SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE: FORMALIZING AN APPROACH FOR THE CANADIAN ARMY

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Service Paper

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AIM

1.   This service paper will examine the requirement to formalize the concept of Security Force Assistance (SFA)[1] within the Canadian Army (CA). The discussion is organized in three parts: why SFA operations are important understanding the current security environment, what SFA enables the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to accomplish in the human domain and engaging with the population through a legitimate security force, and finally how SFA operations, through consistency and sustainability, enable trust and confidence in appropriately selected partner forces. By not having a formal approach to SFA, the CA is lagging behind our Allies, in all areas from doctrine to structure.

INTRODUCTION

2.   The guidance regarding Security Force Assistance, as a Canadian security policy, from the Prime Minister to the Ministers of National Defence and Foreign Affairs was clear in the Minister of National Defence Mandate Letter.[2] The result was strategic direction in Strong, Secure, and Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy, which reinforced the government's wish to partner with allies across the globe to achieve shared security objectives, particularly defending vulnerable populations by, "building the capacity and resilience of others".[3] Conducting SFA activities in weak and failing states is an extremely complex problem and the implementation of these efforts must be integrated into a greater counter insurgency strategy.[4]

3.   Canadian Joint Doctrine identifies five general phases of operations: warning, preparation, deployment, employment, and redeployment.[5] This paper will focus on the provision of assistance to land combat, combat support, and combat service support elements of partner nations by the CA in what has been described as Phase Zero operations. These activities occur before the warning phase, with the intent of preventing conflicts or discouraging adversaries from escalating their activities to the point of conflict.[6] Organizations tasked with phase zero security force assistance should be postured with some augmentation to continue

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[1] NATO, AJP-3.16 Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Force Assistance (SFA), Edition A Version 1, (Brussels, BE: NATO Standardization Office, May 2016.), VII-IX. NATO uses SFA as an overarching concept which has conceptual linkages to Security Sector Reform, Stability and reconstruction, Military Assistance, Counter-Insurgency, Stability Policing and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration. For the purposes of this service paper Security Force Assistance will be used in lieu of Security Force Capacity Building (SFCB), more typically used in Canadian doctrine.

[2] Justin Trudeau, Office of the Prime Minister, *Minister of National Defence MandateLetter – 12 November 2015.* https://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-national-defence-mandate-letter.

[3] Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy,* (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, 2017), 61.

[4] Christopher Paul et al., *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts?*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2015), 9.

[5] Canada, Department of National Defence, *CFJP 5.0 The Canadian Forces Operational Planning Process,* (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, 2010), 1-6.

[6] Kyle Johnston, "US Special Operations Forces and the Interagency in Phase Zero," *Interagency Journal 8*, Issue 1 (Winter 2017): 77.

security force assistance mentoring or advising and assisting operations once conflict emerges, whether with their partnered element or another previously unpartnered force, but a detailed analysis of these requirements and capabilities are beyond the scope of this paper.

DISCUSSION

4.   LtCol John Teichert, in the first of a four part series regarding security force assistance for the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management Journal, correctly characterizes the security environment, "[i]n fact, strong states no longer pose the greatest threat to international security, weak states do."[7] Zeigler and Smith, further examine the connection between terrorism and civil war; identifying the root cause of terrorism is civil strife in weak or failing states, that non-state actors or state actors through proxies tend to leverage or exploit. They posit that instead of focusing on combating terrorism as a primary threat, the United States should focus on reducing the incidence of civil war. The instances of terrorist attacks in countries not experiencing civil war are far below the rate Zeigler and Smith were able to identify in countries experiencing internal conflict.[8] In a US Congressional Research Service report, SFA is considered key to engaging weak and fragile states in a preventative context linked to counterterrorism strategy. Its basic premise is that developing at least basic military and governance capabilities in nations that are on the edge and could either stabilize or fall into internal conflict with ungoverned spaces, prevents the circumstances that facilitate terrorist elements connecting with the population.[9]

5.   The United States Army identifies several *warfighting functions* that are, "a group of tasks and systems united by a common purpose that Commanders use to accomplish missions."[10] These warfighting functions, similar to Canada's operational functions, were envisioned in a traditional, linear battlefield. Since the end Cold War, the battlefield has become less contiguous and more complex and while the fundamentals are still applicable, both the warfighting and operational functions need to be reexamined in a new light. In 2014, the United States Army developed a seventh warfighting function, *engagement*.[11] The United States Army realized that the non-linear nature of the battlefield and the complexity of the security environment had implications from the tactical to the strategic levels and it needed an ability to operate in the human domain,[12] as well as see greater integration into *unified action*.[13] This concept of

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[7] John E. Teichert, "The Building Partner Capacity Imperative," *DISAM Journal of International Security Assistance Management* 31, no. 2 (August 2009): 116.

[8] Sean Zeigler and Meagan Smith, "Terrorism Before and During the War on Terror: A look at the numbers", War on the Rocks, 12 December 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/12/terrorism-war-terror-look-numbers/. In the study a country is designated to be experiencing civil war in any year if violence was ongoing in that year and if at least 1,000 battle-related deaths had taken place there prior to that time.

[9] Thomas K. Livingston, "Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance," *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, May 05, 2011), 1-2.

[10] United States, Department of the Army, *Unified Land Operations ADP 3-0*, (Washington D.C., October 2011), 13.

[11] United States, Department of the Army, *Army Functional Concept for Engagement TP 525-8-5*, (Washington D.C.: February 2014), iii.

[12] United States, *AFC for Engagement*, iii.

operating in the human domain and engaging with the population has been captured in joint doctrine by both the United States and the United Kingdom, while at the time of writing, the Canadian Army doctrine on Security Force Capacity Building, is still in draft, nor is there Canadian joint doctrine regarding the CAF role in stability or SFA operations, despite having spent well over a decade in Afghanistan.

6.   The CA must understand the human domain of warfare, specifically how to assess, influence, and deter the decisions of partner nation security elements, the governance structures, and the people.[14] The United States Army Functional Concept for Engagement identifies a number of assumptions, one of which is that "[b]uilding partners' capacity for security, governance, and rule of law will remain a fundamental U.S. national security strategy objective and support diplomatic, informational, military and economic measures."[15] This is one of the key solutions to the problem of how to exercise military engagement. These partnership activities help to generate capacity, a capacity within the partner nation to counter insurgencies, terrorism, proliferation, and other threats.[16] These SFA operations also enable understanding, whether it is through increased access by Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) elements, or simply if conflict changes to one requiring more direct support, SFA practitioners are in a better position to grasp the unfolding situation. This ensures that a now reactive strategy is built on greater understanding.[17] This understanding at the lowest levels enables better decision making at the highest levels by providing, "context, insight, and foresight."[18]

7.   Interacting and operating within the human domain is best achieved within a unified action context, led by governmental or international organizations and supported by the military.[19] This requirement is clear, based on the lessons learned through engagement across the Middle East over the last nearly two decades. However, the requirement for security when it comes to stabilization is critical. Security, as has been learned or re-learned, is not the end game, but it is the foundation on which governance and reconstruction can be accomplished.[20] The combination of security, reconstruction, and governance, enables partner nations to be responsible for their own security underpinned by the rule of law, improving the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the people. Ultimately, the population becomes more immune to terrorism, insurgency, and non-state actors.[21] There is no question that partner nation governments are more adept at solving internal issues than occidental militaries or government organizations for a number of reasons: understanding of language, geography, culture, human

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[13] United States, Department of the Army, *Unified Land Operations ARDP 3-0*, (Washington D.C., October 2017), 1-5. Unified action is the synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort.

[14] United States, *AFC for Engagement*, 11.

[15] *Ibid.*, 7.

[16] *Ibid.*, 12.

[17] United States, Department of the Air Force, *Irregular Warfare Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3*, (Washington D.C.: August 2007), 6.

[18] United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 4 – Understanding and Decision-Making*, 2nd Edition, (Swindon, Wiltshire: Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, December 2016), 2-1.

[19] United States, *AFC for Engagement*, iii.

[20] United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40 – Security and Stabilization: The Military Contribution*, 2nd Edition, (Swindon, Wiltshire: Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, n.d..), xvi.

[21] Michael McNerney et al., *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventative Tool*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2014), 10.

terrain, but most importantly the ability to gain useful information.[22] The ability to operate in the human domain and engage with not only the population, but also with partner nation security forces is critical.[23] The basis of this freedom of manoeuvre is relationships. When it comes to SFA relationships are absolutely the foundation on which the program is built and are critical to success.

8.   The US Joint Doctrine Note 1-13, *Security Force Assistance*, describes a number of characteristics of a partner nation security force that can be independently responsible for security operations following a SFA program. The Partner Nation security force must, above all else be competent, across all levels, from the individual to the ministerial. This competency, as described above, requires engagement from organizations across the government. Second to competency, the Partner Nation security force must be appropriately sized and resourced by the Partner Nation, which leads to its sustainability.[24] In order to achieve this competency and sustainability, an appropriate assessment of the Partner Nation security forces to ensure the right problems or factors are understood, and the follow on developmental objectives and tasks are established. The American, British, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand (ABCA) Armies Program SFCB Handbook recognizes four elements that need to be assessed during partner nation assessment: organizational, operational, environmental, and institutional. Together these elements provide a holistic perspective of capability, capacity, and proficiency levels in relation to security environment they must operate in.[25] The assessment is wide reaching and complex, but is essential to set the conditions for a successful SFA program.

9.   Based on some additional Rand research regarding SFA in complex environments, the two factors that played a particularly important role in weak and failing states were consistency and sustainability.[26] When it comes to consistency, it is related to not only funding or delivery, but policies and personnel. Without a sound understanding of the civil considerations, it is easy to make poor policy choices when approaching SFA efforts, whether when developing the structure of the Partner Nation security force or aligning with certain militias in an attempt to undergo Security Sector Reform. As previously identified, SFA efforts mean that the CA will operate in the human domain and rapport is essential, which can only be developed over time.[27] COL (US) Pat Work, Commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division was responsible for partnering with the Iraqi Security Forces during the counterattack at Mosul, Iraq, adds *assurance* and *anticipate* to the advise, assist, and accompany (3A) model that was implemented during the Counter-Islamic State Fight in Iraq. The key addition of assurance and anticipate embodies the aspects of confidence and trust that is built through consistency.[28]

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[22] John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xiv.

[23] United States, *Irregular Warfare*, 11.

[24] United States, Director Joint Force Development Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine Note 1-13 Security Force Assistance,* (Washington, D.C., April 2013), III-3.

[25] American, British, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Armies Program, *Security Force Capacity Building Handbook ABCA Publication 369*, Edition 2, (n.p.:1 July 2011), 3-1-3-3.

[26] Paul, *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts?*, 10.

[27] Paul, *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts?*, 10.

[28] United States, United States Military Academy. "MWI Podcast: The Battle for Mosul with COL Pat Work." *Modern War Institute*, 14 Feb 2018. https://mwi.usma.edu/mwi-podcast-battle-mosul-col-pat-work/

10.   UK and US doctrine both identify that there is conflict between a military's ability to conduct operations and SFA operations simultaneously. The fact that SFA operations require leadership at the Non-commissioned Officer and Officer level is compounded by the requirement for specialist skills.[29] Ultimately, the CA is drawing on the same resources for both operational tasks and SFA operations. There has been plenty of discussion about the suitability of CANSOFCOM units as opposed to CA elements to conduct SFA tasks. CANSOF units are well led, flexible, and adaptable, these elements thrive in the human domain, however the low density nature of these skill sets make the CA an attractive option, particularly for sustained SFA tasks with conventional partners.[30]

11.   Weak and failing states have weak governance structures,[31] which typically result in an increased rate of degeneration of equipment and training.[32] Failing to institutionalize a maintenance and training culture and focus efforts at all levels, but most importantly at the ministerial level, inevitably leads to equipment breaking down and degradation of the proficiency of units.[33] While the Partner Nation must bear some responsibility, ensuring that the appropriate equipment is donated to support the equipping of the Partner Nation security force must also be considered. If the Partner Nation does not have the funds or access to the appropriate logistic chains, no degree of culture will ensure that the SFA efforts can be sustained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12.   In order to formalize SFA operations within the CA, three recommendations for action are proposed:

    a.   <u>Joint Doctrine</u>. There is a requirement for the CAF to institutionalize the many lessons learned after more than a decade of fighting in Afghanistan and bring our method of operations in line with the current security environment and our allies. This doctrine needs to capture SFA operations at the operational level. Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3-4.2, *Security Sector Capacity Building* remains in draft;

    b.   <u>Interagency Cooperation</u>. The CA needs to integrate whole of government partners on a more institutional basis and at lower levels, to ensure long term support in an expeditionary context.

        i.   The purposeful use of permanent liaison officers at Canadian Joint Operations Command and the Strategic Joint Staff would be a first step to having whole of government partners to support deployed Task Force Commanders on a more consistent and meaningful basis; and

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[29] United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40*, 5-7; United States, Department of the Army. "Security Force Assistance Brigades." Last modified 17 Feb 2017. https://www.army.mil/standto/2017-02-17; Tyler Wentzell, "Security Forces Capacity Building: Local ownership versus human capital." *Canadian Military Journal* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 19-20.

[30] Livingston, "Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance," *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, 32-33.

[31] McNerney, *Assessing Security Cooperation*, 18.

[32] Paul, *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts?*, 11.

[33] *Ibid*.

ii. The interagency team needs to be exposed to CA operations and vice versa, both at the CA Command and Staff College and Canadian Forces College earlier than the executive/general officer/flag officer level. As more junior members of the whole of government team become integrated and develop an understanding of each other's capabilities, it is more likely that a more lasting partnership in the context of Canadian security will be established.

c. <u>SFA unique organization</u>. There is no requirement to establish SFA units with specialized insignia or designations, but the long training cycle that is currently not linked to ongoing operational tasks expends resources that could be best utilized supporting organizations preparing for SFA operations. Additionally, SFA tasks require experienced Officers, Senior NCOs, and specialist trainers which strip these elements from the CMBG in Canada, leaving a gap at the unit level if deployed on SFA tasks. This gap at the unit level, also impacts the ability of the CA to meet the Government of Canada requirements. Establishing a specific SFA organization, at the beginning of the Managed Readiness Plan (MRP) allows unit members to be cross-posted early and those not required for SFA tasks can be employed in other organizations in a useful capacity. For example, if an infantry battalion headquarters, a rifle company complete for security tasks, an additional rifle company leadership or two for SFA tasks, with both combat support company leadership and admin company augmented by external specialists and enablers (Combat Engineers, Artillery, Counter-IED, Health Support Services, additional second and third line maintenance for training and independent operations) to permit independent and technical SFA tasks would allow the remaining Non-Commissioned Members and junior leaders to augment the other infantry battalions across the brigade and establish those units at or near full strength. This also ensures that the CA can meet the requirements of the Government of Canada which may or may not be outlined in Strong, Secure, and Engaged.

CONCLUSION

13. Conducting SFA activities in weak and failing states is an extremely complex problem, but direction and guidance has been provided for the CAF to do so. The perspective that both state and non-state actors will leverage ungoverned spaces or civil strife to separate the population from the government in failed and failing states is a reality. This paradigm forms the foundation of the current security environment and engagement further upstream helps promote legitimacy of the appropriately designated and vetted incumbent government. There is a direct link between pre-emptive or preventative action to reduce the incidence of civil war by developing not only the Partner Nation security elements but government structures to create legitimacy among the population and the CA needs to modernize its approach in this context while balancing the ability to conduct warfighting operations.

14. In order to do this, the CA needs to be able to *engage* and operate within the *human domain*. This needs to be done through a unique and specialized unified action team, underscored by joint doctrine. After more than a decade of experience in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the occident should be well acquainted with the fact that the military, "gives us the power to conquer

foreign countries, but not the power to run them."[34] This requires support from governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure the aspects of reconstruction and governance can support the pillar of security.

15.   A formalized structure for SFA at the outset of the MRP ensures that the organization is directly focused on assisting partner nations' security forces, allowing regular force mechanized brigades (CMBG) to focus on warfighting skills better aligned with decisive operational tasks. The establishment of CA elements to specifically conduct SFA competes for already limited fiscal and personnel resources, but the resources can be identified at the outset and not ad-hoc in nature. The CA is handcuffed by a lengthy training cycle that is not directly connected to ongoing operational missions. SFA tasks require experienced Officers, Senior NCOs, and specialist trainers which strip these elements from the CMBG in Canada, maintaining a SFA element designated as part of the MRP, ensures that the Government of Canada has the flexibility to respond to with a variety of tools without stripping personnel and resources from warfighting organizations.

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[34] Benjamin H. Friedman, Harvey M. Sapolsky and Christopher Preble, "Learning the Right Lessons from Iraq," *Policy Analysis* No. 610, (Washington DC: The Cato Institute, February 13, 2008): 1.

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