggest significant experience. However, noting the complex problems and decision-making processes common to advising activity, a certain level of education is also required and those are subjects typical of senior staff level education, which in the military is usually

taught starting from an age of around 30. Arguably, these personnel were able to accomplish their mission, but following the logic behind the construct of the advisor's role presented so far, it is more than reasonable to assume that they were not requested to conduct advising activities.

THE NATO SFA TRAINING SPECTRUM

A close analysis of the NATO SFA training spectrum indicates that there are no options to satisfy the requirement of SFA trainers' and mentors' education other than the SFA Operators Course delivered by the NATO SFA COE. It also seems to have become a consolidated practice to use 'advising' as a macro category under which to include all other SFA functions, with no further distinction. This could be because the existing training solutions available for SFA trainers, mentors and advisors are not effectively exploited or advertised. Another aspect may also be the terminology used in NATO official documents advertising SFA-oriented PDT programmes. The *NATO Mission in Iraq (NMI) PDT and Courses 2020-2021 Annual Letter*⁹ refers to the future posts of personnel and the instructional activities as follows:

NMI PDT is a multi-modal training designed to educate and train personnel who are filling both advisory and/or command and control (C2) CE positions.

TYPE: Combined NATO-Led Phase 2: academic lectures, practical advisor training.

NMI PDT aims to educate the TA in the specifics of the mission, to train TA assigned to advisory roles.

This training will consist of academic sessions, vignettes, case studies and practical advisor training.

Everything leads to the assumption that NMI PDTs leave out the categories of mentor and trainer and are solely advisor-oriented. From a review of the data gathered on the training and mentoring roles, mentoring and training seem still to be needed for the success of SFA missions. They are part of established doctrine and personnel are still deployed in those roles, as displayed by the charts below.

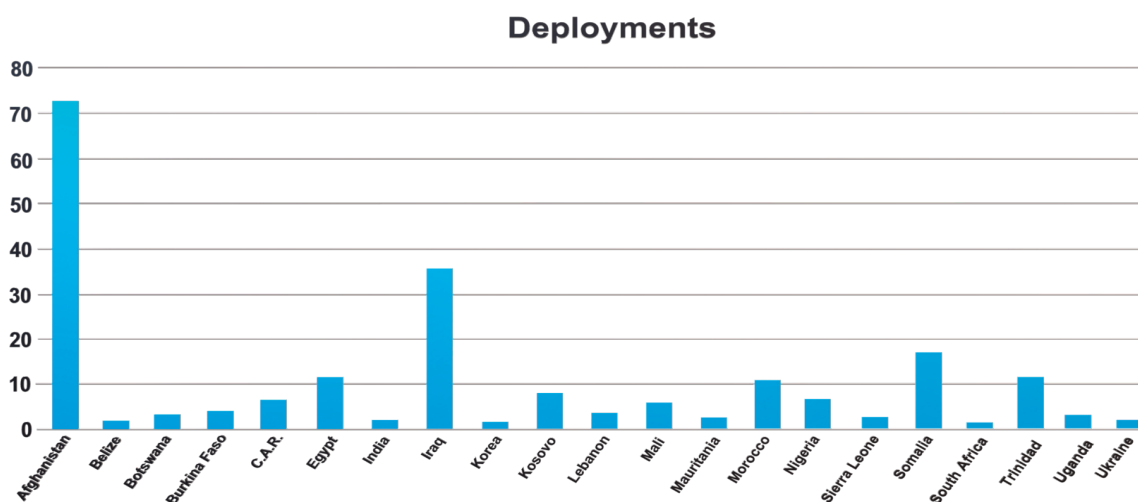


Figure 13

⁹ NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) and NATO Resolute Support Mission (RSM) have been the Alliance's SFA missions most relevant in term of numbers and duration. For this reason, the respective PDT programmes and operational theatres will be used as a reference in this paper. By the time of writing, NATO Resolute Support Mission had ended. Therefore, all references to NATO SFA PDT will address that for personnel deploying to NMI.

Deployments on SFA NATO Missions (Afghanistan / Iraq) - Advisors

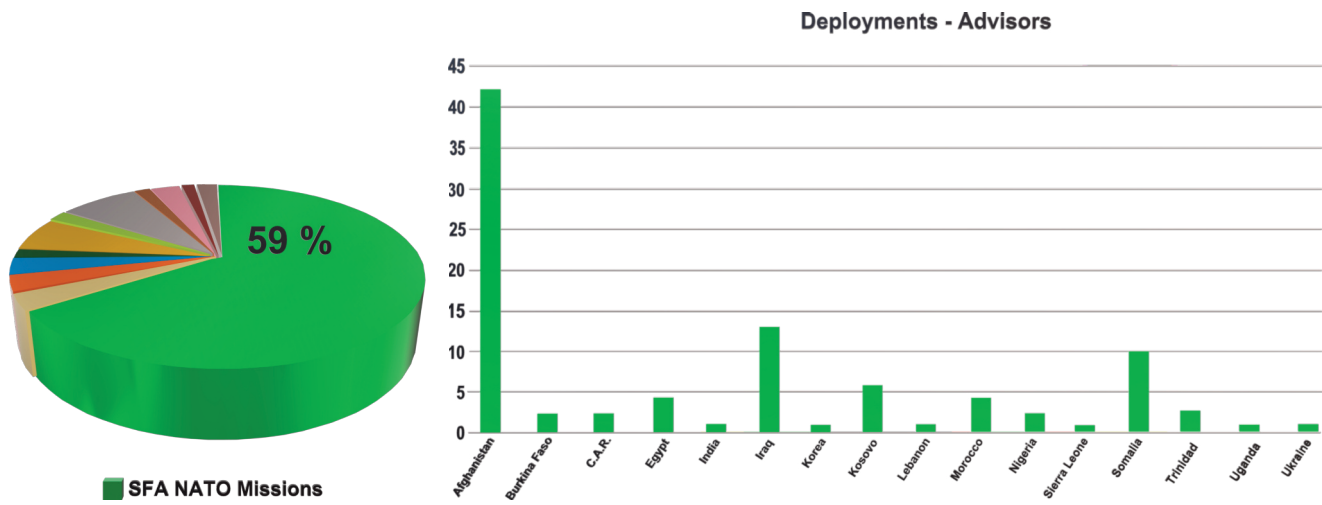


Figure 14

Figure 15

Deployments on SFA NATO Missions (Afghanistan / Iraq) - Mentors

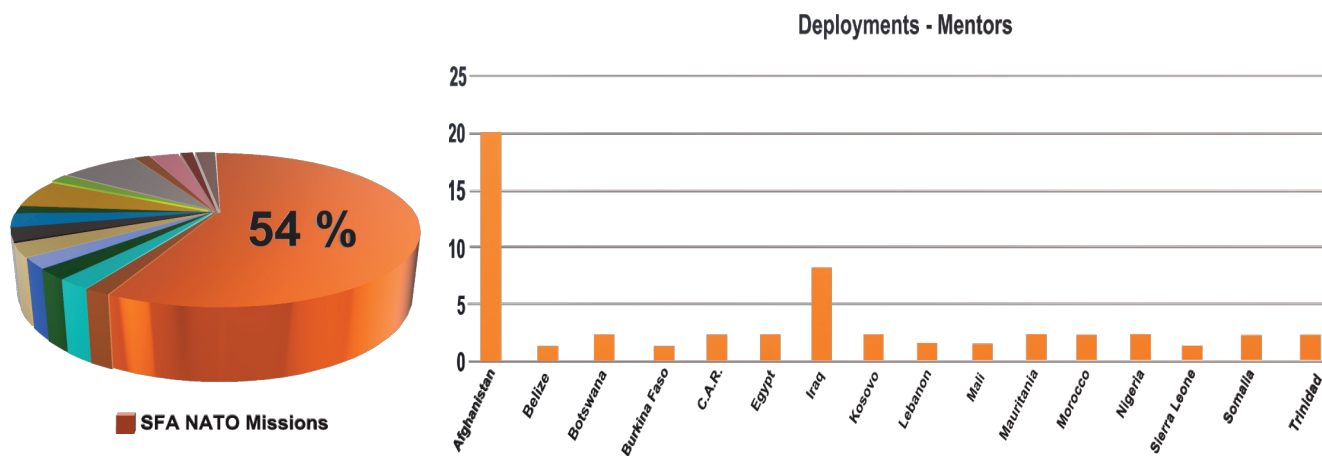


Figure 16

Figure 17

Deployments on SFA NATO Missions (Afghanistan / Iraq) - Trainers

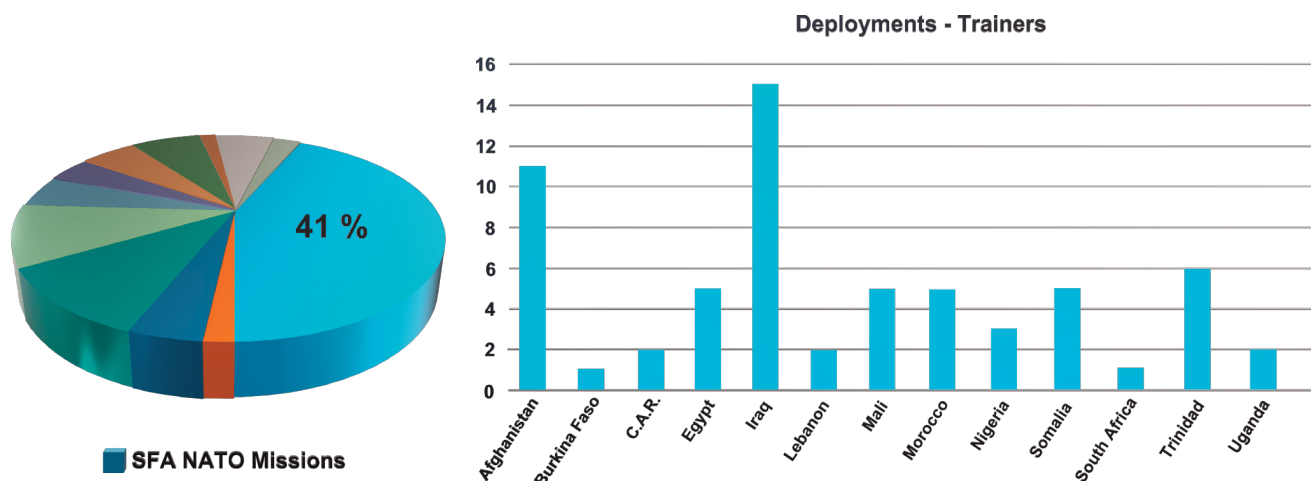


Figure 18

Deployments - Trainers

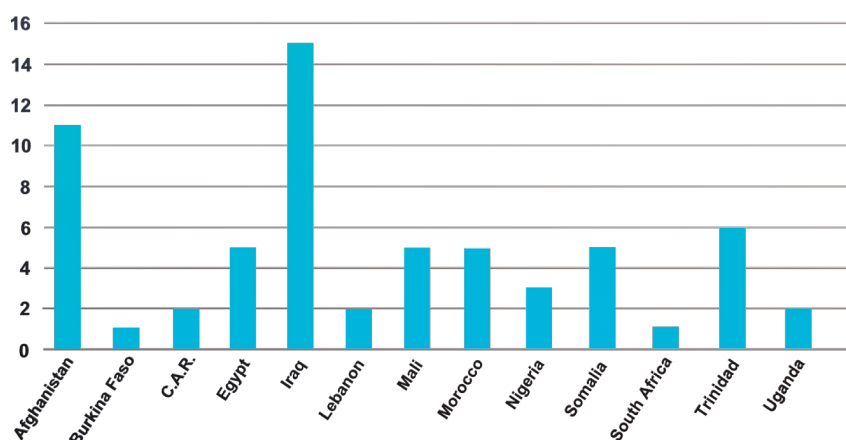


Figure 19

AJP 3.16 was released in May 2016 and all the courses and training programmes delivered thereafter are supposed to adhere to the principles of that doctrine which differentiates between the three functions. The distinction should therefore be reflected in bespoke instructional programmes. The data suggests that while the PDTs conducted by the Officer Scheduling the Exercise (OSE) address advisors only, the SFA Operator Course, which also targets mentors and trainers, does not play a central role in the preparation of personnel.

Data from attendance on the SFA Operators Course from December 2019, when the pilot course was delivered, shows that the programme has seen 44 participants; 23 on the pilot course and 21 on the first regular course in 2020). It is unclear why the course has not been advertised by NATO as among the options available to prepare personnel deploying in SFA functions. To better understand the importance of this aspect, it is necessary to briefly introduce NATO Global Programming and how the Alliance chooses and develops training solutions.

NATO GLOBAL PROGRAMMING

The capstone document which directs the education and training solutions in NATO is the *Military Decision on MC 0458/3, NATO Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation (ETEE) Policy*. It states:

NATO ETEE activities are to be conducted in the most effective and efficient manner. The implementation of specific NATO ETEE programmes, plans, activities and events will consider the optimal usage of the available resources. NATO will continue utilising ETFs, NATO-accredited COEs and NATO recognised PTECs in accordance with their capabilities and potential in the scope of their mandates, their MC/NAC approved concepts and policies and in their respective area of excellence. NATO will also utilise National/Multinational Training institutions from NATO nations and other education and training facilities from partner nations and NNEs that are in com-

pliance with NATO procedures and standards, as complementary training assets to fulfil recognised NATO ETEE requirements.¹⁰

The directive identifies individual and collective training with the following definitions:

- a. **Individual Training.** The development of skills and knowledge necessary to perform specific duties and tasks. Individual training is a learned response to predictable situations.
- b. **Collective Training.** Procedural drills and practical application of doctrine, plans and procedures to acquire and maintain collective tactical, operational and strategic capabilities.

NATO individual training focuses on the development of 'skills and knowledge', whereas the collective training domain targets 'procedural drills and practical application of doctrine, plans and procedures to acquire and maintain collective [...] capabilities'. Individual training is thus the natural benchmark against which to design and deliver any SFA training solutions which are inherently personnel-oriented. The nature of SFA functions requires the development of a very specific skill set that is centred on individual attributes, competencies and performance. All SFA functions translate into a very direct human interaction between the SFA Operator and their interlocutor. The ultimate task of advisors, mentors and trainers is certainly not the application of staff drills and procedures, but rather the effective transfer of knowledge to another individual on a personal development path. Consequently, the most suitable procedures to design SFA instructional programmes are those from the Bi-SC Education and Individual Training Directive (E&ITD) 075-007 and not collective training processes such as those deriving from the Bi-SC Collective Training and Exercise Directive (CT&ED) 075-003.

MC 0458/3 also highlights two other key principles of paramount importance in the context of this study paper:

Financial Efficiency. Planning and execution of all NATO ETEE activities shall be conducted most efficiently and effectively as possible within budgetary guidelines.

HQ SACT is responsible for the management, execution and accreditation of education and individual training and collective training and exercises.

These two principles together introduce the necessity of having sound coordination while planning and delivering education and training solutions across the Alliance to avoid redundancies and duplication which could translate into a waste of resources. HQ SACT leads the development and implementation of the training offer and ensures the optimisation of the efforts of all the solutions providers, including NATO Training Facilities, accredited COEs and other Non-NATO Entities. Although the document specifically addresses the theme of financial efficiency, the concept could, very likely, be extended to all kinds of resources involved in the design and execution of the solutions, including the intellectual, logistic and temporal.

HQ SACT carries out the management of the NATO training domain through the processes of *Global Programming* as depicted in the Bi-SC 75-2 Education and Training Directive (E&TD).

Global Programming is a structure in the E&T framework, assuring that defined requirements are developed into E&T products, in line with the political-military guidance; with all available re-

¹⁰ Military Decision ON MC 0458/3, NATO Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation (ETEE) Policy.

sources (institutions and courses) explored in a transparent manner, with E&T solutions properly managed throughout the process; and with an enactment of the delivered E&T.¹¹

Throughout Global Programming, NATO pursues not only the goal that all education and training requirements are identified and met, but also that all solutions developed are adequately advertised and exploited, achieving optimisation of resources and satisfying the principle of efficiency. To this end, HQ SACT relies on a network of structures and responsibilities:

- a. **Strategic Training Plan (STP).** Based on an approved discipline, the STP is a holistic integrator that defines a discipline and differentiates it from others in the discipline structure. The STP is considered holistic as it converts politico-military guidance for current and future operations into NATO specific tasks that are executed across different levels of command and which meet NATO E&T requirements. The STP provides a strategic view across the NATO education and training spectrum and provides the basis for a unity of effort among stakeholders seeking to synchronise E&T requirements and solutions.
- b. **Training Requirements Analysis (TRA).** The TRA is based on the STP and involves a formalised review process that further refines the tasks and identifies the corresponding individual and collective NATO E&T requirements. The TRA eventually matches existing E&T opportunities open to NATO for satisfying requirements. The resulting TRA report also indicates potential duplication or gaps in the existing E&T programme for the discipline.
- c. **Training Needs Analysis (TNA).** TNA concerns the provision of individual and collective E&T solutions. A TNA engages stakeholders in a community of interest in the development of an E&T solution to eliminate one or more gaps in the E&T programme identified through the TRA. For Education and Individual Training (E&IT), a TNA initiates the NATO Systems Approach to Training (SAT) processes and this ultimately results in the provision of quality E&IT solutions. For CT&E, a TNA contributes to and respectively starts the exercise process to address solutions for collective training and exercises at the interdisciplinary level. Where appropriate, the NATO SAT may be applied to the formulation of foundation training in support of an exercise process.
- d. **Annual Discipline Conference (ADC).** The ADC is a recurring event that involves a review of the NATO E&T requirements related to a discipline and verifies the adequacy of the discipline-specific E&T programme to satisfy the requirements. The intent is to ensure E&T remains aligned with evolving needs and to determine the way ahead in closing gaps while further developing the discipline.
- e. **HQ SACT Deputy Chief of Staff Joint Force Trainer (DCOS JFT).** On behalf of SACT, DCOS JFT directs and coordinates all activities and events in NATO's interest to educate and train individuals and to manage collective training and exercises through Global Programming. DCOS JFT is functionally responsible for Global Programming, including establishing the governance framework and maintaining the discipline structure.
- f. **Requirements Authority (RA).** The RA is responsible for identifying and managing the NATO E&T requirements associated with a specific discipline. The RA is considered an operational authority in the discipline and represents the interests of the end-users.

¹¹ Bi-SC 75-2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING DIRECTIVE (E&TD).

- g. **Department Head (DH).** Under DCOS JFT's guidance, the DH is responsible for matching the requirements with E&T solutions and for the coordination of those solutions. The DH will strive to ensure that identified solutions are delivered in the most effective, efficient and affordable manner through NATO Allies, Partners and NNEs.

THE SFA TRAINING OFFER

SFA training requirements are met through the following education and training solutions:

- a. ADL 362 Introduction to SFA delivered by the NATO SFA COE.
- b. The SFA Operators Course delivered by the NATO SFA COE.
- c. The NATO Mission IRAQ PDT as delivered by the NATO Joint Force Training Centre (JFTC).
- d. The Institutional Advisor Course, delivered by the NATO SFA COE, will not be the subject of this analysis but will be discussed to highlight the direction in which NATO's Military Contribution to Peace Support training curricula are evolving.

These solutions will now be introduced individually to analyse key aspects and to make a comparison and understand how they sit in the NATO training domain from the perspective of the Global Programming approach and how they reflect the training requirements following AJP 3.16.

ADL 362 Introduction to SFA

The course seeks to illustrate how the Security Force Assistance Concept (MCM-0034-2014) originated in NATO and how SFA is intended to work under AJP 3.16.

The course also provides participants of the residential SFA training solutions (e.g. 'SFA Operators Course' and 'Institutional Advisor Course') with a general overview, useful to create a common picture that will be further investigated during the residential courses.

The SFA Operators Course

Overview. Following the identification of a training gap for SFA operators, the SFA COE initiated a process to design a course for HQ SACT approval and accreditation. Once complete, the course was published on the ETOC¹² with the code MCP-CM-25556. The course has been designed and developed under Global Programming and meets the requirements

¹² Education and Training Opportunities Catalogue.

of the standing NATO SFA doctrine in each of the three functions of advising, mentoring and training:

- a. NATO recognises the need to develop SFA training solutions to improve the competency of personnel working in the field.
- b. Those requirements have been documented in AJP 3.16 and can also be found in NATO's Military Contribution to Peace Support TRA with a final report and updated list of performance statements in a Discipline Alignment Plan (DAP).
- c. This course fulfils the NATO requirement for SFA advisors, mentors and trainers as described in AJP 3.16 at Proficiency level 200 (intermediate).
- d. The course aims to improve the competency and effectiveness of SFA operators in current and future missions and security-related capacity building.
- e. The course enhances the practical understanding and application of NATO SFA operators working as part of a comprehensive and integrated approach.
- f. Course participants will be able to enable SFA by advising, mentoring or training to improve the performance of designated actors.

The primary target audience of the SFA operators course are personnel assigned to SFA posts:

- a. NATO and Partner SFA operators – Advisors, Mentors and Trainers.
- b. Military Officers (OF2 through OF5) or civilian equivalents working as SFA operators in NATO SFA operations.

The course indicates that, as a prerequisite, 'participants shall be competent experts in their own field'. This confirms adherence to the requirement that personnel must have the ability to fulfil their SFA tasks successfully. The instructional strategy is also designed with teaching modules built on the principles of adult learning. The programme is completed by a sound assessment strategy to measure the students' learning progress through a series of diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. Finally, the feedback collection process includes both surveys conducted during the course and those submitted six months after the end of the course. This allows the students to provide feedback taking into consideration their perspective and perception of the effectiveness of the instruction after a significant period of job employment has been completed.

Overall, the outline of the SFA Operators Course provides a bespoke training solution meeting the requirements of all the SFA functions. This is also confirmed by the fact that 100% of the course's Performance Objectives are SFA operators oriented. Finally, the whole process of design and implementation of the course has been conducted in cooperation with the SFA Cluster in the discipline, initiated by the Requirement Authority (Bi-SC DCOS MP) and coordinated by the appointed DH (Finnish Defence Forces International Centre – FINCENT).

NMI Pre-Deployment Training

This paragraph highlights key points displayed in the JFCNP letter NMI PDT and Courses 2020-2021 and provides considerations concerning the training programme in a similar vein to the analysis conducted above regarding the SFA Operators Course.

NMI PDT is a multi-modal training designed to educate and train personnel who are filling both advisory and command and control (C2) CE positions in NMI. It was held twice in 2020 and twice in 2021. Although the training focused on NMI, personnel assigned to fill positions in Unified Action Partners (UAP) are also invited. Training will incorporate the expertise of subject matter experts (SMEs) who have relevant theatre experience and will be augmented by the participation of members of the Iraq National Security Forces to enhance realism.

Type: Combined NATO-Led Phase 2: academic lectures, practical advisor training and essential hands-on Electronic Working Practices (EWP) training.

The benchmark remains AJP 3.16. Here the programme description does not provide enough detail to suggest that the course is strongly SFA oriented, with no explicit reference to the doctrine.

Form: Individual Augmentee (IA) training

The document indicates that the instruction is not a collective exercise, rather an individual training programme collectively delivered. Nonetheless, the OSE references throughout the processes and structures derived from CT&ED 075-003, even though no collective performance is expected of the training audience.

Aim. The aim of NMI PDT is to educate the TA in the specifics of the mission, to train TA assigned to advisory roles and to create conditions for team building.

The aim of the course does not expand on the description of the SFA training audience. This could be misleading, leaving room for doubt or misinterpretation. For instance, it is not clear whether personnel on future deployments as mentors and trainers should be excluded from the target audience or included without further distinction in the overall category of advisors. The latter option, however, clashes with the concept of differentiating the three SFA functions.

The Officer Directing the Exercise (ODE) supports the OCE for the detailed planning and overall execution of the exercise by creating the conditions which allow the achievement of the exercise aim and objectives.

In this case, the reference to the collective training and exercise domain is even more evident. The PDT is called by a different name and becomes 'an exercise'. This directly contradicts the concept expressed by the form indicated as that of *Individual Augmentee (IA) Training* introduced before.

Concept. NMI PDT will provide individual and collective practical training without recreating the In-Theatre Communications and Information Systems (CIS) environment nor executing a Command Post Exercise (CPX)-type Mission Rehearsal Exercise. This training will consist of academic sessions, vignettes, case studies and practical advisor training.

The NMI TE is divided into sub-phases:

Mission Specific Training (MST): Academic phase comprises two key elements:

Academics: Common-to-all TA education aimed at imparting the knowledge necessary to understand the key aspects of the mission.

Electronic Working Practices (EWP): Instructions and hands-on practice for the common-to-all desktop computer applications.

Battle Staff Training (BST): This phase will provide the TA with a higher level of understanding of the processes, procedures and tasks in their Functional Area or DCOS area and cross-functionality. TA will be able to demonstrate practical knowledge of their role.

Another direct reference to the collective exercise doctrine suggests how the training is primarily intended to be delivered to personnel covering staff positions. In this context, the SFA training appears to be marginal.

Training Audience Participation Requirements. NMI PDT is a requirement for staff filling NMI CE posts and supporting NATO Civilians.

This paragraph makes no mention of advisors or SFA roles. This construct seems to suggest that the OSE does not foresee a mandatory attendance of the programme as a prerequisite for the advisors' deployment, leaving it to the initiative of the appointed personnel or the respective national authorities. As we will see later, this clashes with the assessed necessity to standardise SFA training programmes and implement the possibility to track and certify trained SFA operators soon.

Overall, the current format of NMI PDTs does not seem to be an optimal solution to satisfy the training requirements of the doctrine, noting that it is still the first choice to train SFA personnel if we consider participation data compiled by the NATO SFA COE education programmes in the last two years. This may be because part of the training audience is identified as 'personnel who are filling [...] command and control (C2) CE positions' and not advising ones. For this reason, the training concept is still developed following the processes of the CT&ED 075-003. The constant reference to the terminology typical of the domain of collective training and the lack of direct references to the SFA doctrine suggests that the training programme has not been designed only to train and educate SFA advisors, mentors and trainers. Even when the training targets only advisors, the SFA content of the instructional concept appears very limited in comparison with the SFA Operators Course. This theory seems to be confirmed by the analysis of the training objectives developed for the NMI PDTs series. While the programme aims to achieve a total of six training objectives, none of those references any SFA function specifically. To find indicators of any advisory teaching content, it is necessary to shift the attention to the Enabling Objectives (EOs) instead. The NMI calling letter lists 32 EOs: of those only 6 specifically address typical advisors education requirements, which is equivalent to 18.7%. The remaining EOs, apart from those covering the general overview on the main aspects of the mission, address typical staff functions, processes and procedures.

In the light of the considerations made so far about the NATO SFA training spectrum, the co-existence of NMI PDT and the SFA Operators Course appears to present duplication and an opportunity for consolidation, noting that this situation contradicts the principles of efficiency and

no-duplication of Global Programming. The Alliance has also made a firm commitment to the institution of the SFA COE whose mission is ‘to provide a unique capability to Alliance, NATO Nations and NATO Partners in the field of SFA’ and which is supposed to:

- a. serve as a focal point to an SFA Community of Interest (Col);
- b. lead subject matter expertise in the field of SFA;
- c. train military and civilian personnel, on all aspects of SFA issues and activities in operations;
- d. provide a hub for development and management of common and shared knowledge and expertise for SFA;
- e. provide expertise and training on SFA.¹³

These considerations present questions as to whether or not it is still practical to continue to provide a training programme that does not explicitly meet the SFA doctrine requirements, especially noting that it does not originate from sound outcomes of a TNA analysis in the Military Contribution to Peace Support Discipline and that specialised training for SFA personnel is already in place. The question is very likely to become even more urgent with the imminent release of the first of the next generation of specialised advisor educational programmes accredited by HQ SACT: the Institutional Advisor Course.

The Institutional Advisor Course

Core differences separating the advising function from those of mentoring and training and the corresponding profile of the appointed personnel have been subject to scrutiny over the last few years. The peculiarity of the role of the advisor has recently pushed the stakeholders in the *Military Contribution to Peace Support Discipline* to initiate an additional TRA to identify and develop a better solution to training and educating personnel appointed to SFA advisory positions. The outcome of the TRA is the development by the SFA COE of the new Institutional Advisor Course. The programme is a 300 level (expert) course targeting personnel for future employment in advisory positions up to ministerial level. The requirement statement shows the level of ambition of the project and underlines continued thinking regarding the need for a clear distinction to be made between advisors and mentors/trainers, given the critical importance of the former.

The Institutional Advisor Course not only derives from the NATO TNA conducted in the SFA training domain, but also follows the Interoperable Multinational Resident Advisor Capacity (IMRAC) Project, a six-nation effort led by SFA practitioners from Italy and the United States. The Project, sanctioned by the Multinational Capability Development Campaign (MCDC) of 24 nations, has produced a handbook as a resource for institutional advisors (individuals developing foreign security establishments), training developers and multinational headquarters’ planners carrying out SFA as defined in AJP 3.16.¹⁴

¹³ Concept of the NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence.

¹⁴ Security force assistance (SFA) includes all NATO activities that develop and improve, or directly support, the development of local forces and their associated institutions in crisis zones.

In essence, the ultimate goal of the SFA training solution is to standardise the SFA Operators Course as an accredited programme for all personnel being deployed to mentor and trainer posts with the Institutional Advisor Course as the top-end training for those going to advisory positions. A further step would see the Alliance align reference doctrine to this new concept, producing two categories of SFA personnel.

This overview of current SFA training programmes has demonstrated how programmes and courses developed by the SFA COE seem to better satisfy the educational requirements for SFA personnel. This appears to be the consequence of a thorough analysis to identify training gaps and provide solutions tailored to the SFA profiles. The reason for the low attendance at the SFA COE courses thus far could be due to HQ SACT's accreditation in December 2019 and the programme becoming fully operational from the beginning of 2020. By then, the JFCNPS annual letter advertising NMI PDT for 2020-2021 had already been issued. It was dated 4 Dec 2019. While an amendment to include the new specialised SFA training programmes could have been possible, 2020 was characterised by COVID-19 constraints which forced the NATO community to abruptly change schedules and implement contingency measures to adapt all programmes to the new situation by adopting distributed learning and similar measures. Including the SFA specialised courses in the training opportunities should be one of the key points in the agenda for the revision of the NMI calling letter for 2022-2024.

Performance Objectives Vs Training Objectives

The TNA conducted to tackle the issue of training gaps in the SFA domain has identified the individual education and training methodology as the most appropriate to develop instructional solutions for SFA personnel. This is consistent with all the considerations seen so far pointing out the individual dimension of the skill set to possess to fulfil tasks related to the advisor's, mentor's and trainer's roles. This is confirmed by a closer look at the definition of Performance Objectives and Training Objectives and the distinction between the two in accordance with the BI-SC 75-2 E&TD.

A **Performance Objective (PO)** consists of a general input of skills, knowledge and competence statements that should be taught to a specific training audience. It should be closely connected with tasks that are described in training audience job description documents, if available.

A PO focuses on learning. The required skills, knowledge and competence are transferred to the student through the teaching activity. Knowledge of the subject is something that the learner does not have at the beginning of the instruction, but which is expected to be achieved once the course is completed.

A **Training Objective (TO)** is the desired goal expressed in terms of performance under set conditions related to a defined standard. It describes knowledge, skills and attitudes to be reached during the conduct of training.

TOs are centred on the performance of participants in the training activities. The assumption is that the trainee already possesses a sufficient level of knowledge and professional experience which allows them to exercise the required skills. The focus is on the level of performance to be achieved at the end of the programme and benchmarked against defined standards. The training aims to let the attendee exercise particular competencies by providing the organisation, the tools and conditions.

Processes from E&ITD 075-007 not only directly connect with the job description for which they provide an instructional solution, but they also have a strong focus on the related proficiency levels to be achieved. This would significantly simplify the standardisation of profiles, contributing to the implementation of more accurate selection processes.

Proficiency Levels

Proficiency Levels form a scale that defines a degree of competence required to perform the principal duties and tasks of a job. They provide a scale that defines a degree of competence or expertise. The duties and tasks are used to capture the performance gap while the proficiency level scale determines the depth of knowledge and skill that an E&IT solution is intended to target. Key action words are used to describe job performance and they are categorised based on broad functional areas. The levels of proficiency are based on a modified version of the generic skill descriptions used to augment NATO occupation codes. The levels of proficiency and related generic skill descriptors are:

- (1) Basic Level – Follow.
- (2) Intermediate Level – Assist.
- (3) Advanced Level – Apply.
- (4) Expert Level – Enable/Advisor.
- (5) Master Level – Initiate/Shape/Influence.

Intermediate Level (Assist)

Skill & Knowledge: The level of proficiency required to become functional and successfully perform a series of tasks independently with minimal oversight. Uses discretion in resolving problems and may plan and schedule work in short timeframes. This requires interpreting information, constructing meaning and the comprehension of facts, terms, concepts and principles and the processes and procedures essential to enable understanding and accomplishing job requirements.

Advance Level (Apply)

Skill & Knowledge: The level of proficiency required to interpret direction and guidance and successfully plan and complete tasks independently and potentially monitoring the work of others. Uses discretion to resolve increasingly more complex problems. This requires the application of concepts, principles processes and procedures in both non-routine (new) and concrete situations and executing, implementing and carrying out processes and procedures to satisfy job requirements.

Expert Level (Enable/Advisor)

Skill & Knowledge: The level of proficiency required to execute a broad range of complex professional and/or technical work activities leveraging prior education, training and practical experience; this includes maintaining an awareness of developing trends in the wider occupational field, analytical thinking and providing institutional leaders discipline and/or interdisciplinary related advice. This level requires setting work objectives and assigning tasks and the ability to deconstruct and integrate concepts, principles and procedures to support reasoning and the application of a systematic approach to solving non-routine and ill-defined problems.

SFA SPECIALIST NOTES

The results of the surveys point out the following shortfalls in the implementation of advising, mentoring and training activities:

- a. Ineffective Handover Takeover (HOTO).
- b. Break of mutual trust relationship due to SFA Operator/advisor rotation.
- c. Difficulty in maintaining institutional memory (keeping the SFA delivery on track and progressively the SFA operators/advisors should build counterpart's capability starting from the work done by their predecessor).

In light of these shortfalls, interviewees were asked about possible ways to cope. Different solutions emerged based on the personal experience of the candidates and converged towards a specific requirement. The feedback suggests the need for a dedicated professional specialist selected and trained to enable and support the SFA operators and advisors in carrying out the advising, mentoring and training. The specialist would be trained in the capacity building process, enabling SFA operators and advisors to achieve the desired effects. The specialist should be part of a regionally-oriented organisation. The role would set the conditions to have personnel deployed periodically in the same area of operation, gaining the knowledge of the counterparts and creating an enduring link with the LF system. This new professional figure, part of a dedicated organisation, would be a suitable asset to fill identified shortfalls in training, mentoring and advising, deriving from HOTO issues due to the frequent rotation of the personnel.

In particular, an SFA specialist, acting as the institutional memory of the mission, is intended to support advisors, mentors and trainers and their replacements in transferring information to carry out the mission. In particular, because of the networking with LF built over time, the role of the SFA specialist would help the system to preserve trust, credibility and the sharing of values with counterparts, despite the turnover of personnel and allow for a more effective concentration of effort. Consequently, this new role would guarantee continuity in capacity building progress development. The SFA specialists' deployment would indeed follow a separate pattern, characterised by short tours in theatre during decisive operational periods. This would enable them to envision the long run SFA effort in terms of LF improvements.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, noting the importance of the ‘human factor to the success of NATO SFA missions, what emerges from this study is the evolution of the personnel dimension of the NATO SFA domain, which should follow two main lines of effort:

a. Selection and Recruiting

- (1) The selection and recruiting processes need to be reviewed to better assess whether the profile of personnel appointed to SFA positions fits the role and is fit for the purpose. A thorough screening of the candidates is needed to verify that the personnel meet the requirements of behavioural traits and core competencies.
- (2) In particular, attention should be paid to make sure that consolidated teaching skills are part of the professional background before assignment to positions as an advisor, mentor or trainer. If not already possessed by the candidates, such skills must be incorporated as subjects of dedicated instructional modules of PDT programmes.
- (3) Since being a ‘competent expert’ is a prerequisite to attend some of the SFA’s specialised programmes, it is necessary to standardise procedures to make the tracking of the professional backgrounds of participants possible and to certify that they match the requirements.
- (4) The appropriate screening and selection of personnel is the responsibility of the TCNs. Therefore, a set of standards to be referenced when selecting/appointing personnel has to be made available throughout the NATO SFA community of interests.

b. Education and Training Programmes Adaptation:

- (1) Because of the advisors’, mentors’ and trainers’ tasks, performances, relative skills, competencies and personnel functions, it is necessary to review and potentially re-design all education and training programmes across the Alliance’s SFA effort to align them to the methodology of individual education as per the Bi-SC Education and Individual Training Directive (E&ITD) 075-007.
- (2) In particular, it is recommended that the learning progress and the results of any SFA training audience be assessed and measured against Performance Objectives rather than Training Objectives.
- (3) It is important to proceed with harmonisation and optimisation of the current SFA training solution in light of Global Programming processes. In particular, the planning and delivery of all SFA education and training must be coordinated among the providers to avoid redundancies and duplication according to the principle of efficiency.
- (4) All SFA training solutions must be properly advertised to personnel selected for imminent or future deployments. In particular, it is recommended to proceed with the inclusion of SFA COE specialised programmes (ADL 362 Introduction to Security Force Assistance, SFA Operators Course and Institutional Advisor Course) in the OSE calling letter publishing the PDTs schedule for 2022-2024.

- (5) Personnel to be deployed in SFA roles should participate in bespoke training. With regards to SFA specialised courses, the SFA Operators Course should be the primary option for personnel appointed as trainers and mentors, and the Institutional Advisor Course should be attended by those selected to be an advisor.
- (6) All future NATO and national SFA education and training solutions should be reviewed and accredited by competent SMEs. The SFA COE is considered the obvious choice to fulfil this function in NATO, being officially accredited to 'lead subject matter expertise in the field of SFA'. It is empowered to provide a wider range of specialised knowledge and expertise throughout the SFA community.
- (7) Because of the nature of its mission, all SFA COE capabilities should be exploited 'to help improve the effectiveness of NATO nations and partners'. It is thus recommended that the SFA COE take an active role in training personnel appointed to NATO SFA missions, combining, designing and delivering robust instructional solutions. SFA COE support should be sought and its participation included in the planning and execution of future PDT from a very early stage.

CHAPTER 2

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE

INTRODUCTION

Model. Analysis of competencies is an instrument to share know-how in the SFA domain, ranging from the knowledge to be acquired, through observable behaviours, to attitudes and motivations. This allows for the identification of possible gaps and to formulate hypotheses for personnel selection and development. Each competence will be reviewed and defined through the following: qualitative analysis, knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Knowledge. Indicates the knowledge that must be possessed by the person covering the position.

Skill. The term 'skill' refers to operational 'know-how', i.e. being able to perform a certain task and/or use a certain knowledge with dexterity.

Attitudes. Implies elements deriving from personal aspects, namely motivations, character traits, prejudices, attitudes and self-image.



Figure 20

SFA OPERATOR SKILLS, ATTITUDES AND TRAITS

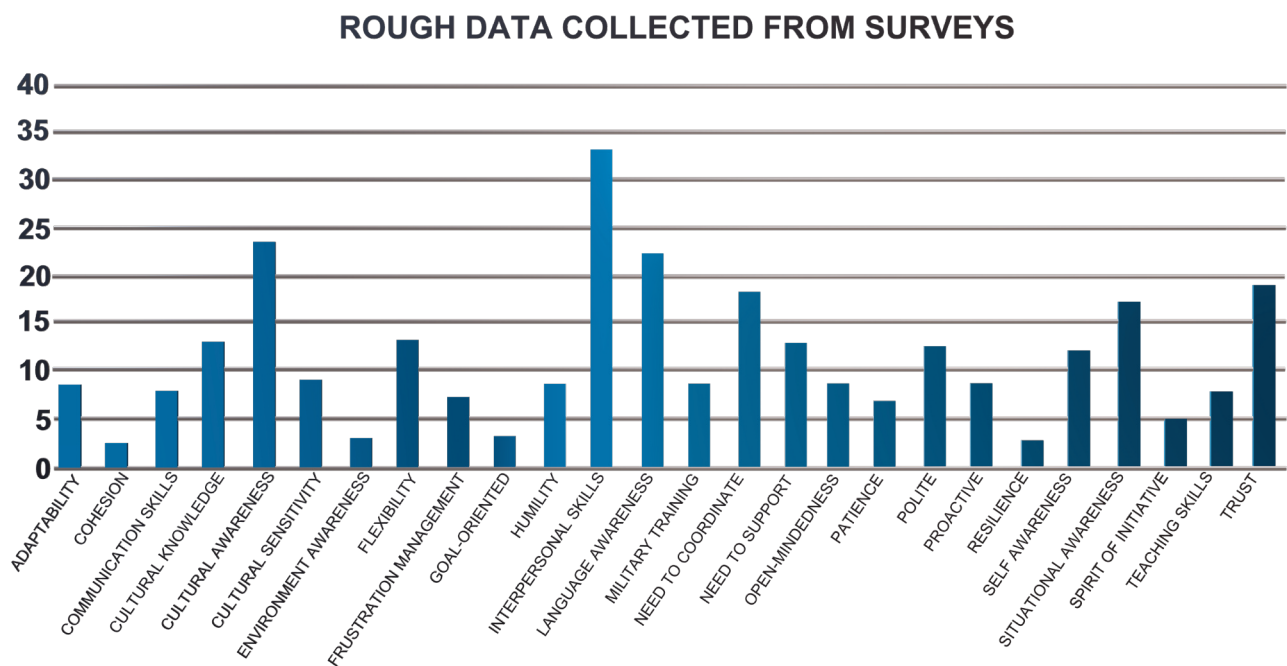


Figure 21

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

DEFINITION: understanding the perceptions, needs, attitudes of others and interacting with them constructively. Checking wider points of view by listening and asking questions, establishing relationships based on clarity, fairness and cooperation, embodying attitudes consistent with the characteristics of an interlocutor.

KNOWLEDGE

Theoretical and practical knowledge as regards:

- **Active listening:** being psychologically available and attentive to the information that is transmitted by the other party. To practice active listening, it is necessary to waive the need to be right, to disqualify, to exhibit one's own knowledge at any cost. It is however key to listen to other persons, to their interests, motivations and beliefs to obtain as much information as possible and to establish a more effective relationship.
- **Qualities and behaviours individuals exhibit while interacting with others:** knowing kinesics (body behaviour), facial expressions and all the emotions unconsciously displayed during interpersonal interaction.

SKILL

Ability to build and maintain interpersonal relationships, gaining the respect of the counterpart. Matching one's own needs with those of others; Behaving inappropriately with the CP may jeopardise operations. SOCIAL FITNESS skills are therefore required:

- **TRUST:** The SFA Operator can create mutual respect and trust between the parties. Trust is an important relational resource of social capital.
- **COHESION:** The SFA Operator stimulates mutual exchange with the counterpart about mutual experiences and backgrounds.
- **DIVERSITY:** the practitioner can consider what is important for the CP and not only what

is important for him. They are aware that they are part of a heterogeneous team formed by different people and with a different organisation (diversity that does not only concern the counterpart but also the other actors present in the operational theatre).

- Differences have to be grasped and learned to understand motivations and values.

ATTITUDE

- Positive attitude towards other people.
- Conveying credibility to others.
- Genuineness.
- Friendliness: The SFA practitioner seeks social harmony with others and has an important role in the group. However, their relationship with the counterpart is professional/instrumental.
- The SFA Operator, therefore, employs the relationship to fulfil mission objectives more effectively.
- Humility.

Interpersonal skills are considered by respondents to be consistently more important than military experience and specific knowledge of their field of work. Some consider interpersonal skills as a leading factor in achieving success. Progress and achievement depend on how strong the relationships established with the other party are. The SFA Operator should be trained to be flexible and able to recognise when they are required to be either more 'task', or more 'relationship' oriented, while always maintaining a balance between the two.

TEACHING SKILLS

DEFINITION: Teaching skills are defined as a set of didactic acts or behaviours that facilitate the learning process of others.

KNOWLEDGE

Theoretical and practical knowledge of:

- Adult education: the principles of andragogy (i.e., knowledge that specifically concerns the education of adults). This differs from pedagogy, which is instead concerned with the education of children.
- The relationship between instructor and pupil.
- The basic principles of communication.
- Teaching by objectives.

SKILL

- The SFA Operator can adapt the communication style to the different interlocutors, according to their culture, their experiences, their skills, favouring mutual exchange and not imposing authoritative teachings.
- The SFA Operator can speak clearly, concisely and simply and to use an interpreter.
- Creates and maintains a comfortable learning environment: the pupils' involvement is a prerequisite for achieving the learning objective. It is the task of the SFA Operator to involve the pupils and to avoid contingent situations that hinder this involvement.
- Analyse the audience and their expectations. Then the SFA Operator organises and plans training and educational activities while taking into account the wider armed forces' objectives.

ATTITUDE

- Tolerance: the practitioner can manage their own prejudices, is open to debate and does not impose their own thoughts or procedures.
- Commitment: The practitioner does not fulfil their tasks bureaucratically but prepares activities and lessons with motivation and commitment so that learning is goal-oriented.
- Flexibility/Adaptability. The SFA Operator can adapt their communication style to the interlocutor, to change pre-set plans if necessary, to show willingness and openness to accept ideas and/or proposals.
- Creativity and innovation: the SFA Operator can identify solutions even in the most difficult situations. They are creative in identifying the most appropriate solution to the situation, based on the available tools.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

DEFINITION: Clearly expressing and simplifying facts and concepts for all types of interlocutors. Taking into account the specificities of the interlocutors and adapting the language accordingly. Use concise sentences and appropriate words. Constantly seeking feedback on what is being said with the interlocutors.

KNOWLEDGE

Theoretical and practical knowledge of:

- Verbal, non-verbal and para-verbal communication.
- Active listening.
- Communication in the escalation of force: i.e., knowledge of appropriate strategies to intervene at the communications level, to mitigate or prevent interpersonal conflict.
- Negotiation.
- Persuasion.
- Feedback: i.e., knowledge of the effects that communications have on the interlocutor and how to change styles if necessary.
- Interpreter management.
- Language awareness: Even if the local language is not known, the SFA Operator learns the most commonly used local words and/or phrases to interact more effectively with the counterpart and to handle the possible absence of the interpreter credibly.

SKILL

- The ability to communicate tactfully: The SFA Operator can communicate effectively and to understand the needs of others, using verbal, non-verbal and para-verbal communication. They are aware of their own communication, emotions and messages they send to the other persons and how the other person communicates.
- Knowing how to communicate concerns and the ability to provide feedback: the SFA Operator can have a positive approach and to be focused on improving the other party. Feedback is not a judgement on the person, but on the behaviour to develop positive outcomes. Through feedback, the SFA Operator encourages the other party to do their best to achieve continuous improvement.
- The SFA Operator is aware of the objectives of the communication and is therefore able to negotiate and persuade the counterpart. The SFA Practitioner can manage and prevent conflicts through effective communication.

ATTITUDE

- Motivation to learn.

- Propensity to put knowledge into practice.
- Assertiveness: The SFA Operator can achieve their goals by maintaining a positive relationship with the other party. They have the competence to express their ideas and achieve their goals without causing harm to the other party, causing offence or not showing an attitude of respect.
- Open-mindedness to the ideas and opinions of others.

While the SFA Operator does not necessarily have to speak the local language, possessing appropriate knowledge of effective communication techniques is a prerequisite to fulfilling the role. A further key competence alongside communication skills is that of mastering negotiation techniques, something which may be considered as the 'Swiss knife' of relationship management. Furthermore, communication skills significantly contribute to the ability to both escalate and de-escalate a conversation – demanding situations can indeed be better managed through the use of effective communication.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

DEFINITION: The set of knowledge, skills, affection and motivation enabling individuals to effectively adapt in intercultural environments. The ability to successfully operate across cultures. It does not simply entail knowledge of culture, or cultural awareness or sensitivity, but also encompasses these aspects in addition to operational effectiveness.

KNOWLEDGE

Theoretical and practical knowledge of:

- Specific cultural concepts.
- Customs and traditions of a culture.
- Historical excursus of the place.
- Background cultural values (space and time, hierarchy, status, respect, family, etc.).
- Expressions, gestures, codes, symbols, clothes typical of a culture.
- Foreign languages.
- International relations.

SKILL

- The skill of cultural awareness differs from simple theoretical and practical cultural knowledge. This kind of knowledge may help orientation in particular cultures or regions. Awareness, on the other hand, is about understanding, for example, that society's gender roles may have an impact on the behaviour of members of that society.
- The SFA Operator can interact effectively with the counterpart showing that they are capable of working alongside people with different cultural attitudes and behaviours and doing so to achieve certain objectives.

ATTITUDE

- Tolerance.
- Respect: The SFA Operator shows respect towards the counterpart without diminishing them. They are aware of existing differences but does not provide judgements or values (better, worse, right or wrong).
- Cultural sensitivity: The culturally sensitive individual respects diversity, shows interest in different cultures, reflects on the meaning of their own culture, on themselves and on their atti-

- tudes. They are open, patient and avoid generalisations.
- Openness of mind.
- Appreciation of different cultures.

Cultural awareness increases mutual respect, understanding between parties, trust and collaboration. It also reduces risk. Cultural awareness, in particular, should provide the individual with a lens to search for knowledge actively and consciously whenever they are called to operate in a new area. Therefore, cultural awareness and bespoke training should provide instruments to learn how to actively search for information and 'how' to think - rather than 'what' to think. This also entails knowledge of the values, customs and rituals of as many ethnic groups as possible. Mastering multiple languages does not necessarily produce culturally competent people; it may be useful, but it is not sufficient. Being culturally competent requires an ability to act on knowledge acquired in different cultural situations. Acquiring such competence requires continuous learning and personal development to develop skills and social behaviours around diversity. The attitude must be based on open-mindedness and curiosity: the SFA Operator is aware that behaviours exist in a given situation and, therefore, does not allow their mind to be guided only by knowledge and preconceptions. The behaviour of a person is evaluated in the situation flexibly as U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Raymond Odierno aptly stated: *'The best-equipped army in the world may still lose a war if it does not understand the people it is fighting'*.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

DEFINITION: situational awareness refers to awareness of the environment and context in which one is operating and includes paying attention to what is happening around oneself while operating and anticipating possible events and/or situations that might occur in the future.

KNOWLEDGE

Theoretical and practical knowledge concerning:

- Perception: i.e., Knowing how individuals receive, process and interpret information.
- Cultural background acts as a filter in communication with the other party. It is therefore of utmost importance to be aware of these perception filters.
- Attention: i.e., the mental process that allows us to consciously process information from a multitude of available information sources. An SFA Operator needs to know-how to pay attention to salient stimuli and ignore information that is not relevant to the current purpose or discard information that might interfere.
- Levels of awareness: Cooper's Colour Code.
- Domains of information: Conscious and subconscious body language, biological autonomic responses, use of space and distances between individuals, collective moods.

SKILL

- The SFA Operator can perceive and understand all relevant information to influence the operation and/or prevent future situations.
- The SFA Operator is not only aware of the environment, but also of human behaviour. Being able to recognise what the other person is communicating beyond words entails a greater ability to influence the relationship.
- They read signals in the environment and situations and they can detect a change in the relational dynamics of the counterpart.

ATTITUDE

- Responsibility: The SFA Operator fosters a relational climate based on trust and mutual respect with a strong sense of responsibility to achieve objectives.
- Proactivity: they search for information, in the current situation, in a proactive rather than reactive way.
- Curiosity: The SFA Operator perceives and interprets situations curiously without being guided by preconceptions.
- Tolerance for risk and uncertainty.
- A critical approach to information.

Understanding the situation and the human terrain is critical in any context where decision-making has consequences. The ability to perceive non-verbal behaviour or to pay attention to all signals present in a given environment, area or situation, allows the individual to appropriately react. All behaviour takes place in a given situation and cannot be conceived without it.

SELF-AWARENESS

DEFINITION: Self-awareness refers to being able to know oneself, one's needs and desires, strengths and weaknesses, one's way of relating, habits and thought patterns. Being able to read one's own emotions and recognise their impact on oneself and others. It entails tuning into one's inner signals by understanding how they influence one's behaviour. It is the ability to be aware of one's own and other people's emotions, discriminate between them and relate them to what is happening in the context, managing them in a way that is functional to achieving the objective.

KNOWLEDGE

Theoretical and practical knowledge concerning:

- Emotions: responses that the body produces to situations occurring around us. They carry information and are often more authentic than words. Knowing how to recognise them in ourselves and in others allows us to obtain greater information about the situation and the interpersonal relationship with the other party.
- Micro facial and body expressions generated by the limbic system are universal.
- Perception.
- Principles of emotional intelligence are understood as the ability of the individual to recognise their own emotions and those of others to achieve certain goals. The success of the SFA Operator is based on the ability to build good relationships. Thus, emotional management can play an important role.
- Mindfulness: exercises to train oneself to pay full attention to the internal and external states of oneself/others.

SKILL

- The SFA Operator is aware of themselves, what they perceive, how they feel and how they react to situations. They are therefore prepared to react and modify attitudes and behaviours, according to the situations, to choose the most functional ones to achieve certain objectives.
- The SFA Operator understands that their own behaviour and habits derive from personal values and they can embrace those belonging to other individuals.
- They can anticipate how their actions will be perceived by others and use this knowledge to clarify communications and better influence others.

- The SFA Operator can validate, i.e. to understand if a person's emotions are possible in the situation they are in.

ATTITUDE

Empathy: understanding other views of reality, opinions and thoughts without prejudice. The connection with the other party has to be authentic, but goal-oriented. The SFA Operator recognises their own and other people's emotions and identifies with them; they then use this connection to influence the other party more effectively without becoming entangled in the relationship.

Knowing oneself helps to understand how personal aspects mutually impact ourselves/others. Being aware increases the ability to distinguish between the mental representation of the world we use to interpret events and experiences and the objective reality. The ability to regulate one's emotions reduces the likelihood of acting irrationally and making unfounded judgements. Empathy facilitates communication and problem-solving. However, the SFA Operator is always aware that the other party is different from themselves and uses the empathic relationship to achieve the operation's objectives.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

DEFINITION: To adapt effectively to changes in the environment and to be flexible in managing interactions with people of different professions and degrees of authority.

KNOWLEDGE

Practical exercises and role-play to train for flexibility and adaptability in critical or uncomfortable situations.

SKILL

- The SFA Operator can adapt to changing and new circumstances quickly.
- They can modify their actions and/or critically analyse their knowledge and procedures if these are not useful for obtaining results.
- The SFA Operator is flexible and creative in identifying solutions and they can have a positive mental attitude even in very stressful situations. The SFA Operator can re-prioritise the needs of the other party or of a new situation.
- Adapting the communication style according to the interlocutor.
- The SFA Operator is unconstrained by preconceived ideas, can adapt to the needs of the counterpart and is willing to accept ideas and proposals.

ATTITUDE

- Reactivity to change: perceiving change as a positive challenge rather than an obstacle to work.
- Managing the unexpected.
- Tolerance of uncertainty.
- Creativity: the SFA Operator seeks new methods and new ways of approaching/acting without fear.
- Intellectual flexibility: considering the unexpected as new information to be added to the information one already possesses.
- Openness towards people, methods and experiences.
- Adaptability: the SFA Operator adapts their methods, communication style and expertise proactively to meet the needs of the counterpart and the operation's objectives.

ORGANISATION AND GOAL ORIENTATION

DEFINITION:

Organisation: effectively structuring one's own and others' activities, resources and time available to achieve an objective.

Goal orientation: constantly directing one's own and others' activities towards the achievement of expected goals, providing a level of performance consistent with the nature and importance of those goals.

KNOWLEDGE

Theoretical and practical knowledge on:

Project Management (planning, prioritisation, resource analysis, audience analysis, monitoring progress, redefining plans and priorities).

SKILL

- The SFA Operator can plan activities in the short, medium and long term.
- They are aware of the operation's objectives and take them into account when planning the various activities.
- They tolerate frustration and can manage the gaps between their own expectations and personal goals, the goals of their command and the counterpart's real possibilities.

SKILL

- Proactivity: i.e. knowing how to intervene in advance in situations to solve any upstream problems.
- Initiative.
- Commitment: the SFA Operator is satisfied with their role and skilled in managing the relationship with the counterpart.

The SFA Operator recognises the counterpart's objectives while also keeping in mind the objectives of the mission. They are highly motivated to effectively work with the counterpart and is, therefore, able to motivate personnel to change: making the counterpart aware of why they should act in a certain way. The willingness and motivation to engage with members of different cultures is a necessary component of effective interaction.

TEAMWORK AND NETWORKING

DEFINITION:

Teamwork: being able to feel part of a group, communicating and sharing experiences, progress and ideas with other group members.

Networking: competence needed to maintain professional or social contacts.

KNOWLEDGE

Theoretical and practical knowledge on:

- The group: understanding the dynamics and working styles in the group: the life cycle of a team, effective communication in teams, defining and sharing common goals.
- Conflict Management techniques: obstacles to teamwork, barriers to collaboration, main causes of conflict in the team, conflict as a resource.

SKILL

- The SFA Operator can coordinate with previously employed operators to share experiences and achievements to maintain the same course of action.
- They cooperate with the counterpart by identifying key figures in the personnel who may facilitate their work and with contractors and civilians.
- The SFA Operator can recognise which key figures may positively and effectively influence the success of the operation and establish meaningful relationships with them. These do not always correspond to higher hierarchical levels.

ATTITUDE

Predisposition to teamwork.

Networking is a strategic objective to be promoted and disseminated in SFA operations. The period of deployment abroad is perceived by interviewees as too short to achieve results. They report the need to coordinate with colleagues on activities, to not 'reinvent the wheel' and not lose results achieved at the end of the tour/mission. In SFA operations the mission cannot be considered as a simple mandate limited in time, but rather as a part of a larger project and objective that therefore needs to be shared and coordinated with different figures throughout the time. 'Network' is also of the same critical importance as 'social capital': one's social network determines the extent to which they can access information, exert influence and effect change in an organisation. This is made possible if the SFA Operator is motivated to take on this role, to recognise the importance of transversal skills and to use them to their advantage to influence the counterpart.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

DEFINITION: Stability of performance under difficult and conflict conditions, through lucid and balanced reactions. Constructively reacting to workloads; maintaining unchanged behaviour in conflict situations. Maintaining a calm and reassuring attitude without losing sight of the situation and the result to be achieved.

KNOWLEDGE

Theoretical and practical knowledge on:

- Eustress and Distress: when stress becomes negative and dysfunctional.
- The effects of stress on performance: perceptual distortions, decreased ability to process information, longer time to complete work assignments.
- Strategies to cope with stress: Problem-centered coping aimed at solving the problems, following the analysis of all the elements and possible solutions of a given situation.
- Emotion-centred coping is aimed at changing one's cognitive appraisal, i.e., one's interpretation of the stressful event along with the ability to regulate emotions.

SKILL

- The SFA Operator can deal with the uncertainty and frustration that may arise in different situations.
- They can effectively manage their professional and personal life.
- They possess several effective stress management strategies in their background.

ATTITUDE

- Self-efficacy: awareness of being able to master specific situations and/or activities.

- Self-esteem.
- Flexibility.
- Tolerance to frustration.
- Openness to novelties.
- Being focused on objectives.

EVALUATION TOOLS

Specific cognitive tools (tests, questionnaires, interviews, group tests, simulations, etc.) are used to measure psychological dimensions and skills: certain tools are for the exclusive use of the Psychology Officer, while others, not of a purely psychological nature, may also be used by experienced SFA operators.

FINAL EVALUATION

The psycho-aptitude assessment, undertaken for selection and admission to the course, will be completed during the various phases of the course itself, using structured tools such as observation and group exercises and possibly through additional individual or group interviews. The same evaluations will be carried out continuously during the exercise phase, using the evaluation criteria and the characteristics considered in the initial selection phase. Continuous assessment during the execution phase allows the ability to make an overall assessment of the candidates, but furthermore provides a vehicle for the observation of personal aptitude characteristics.

WHO IS THE SFA OPERATOR IN REALITY?

- Listener. A good listener and a good communicator: The SFA Operator uses the information they grasp and observes from the counterpart to their own advantage to build and maintain effective relationships to achieve the operation's objectives.
- Flexible. They adapt to the context and contingent situations with an attitude of open-mindedness, tolerance and respect.
- Assertive. Determined to achieve their own objectives while focusing on the counterpart's needs in an environment based on mutual trust.
- Emotionally intelligent. They are aware of themselves, how they are perceived and how they react and of the situations and signals in the physical and human terrain.
- Team/Network builder. Capable of working in a team and establishing a network of relationships that may be functional to fulfil their objectives.
- Competent. Competent in their field of work, they remain constantly updated and they can adapt their own procedures to those of counterparts as necessary.
- Able to manage stress. Able to effectively manage stress, uncertainty and frustration arising from both professional and personal/family issues.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The following conclusions and recommendations have been identified:

- a. Overall, the military and civilian personnel interviewed considered the 'in place' selection process to be lacking and believed a more workable/exacting process for selection should be implemented. Of note, currently, the importance of emotional intelligence attributes is not a key selection focus – arguably, the ability to establish and maintain relationships is much more important than professional and technical knowledge. Therefore, it is paramount to select personnel who are truly motivated to work alongside their counterpart.
- b. In addition to the selection process, it is also important to train and psychologically equip staff to more effectively interact with their counterpart.
- c. Knowledge and skills are easier to train than attitudes and traits. Therefore, in the selection process, it would be essential to primarily identify personnel with skills, given the essential competencies they should already possess. On the other hand, training can be implemented through courses that teach specific skills and through practical role-play exercises and scenario-based simulation training.
- d. The selection process should search for traits and attitudes that represent innate dispositions for certain activities and are, therefore, more difficult to train. Attitudes alone are not sufficient to develop a good SFA Operator. Therefore, operators must deepen their knowledge, hone and refine their skills through exercise and training - thus strengthening their competencies.
- e. While self-awareness did not significantly emerge among the interviewees' responses and is often underestimated by experienced soldiers, this skill should be increasingly developed in SFA for the very reason that emotions carry information and are often more authentic than thoughts. Emotions offer data necessary for decision-making. Moreover, to be aware and recognise other individuals' emotions, operators must first be aware of one's own emotions, attitudes and reactions. Therefore, the SFA Operator needs to adopt an empathic attitude not only towards the counterpart, but also towards themselves.
- f. Ultimately, in the future, it might be interesting to further investigate, using quantitative research, what skills are required for the SFA Operator and to statistically observe how these affect performances.

What we need are people who have a certain aptitude for advisor duties, who have not just the professional expertise but also the interpersonal skills that are required. That includes a degree of patience, a degree of emotional control and a degree of empathy for others.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The lexicon contains abbreviations relevant to Allied Joint Publication (AJP) - 3.16, Allied Joint Doctrine for Force Protection and is not meant to be exhaustive. The definitive and more comprehensive list of abbreviations is in AAP-15, NATO Glossary of Abbreviations used in NATO Documents and Publications.

ACT	Allied Command Transformation
ACO	Allied Command Operations
ADL	Advanced Distributed Learning
AO	Analysis Objective
AJP	Allied Joint Publication
Bi-SC	of the two Strategic Commands
BST	Battle Staff Training
CE	Crisis Establishment
COE	Centre of Excellence
Col	Community of Interest
CPX	Combat Post Exercise
CT&ED	Collective Training and Exercise Directive
DAP	Discipline Alignment Plan
DCOS	Deputy Chief of Staff
DH	Department Head
EOs	Enabling Objectives
ETEE	Education Training Exercise Evaluation
ETF	Education and Training Facilities
HOTO	Handover – Takeover
HN	Host Nation
JFTC	Joint Force Training Centre
JFCNP	Joint Force Command Naples
LF	Local Forces
MC	Military Committee
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NMI	NATO Mission Iraq
OCE	Officer Conducting the Exercise
ODE	Officer Directing the Exercise
OSE	Officer Scheduling the Exercise
PDT	Pre-Deployment Training
PTEC	Partnership Training and Education Centres
RA	Requirements Authority
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SACT	Supreme Allied Command for Transformation
SAT	NATO Systems Approach to Training
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SME	Subject Matter Expert
STP	Strategic Training Plan
TA	Training Audience
TCNs	Troop Contributing Nations
TNA	Training Needs Analysis
TO	Training Objective
TRA	Training Requirements Analysis

BIOGRAPHIES

Col. Massimo Di PIETRO

Col. Massimo Di Pietro is an Italian Army Officer and currently serves as Director of the NATO SFA COE. During his professional career, he was deeply involved in NATO issues while serving at the Italian NATO Rapid Deployable Corps HQ, at the Italian Army General Staff HQ, at the Italian Joint Operations HQ and during his command of the 6th Bersaglieri Regiment. He was deployed to USCENTCOM (Tampa, Florida, USA) as Liaison Officer and served on NATO missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Afghanistan. After a degree in Politics and International Relations, he completed several master's degrees in international security and peacekeeping and specific courses at the NATO School in Oberammergau.

LTC. Matteo FRANCAVILLA

LTC. Matteo FRANCAVILLA attended the 181st Course "Esempio" of the Military Academy from 1999 to 2001 and the School of Applied Military Studies from 2001 to 2004. He was appointed as Platoon Leader in the 5th Infantry Rgt. "Aosta" in Messina where he also covered the position of Deputy Coy Commander and Coy Commander. He was deployed twice in KOSOVO as Deputy Coy Commander (2007) and as TOC Director (2009). In 2009 he was posted as Support Coy Commander in the Signal and Intelligence Command in Anzio (Rome). In 2014, after successfully attending the Staff Course, he was assigned to the Infantry school and after two years was appointed to the NATO SFA COE as LL Section Chief.

C.W.O. Stefano BARANOVICH

C.W.O. Stefano BARANOVICH joined the Italian Army in 2005. From 2007 to 2010 he attended the 10th Warrant Officer Course "Dignità" in the Italian Warrant Officer School. From 2010 to 2014 he served as Platoon Leader in the 186th Airborne Regiment in Siena. From 2014 to 2016 he was employed as Platoon Leader and Staff member in Regiment HQ in the Italian Warrant Officer School. From September 2016 he joined the NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence in Cesano di Roma as Cultural Awareness and GAP Analysis staff assistant. C.W.O. BARANOVICH took part in the missions JOINT ENTERPRISE in Kosovo in 2007 and ISAF XVI in Afghanistan in 2011. He graduated in Political Science in 2005 and in Organizational and Management Sciences in 2010. He has also been awarded with the Italian, Dutch, US Military wings.

Dr. Luca DEL SOLE

Dr. Luca Del Sole is a former Italian Army Officer. He attended the Military Academy in Modena from 1999 to 2001, then appointed as infantry officer to the mountain corps. Throughout his service he has covered several commanding and staff positions both in the national and multinational arena and was deployed on EU and NATO missions in the Balkans and Afghanistan. From 2014 to 2017 has served at the NATO Joint Force Training Centre in Bydgoszcz, Poland. He graduated from the Higher Joint Service Staff College in 2018. In 2018 he retired from active service with the rank of major and worked as Project Manager for ATOS GDC Polska, a multinational corporation in the IT business. Since 2019 he has worked as an independent consultant for Cadence (a Calian Company), providing training and development consultancy for NATO. Certified as Project Manager and Executive Coach, he holds master's degrees in strategic studies, International Relations, International Military-Strategic Studies, and Human Resources and Organizations.

Lt. Maria Michela TAGLIACCOZZI LANCIOTTI

After graduating in Psychodynamic Psychology at La Sapienza University in Rome in 2016, Lt. Maria Michela Tagliacozzi Lanciotti obtained a Master in Human Resources Management-HR Specialist and one in Psychology and Coaching in Sport. She is currently attending the four-year course in Cognitive-Behavioural Psychotherapy at the School of Training in Cognitive Psychotherapy and Research in Bolzano. She joined the Italian Army in 2018 and attended the 15th Psychologist Course at the Academy of Modena. Since 2019, she is employed as Psychologist Officer at the 85th Volunteer Training Regiment "Verona" and she collaborates with the Italian SFA Section and the NATO SFA COE. Deployed in 2020 in Niger in a Mobile Training Team, she has specialised in the study of Effective Communication in an intercultural context, Situational Awareness and Combat Profiling, integrating the theoretical aspects with the use of mental training techniques of transversal skills and using especially the third wave cognitive techniques such as mindfulness.

Dr. Camilla LAVINO

After completing her multi-disciplinary bachelor's degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics at LUISS Guido Carli University, Dr. Camilla Lavino graduated from her MSc in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where she specialised in International and European security and defence. Dr. Lavino developed a comprehensive and diverse background in international affairs, thanks to her professional experiences at the United Nations, the European Parliament, the British Embassy in Rome, a Brussels-based NGO and international research centres. She joined the NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence as an intern in 2021 to support the Lessons Learned Branch in their research activities.

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