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Simplicity: An Efficient Approach to Human Resources Management Issues

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SIMPLICITY:

AN EFFICIENT APPROACH TO HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ISSUES

AIM

1. The intent of this service paper is to align the objectives of Colombia's military institutions with the goals proposed as a country in terms of interoperability and training agreements with different countries and international organizations such as NATO. It aims to reevaluate the current promotion procedure in the Colombian Military Forces for officers who perform Staff College abroad. Evaluating this procedure could represent an advantage for the military institutions since it would not only increase shared knowledge and improve its doctrine but also benefit human resource management in the Colombian military institutions.

INTRODUCTION

2. In Colombia, the procedure for promoting Military Forces' personnel is regulated by decree 1428. This establishes that in order to be promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col), major-ranked officer personnel who have completed the time of service in the grade must complete the staff program at the "Escuela Superior de Guerra"¹ (ESDEGUE). This procedure applies to all officers to be promoted, including those who attended staff college in allied countries.

3. Colombia began cooperation with NATO in 2013 and became the first Latin American country to be a NATO partner in 2017. Considering the relevance of this agreement for the country, sending personnel to attend further education and training schools abroad has become essential to strengthening relations with allied nations and acquiring experience, knowledge, and sharing doctrine in terms of interoperability. Amongst the strategic objectives projected in the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITTP) between NATO and Colombia, issued in 2021, it is established that the country should "strengthen its capabilities and achieves interoperability to respond together with NATO to the challenges of cooperative security and crisis management."²

4. Additionally, cooperation between the Colombian defense education system and NATO educational structures and the alignment of these for developing capabilities and strengthening interoperability are outlined among the 11 objectives delineated in the ITTP³. This document analyzes why, according to the ESDEGUE, it is not possible to validate the staff program abroad. It also reviews the Colombian procedure with that of some allied or NATO countries present in the JCSP-49, providing different approaches to the same situation and proposing some recommendations to the Colombian Military Head Quarters.

¹ Sistema Único de Información Normativa Colombia, 'DECRETO 1428 DE 2007', Título III, Capítulo 1, Artículo 68., accessed 14 February 2023, <https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?id=1285439>.

² North Atlantic Council, 'INDIVIDUALLY TAILORED PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME (ITPP) BETWEEN NATO AND COLOMBIA', 2021.

³ Idle.

DISCUSSION

5. According to the document issued by the ESDEGUE in response to the Colombia Air Force's (COLAF) request to analyze this situation, there are three main reasons why the ESDEGUE argues that it is not possible to certify Command and Staff Programs attended abroad. Firstly, one of the purposes of the course in Colombia is to study and analyze the country's doctrine and ensure that all military personnel is familiar with it. Secondly, the opportunity to get to know colleagues from other branches, and build up a strong network in the joint environments will be lost. Lastly, the interaction between students from different regions helps to understand in depth Colombian culture and its complexity⁴.

6. One of the biggest challenges for the Military is the doctrinal standardization of operational procedures. A unique NATO feature is that despite national caveats, there is a doctrinal baseline for its operations. In which members and partner countries have aligned their military doctrine with that of NATO. This allows for greater adaptability and understanding by the troops of the planning and developing of operations under complex dynamics and in convulsive scenarios in different regions of the world. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that Colombia has been part of NATO-led operations, such as Ocean Shield⁵. Similarly, in the past few years, Colombia has sent personnel to attend different courses at the NATO School in Germany and the NATO Defense College in Italy⁶.

7. Colombia's most important military ally is the United States of America (USA). Since the early 1990s, the USA has influenced the training and development of Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP)s, especially in the COLAF⁷. This has led the country to update its doctrine significantly and participate actively in international exercises such as Maple Flag, Green Flag, and Red Flag,⁸ among others. The efforts made by the Colombian Military are a confirmation of the country's commitment to aligning its doctrine to that of USA and NATO standards. Therefore, it also shows a common doctrinal basis between Colombia and the allied nations and what is learned in terms of doctrine does not run counter to Colombian operational principles; on the contrary, this type of program enriches the knowledge of the officers who attend those programs.

8. It is irrefutable that attending staff college in the home country provides a valuable opportunity to build working relationships. However, when pursuing multinational integration and operational efforts in the region and with NATO, it becomes relevant to start building solid networks in terms of interoperability and trust between members of allied countries that could be established during staff programs abroad. It will provide a different perspective and background

⁴ Escuela Superior de Guerra Colombia, 'Respuesta Validación Cursos de Estado Mayor', 3 August 2022.

⁵ NATO, 'L'OTAN collabore avec la Colombie dans la lutte contre le terrorisme en mer', NATO, accessed 20 February 2023, http://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/news_166712.htm.

⁶ NATO, 'Relations with Colombia'.

⁷ Information provided by COLAF's International Affairs Office

⁸ Fuerza Aérea Colombiana Colombia, 'Interoperabilidad, una capacidad de la Fuerza con valor exponencial', Fuerza Aérea Colombiana, accessed 20 February 2023, <http://www.fac.mil.co/es/editorial-comandante-fac/interoperabilidad-una-capacidad-de-la-fuerza-con-valor-exponencial>.

to the officers who attend those programs. It is important to mention that performing staff college abroad does not exclude sharing the experience and the knowledge with colleges in Colombia.

9. It is essential to analyze different approaches and create appropriate scenarios in which it is possible to share other points of view. Where knowledge exchange is carried out practically and efficiently, allowing enriching the doctrinal and operational knowledge of the members of the military institutions. The efforts made by the country to be interoperable in the region and with NATO can not only be reflected in terms of capabilities and compatible technology. Thus, interoperability can also be a reflection of human resources management and mutual understanding of the members that may come to form a coalition in which Colombia can participate and where speaking the language of interoperability is a requirement.

10. A valuable aspect provided by doing staff programs abroad is the opportunity to get to know different approaches to similar situations. Where cultural and historical background plays a crucial role in defining the problem-solving process of every individual. In this sense, and understanding the operational particularities of each country. It is helpful to review the procedures established by each nation regarding the processes through which its personnel must go through in terms of professionalization and promotion, underpinning concepts such as efficiency and practicality.

11. The first example is Canada. The country issued the Canadian Forces Military Equivalencies Program to avoid redundancy and duplicity in education and training processes. In this document, the CAF formally recognizes prior learning, i.e., training or education received by its members. Regarding staff programs performed overseas, the requirements and criteria to acknowledge whether or not this qualification is current or valid are defined in the Canadian Forces Individual Training and Education System (CFITES) and should have input and approval from the Canadian Forces College (CFC)⁹.

12. The members of the US ARMY are not required to attend another staff program if they attend Sister-Service or School of other Nation (SoN) Staff Colleges. According to the Army Competitive Category (ACC) Intermediate Level Education (ILE) Selection Board Military Personnel (MILPER) Message, if officers are accepted into a Sister Service or SoN, they are required to attend a three-week distance learning ILE preparatory course prior to attendance. During the course, officers receive baseline training from the US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) on national strategy, doctrine, operational planning, and military leadership. This distance learning course is the only additional training requirement for officers attending staff college overseas¹⁰.

⁹ National Defence Canada, 'DAOD 5031-1, Canadian Forces Military Equivalencies Program', policies, 13 December 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5031/5031-1-canadian-forces-military-equivalencies-program.html>.

¹⁰ United States Army Human Resources Command, 'MILPER MESSAGE 23-039: FY 2023 Army Competitive Category (ACC) Intermediate Level Education (ILE) Selection Board and Process for Submitting ILE Resident Attendance Preferences', 26 January 2023.

13. Different perspectives can be seen in Europe depending on the country. However, the practicality of its procedures can be understood in the context of the operational dynamics of its Military. The British Military adopts different promotion criteria for its three different services, but the commonality is that attending Intermediate Command Staff Course (ICSC) is on promotion to Major (Army), Squadron Leader (Royal Airforce), and Lieutenant Commander (Royal Navy), for all service members, rather than being a course that is needed to promote. Similarly, on promotion to Lieutenant Colonel (Army), Wing Commander (Royal Airforce), and Commander (Royal Navy), service members are selected to attend Advanced Command and Staff Course (ACSC). Attendance at overseas staff courses is counted as an equivalent Advanced Staff Training (AST) course, and so does not require the service person to attend the UK course as well¹¹.

14. In Germany, training and education are approached differently, particularly concerning staff and leadership programs. According to the Soldier's Career Ordinance, in order to be promoted to Major, German officers typically attend Staff College. In the later stages of one's career, there is the possibility of re-attending Staff College for an additional two years under the terms of best selection in order to be eligible for promotion to Colonel or General¹². Alternately, these courses may be taken abroad; however, they are not equivalent to the national programs, and promotion opportunities are therefore not identical but significantly greater than for officers without corresponding courses. Officers are assigned to operational and strategic levels upon completion of the second program.

15. For its part, Australia is a country that highly values working and training with its allies. Being part of the Five Eyes (FVEY) Alliance, a NATO partner, and being actively engaged in the Pacific region provides Australia access to different staff programs worldwide. The country applies a practical approach that allows it to manage human resources following the responsibilities acquired with the allied nations. For officers, the staff program is required for promotion. However, taking the course in their home country is not mandatory. Thus, Australia conducts a competitive and detailed process for selecting officers attending these international programs. Subsequently, officers selected for training abroad do not have to take any previous or subsequent validation to meet the requirements for promotion¹³.

16. A regional perspective is Mexico, with whom Colombia maintains a close relationship in order to face common threats and with whom cultural similarities are shared. In 2019, the Mexican Navy issued the document "Directiva del Estado Mayor de la Armada" with the purpose of meeting the needs of personnel. The document establishes that officers who have completed the staff program abroad must revalidate their credentials at the "Centro de Estudios Superiores Navales" (CESNAV) to obtain the official accreditation of the Mexican Staff Program. As a result, personnel who have completed this program abroad will only be required to be part of the Mexican General

¹¹ Information provided by Lieutenant Colonel Edward Vickers, International Student JCSP-49, United Kingdom.

¹² 'Gesetz Über Die Rechtsstellung Der Soldaten', 30 May 2005, <https://www.global-regulation.com/translation/germany/389434/law-on-the-legal-status-of-soldiers.html>.

¹³ Information provided by Squadron Leader Mark Wilson, International Student JCSP-49, Australia.

Staff College during the operational planning process and wargames phases, having to perform a six-month virtual course previously¹⁴ focused on those subjects.

17. Readiness is an important aspect to consider in the Colombian process. Currently, according to the procedure established in the country, officers performing the staff course abroad spend two years outside of institutional operational duties, one year abroad and another year at ESDEGUE. In terms of time, reevaluating the Colombian process would represent a reduction in training and education times, which could increase personnel's operational readiness. In addition, doing so would represent a better use of economic resources in terms of education and training. Not to mention the benefits of human resource management that it would represent for the military institutions and their members.

CONCLUSIONS

18. A common factor across the different countries is the simplicity and efficiency of human resources management procedures. Practicality is a characteristic defined by each country's operational dynamics and requirements. It is worth revising existing procedures to avoid duplicity in training and education. A more practical and efficient approach will allow Colombia's Military Forces to face contemporary challenges more dynamically, responding adequately to modern warfare's internal and external challenges.

19. Addressing the current process through a more practical lens would provide better career development, enhancing human resources management, training and education processes. In this document, it is possible to recognize different approaches that could be implemented or integrated into the Colombian process evaluation. Exploring new methodologies in which ESDEGUE can continue to contribute knowledge in doctrine and operational planning could provide more creative and practical solutions to different situations where efficiency is a premise in human resources management.

20. In terms of interoperability, recognizing that Colombia's doctrine is aligned with one of the allied countries, particularly NATO, will establish a framework in which the country can engage more proactively in international scenarios, contributing to its extensive operational experience and establishing a trusting networking across the allied nations. In the past decades, the Colombian Military has been making great efforts to build strong relations with allied countries. Those relations are based not only on similar doctrinal concepts but also on shared principles and values that allow the development of operations to face different transnational threats.

21. The experience acquired overseas provides a fresh perspective for those who attend programs abroad. Similarly, it expands the toolkit to address different situations where leadership and command are required to accomplish the mission. Attending command and staff programs

¹⁴ Estado Mayor General de la Armada Mexico, 'Directiva Del Estado Mayor General de La Armada de Mexico (Seccion Primera) 0060/19', 12 January 2019.

abroad does not mean moving away from Colombian culture. On the contrary, this allows the person to evolve and perceive the culture in a different way. Thus, paving the way to self-criticism and reflection features needed to improve and grow with the demands of each military institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

22. It is worth it to update the processes currently carried out in the Colombian Military Forces regarding human resource management. Acknowledging and meeting the country's operational dynamics efficiently and practically is essential to fulfilling Colombian society's expectations. The US Army and the Mexican Navy's approaches could help frame different proposals in which the ESDEGUE remains involved in the process of learning and professionalization of Colombian officers and still meet the needs in terms of readiness and resources management.

23. The Colombian Military Forces, through the ESDEGUE, must approve the staff programs carried out abroad, and provide the credential for promotion to the officers who attend those programs without having to attend the Colombian Staff Program.

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