



NATO
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CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE



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Contents

1. SFA OPERATOR PROFILE - ANALYSIS REPORT
Lessons Learned Branch pag. 2
2. SFA CONCEPT IMPLEMENTATION:
WITHIN NATO COMMAND STRUCTURES AND HQs
Marco DAGNA pag. 8
3. STRATEGIC TAKEAWAYS FROM THE STUDY SEMINAR “RELIGION, PEACE,
AND SECURITY: Challenges and Prospects in the MENA Region”
Opening Session pag. 11
4. THE 2022 Seminar for Institutional Advisors
Matteo Atticciati - NATO SFA COE Intern pag. 17
5. MAIN EVENTS pag. 22

Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the newsletter n. 7/2022 of the NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence which demonstrates the commitment of the COE to provide more and better quality research.

Recent changes within the global order have put NATO at the forefront of the players in the international arena. Since its foundation, the NATO SFA COE has made it its mission to provide detailed analyses on pressing topics that are relevant in the international arena, and this newsletter aims to emphasize some of them.



The first article concerns a very important topic to the COE, as it provides an in-depth analysis of Security Force Assistance (SFA) Operators by covering the different types of tasks, duties, and requirements they must meet to optimise their effectiveness and role within NATO. Indeed, for an Operator to function in the most efficient way possible when working with other nations, which most likely will be more accustomed to different methods and/or standards of operation, NATO must establish a neutral but universal set of criteria for its Operators. This article aims to analyse the effectiveness of said criteria, establish clear boundaries between the different roles of SFA Operators, and improve efficiency by providing higher quality advising.

SFA has become a very important enabler used by the NATO Command Structure (NCS) and other armies alike, yet it has not been at its most efficient when different countries try to collaborate in advising. The second article will cover just that. By identifying clear gaps in the methodology of SFA activities, the COE has been able to analyse the possible solutions as well as implementations of said activities in a manner that aids the command structures and provides them with better recommendations.

The third article will explore the key takeaways from the "Religion, Peace and Security: Challenges and Prospects in the MENA Region" study seminar. Organised by NATO SFA COE in collaboration with the Religion & Security Council (RSC), the seminar was aimed at exploring the use of religion as a tool for initiating peaceful dialogue between actors. During the seminar, several major figures in the academic, political, and military fields took part in discussions with the objective of exploring the possible solutions to religious extremism.

Finally, in our fourth and last article for this edition of the newsletter, we will discuss the 2022 Seminar for Institutional Advisors. This event, co-organised with the Stability Policing Centre of Excellence, explored topics such as the NATO doctrine when implemented in different sectors in order to help operators recognise the main challenges that might arise when operating in those sectors. Indeed, the seminar helped to explore the various doctrinal and operational applications and concepts related to Capacity Building operations.

I sincerely hope that this newsletter will help researchers, as well as the entire SFA community, to deepen their interests within the area by providing more research for the community and expanding the pre-existing literature available. I have full trust in the personnel here at the NATO SFA COE to provide high-quality, yet easy-to-understand, material for all readers.

SFA OPERATOR PROFILE ANALYSIS REPORT

This analysis report 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 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.

The article 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.



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.

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.

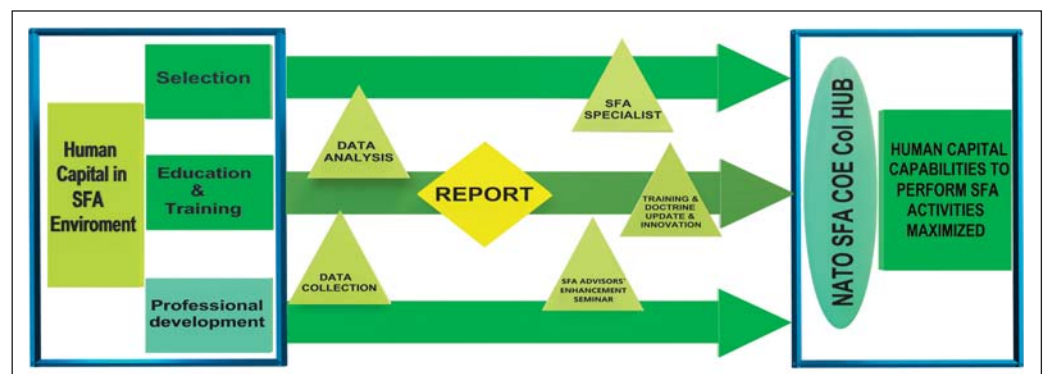


Image 1. SFA Operator Profile Project Design.

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 a 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, examined them and isolated the main characteristics of each role.

Functions are extensively described in the AJP-3.16. Expected outcomes, types of activities and aspects of the targeted individuals from the Local Forces (LF) are well defined. However, the AJP-3.16 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 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.

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 in-depth and extensive knowledge in a specific subject area, usually with cross-functional and multidisciplinary expertise. His/her 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:

Advisor: a person whose job is to give advice, especially to government or businesses or to students.

Advisory: giving advice; having the power or duty to advise.

Advisory body: an organisation which has the authority to make suggestions about how other organisations, especially in a certain field, should behave and run their affairs.

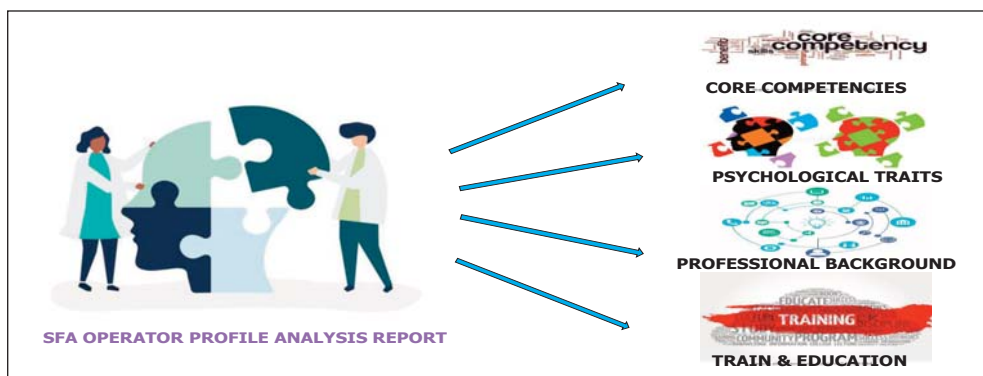


Image 2. SFA Operator Profile Analysis Report.

ADVISOR



Image 3. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unminusca/14593563462>

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. His/her 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 his/her 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.

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 that constant proximity with the mentee is a paramount requirement.

MENTOR



Image 4. <https://ww1.prweb.com/prfiles/2006/07/06/0000408426/CPTThachand3BNIAIraqiSniper.JPG>

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.

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-P3.16 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)’.

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.

TRAINER



Image 5. <https://nara.getarchive.net/media/a-us-military-advisor-keeps-time-as-a-member-of-the-fcfb75>

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.



Image 7. <https://www.missionline.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2DAD8BAA-6BF6-4D97-932C-502A23BA4608-e1549991159854.jpeg>

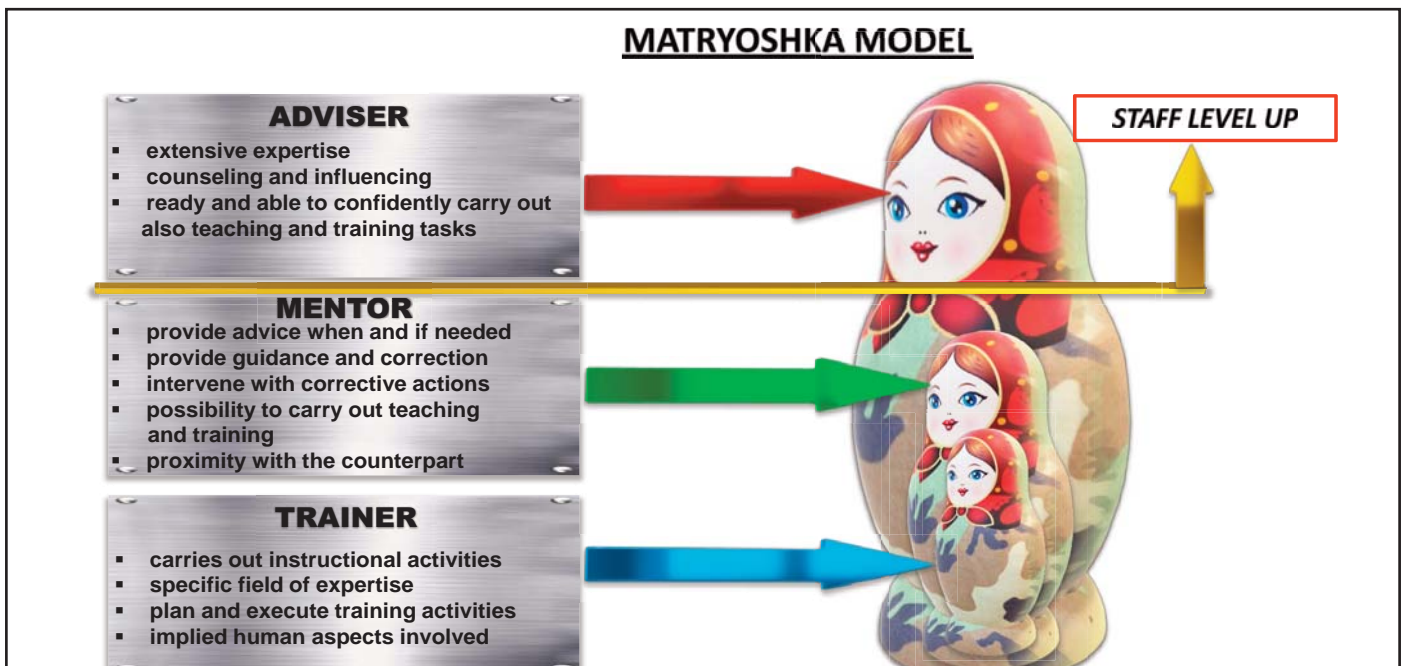


Image 6. Competencies, functions and levels of the SFA Operator.

SFA SPECIALIST

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

- Ineffective Handover Takeover (HOTO).
- Interruption of mutual trust relationship due to SFA Operator/advisor rotation.
- Difficulty in maintaining institutional memory (keeping the SFA delivery on track and progressively the SFA operators/advisors should build their 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, a 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.

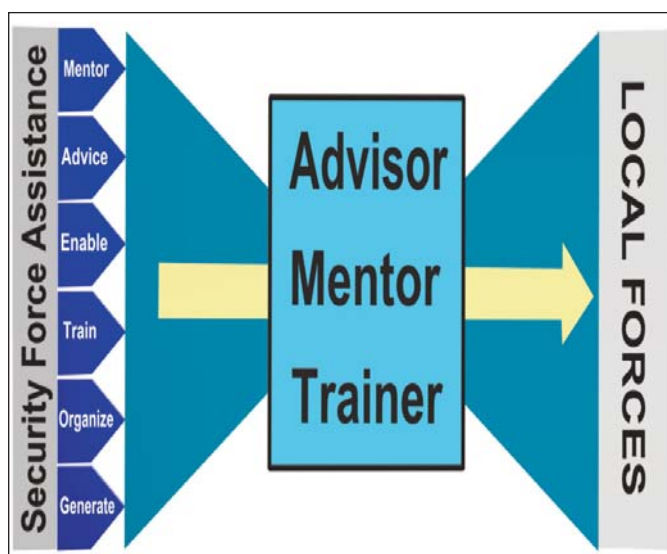


Image 8. SFA Operator key factor to interact within LF system.

CONCLUSIONS

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.

Selection and Recruiting

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.

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.

Adaption of Education and Training Programmes

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.

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 wide range of specialised knowledge and expertise throughout the SFA community.

SFA CONCEPT IMPLEMENTATION: WITHIN NATO COMMAND STRUCTURES AND HQS

GAP ANALYSIS

Security Force Assistance (SFA) has rapidly become an integral part of the NATO Command Structure (NCS) work. At the basis of the implementation of SFA in the NCS are the NATO Strategic Concept of 2010 and the NATO Security Force Assistance Concept of 2014. Both documents not only clarify the scope and modalities of SFA as a capability for NATO, but also help to define the institutional framework of the entire SFA structure in more detail.

Firstly, it is important to highlight the close link between SFA and the NCS. This becomes concrete to the extent that SFA is implemented within the operational structures of the NCS. To give a few examples, the analysis and study of Lessons Learned is carried out within the Joint Allied Lessons Learned Centre, an HQ operating under Allied Command Transformation (ACT), which provides training, courses and study activities focusing on “NATO Lessons Learned Ca-



pability”. Similarly, other HQs belonging to the Allied Command Transformation, such as the Joint Warfare Centre and the Joint Force Training Centre, contribute to the development and integration of SFA. They respectively support exercises focused on Crisis Response Operations aimed at promoting SFA capabilities to address a crisis, and provide training in the SFA field for personnel employed in the framework of the NATO Mission in Iraq.

Another area in which SFA is implemented within the NCS is Education and Training. In this field, over the years, SFA

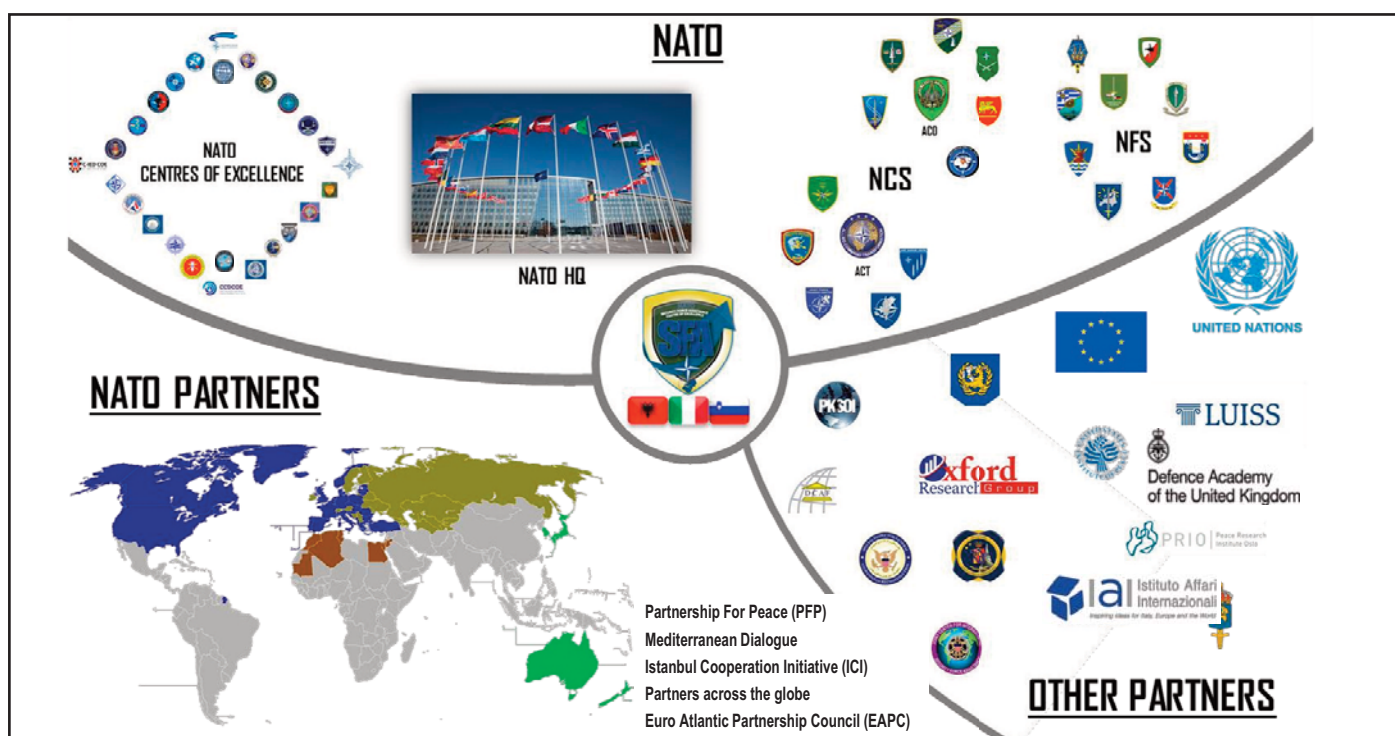


Image 1. NATO SFA COE network.

has developed a proven capacity for individual and collective training and education aimed at consolidating the preparedness of NATO operators. Therefore, thanks to the courses and training programmes organised and promoted by SFA, including the “NATO SFA Operators Course” and the “Institutional Advisor Course”, SFA has progressively gained importance in the field of Education and Training to the point of becoming one of the four clusters of the “Military Contribution to Peace Support” discipline.

MITIGATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Regarding the issue of how Leadership within the NATO Command Structure should deal with SFA, the NATO SFA Concept states that “NATO Leadership at all levels has to be aware of the importance of Security Force Assistance as a tool contributing to mission success”. Consequently, the concept particularly advocates the need for NATO leadership to establish operating units made up of highly selected and trained SFA units. In this regard the recent project of

the NATO SFA COE, entitled “SFA Operator Profile”, is a valid reference for identifying the proper skills for advisors, mentors, and trainers capable of planning, conducting and assessing SFA activities.

Although SFA enjoys a clear institutional framework and a continuously improving and evolving organisation, its full implementation within NCS is often hindered by the concomitance of several factors.

Firstly, a significant obstacle is the lack of a coherent picture clearly and uniquely defining how SFA is related to other Defence and related institutions and Capacity Building activities. In this regard, the proliferation of programmes, initiatives and activities referring both to cooperative security and crisis management has led to a potential mis-awareness and lack of consistency of who does what and on the areas of responsibility. In addition, SFA is a “relatively new activity” and its outcomes are difficult to measure and monitor because they are time-consuming and difficult to translate into numbers. This has resulted in only partial implementation within the NCS,

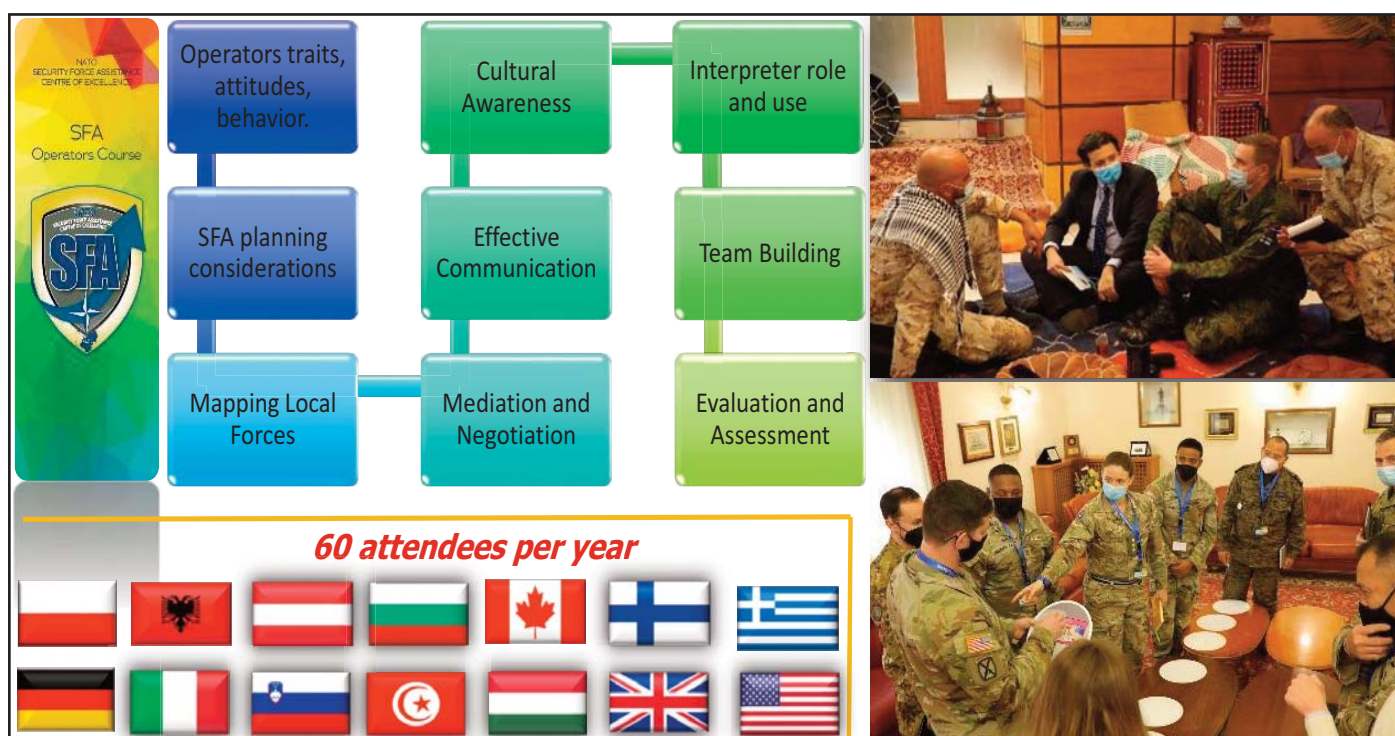


Image 2. SFA Operators course.



Image 3. NATO SFA COE Way Ahead.

hindering the full development of the SFA's potential. However, the most problematic element is the lack of specific planning tools related to SFA at both the operational and tactical levels that can integrate SFA actions within a broader context. Exacerbating this situation is the lack of a NATO SFA Planning Guide which can integrate the principles of SFA with the planning process established by the Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive, and the lack of a set of Yardsticks supporting planners in gauging the resources.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering these weaknesses, several recommendations were prepared in order to achieve a more efficient and effective implementation of the NATO SFA concept within the NCS. These push for

harmonisation and coordination of all NATO capacity building activities by developing and implementing the "Assistance" joint function, which should group together and synchronize all the instruments developed by NATO to provide partners and Host nations the proper assistance to increase their capabilities in providing internal and external security on their own. Therefore, it is important to promote the development of SFA-related planning tools including a set of Yardsticks for measuring the performance of the Local Forces. Ultimately, in light of the importance that the human factor plays within NATO, the need to improve NATO Human Capital in the field of SFA by providing training that is oriented towards the creation of a SFA mindset, including shared understanding, lexicon, experiences, and exercises that can best train future SFA operators, is also strongly recommended.

STRATEGIC TAKEAWAYS FROM THE STUDY SEMINAR “RELIGION, PEACE, AND SECURITY: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN THE MENA REGION” - OPENING SESSION



The Study Seminar “Religion, Peace, and Security: Challenges and Prospects in the MENA Region”, organized by the NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence (NATO SFA COE) and the Religion & Security Council (RSC) took place in Rome at the Air Force’s Officers Club, on 5-6 May 2022. The event brought together an international group of scholars, experts, practitioners, and military officers who examined the potentialities of the “religious factor” in the Mediterranean and the Middle East as a “driver” of peace and security, rather than of warfare and instability.

The proceedings developed over three thematic sessions, focused on: 1) Interreligious Dialogue in Conflicts Resolution and Peace-Building; 2) Addressing Radical Thinking and Violent Extremism; 3) How to Foster Religious Freedom and Peaceful Coexistence: Best Policies and Practices. Each session featured two keynote speakers, who gave a 30-minute presentation, followed by a roundtable discussion that allowed all participants to share their views and recommendations on the topics dealt with.

The goals and the scientific groundwork

of the Study Seminar were outlined during the Opening Session by the NATO SFA COE Director, Col. Massimo Di Pietro, RSC Chairman Emiliano Stornelli, and Dr. Sihem Djebbi, University of Sorbonne Paris Nord and Pontifical Faculty of Theology of Southern Italy. The special remarks by Maj. Gen. Stefano Del Col, Former UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, provided first-hand insights into the importance of the role of the “religious factor” for the maintenance of peace and security, based on the case of Lebanon.

An account of the Opening Session is shared below, as a preview of the reports that will be published on each of the three main session of the proceedings, including the main “strategic takeaways” drawn from the keynote speakers’ presentations and the roundtable discussions.



Figure 1. Plenary session.

COL. MASSIMO DI PIETRO - DIRECTOR OF THE NATO SFA COE

The NATO Security Force Assistance Centre of Excellence (NATO SFA COE) acts as a SFA focal point for the Alliance in the promotion of research, doctrine development, and training activities aimed at supporting stability and reconstruction processes in crisis scenarios. By adopting a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach, the NATO SFA COE carries out its mission along three main lines of efforts: policy, human capital, and support to operations. In the “policy” line of effort, the NATO SFA COE develops all NATO concepts and best practices related to SFA, integrating them in the revision process of the already existing NATO doctrines, and delivering independent research and publications.

In the “human capital” line of effort, the NATO SFA COE develops projects and initiatives that concur in enhancing the capacities, knowledge, and situational awareness of NATO personnel, so as to

support NATO in providing the “best prepared people, in the right place, at the right time, every time”.

As for the “support to operations” line of effort, the NATO SFA COE takes all necessary actions to support NATO command and force structures in improving their ability to plan and conduct SFA activities across NATO missions and operations. The effectiveness of SFA depends on: a good analysis of the mission area; a planning process since the very beginning of the crisis; and the synchronization of the efforts along the tactical, operational, and strategic levels, accompanied by a continuous assessment.

In this context, the NATO SFA COE's areas of responsibility are also extended to the so-called “Cross Cutting Topics” (CCTs), including a range of subjects that fall outside the primary military domain, but are still relevant to the success of NATO missions and operations. The NATO recognized CCTs are: protection of civilians; children and armed conflict; sexual and gender-



Image 2. Director's introduction.

based violence; cultural property protection; building integrity; women, peace, and security.

Another subject to be considered in the comprehensive approach for SFA activities is certainly the role of the “religious factor”, especially as referred to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where religions have long been a pretext to fuel warfare and instability, but can also represent a powerful driver of peace and stability. The cooperation between the NATO SFA COE and the Religion & Security Council (RSC) has thus been prompted by the need to address the potentialities of the “religious factor” in crisis management, peace-building, and post-conflict stabilization processes across NATO's Southern flank.

This Study Seminar is the first output of the NATO SFA COE-RSC cooperation, and aims to promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise between military officers, scholars, and practitioners, on the religion, peace, and security nexus in the MENA region, and on the related challenges to be met.

As a follow-up to the Study Seminar, the NATO SFA COE and the RSC will develop a wide editorial initiative, including a series of papers, reports, and other publications, with the goal to enhance the cultural and situational awareness on the “religious factor” as a crucial component of the SFA effort within the comprehensive approach framework of NATO missions and operations.

EMILIANO STORNELLI - RSC CHAIRMAN

This Study Seminar is a significant example of civilian-military cooperation, and of the high-level results it can achieve also in the scientific and cultural domain. The event engages speakers and participants

from different professional backgrounds and countries, but united by the same purpose, that is to address the role of the “religious factor” in the security sphere.

As a matter of fact, many of the conflicts and crises of our time have a religious dimension, and this is particularly true for the MENA region, whose instability have major repercussions for the countries of the northern side of the Mediterranean and for Europe as a whole.

However, until a few years ago, the idea that religions and religious actors could play a positive and constructive role in helping peace and security to advance was still not taken into serious consideration whether in terms of strategic thinking, or at an operational level.

Talking about “religion” in relation to “security” was considered a “taboo”. There was a kind of fear to face the issue, as if we were crossing a forbidden threshold for our mindset. Such a mindset produced “a lack of awareness” of the potentialities of religions as an asset in the field of crisis



Image 3. Mr. Emiliano Stornelli (Chairman RSC).

management, conflicts resolution, peace-building, and post-conflict stabilization.

The Religion & Security Council (RSC) was established in 2016 to contribute to fill this gap, with a view to increasing the awareness of stakeholders on the strategic necessity to include the “religious factor” in the peace and security equation.

In these six years of work, the RSC has been engaged in addressing the main areas where religion and security intersect.

The RSC has been at the forefront in advocating for interreligious dialogue as the way forward to prevent confrontation, achieve reconciliation, and build peaceful coexistence, both at the inter-state and intra-state level. The RSC has also been advocating for the development of sound and balanced approaches to religious scriptures and doctrines to counter the radical discourse and narratives, and the indoctrination and recruitment by extremist groups, especially among youth.

Moreover, the RSC has closely focused on the predicament of religious minorities, backing the implementation of policies and practices to foster cooperation and communal harmony between different

religious groups, as opposed to any form of sectarianism, discrimination, and human rights violation.

These areas of engagement have proved to be relevant to the goals of the SFA, and thus have become the topics of this Study Seminar, which explores the nexus between religion, peace, and security.

Based on the views, insights, and recommendations gathered during the proceedings, the NATO SFA COE and the RSC will continue with new initiatives to address the role of the “religious factor” in the security sphere on a conceptual and doctrinal level. Therefore, if today’s event is the culmination of a process, it is also the beginning of a new stage.

DR. SIHEM DJEBBI - UNIVERSITY OF SORBONNE PARIS NORD AND PONTIFICAL FACULTY OF THEOLOGY OF SOUTHERN ITALY

The seminar sheds light on the specific contribution religion can provide in building peace and stability.



Image 4. Dr. Sihem Djebbi (Associate Professor, University of Sorbonne Paris Nord).

Religion has long been disqualified by political and social sciences both as a matter of study and as a valid force in society. Analytically, religion was thought to be declining inexorably as a consequence of modernity. Axiologically, it was considered to be fundamentally linked with reactionist trends.

Since the end of the eighties, this secularist bias has been profoundly revised. The apparent rise of religious claims all over the world have led many analysts to define today's era as a post-secular one. An academic consensus has been reached about the necessity to better explore the role of religion in society and politics. However, this renewed interest has resulted, over time, in overwhelming negative approaches to religion. The latter has been understood mostly as a main driver of contemporary conflicts and terrorism, especially with regards to Islam. It is only recently that academic research has started to explore the nexus between religion and peace.

Religion has recently gained more importance in global governance too. Religious actors, who used to be by-passed or considered untrustworthy in international politics, have eventually acquired a certain credit. Policy-makers have increasingly involved religious entities in the definition and implementation of projects related to the public interest in order to gain legitimacy and efficiency. This has been particularly the case in the humanitarian and development arenas, but the potential role of religious entities in the peace-building arena has not been thoroughly considered yet.

In this seminar, the concept of religion is broadly understood as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices, which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them". This definition, provided by Durkheim, highlights the numerous facets

of religion. Religion is both an individual and a collective phenomenon, as well as a spiritual and a socio-political one connecting cosmological views, practices, rituals, cognitive and normative frameworks. Thus, the seminar pays particular attention to religious myths, rituals, doctrine, ethics, social and experiential dimensions as well as leadership, all aspects that should be addressed to help peace processes.

Religion must be approached as a dynamic phenomenon, which cannot but go through processes of adaptation, transformation and pluralization, especially in a globalized era. At the same time, it shapes and is also shaped by social, cultural, political and economic realities. It is a powerful driver of change as well as a deeply evolving reality. It is thus crucial to embed the study of religion in the environments in which it evolves, and to consider its variations over time and space.

The seminar gathers a panel coming from the MENA region, and from different socio-political and religious-cultural environments. This choice is meant to provide space for the expression and understanding of the variety of local perceptions, representations and aspirations. This should help global public action in the region acquire more efficiency and legitimacy.

Working on the potential nexus between religion and peace in the MENA region does not presume that the religious dimension of conflict is the primary one. Economic inequalities, social precariousness, democratic deficit, geopolitical rivalries, and environmental degradation are the leading factors. These issues provide ground for religious instrumentalization and framing, which, in turn, contribute to conflict escalation and duration. These non-religious core issues should be addressed primarily, in collaboration with, or apart from religious actors. Nevertheless, in the collective effort to build peace, certain religious realities could, and should be a precious "adjuvant".

MAJ. GEN. STEFANO DEL COL - FORMER UNIFIL HEAD OF MISSION AND FORCE COMMANDER

This meeting of experts is undoubtedly needed to better understand the MENA region from the religion, peace, and security perspective. In this area of the world, religions have long been misused to promote views that set neighbours against neighbours and jeopardize peaceful relations between communities that have coexisted for generations.

Religion is a powerful unifying force, but it is also easy for extremist ideologies to exploit the religious factor for their wicked purposes. This is where religious leaders, especially when they are far away from the political dimension, can play a major role in conflict prevention and in the reconciliation processes, by leveraging their networks and communication channels to help people separate their beliefs and religious identity from the attempts to manipulate them.

Aware of the cohesive power of religion, as Head of UNIFIL in South Lebanon, I used to engage religious leaders from

different denominations in promoting non-violence, partnership relations, equality, and respect on a communal level. UNIFIL itself symbolizes unity in diversity, with troops from 46 different countries across the world. Recalling the words of the UN Secretary General António Guterres, UNIFIL is the “symbol of stability in an unstable region”.

As for Lebanon, it represents a microcosm of the world with all its diversity, particularly with respect to culture, religion, and education. Therefore, the Lebanese experience offers a fundamental contribution to the elaboration of concrete approaches aimed at addressing the topics of the Study Seminar.

Currently, Lebanon is going through an unprecedented socio-economic predicament, added to the many other issues that keep affecting its stability and future prospects. The gathering in the Vatican City of all the Lebanese religious leaders has been a major sign of unity in such a critical time and reminds us of the need to invest more and more in fostering dialogue, social cohesion, and a culture of peace and human rights in troubled societies and countries.



Image 5. Maj. Gen. Stefano Del Col.

THE 2022 SEMINAR FOR INSTITUTIONAL ADVISORS



The Seminar for Institutional Advisors on Stabilization and Reconstruction (S&R), Security Sector Reform (SSR), Security Force Assistance (SFA) and Stability Policing (SP) took place in Rome from 15th to 17th of March 2022, at the Italian Air Force Head Quarters.

It was co-organised by the NATO SFA and SP Centres of Excellence (COE) headed respectively by Col. Massimo Di Pietro and Col. Giuseppe De Magistris. The main objectives were to review NATO doctrine on S&R, SSR, SFA and SP, recognize the main challenges for Institutional Advisors and develop the essential skills for effective advising.

The event was divided into three different parts. The first day focused on the doctrinal views of the various aspects of S&R, SSR, SFA and SP concepts. On the second day, the lecturers stressed the operational and tactical aspects. The third day centred on the political and strategic implications of the subject matter.

After an introduction by Seminar's co-director Lt. Col. Sandro Gulisano, the first talk of the conference explored the various traits of the S&R operations doctrine and principles. Lt. Col. Gianluca Mascherano, from the Post Conflict Operation Studies Centre (PCOSC), explained the concept of Stabilization. He defined it as an approach used to mitigate crisis, promote legitimate political authority and set the conditions for long-term stability by using comprehensive civilian and military actions to reduce violence and re-establish security. Soon after, the lecturer considered the notion of Reconstruction, which he defined as



Image 1. Briefing on Security Sector Reform.

a process of rebuilding physical infrastructure and re-establishing governmental or societal institutions damaged during the crisis. Lt. Col. Mascherano also listed a series of experience-based principles of S&R. The second lecture highlighted the critical features of SSR. In fact, Lt. Col. Paolo Mazzuferi (PCOSC) gave the audience a broad introduction to SSR as a conceptual framework for SFA and SP concepts and activities. Furthermore, the event made it clear that the goal of SSR is to establish programmes and activities to improve the way a host nation provides safety, security and justice. Shortly afterward, Lt. Col. Marco Giacometti, the other co-director of the seminar from the NATO Stability Policing COE, lectured on SP. He introduced SP history, doctrine and some relevant examples of SP frameworks in NATO missions. The last lecturer of the day was Maj. Marco Dagna of the NATO SFA COE, who focused on SFA doctrine and activities. Maj. Dagna explained the SFA definition and principles, then presented some case studies such as operation "Inherent Resolve" and considered planning aspects and impact of planning on operations. He additionally examined the best SFA approach and mentioned the guiding principles for commanders and planners. He concluded by emphasizing the optimal assessment methods in understanding Local Forces.

As an intern, I found the PCOSC's support very informative. The lectures were interesting and useful thanks to the lecturers' ability to engage the audience and clearly communicate the main notions of their lessons. Moreover, Lt. Col. Giacometti gave a very in-depth view of SP history and evolution, emphasizing the importance of "organizing the peace". Maj. Dagna's lesson furthered our knowledge of SFA concepts and activities.

On the second day, the speakers discussed operational and tactical aspects, bringing their direct experience in Insti-

tutional Advising, S&R, SSR, SFA and SP operations. The day began with Mr. Piet Biesheuvel, of the International Security Sector Advisory Team, holding a lecture on Policing Development. Mr. Biesheuvel advised to work across all the criminal justice institutions and those needing to access justice and security, to build balanced linkages, which are more important than individual capacity building. Moreover, he explained how governance, accountability and oversight must simultaneously enhance professional capacity.

He also stressed that non-state justice and non-state policing actors must be involved if the impact is to benefit everyone. During the following session, Col. Nicola Mangialavori, of the 2nd CC Mobile Brigade, gave a lesson enlightening the attendees about training and advising activities performed by the Police Task Force-Iraq in favour of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior/Police Services. He focused on the importance of establishing effective coordination among international actors as a key to the success of training/advising and ensuring the tailoring of police training/advising steps by listening to the actual needs of the counterpart. In the subsequent lecture, B. Gen. Davide Cipelletti and Col. Massimo Moncada described the Italian Support Mission in Niger. At the time of the conference B. Gen. Cipelletti was commanding the mission, while Col. Moncada played an advisory role in the mission in the past. They both shared valuable information with the audience. The mission represents an excellent case study. The lecturers gave precious insights on which practices to learn, to succeed in similar environments, for example never underestimating logistics, constantly working on engagement or perception and against disinformation.

The last lecture analysed the Advisory Role in the EU crisis management operations for stabilization in the Sahel. The

lesson, divided into two parts, was held by Dr. Simonetta Silvestri, who is a Political Advisor in the Regional Advisory Coordination Cell for the Sahel. In the first half of the lecture, Dr. Silvestri described the EU strategy for the Sahel and its advisory role in crisis management toward stabilization. She recalled how the EU acted in supporting the G5 Sahel in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime and how to enhance the cooperation and strengthen the national capacities of the G5 Sahel countries. The second part of the lesson focused on the skills required to advise strategically and the framework people recommend in stabilization and crisis management.

I found the first lesson easy and understandable. Mr. Biesheuvel's energy engaged all of us. It was satisfying to assist such an in-depth analysis. When B. Gen. Cipelletti and Col. Moncada talked about their experiences in the field, it was like being projected into their Headquarters in Niger. Even though I am a civilian, the information they gave on the conduct of such operations provided me with a precious pool of data which will be useful to my upcoming studies and professional experiences. Dr Silvestri's lecture provided us with a conspicuous

amount of information. That kind of knowledge gave us a broader view and perception of SFA. I think that the great value of the lesson was Dr Silvestri's transparency in pointing out the mission's strengths and weaknesses and elaborating the subsequent lessons learned.

The final day focused on the political and strategic features of the subject matter. In the morning, Mr. Timothy Lannan lectured about the doctrinal and operational development of the S&R concept. Mr. Timothy Lannan is an experienced officer currently heading the Euro Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre at the NATO HQ. He explained that S&R was officially codified by NATO in the 2010 Strategic concept. According to Mr. Lannan, during S&R operations, NATO provides military support, defence and security capacity building. Moreover, NATO provides partnership programmes to the host nation's institutions. He emphasized the most critical S&R activities conducted by NATO at the operational level in the past decades. The Alliance was active in Bosnia (1995), Kosovo (since 1999) and Afghanistan (2001-2020). Mr. Lannan explained the main fallacies of the Afghan S&R operation, citing the case of the Provincial Reconstruction



Image 2. Group photo at the Italian Air Force HQ.



Image 3. Mr Lannan's lecture.

Teams, which were promising projects centred on CIMIC. The lecturer addressed the ongoing operations supporting the African Union. He also talked about the NATO Mission in Iraq that offers training to the military and the country's gendarmerie and is widely appreciated by the Iraqi Government. Furthermore, Mr. Lannan showed how being negligent could lead to disaster, emphasizing that after a conflict it is necessary to push the policymakers for a S&R operation in the country, in order to avoid further instability and civil unrest. The next part of the lesson focused on the outlook and the doctrinal elaboration of S&R. The primary consideration regarded the necessity to implement Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), especially Civil-Military Planning. Mr. Lannan stressed the need for an enhanced comprehensive approach embracing operational and strategic aspects such as Strategic communication, Planning and Conduct of operations, Training, Education and Cooperation. Pivotal to the operation's success is a substantive dialogue with political decision-makers and partner organizations.

Regarding the outlook of S&R operations, Mr. Lannan emphasized the necessity for more consideration of the civilian side of the operations.

Following Mr. Lannan's lesson, former Ambassador Stefano Pontecorvo lectured on the role of the Institutional advisor in supporting the host nation (HN) authorities in S&R operations. Ambassador Pontecorvo served in Afghanistan during the 2020 evacuation, cooperating in close contact with the NATO Command structure in Kabul. Ambassador Pontecorvo made many interesting observations on the current landscape of international politics. He noted how important it is for Western countries to act clearly to affirm their credibility with non-western countries. The Ambassador stated that non-western countries look at the EU-NATO response to a crisis to assess their commitment and unity. He also noted that EU countries need to build up their defence capabilities and find a shared stance in foreign policy to reinforce the Alliance's cohesion.

Regarding the subject of the lecture, he stated that NATO has a strategic need

to better invest in its civilian assets to face the challenges of S&R in future operational environments. The lack of synchronization between Civil and Military stakeholders in the past operations, particularly in Afghanistan, was the main blunder made by the Alliance's planners and caused the mission's main failures.

Ambassador Pontecorvo specifically mentioned the military difficulty in "winning the hearts and minds" of the host population. Thus, a more comprehensive approach, including cultural, political and civilian features in the planning and execution of the operations, is required to achieve the desired end state.

Thanks to his great experience on the field, Mr. Lannan was able to deliver a most interesting lesson. The political and strategic reflections on past operations and future challenges increased my curiosity on the topic. Ambassador Pontecorvo was brilliant in defining and humbly admitting NATO's missteps in Afghanistan, thus giving the attendees the opportunity to elaborate on this failure and re-think NATO's approach. The two presenters were excellent in re-

calling their personal experiences while confronting wide-ranging issues.

During his closing remarks, the Italian Air Force's Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Luca Goretti, complimented the SFA and SP COEs for organizing the interesting and valuable event, in which personnel from many NATO countries took part.

The General underlined the importance of such moments of high-level learning to prepare NATO personnel to be ready for future challenges across the globe. Lt. Gen. Goretti also emphasized the important role of such occasions in building trust and relations among high-ranking commanders of the Alliance that will prove helpful in operative theatres.

The experience shared during the Seminar was priceless. The lecturers gave interesting insights on many different subjects. As a civilian, I appreciated the attention given to civil-military aspects, which I believe NATO must enhance to better face challenges in those areas where it interacts with civilians, institutions and religious communities.

The topics covered represent a comprehensive picture of the various doctrinal and operational applications and concepts related to Capacity Building operations. This kind of conference plays a key role in shaping NATO's development and readiness to face future challenges. In fact, during the last Annual Discipline Conference in The Hague, it was decided that the activity will undergo a Training Need Analysis finalized at making the contents of the seminar available to the whole Atlantic Alliance. Moreover, the activity will be utilized to fill in NATO's Performance Gaps. The widespread interest for the seminar confirms its quality and effectiveness in providing education solutions useful to NATO's personnel to accomplish their mission.



Image 4. Certificate delivery by Education and Training branch head.

Matteo Atticciati

Intern at NATO SFA COE

MAIN EVENTS

2022 COE MARKETPLACE



The aim was to provide an opportunity for the delegations to showcase national contributions made to the Alliance, and for all the personnel of the NATO HQ to recognize, understand and embrace the value of the expertise, support and advice provided by the 28 NATO accredited COEs.

During the event, the NATO SFA COE delegation explained the COE's main projects and the interdisciplinary activities in support of the Alliance, highlighting the current and future challenges in support of NATO Human Capital.

In particular it presented its training offer for 2022, both in person and online, that satisfies NATO performance gaps identified within the Military Contribution to Peace Support Discipline through the System Approach to Training process that represents suitable training solutions aligned with performance gaps.

Furthermore, two important projects were presented, the publication on "Promoting the Rule of Law and Good governance", prepared with the support of a group of international experts and the SFA Operators profile Analysis Report aimed at seeking a definition of the profile for advisors, mentors and trainers in the SFA environment.

This event was a fruitful opportunity for the NATO SFA COE to promote its work and share the products and outputs delivered to NATO on behalf of their Sponsoring Nations.

1ST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING 2022

The first 2022 Steering Committee Meeting of the NATO SFA COE was held in Durrës in Albania following the invitation of the Albanian Defence Staff.

Among the observers were the military attachés serving in Tirana from the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Poland, the United Kingdom and Turkey.

After the welcome by Gen. B. Bitri, Director General of the Albanian Armed Forces, the Director emphasized the progress of the Centre in training activities, both in presence and online, and in analysis and research activities concerning SFA implementation within the Alliance. Such activities are aimed at developing NATO's prerogative to plan, organize and conduct capacity development programmes for Host Nations' Armed Forces upon request to the North Atlantic Council (NAC). During the event, in order to increase the relationship with academic institutions and maximize their contribution to study and analysis activities, an agreement was signed with the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, formalizing the mutual collaboration in training and in research and starting a new internship program at the COE.

Within the context of the Centre's international and collaborative activities which aim to strengthen

the application of the integrated approach between NATO and the European Union, the NATO SFA COE illustrated the recent collaboration initiatives with the Centre Terre pour le Partenariat Militaire Opérationnel (CPMO), the French National SFA centre responsible for a PESCO program, and the European Security and Defence College (ESDC), as well as the exchange of information with the departments of the European Military Staff (EUMS) responsible for security and defence.





Nine interns selected pursuant to agreements with the LUISS and LUMSA Universities and through applications from students who have already graduated from other Italian and foreign universities participated in the event accompanied by their respective tutors from the Centre. The Internship agreements, recently signed by the NATO SFA COE with the University of Verona, with the Albanian Defence Academy and with the University of Ljubljana, offer students and researchers the opportunity to acquire specific NATO skills, interacting with high profile experts from the civilian and military world of in-

ternational organizations that collaborate with the COE.

During the event, the Director highlighted the importance of the initiative and the commitment of the Centre in promoting cooperation with the academic world as much as possible, investing in the younger generations of researchers.

Subsequently, the trainees explained in detail their role in the individual projects such as the participation in the organization and successive drafting of the outcomes from the seminars ("Seminar on the Religious Factor and Security", "Seminar for Institutional Advisors" and the "SFA enhancement Advisors Seminar").

The event was a further confirmation for the NATO SFA COE of the great value of collaboration and integration between the civilian and military world and of the importance of favouring the multidisciplinary approach in the study of the complex dynamics inherent to SFA.

CPMO DELEGATION VISITED THE NATO SFA COE

The "Centre Terre pour le Partenariat Militaire Opérationnel" (CPMO), located in Paris, is a centre that checks the coherence and the training of the French Army on all military operational partnership (PMO) missions.

The aim of the visit was to strengthen the relationship between the NATO SFA COE and the French CPMO, which is specialised in capacity building activities and in sustaining partners' military forces. During his briefing the NATO SFA COE Director recalled the need to develop coherent, complementary, and interoperable SFA capabilities within the Alliance and the importance of supporting the fullest possible involvement in EU military partnership initiatives on SFA related issues.

Finally, the French delegation had the opportunity to visit the ITA Army Combat Training Centre of the Simulation and Validation Centre of the Army (Ce.Si.Va.) in charge of LIVE simulations in the following areas: function, location, facilities, tools and equipment. The «Land Training Integrated System» program was presented, including all the advantages over traditional training activities.



This visit, as a part of the collaboration with those military organizations, such as the French CPMO, which are fully experienced in dealing with SFA principles and procedures, could help develop a coherent and complementary approach to capacity building of partners in both organisations. This should foster the exchange of competence and know-how, while offering the NATO SFA COE a significant opportunity to interact with Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) actors, such as the EUMS and the EEAS.

MEETING WITH THE JCISFA TEAM



Meeting with a Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA) team, in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The aim of the visit was to revise and update the Institutional Adviser course that was born within the Interoperable 'Multinational Resident Advisor Capability' Project (IMRAC). It is being developed within the 'Multinational Capability Development Campaign' (MCDC) by two nations as leaders, Italy and the USA, with Canada, the UK

and French as contributors. The following international institutions are supporters: the US Armed Forces Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA), the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre (FINCENT), the Italian Army Post Conflict Operations Study Centre (PCOSC), the British Army 77th Brigade. Moreover, Colombia and Poland are observers.

The course, certified by NATO as a selected course, aims to prepare military and civilian personnel to assume the advisor's role at the ministerial and institutional level, in order to support the Host Nation's reconstruction efforts.

After several workshops (in 2020 and 2021), a pilot course was conducted in October 2021 to test the effectiveness of the contents and to solicit feedback from SMEs, with the aim to refine the whole educational package, prior to the course's inception. In this spirit, JCISFA and NSFACOE's SMEs met in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and worked shoulder to shoulder to revise and refine the course contents in order to prepare for the first iteration.

The NATO SFA COE team also had the opportunity to visit the impressive venue of the US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSG) and to meet representatives of the US Army Security Force Assistance Proponent (SFAP).

AGREEMENT BETWEEN NATO SFA COE AND NSO

The purpose of the agreement is to establish a general framework within which both the NATO SFA COE and the NSO agree to cooperate and engage in exchanges through a mutually beneficial working relationship involving them in a synergic effort, enhancing the results and the media impact of their projects and activities.

The NATO School Oberammergau (NSO) conducts education and training in support of current and developing NATO operations, strategy, policy, doctrine and procedures.

This letter of Intent signals the mutual support to each other's educational activities and relevant events such as exercises, courses, seminars and workshops through the exchange of Subject Matters



Experts as lectures, researchers and mentors. The two entities are also committed to contributing to research, event reports and publications on matters of common interest. This agreement underlines the paramount value of the "education and training" pillar that the NATO SFA COE is further developing within the International Community of Interest and with the support of important national and international organizations, in order to enhance the SFA Operators' performance within the context of current operational scenarios.



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