

The Future Expansion of the State Partnership Program: A Vision

by

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Abstract

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The Budget Control Act of 2011 has driven significant reductions to our military budgets over the last several years. This fact, coupled with the reality that the United States is heavily burdened by more national debt today than at any point in history, will continue to drive budget shortfalls and will no doubt drive a reprioritization of our global strategic objectives. The National Security Strategy has emphasized the importance of building capacity with our partner nations. The State Partnership Program (SPP) is a shining star when it comes to building partnership capacity and security cooperation. The SPP is the only current program that integrates military and civilian capabilities and has proven to be an economical approach with a high return on investment. We must take advantage of this successful program and take it to the next level as we seek the most effective ways to build the security capacities of our partner nations.

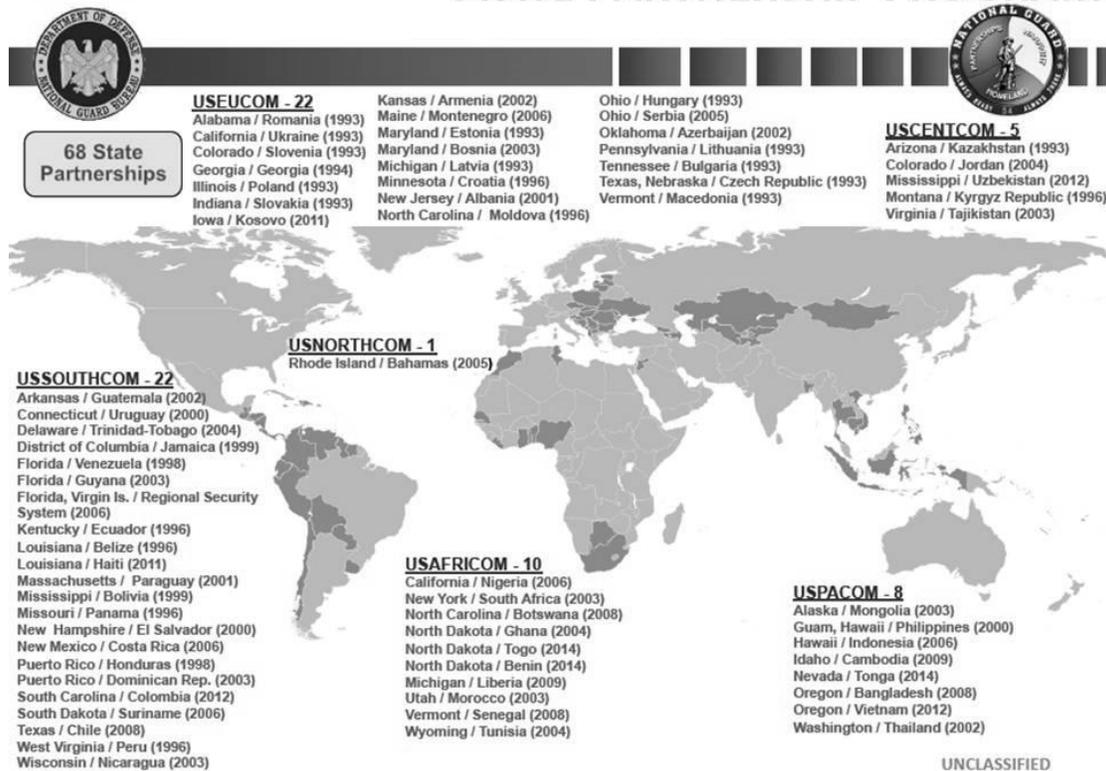
The Future Expansion of the State Partnership Program: A Vision

We have learned... over the last 10 years... that nothing is as important to long term success as understanding the prevailing culture and values....

—General Ray Odierno¹

The current United States National Strategy highlights the importance of shaping and strengthening the environment with other nations and cultivating partnerships around the world. Per the 2015 United States National Security Strategy, this shaping of the environment is centered upon enabling “and build[ing] the capacity of our partners to join with us in meeting security challenges.”²

In line with the opening quote of this paper by the Army Chief of Staff, General Raymond T. Odierno, one engagement tool that has unequivocally proven to be effective by establishing and strengthening relationships with other nations is the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP). The SPP has been successfully establishing and building relationships with other nations for over 20 years and currently includes 68 unique security partnerships involving 74 nations around the globe.³ (See Figure 1) “The SPP links a unique component of the Department of Defense – a state's National Guard – with the armed forces or equivalent of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship.”⁴

STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

UNCLASSIFIED

Figure 1. State Partnership Program ⁵

The intent of this paper is to describe a particular vision focused on enhancing the SPP. I will provide six ideas that, if implemented, will build on the past success of this proven program to make it more effective. These ideas include:

- Implement a Coordination / Integration Center focused on tracking and managing the overall SPP to include performance measures, etc.
- Establish a goal for each state to have at least two partner nations
- Explore ways to couple the efforts of the SPP with the Regionally Aligned Forces approach
- Work with the State Department to enhance the civil partnering aspects of the SPP

- Some ideas related to relationships that will further strengthen our partnerships in the future

By implementing these ideas, the United States will build even stronger relationships with the nations we partner with and support. In turn, these relationships will lead to these nations having stronger militaries and civil services for their populations and would most likely reduce the risk of outside military actions being taken upon these sovereign countries by outside forces. In addition, this enhanced approach would enable better access to our partners during contingencies. A prime example of this is the relationship established between Michigan and Liberia in 2010 after years of civil war.⁶

Recent Fiscal Challenges... More Challenges Ahead

The vision to expand the State Partnership Program is directly aligned with the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) guidance of supporting the interests of strengthening “U.S. security and that of our partners...”⁷ and of implementing “invigorating efforts to build innovative partnerships and strengthen key alliances and partnerships.”⁸ Building new partnerships and strengthening partnerships and alliances already in effect will become even more important in the future as resources allocated to military funding continue to dwindle in accordance with the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011. The BCA also included a mechanism requiring mandatory military budget reductions of approximately \$50 billion annually. Ultimately, the end result of reducing the military budget will be greater risk to the American people and our allies. The authors of the 2014 QDR describe that the Department of Defense will be able to manage risks to a reasonable level under the President’s FY2015 Budget plan.⁹

However, the authors go on to note that “the risks would grow significantly if sequester-level cuts return in FY2016, if proposed reforms are not accepted, or if uncertainty over budget levels continues.”¹⁰ Unfortunately, the consensus is that the proposed budget reductions will occur as outlined in the BCA for FY2016.

According to author, Loren Thompson, in a *Forbes Magazine* article published in February of 2014, the most damaging aspect of the Budget Control Act of 2011 is “sequestration,” which literally means to remove or withdraw.¹¹ Thompson explains that in essence the act limits the Pentagon’s base budget, not including dollars spent on wars, to \$496 billion in FY2014 and FY2015.¹² The act also lays out specific spending alternatives if the caps are exceeded. So far, military leaders and “planners have been able to use supplemental appropriations for the war in Afghanistan to circumvent some of the reductions... but that safety valve will start closing fast in 2015.”¹³

Regarding the future budgets and force structure of the Army, the 2014 QDR states:

Sustaining a world-class Army capable of conducting the full range of operations on land, including prompt and sustained land combat as part of large, multi-phase joint and multinational operations by maintaining a force structure that we can man, train, equip, and keep ready. To sustain this force, the Department will rebalance within the Army, across the Active, Guard, and Reserves. The active Army will reduce from its war-time high force of 570,000 to 440,000-450,000 Soldiers. The Army National Guard will continue its downsizing from a war-time high of 358,000 to 335,000 Soldiers, and the U.S. Army Reserve will reduce from 205,000 to 195,000 Soldiers. If sequestration-level cuts are imposed in FY2016 and beyond, all components of the Army would be further reduced, with active duty end strength decreasing to 420,000, the Army National Guard drawing down to 315,000, and the Army Reserves reducing to 185,000.¹⁴

The Army is taking the hardest budget hit, but the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps will experience significant reductions to their budgets and force structure as well.

Build Partner Nation Capacity

Regardless of the size of the force, the 2014 QDR directly states that one of the three main pillars of the SECDEF's plan is to "Build security globally, in order to preserve regional stability, deter adversaries, support allies and partners, and cooperate with others to address common security challenges."¹⁵ The 2014 QDR spells out that to build "security globally not only assures allies and partners and builds their capacity but also helps protect the homeland by deterring conflict and increasing stability."¹⁶ This statement also correlates with President Barack Obama's 2015 National Security Strategy goal to share both the burden and cost of global security with our partnered nations.¹⁷ The increased capacity of our partners (both military and civilian) would free up much needed resources to enable the United States to address more of our own fiscal challenges and concerns.

In concert with the SECDEF, one of the five Strategic Imperatives of the National Guard organization is to "partner with Combatant Commanders to provide relevant, ready forces capable of performing unified land operations worldwide."¹⁸ Our primary customers, combatant commanders, need proficient military units skilled in executing decisive action missions. Army National Guard units are organized, equipped and trained to carry out combat operations, and have fully demonstrated their capacity and ability to build partnership capacity in support of a combatant commanders' theater campaign plan aimed at regional and global stability.¹⁹ LTG William E. Ingram notes that the enduring relationships developed with nearly 70 countries through the National Guard State Partnership Program "provide skilled and experienced Soldiers serving Combatant Commanders in an advise and assist capacity."²⁰

In the document, *Strategic Direction to the National Guard*, National Guard

Bureau Chief, General Frank J. Grass, points out the following:

The SPP also develops international relationships that support the Geographical Combatant Commands' "Phase 0" or "shaping operations." Our 68 partnerships, fully integrated into theater security cooperation plans, help set the conditions for future American success across the globe. Maintaining and growing partnerships around the world is essential to sharing the burden of regional security and responding to the next global crisis as evidenced by multiple co-deployments with our State Partners over the past decade.²¹

Expounding some on what it means to build partner nation capacity, some of the key DOD-specific interactions include: joint exercises, professional military education, military personnel exchange programs, and bi-lateral training. Building of partner nation capacity can also include military equipment sales and modernization to bolster the military capability of a partner nation. Interaction with a partner nation can also include routine military engagement with our partner nation's armed forces by key leaders, defense attachés, and other niche military occupations (as required) within a combatant command.

State Partnership Programs have conducted command post exercises, emergency management operations, medical training (military and civilian), and military police training and artillery training as well as the following:

- Emergency Preparedness & Disaster Response
- Military Exercises & Peacekeeping Operations
- Border, Port, & Aviation Defense & Security
- Leadership, Officer & NCO Development
- Military Media Relations
- Defense & Democratic Institutions Reform

- Natural Resources Protection
- Economic Security
- University & Education Exchange Programs

Cultivated over time, these engagements lead to stronger relationships and assist in building the partner nation's capabilities, as well as their capacity. These various training events and engagements also build a familiarity between the United States and our partner nation militaries. This approach also supports the "need for the military to work with... host nation authorities to plan and conduct military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence operations and activities" as outlined in Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations.²² The bottom line is that, conducted properly, partnership-focused operations have proven to be a viable and productive way to build a partner nation's capacity, while at the same time, providing a means to build strong relationships that will pay huge dividends in the future.

Strategic Landpower

In order to fully understand and appreciate where we need to go with improving and expanding the State Partnership Program, we must take a hard look at Landpower. According to the former United States Army Training and Doctrine Command Commander, General Robert W. Cone, "Relationships with the Special Operations community that the Army has formed over the past 12 years should be preserved and institutionalized in the Strategic Landpower concept. So should gains in battlefield intelligence."²³ General Cone led The Strategic Landpower Task Force, a joint effort with the Army, the Marine Corps and U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) which was partly focused on countering critics "who believe precision strikes by air and sea power can win a war without boots on the ground."²⁴

Cone explains that, "While human beings transit air and transit the sea, they live on the land... so your strategic outcomes are going to take place on the land."²⁵ In the Strategic Landpower White Paper, authored by General Raymond T. Odierno, General James F. Amos and Admiral William H. McRaven, it is explained that armed conflict is a "clash of interests between or among organized groups, each attempting to impose their will on the opposition."²⁶ The Strategic Landpower Task Force was chartered to study the application of landpower focused on achieving national objectives in the future. The task force includes the Army, Marine Corps and Special Operations Forces leadership because these three entities conduct all landpower-based operations.

The authors of the landpower white paper explain that during operations the Army, Marine Corps and Special Operations Forces "intersect in the land domain among people."²⁷ This intersection is the primary reason that a combined exploration of the joint application of military power at the junction of the land, cyber and human domains was commissioned. The white paper authors address the ongoing challenge of linking "military action to achieving national objectives and describes the requirement for rigorous analysis to determine solutions that will ensure we provide the right capabilities for the nation in an era of fiscal austerity."²⁸

As noted earlier, the authors of the white paper explain that "war is a violent clash of competing interests between or among organized groups, each attempting to impose their will on the opposition."²⁹ Unfortunately, in the past, the United States has approached conflict without fully understanding the physical, cultural, and social environments that comprise what some have called the "human domain."³⁰ Key to success is figuring out how to best impose one's will on the opposition with the least

loss of life, in the least amount of time, and with the least overall expenditure of resources. As with the British theorist B. H. Liddell Hart who popularized the concept of taking an indirect approach, generally involving the avoidance of enemy strength, we must understand that the ability to prevent or avoid confrontation is, in most cases, more important than the waging of war.³¹

The smart application of the big “M” or military power (when considering the national instruments of power--Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic) is imperative to our success in the future. This smart application of the military aspect of national power involves understanding that military power does not (and should not) always have to be lethal in nature. In the 21st century, it is increasingly important to seek out non-lethal means of imposing our influence and will on others when necessary. One emerging method is to utilize interdependent teams of conventional and special operations forces focused on developing and training local military forces “capable of handling many situations that previously called for direct U.S. intervention, while maintaining a low-cost, small footprint presence almost indefinitely.”³² One key point is that U.S. forces who are consistently engaged with other countries, operating in the land domain, can provide effective and smart military support and responses when necessary. It is interesting to note that this concept sounds a lot like the State Partnership Program.

Ready, responsive and “regionally engaged forces operating on the land are critical for preventing and resolving many of the challenges of an emerging operational environment.”³³ Having U.S. troops on the ground in foreign lands is important to joint force operations focused on providing humanitarian aid, disaster recovery support,

support to humanitarian crises and to assist in preventing and thwarting enemy military actions. The mere presence of forward-deployed U.S. Marines, Soldiers and Special Operations Forces is a deterrent to our adversaries and augments the Navy and Air Force in dissuading violence and military strikes by the enemies of the United States and our allies.

The landpower focus is directly supported by the State Partnership Program described in more detail below and the Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) approach described later in this paper. A focused endeavor to better coordinate the efforts between SPP and RAF, coupled with including a civil service management aspect will invariably result in stronger relationships with the countries the United States supports. A coordinated effort will also reduce the risk of negative military action being taken against the nations where these smart military approaches and tools are implemented.

State Partnership Program... A Proven Approach

The State Partnership Program originated in the 1991 to 1992 timeframe subsequent to the collapse of the former Soviet Union. The program came into existence via a U.S. / European Command decision to set up the Joint Contact Team Program (JCTP) in the Baltic Region utilizing Reserve component Soldiers and Airmen. A National Guard Bureau proposal paired U.S. states with three nations emerging from the former Soviet Bloc and the SPP began, becoming a key U.S. security cooperation tool, facilitating teamwork across all aspects of international civil-military affairs and encouraging people-to-people ties at the state level.³⁴ The JCTP developed into an outreach strategy, including both military and political aspects, to help in undergirding the new independent Central and Eastern European states of the former Soviet Union.

The overall intent was to demonstrate to these fledgling nations an example of how a civilian-controlled military works in a democratic, free-market society.

Shortly after the SPP began, DoD directed that the National Guard was to lead the JCTP initiative. The former Chief of the National Guard Bureau (NGB), Lieutenant General John B. Conway, led a thirty-member Military Liaison Team (MLT) to Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.³⁵ Part of the thinking behind the decision to have the National Guard take the lead was that DoD felt Russia would find National Guard forces less threatening than the presence of active duty U.S. Soldiers. Another reason was that the National Guard option was a better fit for the emerging states and their efforts to build a reserve-based defense force.³⁶ The actual creation of the State Partnership Program occurred when Lieutenant General Conway established the first partnership programs, coupling the Baltic countries of Estonia with New York, Latvia with Michigan, and Lithuania with Pennsylvania.³⁷

As mentioned in the introduction, current U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) highlights the importance of shaping activities with other nations and cultivating partnerships around the world. Per the 2015 NSS, this shaping is centered on finding ways to “continuously expand the scope of cooperation to encompass other state partners, non-state and private actors, and international institutions... and key regional organizations.”³⁸

During a House Armed Services Committee meeting on March 6, 2014, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, noted that “We reflect the support of the program [SPP] in the [FY2015] budget. In fact, just this last week there were two more nations entered in to the SPP. It’s a very effective program.”³⁹

General Dempsey's acknowledgement that the State Partnership Program has proven to be effective by establishing and strengthening relationships with other nations is quite a testament to the program. As noted earlier, the SPP has successfully built relationships with other nations for over 20 years and includes 68 unique security partnerships involving 74 nations around the globe.⁴⁰ "The SPP links a unique component of the Department of Defense – a state's National Guard – with the armed forces or equivalent of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship."⁴¹

SPP activities with partner countries vary depending on the application for assistance by the partnering nation, the proficiencies of the supporting National Guard organization, and the overarching country goals of the respective U.S. ambassador and the geographic combatant commander (GCC). Particular training events are specifically planned, based upon the needs and requests of the partnering nation, and based on inputs from the Department of State, the geographic combatant commander and the supporting National Guard unit. In addition to the training previously noted, typical SPP-focused missions performed are:

- Subject matter expert exchanges.⁴²
- Demonstrations of specialized military capabilities.⁴³
- Discussions of policy issues related to those capabilities.⁴⁴
- Visits between senior leaders of a state National Guard and senior leaders of the partner nation's armed forces.⁴⁵

Standard SPP interactions between partner nations and states include: military education, disaster management and disaster relief activities, command and control,

search and rescue, border operations, military medicine, port security, and military justice / rule of law.⁴⁶ As time passes and the relationship between the states and the partnering nation grow stronger, interactions well beyond these base core topics tend to develop. Once the relationship reaches a sound level of maturity, more specific plans are developed to meet particular requests for assistance from the partnering nation. Of course, another key factor that drives interaction and training opportunities is based on the particular skill sets and abilities of the supporting State's National Guard units and members.

The SPP is frequently hailed as a cost-effective program “administered by the National Guard Bureau, guided by State Department foreign policy goals, and executed by the State Adjutants General in support of combatant commanders and U.S. Chiefs of Mission security cooperation objectives and Department of Defense policy goals.”⁴⁷ Admiral (retired) James G. Stavridis, former commander of U.S. European Command, commented that, “The State Partnership Program is, dollar for dollar, my best EUCOM investment.”⁴⁸ Other key points espoused by EUCOM regarding the merits of the SPP program are:⁴⁹

- Promotes access, increases military capabilities, improves interoperability and enhances the principles of responsible governance.
- Helps to prevent failed states and contributes to a stable Europe.
- Contributed to the accession of 12 central and east European countries into NATO by leveraging SPP relationships.
- 14 SPP nations have participated in multiple ISAF co-deployments with their National Guard partner states since 2008.

- Conducted 213 SPP events in FY2012, nearly a quarter all EUCOM events, at a modest cost of \$2.0M; since 2010, has accounted for approximately 32% of program events while using only 20% of program expenditures.
- Supported 12 of 48 EUCOM Lines of Activity (LOAs) in direct support of ISAF.
- Represents the largest non-EUCOM force provider for events in the AOR.

Through the SPP, the National Guard conducts military-to-military engagements in support of defense security goals and also leverages long-term relationships and capabilities to facilitate broader interagency and corollary engagements which encompass military, government, economic and social spheres.

According to Vice Admiral Frank Craig Pandolfe, Director, Joint Staff J5:

The vision for the SPP in the Asia-Pacific is to reassure our allies through increased presence at nominal cost. Public announcement of new SPP partnerships over the next several years will demonstrate increased U.S. engagement in the Pacific. SPP will help build our partners' capabilities and capacity to respond to natural and man-made disasters and help strengthen collaboration on regional security interests... across the Asia-Pacific Region, this program plays a valuable role in achieving the goals and objectives of the PACOM Theater Security Cooperation Plan.⁵⁰

These words from Vice Admiral Pandolfe reaffirm the value of the SPP and indicate that, based on past success, there will be additional SPP partnerships developed over the years to come as part of the U.S. Pacific Command's Theater Security Cooperation Plan. This is yet another strong testament lauding the SPP as a viable and effective military approach which directly supports the focus on strategic landpower previously described.

Regionally Aligned Forces... An Up and Coming Approach

According to General Odierno, “in the simplest terms, regionally aligned forces are Army units and leaders – Brigades, Divisions, Corps, and support forces – who focus on a specific region within their normal training program by receiving cultural training and language familiarization.”⁵¹

According to authors Cleveland and Farris in their July 2013 article, *Toward Strategic Landpower*, RAF means “forces—military and nonmilitary—with not only the ability to destroy but also the decisive ability to understand the population within the context of the operational environment and then take meaningful action to influence human behavior toward achieving the desired outcome.”⁵² This definition of RAF is a pretty good explanation of what it is and what the program is about.

Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 1 states, “The influence soldiers exert before and after campaigns—shaping—is more important than ever.”⁵³ The regionally aligned forces concept is focused on developing Army organizations designed to respond to violent, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) situations within the current and yet foreseen operating environment and provide increased support to geographic combatant command (GCC) operations. According to Rosa Brooks in her May 2014 article entitled *Portrait Army Work In Progress Regionally Aligned Forces*,

The idea underlying RAF is that more culturally attuned soldiers will be better equipped to identify brewing conflicts before they get out of hand, enabling more timely and effective "shaping" -- that is, activities to make conditions favorable for U.S. military success. Such efforts can include influencing local populations, establishing friendly relations with local leaders, strengthening military-to-military cooperation, and the like. If conflict does break out, more culturally sophisticated soldiers will better understand the enemy and work more effectively with the host population.⁵⁴

As mentioned earlier, in order to fully appreciate what has led up to a RAF approach, one must understand the current fiscally-constrained environment driven primarily by the Budget Control Act of 2011. The imposition of these mandatory defense spending reductions, coupled with the requirement to maintain a viable military force ready to respond to crises worldwide are the primary motivating factors driving a RAF approach.⁵⁵ In addition, the Quadrennial Defense Review released in March of 2014 states,

We are identifying new presence paradigms, including potentially positioning additional forward deployed naval forces in critical areas, and deploying new combinations of ships, aviation assets, *regionally aligned* or rotational ground forces, and crisis response forces, all with the intention of maximizing effects while minimizing costs.⁵⁶

In essence, the Army's concept for regionally aligned forces supports the needs of the various geographic combatant commands to apply an innovative approach utilizing smaller organizations to shape and address the future global security environment. This approach also supports maintaining the skills and expeditionary mindset developed over the previous decade of conflict in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The RAF approach has several tangible benefits to the Department of Defense, the Army, and, in particular, to the geographic combatant commanders.

Why RAF?

By providing forces trained in the culture and foreign language of specific regions around the world, regionally aligned forces will benefit the Army and GCCs. The Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), General Raymond Odierno, has stated there is nothing more important to the Army's long-term success than understanding the culture and values of the countries and populations within which we operate.⁵⁷ General Odierno goes on to

note that, “recent history has made it clear that we need expanded levels of cultural and regional awareness in all Army units.”⁵⁸ A good grasp and understanding of the language and culture of those countries we work with enables the Army to support geographic combatant commanders via shaping operations and by preparing for unforeseen contingencies across the world.

A key aspect of the regionally aligned forces concept is for the geographic combatant commander to select the right area to emplace his aligned forces. With typically one dedicated brigade to work with, one can understand that it is imperative to select the correct application of that brigade. Of course the placement of an RAF brigade is based on priority in a geographic combatant commander’s Area of Responsibility (AOR) at a given point in time. In today’s VUCA environment, trouble spots can develop seemingly overnight which further complicates the correct application of the RAF brigades.

The utilization of small organizations to support security cooperation activities is another benefit. These small organizations “will deploy to select locations to support small-scale security cooperation activities and annual military exercises.”⁵⁹ As expected, the utilization of smaller organizations will result in reducing costs associated with deploying and basing soldiers and their families overseas.⁶⁰ Because of looming budget constraints and force reductions, the concept of utilizing small organizations to conduct security cooperation is a cost effective means to support the GCC shaping operations. These are important benefits, but when evaluating the regionally aligned forces concept one must also consider the significant obstacles and challenges that lay ahead.

Challenges

Numerous challenges must be addressed and overcome in order to ultimately realize General Odierno's vision for regionally aligned forces. One glaring question is how well will the RAF concept mesh with the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model. There are also concerns of driving an atmosphere where only certain priority organizations receive the majority of the Army's budget.⁶¹ Another concern is the potential lack of training focus.⁶² A well thought out and detailed training plan could mitigate these concerns and would provide a clear training focus for Officers, NCOs and Soldiers. In addition to addressing the training concerns, understanding the resource requirements may actually be more important.

Past experience has taught us that one of the greatest challenges is that of building and maintaining foreign language and cultural proficiency. In a June 30, 2012 *Army Times* article entitled, "Army Now Reorganizing Geographically" by Michelle Tan, an officer from the Army G-3/5/7 stated, "foreign language is difficult, perishable and expensive, so to what extent do we want people to be an expert?"⁶³ This will be a key question and a challenge we must understand and overcome as an Army in order to make the RAF approach a truly viable one in the future.

The Army has a plan to address foreign language and cultural training challenges entitled the *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy* which was published by U.S. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) as part of the 2012 Army Posture Statement. More work needs to be done to finalize a plan to address the depth of training required for cultural and foreign language proficiency for regionally aligned units. The next step is to ensure this training has been properly resourced and funded to ensure the success of the RAF program.

One of the primary challenges of implementing the regionally aligned forces concept is the difficulty associated with prioritizing training efforts. In 2012 General Odierno commented that, “we will have units that will train to certain levels and then, as they get requirements from combatant commanders, they will train and be capable of conducting operations in those areas—for that specific combatant commander.”⁶⁴ Odierno further explains that, “the bottom line is if you want to train units to be more capable in their specialties... we want infantrymen training infantrymen, armor officers training armor, and so you want that capability within each individual in order to be able to train that.”⁶⁵ In other words, the standard training cycle of troops learning their specific military occupational specialty (MOS) skills transitions well to these same troops teaching their MOS skills to partner nation troops via established security cooperation programs. This in turn supports the geographic combatant commander and his theater campaign plan in his particular region.

Conclusion / Recommendations

As much as we may try, we are not able to accurately predict where the next international security crisis will occur, nor can we predict what it will entail. Major world events of the past such as Pearl Harbor, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the fall of the Soviet Union, and the tragic events which occurred on September 11, 2001, have each in their own way drastically changed the world landscape and the way the United States views international security. We understand that maintaining and growing partnerships with our allies around the world is essential to responding to the next crisis. We will continue to establish and subsequently build these key relationships via diplomacy and military cooperation. In order to enhance our ability to do this in the future, I propose the following recommendations / initiatives for consideration.

1. Establish a National Guard State Partnership Program Coordination / Integration Center at the National Guard Bureau to oversee, manage and coordinate the SPP program as a whole. Part of the responsibility set of this coordination center would be to monitor activities of the program, ensure alignment with the combatant commander's Theater Campaign Plans, identify best practices, identify and track lessons learned and to establish and track key metrics such as Measures of Effectiveness and Key Performance Indicators. This entity should also establish and manage a database to collect SPP-related best practices and lessons learned as a repository for all states to draw information from as required. Personnel who have had broad experience with the State Partnership Program should be selected to manage and work in the NGB SPP Coordination / Integration Center. We should also look at the benefit of "sharing" personnel with SPP experience between the states to share ideas and successful Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) related to the State Partnership Program. The SPP has grown and matured over the last 20 years and it is time to establish a central mechanism to set the program up for success for the next 20 year period.
2. With over 180 nations in the world, the National Guard State Partnership Program should strongly consider establishing a goal for each state to have at least two partner nations. This two-partner-nations-per-state approach will enable the opportunity for the proven and cost effective SPP approach to be implemented in more areas across the world and would nearly double the current effort over time. Several states already have two partners and have

demonstrated that maintaining two relationships with partner nations can be accomplished. Nations geographically close to the current nations in the SPP should be looked at first with a focus on building stronger ties between the two countries involved. This approach would also facilitate the logistics of the sponsoring state regarding resources and travel requirements, thus keeping costs as low as possible. Current SPP nations should be involved in the early stages of establishing a new SPP with a neighboring country. Selecting additional SPP partners must be carefully considered and inputs from GCCs regarding which high-priority nations should be considered needs to be heavily weighted and factored into the selection process. We should also take a hard look at the balance of nations involved in the SPP from a combatant commander perspective.

3. The National Guard Bureau and the United States Army should explore ways to coordinate and couple the efforts of the National Guard State Partnership Program with the Regionally Aligned Forces approach. We should look at ways to meld these two approaches into a coordinated and concerted effort managed by theater army commanders for their GCC. This will result in being able to better support the geographic combatant commanders and their focus on setting the stage and preparing the force for future operations in a global security environment fraught with VUCA problems. The combined effort and synthesized understanding of the culture and language of a specific region of the world will put the military as a whole in a better situation to support the

geographic combatant commander's shaping operations and will facilitate better preparation for contingencies wherever they may occur.

4. Work with the State Department to enhance the civil partnering aspects of the SPP and increase the efforts focused on improving the civil services and public works of our partner nations. Examples may include having state personnel with expertise in potable water systems, management of water treatment facilities, and electrical distribution system expertise to assist our partner nations in improving their public service systems. Enhancing our means and mechanisms to provide this type of mentoring to our partners will build stronger relationships and will raise the standard of living and security within our partner communities.
5. An effort should be made to establish closer ties between the embassy leadership of the nations in the SPP and our corresponding state leaders to include governors, senators, congressmen and mayors. The time and effort spent to build these personal relationships would spur further opportunities between the states and their partners.⁶⁶
6. We should focus more on assisting our partner nations with training related to rule of law, judicial system management, and law enforcement in general. Past experience has indicated this is an area where many of our SPP partner nations are in need of assistance.

These recommendations were developed with the combatant commanders, our multinational partners, and other key stakeholders in mind. The 2015 National Security Strategy reminds us that in order to be successful, "We will strengthen U.S. and

international capacity to prevent conflict among and within states.”⁶⁷ The SPP has matured over the last 20 years and has diligently added to the list of ready, willing, and able security partners. This assiduous effort has positioned the United States to respond more effectively to global scenarios as they materialize.

The National Guard motto of “Always Ready... Always There” has in effect been transferred on to the states’ SPP partner nations. This is but one of the many positive outcomes made possible by the enduring and functional relationships built over the years of interaction and partnering, resulting in the fact that today, our partner nations stand better prepared to share in shouldering the burden of maintaining international security. The SPP is but one of many tools the geographic combatant commander has in his toolkit to apply to meet theater objectives. By applying the recommendations outlined above, the SPP will be one step closer to truly being a “Whole-of-Government” tool that can be more effectively applied to take the next step in promoting international security and stability.

Endnotes

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