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JCISFA Mission

JCISFA supports the integration of Security Force Assistance (SFA) activities into the current and future Joint Force to support Globally Integrated Operations. JCISFA enables the development of SFA doctrine, training, and education of the Joint Force to conduct partner nation capacity-building. JCISFA supports SFA-related strategy formulation, policy and guidance development and support to joint exercises.

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a quarterly publication to inform the SFA community of interest (COI), to serve as a platform to highlight the greater COI efforts, and to foster interoperability within the COI. Sharing JCISFA's efforts will help inform the COI of the myriad ways JCISFA can be leveraged.

In addition to the Chairman's Joint Lessons Learned Information System (JLLIS), this newsletter serves as a forum for the COI to submit Observations and Recommendations or other articles of interest regarding their respective SFA efforts. As a service to the Joint Force, this newsletter intends to promote dialogue among the SFA COI that finds itself dispersed across various countries, Interagency, Joint & Service organizations.

The opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense or any other agency of the Federal Government.

As always, this newsletter intends to promote dialogue among the SFA COI and is part of an ongoing effort to more effectively "Communicate, Cooperate, and Coordinate" across the Joint Force with all SFA stakeholders. Please let us know if there are any topics of interest you would like to see in the future, or to submit an article.

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From the Director's Desk

It's my pleasure to introduce the 34th edition of JCISFA's Security Force Assistance Quarterly Newsletter. As always, this edition continues our efforts to foster collaboration and connectivity among the SFA Community of Interest (COI).

In our featured article, the author provides a sketched-out explanation of critical aspects of conducting Security Cooperation missions, from conception to execution. The article is not a manual on Security Cooperation, but rather a collection of experiences that he has seen go well, and those that have not gone so well. The author's hope is that his collection of observations will help practitioners with the benefit of his years of experience.

Next, a member of JCISFA discusses advising Agile Combat Employment (ACE) during Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) in World War II's China-Burma-India Theater. LSCO is not a normal topic for this publication, so when reading this historical case study, I would ask that you focus on the lessons you can derive about cultural understanding, a very necessary Security Cooperation tenant. See how one approach differs from the other in the article and think about how these historical lessons could inform your current operations and interactions.

Next, another JCISFA teammate provides an article on JCISFA's Security Assistance efforts in Europe. The article covers our current efforts on the ground to support SAG-U and NSATU in their missions to support the current warfighters. The article highlights our current five big takeaways. I urge you to see what can be drawn from our experiences to inform your current and future operations.

Next, a report from our Navy FAO brethren about their operations with the Italian Navy as the US Navy assisted the Italian Navy in its first deployment into the INDOPACOM AOR.

Finally, we again highlight SFA Communities Online. Please notice the listing for our newest JKO course that was specifically designed with SAG-U and NSATU to provide their incoming personnel with the required background knowledge necessary for them to be contributors to the mission as soon as they arrive.

As always, we welcome your feedback on this and future editions of our newsletter and invite you to join us virtually to discuss these articles and more during our Quarterly SFA Forum.

JOSEPH E. WILLIAMS
Colonel, U.S. Army
Director



Natacha Meden, Ministry of Defense Advisor, Defense Security Cooperation University teaches future Advisors during the Security Force Assistance Command pre-command course at Fort Bragg, NC. DVIDS: 7768358 04.25.2023 Photo by: Cristina Gomez

Blunders & Best Practices in Building Partner Capacity: Insights on Security Cooperation

by: Mr. John M. Gillette

The opinions herein are my own and do not necessarily reflect of any governmental organization's philosophies regarding Security Cooperation.

The United States conducts security cooperation (SC) with over 200 countries and international organizations around the globe. SC is complex, difficult work often practiced by personnel who are well-intentioned, but inexperienced or poorly trained in the principles of effectively advising or enabling a partner nation (PN). This lack of training has often led to myriad blunders by the U.S. when practicing SC, particularly in large-scale operations.

Leaders and practitioners can sometimes be insular and ignorant of historical successes and failures. They may lack understanding of nuances in the art of influencing PN security institutions and cultures. U.S. planners have incorporated invalid assumptions in their planning processes because they don't talk to socio-cultural-economic experts. Many practitioners are unaware of the myriad U.S., allied and even adversary entities involved in a particular scenario, and our advisors frequently try to implement these plans without understanding what drives their PN's thinking.

At all levels of government involved in SC, confusion about

the purpose, principles, and best practices of SC work present themselves. Simple guidelines about how we should prepare for and implement the work would be helpful. Unfortunately, the vast body of SC publications disdain simplicity. For example, the Joint Publication 3-20 (Security Cooperation) defines 'advising', but this is by no means a shared definition across the U.S. government, much less with our allies.

The accumulated experience in SC since the end of World War II shows that the PN's assumptions, organizational culture and simple 'will' are critical factors in the success of SC efforts. And yet, at a Department of Defense-sponsored training event as recent as late-2024, a briefer presented a PowerPoint slide entitled "Partner Will. There is no such thing as partner will." No one challenged the briefer.

Thus, in this paper I offer broad thoughts covering critical aspects of the SC mission, from conception to execution. This essay draws inspiration from David Kilcullen's "28 Articles,"¹ which offered simple, easy-to-read thoughts on counterinsurgency. Similarly, critical aspects of the SC

mission, from conception to execution are sketched out here. Nothing here is an epiphany, and this is not a detailed 'how to' manual but a snapshot of thoughts--a checklist if you will--meant to avoid many of the mission-killing mistakes from the past. Hopefully these thoughts drive readers to grasp the intertwined complexity of SC missions rather than solely focusing on your area of expertise. Frankly, if a single key node fails, all will likely fail. With that in mind, I hope this will serve as a starting point, a primer that drives readers to further research and, consciously grasp the critical need to do things differently than we have in the past. In addition, I will often cite examples from Afghanistan simply because no matter how much some might like to ignore the results, there is no better compendium of examples, plus many readers will have served there and identify with the examples offered.

ALWAYS Include the Partner. "Whatever you do, do it with me." Though few will argue the principle of partner Inclusion, sadly even fewer will practice it. If you are reading this, you must have an intense interest in SC. For many, this includes past or current service as an advisor. If that's you, I implore you to dig deep and reflect on your time advising; how often was the PN, as well as your specific counterpart, involved in the assessment of the issues at hand, or the planning sessions to develop courses of action (COAs)? Did you include the PN, or did you and your fellow advisors simply develop and deliver solutions devoid of the partner's input on the plan's feasibility, suitability, and sustainability?

Any serious student of SC should read *Missionaries of Modernity*. The book offers examples of advisor missions conducted by a variety of countries who set the stage for their ultimate failure by largely excluding partners during COA development and implementation. A quote from a former Soviet advisor to Angola speaks volumes, "We sought to recreate in Angola exactly the same we had at home in order for things to turn out well here."² If the PN is not involved in a meaningful way early on, and throughout the process from planning to execution, we risk creating the impression we are acting in a 'neo-colonial' way. We rarely use military action to 'take over' (Iraq and Afghanistan were notable exceptions) and install our approved form of

government. Even when we do, it's never our intent to remain as a colonial power. However, be it consciously or inadvertently, ignoring a partner, even if only as a short-term solution, smacks of the historical aspects of colonialism in the eyes of much of the international community. This failure is so commonplace it cannot be overstated. Failure to recognize the criticality of this factor provides endless ammunition for adversaries' Information operation campaigns.

On the other hand, we must always recognize the PN, as well as virtually every stakeholder, has objectives that may not be apparent but which they are working on to enhance their own strategic objectives.

The Goal of the Advisor is increased capability and capacity of the PN. In simple terms, advisors deploy to enhance U.S. strategic interests abroad. In SC it is critical to recognize that enhancing U.S. strategic interests inherently requires advisors to encourage change. In securing our interests, we must identify the internal change agents in the PN's institutions, those who recognize the need to embrace change. Influencing change requires the skillful application of the arts of negotiation, influence, and persuasion coupled with an understanding that U.S. and PN national security objectives cannot be accomplished without direct, regular, and intimate contact with PN leaders and a clear understanding of each parties' realities.

Scope the Mission. Unrealistic expectations are the root of undeliverable results...strive to identify what's possible. There must be crystal clear 'ends' that define the mission. It is critical that the national decision makers produce a clear written agreement setting forth the strategic interests of all the stakeholders. What, exactly, does each want/expect from their involvement...stakeholder integration is critical. To illustrate the importance of this understanding, a former two-time U.S. commander in Afghanistan publicly stated his frustrations that "No one could tell me what winning looked like."³

Understand the Perspectives. To understand a problem, you need to understand its history as well as how others

see the problem. Most recognize the importance of empathy but are less familiar with perspective taking. “Perspective taking is a cognitive ability that involves considering how others think. Empathy, by contrast, involves emotionally connecting with others and experiencing sympathy and concern for them. Moreover, people who naturally take others’ perspectives may not be especially empathetic, and vice versa.”⁴ Put another way, empathy is understanding what people feel, perspective taking is understanding how people think.

We must begin with the problem, not the solution, and carefully analyze and define the true problem, not the problem we want it to be. Problems should be defined by the gap between required versus current capability and capacity. All initiatives should be linked to closing this gap. Furthermore, there must be specificity in the goal. For example, “Improving strategic logistics capabilities” is inadequate. Specificity must define what constitutes strategic logistics in the subject country, and exactly what part of the logistics system are to be addressed, what is the desired capability in a particular condition, what metrics determine success, etc.

What is good enough? The fact might be that ‘nothing is better than something’. SC takes time; some problem sets are likely generational in nature and, if so, should be clearly identified in the early-stage planning efforts. Large, aspirational goals are often a bridge too far.

Are the goals time- or performance-driven? If both, how do you reconcile ‘date certain’ vice ‘required performance’?

Assess Existing Capability. Assess the current capabilities of the PNs associated with the SC goals without having pre-determined answers regarding ‘what needs to be done.’ This is an essential step that allows you to establish a baseline of exactly what the PN can or cannot do.

A case study in failing to plan and assess was the Afghan Integrated Support Services (AISS)⁵. The AISS was a program essentially designed in secrecy by a small coalition planning group with the idea of forcing the Afghans to adopt organic maintenance policies/procedures. An admirable goal, but foolishly designed without any knowledge or input from the

PN forces or even other coalition sustainment advisors. It was a failure at every step and resulted in the collapse of key maintenance services which required a staggering effort and immense costs to overcome.

An objective baseline allows you to establish objective metrics that provide realistic measures of progress. The lack of accurate metrics has plagued SC missions throughout history. Without a baseline you will be held hostage to the vagaries of subjective assessments. For example, the infamous ‘body count’ in Vietnam. For years it was the singular justification of our supposed progress. That point is made clear in Norman Schwarzkopf’s memoir *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*. “That summer of 1970, the Army War College issued a scathing report...that explained a great deal of what we were seeing...It criticized the Army’s obsession with meaningless statistics and was especially damning on the subject of body counts in Vietnam.”⁶

Map the Environment. Who are the stakeholders? Some are likely not obvious at first glance but don’t assume you are the only show in town. Without a clear understanding of all stakeholders, and their objectives, you almost assuredly have duplicative lines of effort.

Planning is Complex and Critical to Success. The U.S. is highly capable of producing professional planners and complex plans. However, just because we are capable does not mean we are infallible. As an example, let’s go back to Afghanistan where the previously cited commander tells us no one could tell him what winning looked like. Without clearly defined ‘Ends’ planners are unable to define meaningful *Ways and Means*.

Written plans are a disciplined form of thinking and must be synchronized with PN leadership. At the same time, the associated strategy must be flexible, robust, and dynamic enough to account for unforeseen issues.

Plans Cannot be Based on Unrealistic Assumptions. Unforeseen issues are often simply overlooked issues that, in fact, can usually be foreseen.

Look deep and attempt to identify the 2nd and 3rd order effects and not ignore how will you mitigate them.

Consistency of planning and execution of initiatives across the tenure of individual leaders and advisors is critical; SC does not lend itself to a new plan every time leadership changes.

Don't try to do too much with too little. In less developed countries, stakeholders must weigh the requirements against the available resources (funding, human capital, etc.). All too often there is inadequate human capital to apply against the requirements needed to accomplish far-reaching goals. Recognize that some future effects may be the result of cultural norms. Norms we might fail to recognize but which are immediately apparent to the partner forces or those familiar with their culture.

Implementing the Plan. Task organization and time management are critical skills...we don't have forever. Therefore, we must recognize "Unity of effort is difficult but not impossible and best accomplished through personal relationships."⁷ Most plans cannot be solved optimally no matter how hard we think about the problem, so we must continue to refine as we go.

Effective Advising Requires Persistent, not Episodic, Presence. A clear understanding of reality cannot be reached without seeing the current state at all echelons. Success comes to those advisors who form powerful relationships, not only with the PN counterpart but within their own organization. Without those powerful relations it is nearly impossible to have the difficult, perhaps even contentious, discussions that are sometimes necessary to bring enduring, sustainable change while maintaining the relationship. Quite simply, "You need to be the advisor your counterpart needs, not the advisor you want to be."⁸ Advisor quality trumps quantity. Doing a few things right is always better than doing a lot of things half-right or worse, entirely wrong. Most important, the quality/quantity equation holds true in what should be a thoughtful assessment, selection process for advisors from the tactical to strategic levels.

Meaningful Change is Only Achievable by Attacking Root Causes, Not Symptoms! Sticking your finger in the leak in the dam doesn't fix the dam. In fact, history is replete with

decisions that ended up creating far greater problems. Consider that in Afghanistan operational level advisors frequently applied back-channel solutions to overcome doctrinal processes inhibiting battlefield success. All the while, more senior advisors were attempting to imbue doctrinal processes across the institution. This was particularly true across the sustainment enterprise. Doing an 'end run' around a doctrinal process others are trying to institutionalize is part of the problem, not a solution to the problem, plus it's a negative lesson for the partner force.

Focus on Transformational Efforts, Not Transactional Ones. Transformation requires vision-based selling. Transformational work influences your partners' thinking about change. Compelling others to change is far less effective than inspiring the will to change. Without complete buy-in it is unlikely any change will endure. In other words, advisors must focus on convincing the partners that change is necessary. It's important to note you must recognize that rational arguments are generally unlikely to succeed. Therefore, to be successful you often must deal in the emotional world where success requires rethinking current assumptions. An advisor helps their partners find and embrace solutions.

Training SC Personnel. The SC learning curve is steep. The importance of training at every echelon cannot be overstated, yet we have a long history of failing to grasp this basic consideration. We cannot ignore the fact that personnel whose entire career has been focused on developing subject matter expertise in a particular specialty or technical field may know almost nothing about SC and advising. The critical training echelons remain the advisors and the leaders who will shape and manage the mission. This is a particularly difficult problem in large-scale operations in which ad hoc manning often short-circuits the idea of comprehensive training for all.

Demonstration Does Not Equal Capability. Do not jump to the conclusion that it does and to that end, beware isomorphic mimicry; a biological term in which one organism mimics another to gain an advantage. Point in case: Simply because a military unit in crisp uniforms can

march in a parade does not mean it has the capability to perform in combat.

Focus on Their Budgeted Funds, Not Ours.

Macro-economics are crucial. Don't be foolish enough to exceed the partner's economic capacity to sustain the change you've "sold" to them. Early focus on identifying requirements and generating sufficient funds within the host nation's budget is essential, along with the capability to execute those funds with effective processes.

An integral part of this is developing an understanding with the PN's leadership of the linkage between funding, requirements, readiness of the force and, ultimately, the ability of the forces to perform.

For example, the Afghans' ability to sustain the Afghan National Defense Security Forces (ANDSF) we were building was clearly unaffordable. Rather than scaling our efforts to the near-term realities, we justified our plans based on the trillions of dollars of minerals and other assets surveys had identified as future exploitable resources. All good, except we totally ignored the obvious risks required to monetize those minerals.

The Best Solution May Be Unattainable. Maybe nothing is better than something...be honest when you ask, "What's good enough?" Remember that advisors must first do no harm by helping a PN develop a capability that has negative downstream effects for the PN or the region.

Negotiation-Influence-Persuasion. The vital ingredients in bringing change. Shared understanding does not mean everyone agrees. It simply means you know each other's goals and concerns. Negotiations are typically shaped to emphasize rational considerations in what is almost always an engagement centered on highly emotional considerations. The fact is negotiation involves shared decision making.

Don't Confuse Deference with Agreement without measurable progress on the issue at hand. Continual deference by partners is often an indicator that either they do not agree with the course of action being pursued, or they are stalling to ensure continued funding.

Ensure the PN Shares our Understanding of Advisors' Role.

All too frequently we deploy 'advisors' yet the partner sees 'staff' or 'liaison' officers. We must bridge that gap before advisors arrive. A 1- or 2-day workshop designed to shape PN expectations of the advisors' role during the scoping/planning phases could be invaluable.

Don't Magnify Insignificant Successes or Failures. People need to be held accountable, on both sides of the SC equation. If we spin imagined stories of success, we become enablers of failure, and the costs of this mistaken approach in past missions has been staggering. The result of being an enabler is noted by Martin Stanton, "...U.S. senior leaders were either oblivious to the clear signs of ANDSF incapacity or felt the requirement to soft peddle it to support the narrative of GIROA/ANDSF success. Our rhetoric was all about tough love and forcing the Afghans to stand on their own. But in every instance when faced with a tactical reverse we still stepped in to save them."⁹

When is it Appropriate to Say "No More?" If you have a joint plan with clear, definable, written goals and meaningful metrics, at some point it may become obvious that the mission is seriously off-track. When that happens, we need to sit back and ask, "Why are we here? Why do we think this is going to work? Is there value in continuing? If so, what is it?"

Case study: Afghanistan: For years warning signs flashed "NO MORE," yet in the end that decision was not made by the US or NATO, but by the Taliban. Corruption was so profound many would characterize Afghanistan as a criminally captured state and that corrosiveness impacted everything. Time and again milestones were missed. Progress in key areas were essentially non-existent, etc. NATO postured, we blustered, we implemented 'Letters of Commitment,' we demanded urgency. When those efforts didn't work, what did we do? Frankly, very little.

Certainly, there will be times to say, 'no more', sometimes in small ways and other times in significant ways. SC efforts are a function of the U.S. National Security Strategy, so it is apparent the large-scale

decisions lie at the highest level. The real question is whether the system will reward, marginalize, or possibly punish those who would dare to step forward to say, 'this is simply not working and to continue will only result in further failure.'

SC missions can and do have a profound impact at the geopolitical level. Hubris and arrogance, individually or collectively, can reduce the effectiveness of, or even destroy relationships at the highest level, as exemplified by, Why Washington failed in Niger. The article claims "Nigerien officials were insulted by the tone of U.S. messaging ...and although self-serving in many ways ...this reflects a broader problem in developing security partnerships with politically fragile regimes.... large influxes of security assistance can inadvertently erode the legitimacy of local state authority..."¹⁰

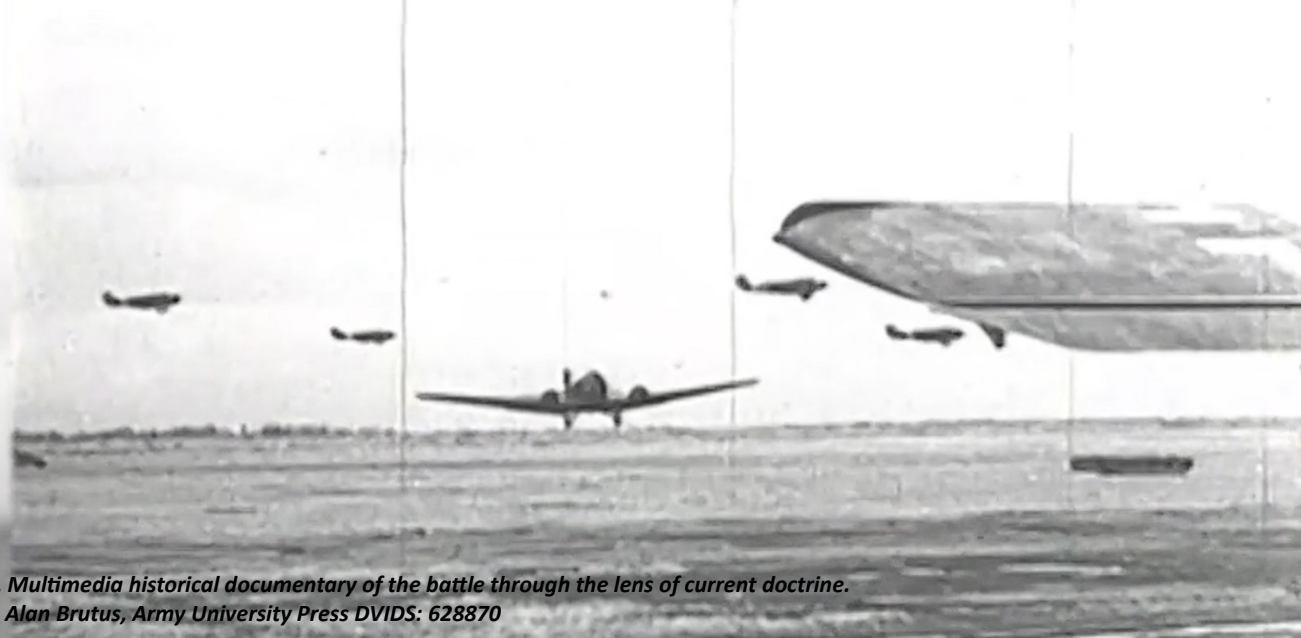
Moreover, perceived abandonment of committed allies creates questions about our credibility. Conversely, a well-planned, well executed SC mission can generate incredibly positive results that directly impact the very highest levels of U.S. foreign policy.

In closing, the bottom line is that while we may be aware of these steps, all too often we execute without fully employing them and ultimately suffer the consequences.

About the Author: John Gillette is a former U.S. Army infantry officer and private sector business owner with first-hand experience from Vietnam to Afghanistan. He spent two years as the senior advisor to an Afghan Major General with whom he traveled extensively throughout the country. Over the last twelve years, he has served as a contracted Executive Mentor to the Ministry of Defense Advisor (MODA) program at the Defense Security Cooperation University. Mr. Gillette's depth and breadth of advising experience across 50 years offers candid, passionate insights of the pitfalls to success he has seen repeated again and again, the actual state of our mission today, and what we must do to be successful in the future.

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United States, Multimedia historical documentary of the battle through the lens of current doctrine.
Video by: Sgt. Alan Brutus, Army University Press DVIDS: 628870

HISTORICAL CASE STUDY

Advising Agile Combat Employment in Large Scale Combat Operations: Lessons from World War II's China-Burma-India Theater

by: Mr. Clayne Bradley, JCISFA Military Analyst

Introduction:

Agile Combat Employment at the Beginnings of Airpower

Over a century ago, the Arabian desert was largely empty near the edge of the Ottoman Empire's southeastern flank. It was there during World War I that a young British Captain, T.E. Lawrence, joined with Arab tribesman to smooth rocky ground for expeditionary airfields. Supplied by camel caravan, these seldom used forward airstrips allowed a few Aussie pilots to bring airpower to bear in support of the Northern Arab Army's raids against Ottoman Turk railways, airfields, and supply depots. Raiding forces composed of British armored cars, Arab camel cavalry, and Aussie piloted aircraft quickly struck targets and then disappeared back to more secure airfields and camps. This first recorded use of the Agile Combat Employment (ACE) of airpower in large scale combat turned nuisanced tribal raids into a combined air-ground threat that paralyzed an entire Ottoman Theatre Army. Almost a third of Ottoman forces on that front simply could not fight the British-Egyptian Army advancing toward Syria.¹ Twenty years later another military maverick implemented ACE in another largely forgotten theater of war. There, north of the Himalayan mountains, the U.S. would advise, train and equip Chinese to employ ACE on a vastly greater scale.

NATO defines: ACE as an operational scheme of maneuver designed to improve resilience and survivability while generating air combat power from both home bases and geographically dispersed locations.

Clare Chennault was at odds with Lieutenant Colonel Henry "Hap" Arnold's view of bomber superiority. With unwavering zeal, this brilliant air tactician advocated for creating early warning systems to feed near real-time information to air operations centers which would then direct fighters to intercept bombers. He believed it possible to counter Strategic Air Attack. This disagreement combined with poor health drove him to retire as a Captain after 20 years in the U.S. Army Air Force.² Soon, however, he found a receptive ear in the form of Soong Mei-ling, otherwise known as "Madame Chiang Kai-shek," the Republic of China's First Lady.³ Granted the rank of Colonel in the Chinese Air Force he began to put his ideas into practice.⁴ Over the next seven years, he integrated ACE into a master plan to wrest air superiority away from the Imperial Japanese and interdict their strategic lines of communication.^{5,6}

Establishing Rapport with Allies (and maintaining it)

The U.S. prefers to fight its wars far from the homeland. Consequently, allies and partners comprise the key element when implementing ACE. Their willingness and capabilities are not just an ACE center of gravity, but the ACE center of gravity to use Clausewitz's terms. As the top U.S. air advisor to the Republic of China's Air Force, Chennault had his work cut out for him. The fascist Italians trained and equipped the Chinese Air Force for years before Chennault arrived. Soon the communist Russians arrived to join the competition.^{7, 8} Nevertheless, his skill at building relationships and maintaining the sympathetic ear of Madame Chang allowed Chennault to make serious inroads. He leveraged his skill flying fighter aircraft, courage during battle and willingness to remain in the fight despite Japanese victories, into a solid network of relationships. With a solid rapport established that would last for over a decade the Republic of China Air Force cooperated.⁹ In only a couple of years, an effective surveillance network provided early warnings of Japanese air attacks to an air operations center (AOC).¹⁰ Chinese spotters flashed light signals, pounded gongs, sent telegrams, made telephone calls, and eventually broadcast radio transmissions to feed the system.^{11, 12} Developing capable Chinese pilots and ground crews proved far more challenging.¹³

Air Combat is Complex and Demanding

Chennault faced massive training and equipment challenges. The prior Italian instructors passed almost all students to avoid giving offense, regardless of ability.¹⁴ Unwilling to let substandard graduates fly or maintain aircraft commanders made some of the worst instructors, thus perpetuating the problem. Few graduates met the qualifications needed to attend aviation training in the United States. The Chinese desire to preserve equipment and to avoid execution for losing priceless aircraft resulted in little actual flight training.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Consequently, the Republic of China's Air Force was very brittle. From their beginnings in the late 1920s, they faced the same problem the Germans encountered in the 1944-1945 Battle of the Bulge. The German Luftwaffe's inability to train due to Allied air superiority manifested itself in the rapid self-destruction of the Luftwaffe.¹⁸ Commanders instructed newer pilots to follow experienced flight leaders

into the attack, and once separated, fly back to the heart of Germany and bail out. The new pilots had little capability to navigate in horrid winter weather and often crashed aircraft on landing. They simply hadn't practiced. Consequently, the once mighty Luftwaffe started the Battle of the Bulge by savaging allied airfields only to quickly fade away because they couldn't fly planes in anything but good weather. Only a rapidly diminishing core of veteran German aviators continued to have any effect.¹⁹ The Chinese Air Force, an underdog in a lopsided conflict with Imperial Japan, and struggling against Mao's communists throughout the 1930s, never developed that core of skilled pilots like American and European air powers.²⁰ War and economic depression hindered China's aviation industry from growing, making them reliant on foreign suppliers.²¹ Eventually, thousands of Chinese trainees filled the Thunderbird airfields around Phoenix, Arizona, but it was very slow going.²²⁻²⁵ The training challenge was not unique to China. The United States' WWII Army Air Force lost over 10,000 airmen and thousands of aircraft before they ever got into combat.²⁶ Yet, even paying this great training cost and maintaining a core of skilled aviators during the 1920s and 30s didn't result in air superiority over Germany until just before the June 1944 invasion of Normandy.²⁷ The Chinese Air Force never had these luxuries.²⁸

Finding a Cadre and Equipment

Chennault's solution was daring, bring in American pilots and airplane mechanics from all walks of life to fight as volunteers in the Chinese Air Force.²⁹ Obtaining the aircraft and other equipment necessary was equally daunting. Nevertheless, security force assistance from the United States eventually emerged in the form of lend lease. Seeing the rise of Japanese air power in the Far East, Prime Minister Churchill, needing to retain British pilots for the Battles in Africa, transferred 100 P-40 Warhawks to the Chinese on the promise of better aircraft from President Roosevelt.^{28, 29} Slowly making their way up the Burma Road from the British port of Rangoon they were assembled in a Chinese-American factory.^{30, 31} A cadre, the American Volunteer Group of the Republic of China Air

HISTORICAL CASE STUDY, continued...

Force, known as the “Flying Tigers,” was born. They didn’t survive a year.³²

America Enters the War

Four years after Chennault arrived in China, and only a few months after American pilots began training to fight for China against the Imperial Japanese, America formally entered World War II following the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Chinese and their American air advisors thought help was at last on the way. They couldn’t have been more wrong.³³ 1942 was a bad year for the Allies in the Indo-Pacific. British, American, Dutch, and Chinese armies fell to the Imperial Japanese Army. Japanese soldiers soon occupied the British seaports in Asia supplying China.³⁴ Almost entirely cut off, forces in China only received supplies flown over the Himalayan mountains from India.³⁵ This air logistics effort called “flying the hump” eventually cost the U.S. over 460 transport aircraft and thousands of casualties.^{36, 37} The Japanese also decimated the U.S. Pacific Fleet, sending the last American aircraft carrier limping home to the west coast for massive repairs.^{38, 39} However, unlike the Allied armies and British Navy, the U.S. Pacific Fleet gave as good as it got, stopping the Japanese advances toward Australia and Hawaii. In contrast to the Japanese, the Americans rescued most sailors even as ships went to the bottom.⁴⁰ The next year these sailors and naval aviators returned to fight in newer, faster, better armed ships and aircraft. The Japanese Navy also launched improved warships and planes but only belatedly realized they’d entered a death spiral without the highly trained crews necessary to effectively fight. So used to winning, the Japanese naval and air forces never created a deep pipeline.⁴¹ They found few reserves with the years of skilled training it takes to effectively sail or fly in combat. Like the German Luftwaffe and Chennault in China, they found modern technology a merciless master of training-and-equipping schedules.

Cut Off in the Indo-Pacific

Although the Flying Tigers performed superbly in the Indo-Pacific, their skill and bravery did not ensure survival.^{42,}
⁴³ Even though they scored some modest victories in air battles, providing hopeful propaganda in otherwise dark

times, their days were numbered. Cut off and starving, they couldn’t get replacement planes, parts and pilots. Instead, they got another chain-of-command when General Stillwell arrived in India.^{44, 45} Worse, the Allies’ China-Burma-India theater remained a low priority throughout the war.⁴⁶⁻⁴⁸ The prioritization of other theaters meant General Stillwell would only receive one American ground fighting unit throughout the war, a provisional regiment that fought on the India-Burma side of the mountains as Merrill’s Marauders.^{49, 50} Most American ground troops simply struggled to maintain roads, airfields, and the single railway line to Northeast India.^{51, 52} Thousands more trained Chinese divisions in India for the Burma campaigns. They all consumed supplies before those isolated in China. Thus, the original Flying Tigers dissolved. It was time to start again with a new approach.

The Chinese-American Composite Wing

Reactivated as a Colonel in the American military, Chennault now answered to multiple chains-of-command. He began to shape the Chinese-American Composite Wing with a few bones left over from the Flying Tigers. Operating on the Chinese side of the mountains every gallon of fuel or .50 caliber bullet became increasingly precious. Until the end of the war the Wing rarely operated more than 100 fighters, about the same number of P-40 Warhawks they started with before America’s entry. Though they did get more modern fighter aircraft and flew 50 twin engine B-25 Mitchell light bombers in later years.⁵⁴ To keep this small force viable, let alone effective, Chennault implemented ACE on a massive scale. The Chinese-American forces had one great capability in hand north of the Himalayas; the Chinese people. They knew how to build walls by hand and draft animal without relying on heavy equipment dependent on fuel, all of which could rarely be flown in. They essentially just turned walls on their sides and built airfields all over southern China. With only 14 U.S. Army engineering advisors, over 370,000 Chinese construction workers excavated soil to a depth of 10 feet, laid a foundation of shaped boulders, emplaced layers of stone, and then set

layer after layer of gravel on dozens of airstrips. Many extended 6,500 to 10,000 feet to accommodate the promised American heavy bombers. It was done with shovels, wicker baskets for hauling, and hand hammers for making gravel. Arriving aircrews described the effort from altitude as organized like tens of thousands of ants. They were every bit as effective as their ancestors who built the Great Wall.^{55, 56} The Chinese-American air force team used these numerous airfields rather than air armadas to gain advantage.⁵⁷

A War of Enablers

Even before implementing ACE in large scale combat operations, Chennault knew success would require far more than just numerous dispersed airfields. Without superior ISR and effective coordination via an AOC, planes using auxiliary airfields might get destroyed on the ground before they could scamper away to safety.⁵⁸ Constant dispersal and retreat preserve a force, but don't grant victories. That requires well trained and equipped airmen. Chennault based his Wing on a 1 to 2 ratio of Americans to Chinese.⁵⁹ Demonstration as a form of on-the-job training took center stage.⁶⁰ Schools still pumped out class room graduates, but now a follow-on system of apprentice, journeyman, master slowly grew competence. Embedded together, the Chinese could ask questions without embarrassment and learn by watching. However, this Chinese-American system did not come naturally.

Culture Clashes

Putting Americans and Chinese in close working proximity did not necessarily create good relationships, such familiarity sometimes bred contempt. Americans were appalled at the 'squeeze,' a semi-legalized system of corruption where officials from the Republic of China's War Ministry to low-ranking officers at the front took a cut of the action. Many Chinese soldiers ended up ill-equipped, diseased, and even starving.^{61, 62} Chinese in turn were shocked at the corruptibility of the Americans. Army criminal investigators were overwhelmed by smuggling and theft. Within a few years Americans in every organization from the Red Cross to the 14th Air Force made over 4 million dollars of supplies and

equipment disappear, the equivalent of over 100 million today. Almost everything could be found in local markets at extreme prices.⁶³

Rowdy Americans seemed to epitomize the cultured Chinese elites' view of barbarians. Drunkenness and fighting seemed to abound while venereal disease in American ranks soared.^{64, 65} Yet the Americans couldn't fathom harsh Chinese discipline where a Chinese soldier might be lashed to the bone for losing a blanket.⁶⁶ Both sides could view the other as uncivilized.

Prioritizing people versus things was very different in both militaries. One American officer was stunned to watch his counterparts throw away a report outlining the horrible cost of disease and starvation in the Chinese military while observing other Chinese clerks meticulously itemize every piece of equipment.⁶⁷ A society where equipment was more precious than soldiers' lives seemed truly alien. Meanwhile the Chinese held tight to a 'scarcity mindset' assuming an aircraft, machine gun or artillery piece lost might never be replaced. They often opposed American offensive tactics that cost aircraft, tanks and artillery in favor of defensive withdrawals designed to preserve their best equipped forces.^{68, 69} Military philosopher Tsung Tzu, who advocated winning without fighting, shaped their view of war as a contest of positioning like the Chinese game of Go.^{70, 71} America shock tactics of closing with an enemy to destroy them like a Greek Phalanx seemed a recipe for defeat after their repeated losses to the better equipped and trained Japanese over the last several decades.⁷² On a similar vein, it was sometimes difficult for war hardened Chinese officers to take American instructors who lacked combat experience seriously.⁷³

Greater than all these differences, however, was the Americans' inability to let the Chinese preserve their dignity during disputes. This inability to avoid directness, especially in front of others, caused constant problems from highest to lowest levels.⁷⁴ In one particularly egregious incident an American engineering advisor, lost his cool when water kept pooling on a runway under construction. Unable to speak the language and make himself understood he shoved the face of a Chinese

HISTORICAL CASE STUDY, continued...

foreman into the puddle in front of his crew. Only deft handling avoided an open revolt of 10,000 construction workers that night.⁷⁵ General Stillwell, who oversaw all U.S. organize, train, equip, build, and advise efforts in China frankly stated that his soldiers knew how to 'deal only in the American way and when this failed to bring results, they became confused and lost patience.' The American education system just didn't prepare soldiers for different cultures.⁷⁶

Strangely, Chennault seemed more comfortable in Chinese culture than his superior, General Stillwell, who was fluent in Mandarin. Originally a World War I reservist from Louisiana, he was already at odds with the bomber culture in Hap Arnold's Air Force and Joe Stillwell's Westpoint infantry view.^{77, 78} Yet, under the careful tutoring of the First Lady of China he became somewhat adept in a culture shaped by palace politics. Being a southerner from a rising middle class, Chennault was familiar with class systems and how to interact with them.⁷⁹ This was a skill that Stillwell, from an anti-aristocratic northeastern background, never mastered in China or Washington.⁸⁰⁻⁸³ In China, Stillwell 'told it like it is' to President Chiang Kai-shek when demanding more support and mumbled in front of President Roosevelt who he felt was above reprimand as Commander-in-Chief.⁸⁴ Chennault, in contrast, moved through a network of relationships that included relatives of both Chiang Kai-shek and Franklin Roosevelt. He never put himself in the class of either, let alone acted above their class. Both were Presidents from distinguished families. He wanted their patronage to become a mere general in their air forces, so he communicated frustrations privately through letters and worked solutions indirectly with relatives at social card games.⁸⁵ Chennault never criticized Chinese leaders openly, while Stillwell made his disgust widely known. The examples of both spread to their staffs and advisors. Consequently, advising in the air component evolved differently than in the land component. Most of all Chinese leadership saw General Stillwell's objectives as American and Chennault's as Chinese.⁸⁶⁻⁸⁸

It Comes Together

For the third time Chennault, now a general in charge of the American 14th Air Force as well as top advisor to the Republic of China's Air Force attempted to put theory into

practice. He had assembled many components necessary for effective ACE, yet until late 1944 air mobility proved sorely lacking.⁸⁹ Worse, British, American, and Chinese strategic objectives framing the operational objectives were often at odds. The British wanted to preserve their Empire, the Chinese wanted to preserve their regime, while the Americans wanted to quickly defeat the Japanese and get on with business.^{90, 91}

ACE in Implementation

The excellent ISR from Chinese spotters, coordination through the AOC, and numerous airfields allowed the small force of Chinese-American airmen to use ACE to punch well above their weight. The Japanese could never pin down Chinese-American aircraft as they jumped around to various airfields.⁹² Bombing the runways did little good as the Chinese quickly replaced scattered gravel. Minimal supply dumps cached precious fuel at a variety of locations. There were rarely enough supplies to make its destruction useful anyway. The Wing used fuel and ammo almost as quickly as it arrived from India.⁹³

Adaptability was key to survival. Previously, when the Japanese fielded a new model of Zero, air intercepts became near certain defeats. The Japanese soon swept the remains of the Republic of China's Air Force from the sky.⁹⁴ Years later, the Chinese-American Composite Wing, even with newer P-51Bs, proved no match against the most recent enemy aircraft. However, after a few phone calls with his Group commanders, the ever-practical Chennault directed the obvious. Destroy the new Japanese fighters on the ground.⁹⁵ It turns out ACE works well for that too. ISR helped them avoid the Japanese while airborne and the AOC coordinated strikes during those times Japanese aircraft were not.⁹⁶ The Chinese and American pilots demonstrated their capability in shooting up parked Japanese aircraft. Despite expectations in Washington, the Chinese-American Composite Wing did the unthinkable. They slowly wrested air superiority away from the Japanese over Southern and Eastern China.⁹⁷ Wherever the Chinese controlled an airfield the Japanese air component suffered. So did other aspects of the Japanese war effort.

HISTORICAL CASE STUDY, continued...

Though noted as a great air tactician in opposition to strategic bombing Chennault thought strategically from the beginning. Together with President Chiang Kai-shek he believed the real vulnerability of Japanese war industry lay in the long supply lines feeding Southeast Asian and Chinese resources to Japanese factories, not the factories themselves.⁹⁸ General Stillwell needed the airpower to retake Burma and opposed the Chinese-American Air Force interdiction plan.⁹⁹ General Hap Arnold wasn't too thrilled either as he wanted to strategically attack Japanese industrial centers using heavy bombers with massive firepower.^{100, 101} The Pacific lines of communication used the ocean and great rivers as highways. Increasingly precious resources ended up on the bottom of the South China Sea or China's rivers. The Japanese knew full well what was happening as control of the air began to slip away. Worse, within a year they felt the effects of the Chinese-American air interdiction plan.¹⁰² Sometime in late 1943, around when the number of iron ore barges meeting grim fates reached into the thousands, the Japanese realized their air component could no longer deal with the severe strategic threat from China.¹⁰³ Japanese military planners at the time disagreed with those historians today who regard the 14th Air Force's efforts as valiant but producing little. The Japanese Emperor approved sending a 500,000-man army out of Northern China to execute Operation Number One.¹⁰⁴ Its mission, capture all airfields along the Chinese coast to isolate the air threat, re-establish the rail-line from Southeast Asia through China to Korea from where goods could ship to Japan in relative safety, and hopefully knock China out of the war.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, they launched another Army out of Rangoon, Burma to seize the British base at Imphal, India supplying both the airlift effort into China and General Stillwell's ongoing Burma Offensive.¹⁰⁶

Millions of British, Indian, American, Chinese, Burmese and Japanese entered a struggle to the death. No calvary was going to come to the rescue, not with the D-Day landings in Normandy fast approaching. Many of China's best American trained troops were committed with General Stillwell in Northern Burma, south of the mountains.¹⁰⁷ They received the bulk of air mobility support. Once again, the China

theater was not the priority. The fighting was brutal and fierce with little quarter given by either side. The Cantonese General Fang defended the Chinese-American airbases of Hengyang for 47 days with the 14th Air Force's close air support forcing the Japanese to attack only at night. Lacking rifles and ammunition due to lack of air mobility the Chinese 10th Army finally gave way after dealing over 60,000 casualties to the Japanese.¹⁰⁴⁻⁶ By Fall of 1944, the painfully built coastal airfields of China belonged to Japan. Throughout August, Chennault wrote of his frustrations to President Roosevelt and contemplated the failure of his plans.¹⁰⁷

A month later he readied for attempt number four. Three key factors encouraged Chennault this time. First, the British-Indian Army held Imphal protecting the Allies' India supply dumps. Second, General William Tunner arrived with new transport aircraft and after flying the air routes over the Himalayas himself took charge of air mobility.¹⁰⁸⁻ 9 Losses due to flawed aircraft design, poor maintenance, and reckless flying plunged while efficiency climbed rapidly. Finally, even as the last coastal airfields fell, General Stillwell led (or in the Chinese view advised) three Chinese divisions and Merrill's Marauders on a brilliant seven-month campaign through dense jungles to retake Myitkyina airport in Northern Burma.¹¹⁰⁻¹¹¹ General Stillwell also knew the importance of air mobility. From May to October 1944, about 14,000 transport flights into Myitkyina were logged, carrying over 40,000 tons of cargo for the Burma Campaign.¹¹² The airfield soon proved worth more than many airfields lost in China. With the airfield in the Allies' hands General Tunner's transports were protected from Japanese air attack and could fly safely on the lower Himalayan routes into China. Tonnage to China soared 10-fold.¹¹³

Chennault knew what to do with all that fuel, ammunition, spare parts and bombs. The Japanese tried to counter sending their last reserves of 50,000 deep into China to seize the remaining major airfields. They never got close. Chinese-American ISR dominance made it impossible to operate effectively out of the many airfields they'd captured. The need to occupy the entire North and East

Coast of China spread the Imperial Japanese Army thin. With the Chinese-American Composite Wing interdicting lines of communication, the Japanese could not defeat the final U.S. trained and equipped Chinese Army to seize the last great airbases.¹¹³⁻¹¹⁵

Conclusion

The China air campaign revealed strengths and weakness in the agile combat employment of airpower. To succeed ACE must do many things right. ACE requires ISR superiority, good command and control, air mobility, extensive combat support, dispersed airfields, and well-trained personnel. However, only with good strategy will well implemented ACE achieve the desired effects (i.e., do the right things). If it doesn't, like most concepts ACE is meaningless. After the war, the Air Force Strategic Bombing survey discovered that Japanese steel mills were running at only one-third capacity due to the lack of iron ore well before strategic bombers attacked them.¹¹⁶ Thus revealing why strategic attacks against Japanese heavy industry yielded disappointing results. In the Pacific, Chennault's strategic interdiction approach rendered Arnold's approach largely meaningless before it even started.¹¹⁷

Underpinning both ACE implementation and unity of effort at strategic and operational levels is the ability to form successful relationships with key allies and partners. Without them the access, capability building efforts, expanding partner military capacity, and mutual planning for success will never materialize. In many ways ACE is a battle of enablers. In the end the Chinese mobilized far more ground-based resources for ACE, like construction, than the Japanese. The Japanese didn't create an operational network of airfields in Burma or sufficient ISR capabilities in China to make ACE work. They just didn't nurture local allies that way. When they lost Myitkyina airport the Japanese were not agile enough to shift to other locations or interdict the air routes from the numerous captured airfields in China.¹¹⁸ Without allies, they lacked agility. Their campaigns in Burma and Southern China never recovered.

After a year of successful ACE in 1943, both sides launched land-centric, large scale combat operations to obtain or

counter the airfields necessary for its implementation. In a future LSCO utilizing extensive land forces may be far more important for future ACE than currently thought. To the extent islands are involved replace 'Army' with 'Navy-Marines.' Finally, leadership that understands ACE and how to implement it is key. The Emperor of Japan himself was correct to conclude that the way to stop the agile combat employment of airpower against his strategic lines of communication was to cut-off the Allies first. He just couldn't overcome two brilliant American tacticians, Britain's Indian Army that still had enough motivation to defend the Empire staunchly at Imphal, the tyranny of distance, and multiple Chinese Armies who wore them down once American equipment got through in bulk.

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U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Curtis Buzzard, commanding general of Security Assistance Group-Ukraine, speaks with leaders of Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine. Photo by: Capt. Leanne Demboski, DVIDS: 8768017

'NEWS FROM THE FRONT'

Multi-National Security Assistance and Security Force Assistance in Conflict

JCISFA Persistently Engages Security Assistance Efforts in Europe

by: Mr. Jeffrey King, JCISFA Military Analyst (Lessons Learned)

From Episodic to Embedded: A Commitment to SAG-U and NSATU

The Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA) has been a steadfast partner to the Security Assistance Group-Ukraine (SAG-U) since its formation over two years ago. Initially, support focused on providing lessons learned (LL) expertise to enhance SAG-U's ability to deliver crucial Security Assistance (SA) to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) amidst a fluid and challenging conflict. JCISFA collaborated closely with key SAG-U partners, including US Army Europe-Africa (USAREUR-AF) and the Joint Multi-National Training Group-Ukraine (JMTG-U), as well as stakeholders like the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) and the UK-led International Donor Coordination Centre (IDCC).

Recognizing the need for a more sustained approach, JCISFA transitioned from episodic engagements to embedded support. Over six months, from August 2024 to February 2025, JCISFA conducted three embed missions with SAG-U and more recently NATO SA and Training Ukraine (NSATU), fostering deeper collaboration and delivering tailored products extending beyond LL to

encompass LL-informed training and education. This shift acknowledges the complexities posed by high personnel turnover and the ever-evolving operational landscape.

"Five Big Rocks": Laying the Foundation for Success

Commander and Staff Handbook Series: A practical resource to achieve common understanding between SAG-U, NSATU, and partners, the "SAG-U and NSATU Security Assistance Handbook" provides useful guidance on navigating the complexities of security assistance in the Ukrainian context. The 1st Edition handbook is controlled unclassified information (CUI) releasable to NATO and FVEY nations. Its electronic version is posted on JCISFA's Protected Internet Exchange (PiX) site at <https://pixtoday.net/article/221400> . The 2nd Edition, due in May 2025, will be releasable to Ukraine and



focus on combined operations and planning with the AFU in accordance with USAREUR-AF.

Pre-Deployment Training Joint Knowledge Online (JKO)

Course: This accessible online course parallels much of the handbook and provides personnel inbound or new to SAG-U and NSATU with essential security assistance, security force assistance, and security cooperation fundamentals tailored to the Ukrainian conflict. It also includes insights for those that might work with or within forward locations. JCISFA intends to update the course semi-annually to reflect evolving realities on the ground, with a new iteration planned for Fall 2025.

US and non-US members can enroll and take this course at Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) from the following link at Security Assistance Group Ukraine Introduction (1.5 hrs.)

Link:

[https://jkosupport.jten.mil/html/COI.xhtml?](https://jkosupport.jten.mil/html/COI.xhtml?course_prefix=J3O&course_number=P-US1258)

[course_prefix=J3O&course_number=P-US1258](https://jkosupport.jten.mil/html/COI.xhtml?course_prefix=J3O&course_number=P-US1258), or go to the course catalog and type in the course number -- P-US1258.



Training Support for Forward Area Operations: Recognizing the unique challenges of operating in forward areas, JCISFA is actively supporting this SAG-U specialized training program that is harmonized with the handbook and JKO course. This includes three ongoing initiatives to help SAG-U:

1. Develop a "hybrid length" course that balances depth of knowledge with operational tempo demands.
2. Add an operational module of the newcomer's orientation for all SAG-U members.
3. A special JKO 'micro-course' for forward members (JCISFA is scoping this course).

Lessons Learned Support: JCISFA has long assisted SAG-U (and now NSATU) to capture, analyze, and disseminate LL to improve future warfighting and current SA performance. In both the handbook and JKO course, JCISFA reflected the dual-hatted CG's elevation of LL as a 'Top 3 priority'.

Active assistance includes participating in SAG-U LL working groups and refining LL processes through streamlining the SAG-U LL memorandum. It also includes synchronizing LL actions and networks across SAG-U, NSATU, USAREUR-AF cells, as well as other LL stakeholders such as the Center for US Army LL (CALL). A final initiative is incorporating medical LL insights from special operating forces (SOF).

Staff Reach-back Support: JCISFA provides consistent staff support to SAG-U, answering requests for information (RFIs), participating in battle rhythm events, and collecting insights on operational force design and combined planning efforts. The emphasis here has shifted to a focus on combined events that also capture USAREUR-AF synchronization with both organizations and covering identified knowledge gaps such as medical LL insights.

Expanding Partnerships: Integrating the NATO SFA CoE

Beyond the "Five Big Rocks," JCISFA has integrated its liaison officer (LNO) to the NATO SFA Centre of Excellence (CoE) to explore opportunities leveraging their expertise in training, education, and LL across all other LOEs. This includes collaborating with NSATU's Force Development pillar and the newly established NATO Joint Analysis Training and Education Centre (JATEC) in Poland. JCISFA has engaged the JATEC since October 2024, before its activation, and has connected it with the global LL community in accordance with the US Joint Staff J-7 LLWG (JLLWG) in November last year and February this year.

The Way Ahead

JCISFA maintains its unwavering commitment to assisting SAG-U, NSATU and key partners to navigate the complexities of delivering security assistance to the Ukrainian Armed Forces (AFU). JCISFA accomplishes much of this via reach-back until the next embed mission.

Key Upcoming Milestones:

May 2025: Publish the 2nd Edition of the SAG-U/NSATU Security Assistance Handbook, releasable to Ukraine (REL UKR), with a focus on combined integration between SAG-U, NSATU, the AFU, and USAREUR-AF. A PowerPoint presentation via video-teleconference is planned to introduce the handbook. Continue developing a "forward area-focused mini JKO course" for personnel working in forward areas or embassies, aiming for a launch coinciding with the 2nd Edition handbook.

Spring/Summer 2025:

- ◆ Support SAG-U in developing a hybrid-length in-person course and operational orientation module.
- ◆ Assist in arranging European LL organizations for the Summer 2025 live JLLWG international panel.

Fall 2025:

- ◆ Release the 2nd iteration of the recently launched SAG-U JKO course, aligned with the updated handbook content.

Ongoing Efforts: Continue to collaborate with SAG-U J7 on its lessons learned program and integrating key points into the 2nd Edition handbook (most notably the CG-LL memorandum). Stay engaged with SAG-U LL working groups and maintain real-time awareness of medical insights and general archival support. Increasing work across lessons learned organizations to integrate battlefield and security assistance observations, leveraging networks like the SAG-U LL portal, Sky-Blue, PiX, and JLLIS remains important. Deepen integration with combined events ranging from operational force design framework, update briefs, planning and execution events. Amplify USAREUR-AF's role with these activities and include them in the 2nd Edition Handbook and other LOEs where appropriate. Continue consistent reach-back support, support personnel rotation knowledge gaps, answering LL and other RFIs. Lastly, crosswalk NATO CoE courses with NSATU requirements, exploring attendance and mobile training team options.



Multinational exercise that supports joint combined interoperability among the partner militaries of Ukraine and the United States, as well as Partnership for Peace nations and NATO allies. Photo by: Staff Sgt. David Carnahan, DVIDS: 6855629

FAOs IN THE FIELD – INTEROPERABILITY FOR TODAY & THE FUTURE



USN FAOs Support Italian Navy's Historic Deployment to INDOPACOM, Advancing Combined Lethality and NAVPLAN

By CDR Dan Justice, U.S. Sixth Fleet LNO to Italian Navy

Rome, Italy - The Italian Navy recently completed the first-ever deployment of its CAVOUR carrier strike group to the Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR), with the US Navy playing a significant role in its success. This globe-spanning achievement directly advanced the Nav Plan North Star line of effort: readiness for sustained high-end joint and combined combat by 2027.

The deployment lasted 152 days and covered over 77,000 nautical miles and marked a significant milestone for the Italian Navy, demonstrating its ability to operate effectively in a global context. The Italian group consisted of 1160 personnel, 3 units, and 19 aircraft and was supported by US and other allied forces throughout the deployment.

The professionalism of the Italian Navy and the collaborative efforts of US Navy Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) who worked closely with their Italian counterparts to facilitate cooperation and planning ensured a positive outcome. Multiple FAOs engaged throughout the deployment and provided critical support in areas such as operational planning, logistics, and communication.

The deployment highlighted the importance of FAOs in providing operational advantage to Fleet Commanders, particularly in the Pacific. While other Joint FAOs may focus on a specific AOR, the nature of maritime forces is to be mobile, present and cross artificially-created geographic boundaries. Navy FAOs are required to be global strategic effects operators with awareness outside our own CCMD boundary lines. This allows FAOs to leverage our skill sets and expertise to deliver operational advantage to the commander.

The Italian Navy's deployment also underscored the growing importance of global naval cooperation. As the French and UK plan similar deployments to INDOPACOM, the Chinese and Russians expand their naval presence in other regions as well. The necessity for strategically-minded FAOs who understand the perspectives, goals, and capabilities of these forces is becoming increasingly important.

The Sixth Fleet Commander, VADM Anderson, celebrated the deployment during a recent visit where he welcomed the Cavour back to Europe. The visit marked the culmination of a year-long effort that began with a visit by Rear Admiral Nyugen and C7F staff to Rome in January last year. The deployment also highlighted the importance of collaboration across different staff codes, with FAOs working closely with other staff members to enable the commanders to maximize the return on work of the entire spectrum of the fleets.

This historic operation to the INDOPACOM AOR demonstrated the importance of global naval cooperation and the critical role that FAOs play in providing operational advantage to commanders. As the world's navies continue to evolve and expand their presence- including our adversaries- the need for skilled and knowledgeable FAOs will only continue to grow.

SFA Communities Online

To communicate with our SFA community, we provide ways to submit a request for information (RFI) or to collaborate through various JCISFA information sites.

You may use an RFI, not only to request more information about Security Force Assistance, but also to provide feedback and recommendations on content or suggest topics for future editions of the Quarterly SFA Newsletter or the Quarterly SFA Forum.



For email, go to our website through the Joint Staff (<https://www.jcs.mil/Directorates/J7-Joint-Force-Development/JCISFA>) and click the email link at the bottom. Via the web, use any of our social media sites or through the Chairman's Joint Lessons Learned Information System (JLLIS).



To join our Community of Interest on Microsoft Teams, open Teams, select the "Teams" button on the left, and type "JSJCISFA Col" in the "Join or create a team" field at the bottom. Someone from JCISFA will add you to the members.



To join our Community of Interest bi-weekly email group. Send an email to the JCISFA mailbox and ask to be added to the bi-weekly community.

usarmy.leavenworth.cac.mbx.jcisfa@army.mil



<https://www.jllis.mil/>



<https://www.milsuite.mil/>

Protected Internet Exchange (PiX)

<https://pixtoday.net>



JCISFA's social media presence allows you to stay up to date on our latest news, efforts, and activities. "Like" our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/JCISFA>



JCISFA

Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance

Joint Staff | Army | Navy | Marines | Air Force | Space Force

JCISFA Community has SFA courses available through Joint Knowledge Online (JKO).

[Link to JCISFA SFA Courses \(click here\)](#)



Available SFA JKO Courses:

NEW! J3OP-US1258 Security Assistance Group Ukraine Introduction (1.5 hours) [No prerequisites]

This tailored course equips personnel deploying to Security Assistance Group - Ukraine (SAG-U) with a comprehensive understanding of the unit's unique mission and operational environment. Participants will delve into the principles of security force assistance, relevant funding authorities, and effective advising techniques, enabling them to provide optimal support to advising efforts. This training aims to cultivate informed and confident teams capable of seamlessly collaborating with partners and rapidly integrating into the broader country team.

J3OP-US1336 Advising Foreign Security Forces 101 (1 hour) [No prerequisites]

Introduces Security Cooperation foreign advisors to concepts, definitions, and fundamentals required for the art regardless of which organization or level the advisor is operating. The Security Cooperation advisor may originate from the Department of Defense (DOD) or non-DOD organizations; therefore, this course is designed to develop any individual, of any rank, filling the role as a foreign advisor, to support U.S. interests through assisting Partner Nations in the development, sustainment, and employment of their security enterprise.

J3OP-US1398 SFA Considerations When Campaign Planning (2 hours) [No prerequisites]

This course offers ways to implement Security Force Assistance (SFA) as part of campaign planning, execution, and assessment. This course is tailored for key leaders and operators within organizations that plan and execute Security Cooperation at the operational level. These organizations include Combatant Commands, Security Cooperation Organizations, Service Component Commands, and Joint Task Force Headquarters equivalents.

J3OP-US1399: Building Allied and Partner Security Institutions - Advanced (2 hours) [No prerequisites]

The overarching focus of this course is building allied and partner defense institutions through SFA with an emphasis on foreign security force functions, core processes, and SFA developmental tasks. This curriculum offers a learning objective that provides mid-to-senior level officers abilities to analyze the Operating and Generating Functions of a Foreign Security Force. For example, the course design supports mid-to-senior officers in the grades or ranks of senior O3s, O4s, and junior O5s. However, any officer or civilian within the DOD can benefit from material offered within the course. Enabling lesson objectives provide material depth and specificity appropriate for respective Professional Military Education at the mid-to-senior levels. The course provides a cornerstone to follow-on learning at the senior and executive levels.



Air Advisor Courses

The USAF continues to offer quality Air Advisor courses to support Security Force Assistance efforts. The AA Initial Qualification Course is certified for Joint accreditation and the Air Advisor A-Course is available at a site of your choosing!

These courses aim to deliver not only core knowledge and skills, but fieldcraft skills as well. Contact AETC below for further information.

Courses

Air Advisor A-Course

- 5 Days
- Deliverable by Mobile Training Team

Air Advisor Initial Qualification Course (Joint Credit)

- 20 days in-residence course
- Academic and Fieldcraft classes
- Awards Air Advisor Special Duty Identifier
- Joint Accredited

Mission Commander/Team Sergeant Course

- 5 days / Advanced Air Advisor status required
- Air Advisor upgrade to team leadership roles

Senior Leadership Course

- 3 Days
- Restricted to O-6/GS-15/E-9 in Air Advisor/Security Cooperation leadership roles

CORE KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

Mission Specific Info, COIN/SFA Theory, Strategic Guidance, Air Advisor Roles & Responsibilities (TTPs), Joint-Coalition-NGO/IGO & Interagency Partnerships, Security Cooperation, Foreign Disclosure, Area Study, Title Sourcing/Funding, General Mission Planning, Assessments/Teaching, Capstone Exercise

Region & Culture Studies

Covers 5 GCCs/30+ Nations, Region/Country Specific, Intro to Culture & Worldview, Religious Familiarization, Region and Partner Nation Specific Information, Relating to Counterparts, Cross-Cultural Communication/ Negotiations, Social Skills, Customs and Appropriate Behavior, Immersive Scenario Exercise

Fieldcraft Skills

High-Threat Driving, Advanced Weapons, Tactical Casualty Care, Tactics/Urban Operations, Self Protection, Active Shooter & Insider Threat Techniques, Land Navigation, Tactical Communication, C-IED, Self Protection (Combatives), Personnel Recovery, Area Familiarization

Contact Phone Number: 210-652-6574 or DSN: 312-487-6574

E-Mail: aetc.a3xp.schedulingworkflow@us.af.mil

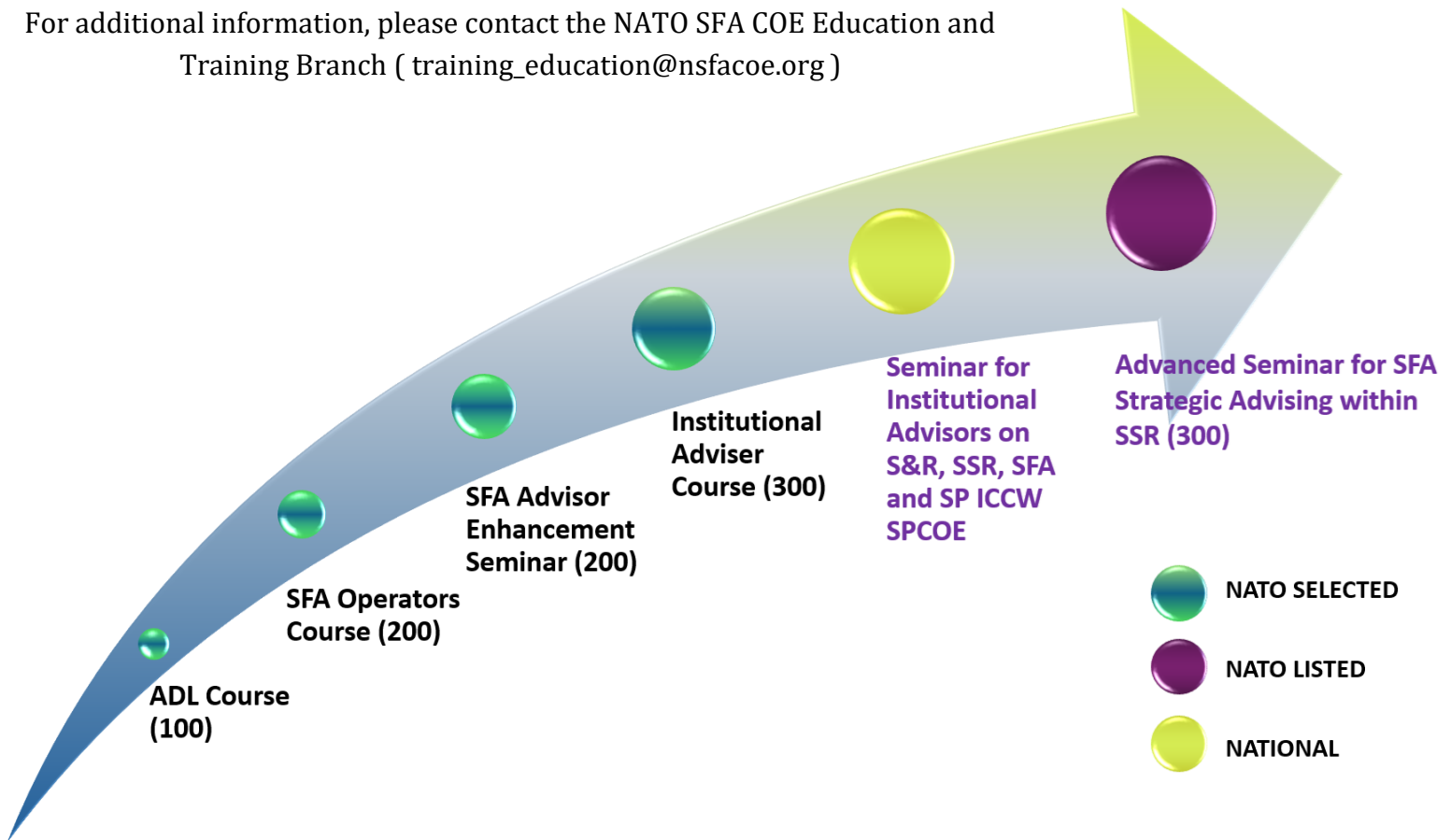
NATO SFA Center of Excellence

Training and Education



These solutions are or will be certified as “NATO Selected” courses that satisfy NATO performance gaps identified within the Military Contribution to Peace Support NATO Discipline through the System Approach to Training process and represent suitable training solutions aligned with the performance gaps. A specific calling letter for each course iteration will be published on the NATO SFA CoE website at least two months before the course offering commences.

For additional information, please contact the NATO SFA COE Education and Training Branch (training_education@nsfaoe.org)



NATO SFA CoE Education and Training Resource Links

ETOC: <https://e-itep.act.nato.int/>

e-PRIME: <https://e-prime.org/>

JADL: ** <https://jidl.act.nato.inl/>

Note: A JADL account is required to join courses offered on the JADL Platform. To register for the course, you must have a NATO-Military, Governmental, or NATO Official email address. Those without NATO email addresses require a sponsor from a NATO entity or NATO member nation to verify that attending training is to the benefit of NATO. The NATO SFA CoE POC can provide requestors with a sponsor as needed.

Points of Contact:

NATO SFA COE Training and Education Branch: training_education@nsfaoe.org

NATO SFA COE ADL Manager: e-learning@nsfaoe.org