

# NEWS FROM THE FRONT

January 2018

## Leveraging the Interagency



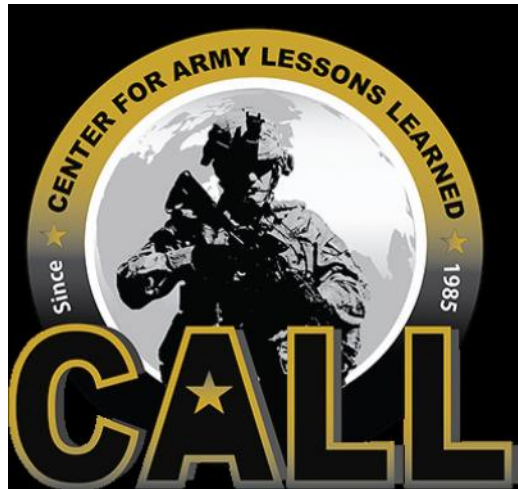
### Insights from the U.S. Department of State Leadership

Version 2

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# **News from the Front: Leveraging the Interagency Insights from the U.S. Department of State Leadership**

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**Leveraging the Interagency  
Insights from the U.S. Department of State Leaders**

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***Contributing authors’ viewpoints and opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.***

## Introduction

This Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) NEWS FROM THE FRONT (NFTF) provides insights, informed perspectives based on experiences, and highlights lessons and best practices provided by seasoned Department of State (DOS) personnel. The intent is to inform Army and Department of Defense (DOD) personnel at the echelons above brigade (EAB) level about valued skills that DOS personnel bring to the fight, inspire additional exploration and discussion about similarities and differences between the two Departments, and help build a stronger Interagency partnership.

This NFTF contains a discussion on U.S. security strategy and the need to rebalance the national security policy. It includes two original articles pertaining to counterterrorism -- counterterrorism and how the U.S. military needs to develop interagency leaders, capable of performing and succeeding in the complex whole of government environment and the events surrounding the MRTA takeover of the Japanese Ambassador's residence and lessons learned by both the DOS and DOD. It also contains articles that provide insights on things that Foreign Service officers need to know when they're working with the US military, a brief history of the Political Advisor (POLAD), and experiences and insights as the POLAD to US Army South.

The U.S. military recognizes the importance of the Interagency and publishes guidance on working with the Interagency. Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, provides current doctrine for conducting joint, interagency, and multinational planning activities across the full range of military operations. JP 5-0 forms the foundation of joint warfighting doctrine, builds the roadmap for the U.S. military to operate as a joint team, and embraces the "one team, one fight" paradigm in which the DOS is an equal partner during operations and activities overseas. Joint Publications 3-08 and 3-33 also give detailed guidance on working with Interagency organizations. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0 provides principles for successful mission command: *building cohesive teams* through mutual trust and creating shared understanding. While the publications named above are not an exhaustive list of documents that drive the Army to work closely with the DOS, they provide guidelines and examples of both why and how the Army works with the DOS.

## **Rebalancing National Security Policy after Afghanistan and Iraq**

***It is time to educate the American people about national security fundamentals, so we can conduct a meaningful reassessment of our current strategy.***

Thomas E. McNamara

*Ambassador. Thomas McNamara provides a historical perspective of the US security strategy and discusses the need to rebalance the national security policy, principles for that strategy, the balance between diplomacy and use of force, and concludes with a cautionary observation.*

*First published in the Foreign Service Journal, October 2013*

*This redacted article is adapted from his May 23 address to the Foreign Affairs Retirees Association of Northern Virginia.*

*From 2006-09 Ambassador McNamara was Program Manager for the Information Sharing Environment, a senior position established by the 2004 Intelligence Reform Act. Reporting to the President, the Congress, and Director of National Intelligence, he advanced capacity for “connecting the dots” and transforming all levels of government information management to bring government into the 21st C. information age.*

*Amb. McNamara left government in the late 1990s, and returned after 9/11 at the request of the Secretary of State to be his Senior Advisor on terrorism and homeland security. He has served as Assistant Secretary of State, Ambassador to Colombia, Special Assistant to the President, Ambassador for Counter Terrorism, Special Negotiator for Panama, and other senior positions. From 1998 to 2001 he was President and CEO of the Americas Society and Council of the Americas in New York.*

*A career diplomat with postings in Colombia, Russia, Congo, and France, his expertise in politico-military issues, include terrorism; arms control; non-proliferation; regional security. His extensive writings on international security have appeared in Washington Post, NY Times, Los Angeles Times, Miami Herald, and in academic books and publications. He has been interviewed on PBS’s News Hour, CNN, NPR, BBC and other national and international news media.*

*He is currently Adjunct Professor in the Elliott School of International Affairs at The George Washington University and Manhattan College, and President of the Diplomacy Center Foundation, a private partner of the Department of State, building the nation’s first ever museum and educational Center completely devoted to American diplomacy. Amb. McNamara is the third recipient of the National Intelligence Distinguished Public Service Medal. His other awards include the State Department’s Distinguished Service Medal, and La Gran Cruz de Boyaca - Colombia’s highest civilian honor.*

Over the past 500 years, every major war has ended with the combatant powers reassessing their interests, relationships and power, then crafting new strategies to guide policy in the postwar world. Not all these reassessments, however, produce coherent, consistent strategies. Since 1898 the United States has fought five major conflicts, and emerged from two of them with viable strategies: the Spanish-American War and World War II. After two others—World War I and the Cold War—we failed to produce viable strategies. The fifth conflict, which I call the Post-9/11 Wars, is ending now, and we face the challenge of another assessment. Unfortunately, we seem ill-prepared for the challenge. One example symbolizes the shortsightedness that hobbles our current politics and thinking. In February 2011 the House Appropriations Committee decided that only Defense, Veteran Affairs and Homeland Security

constituted “the national security budget,” where it would allow no cuts. It then cut the budgets of the foreign affairs agencies. This decision prevails in the House today. Such choices prove the wisdom of that great strategic thinker, Pogo, who observed: “We have met the enemy, and he is us.”

### **What Went Wrong?**

After a good start by President George H.W. Bush, we decided “it’s the economy, stupid,” and focused inward. As a result, we prospered domestically, but with no viable strategy; and we were tentative and inconsistent internationally. Overly involved in Somalia, we departed ignominiously. We hesitated over NATO expansion, and in strategically important Yugoslavia, and then stood and watched the Rwandan genocide. In Haiti, we got it right—on our second try.

We were not alone in our hesitancy. Our European allies, older and supposedly wiser, obsessed over the European Union and dismantled their militaries. Also lacking a strategy, they badly fumbled the Balkan and Caucasus crises in their own backyard. These mistakes cost, as power ebbed away.

After 9/11 a “pendulum swing” (to which Americans are susceptible) made us overconfident and impulsive. We adopted another false slogan, “global war on terror.” President Bush 43 said history offered no guidance for this unique, new, global threat—which was neither unique nor global.

We enjoyed initial success against the Taliban and al-Qaida, but without a strategic vision, mission creep led to a decade-long attempt to restructure Afghan society—ignoring the country’s history, culture and politics, as well as South Asian power relationships. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s declaration that “The mission determines the alliance; the alliance does not determine the mission” epitomized the hubris of the time.

Without finishing Afghanistan, or pausing to think, we sought another monster to destroy and started a second land war in the region. The administration belittled its partners’ concerns about Iraq, and offered widely-differing explanations and objectives for the intervention, including the belief that it could transform the Middle East.

Because the two wars competed for scarce resources, neither got enough. Both campaigns were conducted off-budget, sapping our economic strength. These expensive, inconclusive conflicts have contributed mightily to our economic, political and military deficiencies today.

“Leaders who cannot explain strategy, or mistake tactical success for strategic strength, fail in an essential duty.”

We suffered from strategic astigmatism by following slogans, not coherent strategy.

It is time for a reassessment, and time to educate the American people in national security fundamentals. Leaders who cannot explain strategy, or mistake tactical success for strategic strength, fail in an essential duty.

Both in the White House and in Congress, leaders of both parties have been guilty of this failure. By contrast with the aftermath of World War II, they have neither debated national

strategy nor drawn the public into a discussion of it. Instead, our leaders are mired in petty, partisan bickering over inconsequential matters. As a result, national misconceptions about the respective roles of foreign policy and military policy cloud our thinking, distort our worldview and overstate our ability to change that world.

### **Rebalancing the Elements: Foreign Policy**

Let's begin with foreign policy, and its means of implementation, diplomacy. The House Appropriations Committee's benighted and destructive deprecation of foreign policy is symptomatic of a distorted view of this central pillar of national security. Congress's disregard for diplomacy and fascination with force undermine national security.

The attitude reflects recent American impatience with the complexities of foreign policy, and a desire for simple, tough-guy quick fixes. Military action tends to evoke positive popular and congressional responses, at least initially. Yet the use of force is never quick, simple or cost-free.

To rebalance strategy, our leaders must revalue foreign policy. Since Richard Nixon, we have not had an articulate president explain the strategic role of foreign policy to the American people. President George H.W. Bush understood and valued diplomacy, but could not articulate "the vision thing." His successors neither articulated it nor understood it. This has left the public adrift and our policy weak.

"To rebalance strategy, our leaders must revalue foreign policy."

Today we again face protracted struggles, not unlike the Cold War. We can start a national discussion by recalling three Cold War lessons, which largely explain our success in that 45-year effort, as well as our failures in the two decades since.

- We succeeded primarily through vigorous diplomacy, backed (not led) by a strong, properly structured military force.
- We were strongest when we attracted, not demanded, the support of our allies and partners. As part of our outreach, we accommodated their interests and viewpoints.
- We cultivated our economic, political, cultural and ideological power, while neither ignoring nor exaggerating military power. The Cold War is an excellent example of how complex power levers, manipulated wisely, can reduce the need for force, and succeed efficiently and effectively.

### **The Shield and the Sword**

Seventy years ago, during World War II, Walter Lippmann wrote a book, *Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*. As the title suggests, the Shield, foreign policy, comes first and, when properly used, reduces the need to employ the Sword, military force. The role of foreign policy in peacetime is to hold up the Shield and to guide the Sword. Properly balanced, the two work symbiotically.

No recent president has used the bully pulpit to proclaim this central tenet. Our leaders are not telling the public that the Shield is the most cost-effective method to defend the republic, and that the Sword backs up our policies. We rightly support our military, yet Congress denigrates diplomacy and beggars foreign policy through budget cuts. Its persistent and consistent message to the public is this: military force counts; diplomacy is a waste of money. Foreign policy and diplomats are like football linemen—noticed only for mistakes. The public does not understand that these linemen build and maintain the alliances and coalitions, increasing the effectiveness of the Sword. In ordinary times, diplomats are the peacekeepers. Unfortunately, diplomacy is largely conducted overseas and out of sight. It has a weak constituency compared to the huge military-industrial complex that dominates our Congress and blinds it to military limitations. There is neither a diplomatic-industrial complex, nor a Chamber of Diplomacy supporting foreign policy.

After Benghazi, diplomacy has gotten more recognition, but for the wrong reasons. Our major

“Ignorance of the role of foreign policy is a strategic weakness.”

problem is not bad talking points, or defending our embassies. Ignorance of the role of foreign policy is a strategic weakness. That is the problem we need to focus on, not finding scapegoats for the tragedy in Benghazi.

In our approach we differ from our British allies, who long ago learned that the Shield is their first and best defense, and is almost always more efficient and effective than the Sword. Such an understanding is the way to long-term success.

### **Rebalancing the Elements: The Military**

Far from disparaging military power, I welcome it. After all, a foreign policy unsupported by adequate military power is sterile and unsuccessful. At the same time, military force not guided by a coherent foreign policy is reckless and destructive.

Because we have forgotten that truth, we suffer from a form of national narcissism; we have fallen in love with our own military might. We have been excessively militaristic since 9/11. Our military leaders understand the problem and are not infatuated with force. Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has flatly declared that “U.S. foreign policy is still too dominated by the military.” He amended the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine with Mullen’s Corollary: We will commit military force “only if and when the other instruments of national power are ready to engage, as well.”

Along the same lines, former Secretary of Defense Bob Gates said specifically that military operations should be “subordinated to measures aimed at promoting better governance, economic programs that spur development, and efforts to address the grievances among the discontented.” That sounds strikingly like what diplomats do every day.

An intensive national debate established a balanced strategy after World War II. The wisdom of those “present at the creation” laid the foundation for successes by eight presidents, who adopted and adapted the strategy of containment. In his book, Lippmann defined a correct, effective foreign policy based on a principle we seem to have forgotten:



*“In foreign relations, as in all other relations, a policy has been formed only when commitments and power have been brought into balance. ... [T]he nation must maintain its objectives and its power in equilibrium, its purposes within its means and its means equal to its purposes. Its commitments related to its resources and its resources adequate to its commitments. ... [Without this principle] it is impossible to think at all about foreign affairs.”*

Lippmann’s admonition remains valid 70 years later. Our policies today are in disequilibrium. The world has changed.

It is less dangerous, but also more complicated, than it was during the Cold War. We now risk suffering a thousand cuts, not one massive strike.

But instead of aligning our military structures, doctrines and missions to reflect this understanding, we have abused and exhausted our military personnel and equipment. Our armed forces always salute and say “can do,” even when they never should have been asked. Lacking strategic priorities, America has overused the Sword, so that its blade is now chipped and dulled.

And these are only the political-military policies. Industrial, financial, trade, environmental, refugees, human rights and nonproliferation policy all need strategic prioritization. Strategy is about priorities, yet our pendulum swings demonstrate we have not established priorities. Tactics rule when strategy is uncertain, and the nation is weakened.

Today presents the best opportunity since 1993 to rebalance national security. Fortunately, the beginnings of that process are already visible. President Barack Obama and our military leaders deserve credit for recognizing the need to reassess, rebuild at home and revivify alliances and partnerships. A national discussion of national security strategy is the next step.

### **Toward a Post-9/11 National Security Strategy**

Here are some principles for that strategy:

- Domestic strength is absolutely fundamental. Our strongest assets are our economy, society, culture, political institutions and democratic ideology. Let us rebuild these first, without partisanship.
- The essence of strategy is to balance commitments with capabilities by setting priorities that recognize our strengths and limitations. Our reach should exceed our grasp only in our aspirations, never in our actions.
- We should restructure our military and diplomatic resources so each plays its proper role. Flexibility, agility and imagination are critical. In peacetime, the Shield guides the Sword, which is used only when the Shield is insufficient.
- We should strengthen alliances, partnerships, international organizations and relations with new, emerging powers. No great nation has remained great, except as the leader of a powerful coalition.

- We should work hard, but patiently, to promote international stability, the rule of law and respect for liberty, and should give a high priority to transnational issues. At the same time, however, we must understand and accept that most nations' interests are different from ours.
- Regional Issues
- Our Asia-Pacific "pivot" should make clear our desire that no one nation dominate the region.
- With that in mind, we should maintain our Asian-Pacific regional alliances and presence, and strengthen partnerships. These threaten no one, but they enhance regional stability, as they did in Europe during the Cold War.
- We cannot and should not "contain" China, but should pursue mutually beneficial cooperation and encourage Beijing to assume a stabilizing role as a major power.
- We should continue to support NATO and a revitalized European Union, whose members should employ active leadership in Europe and well beyond. Promoting democracy and development in Eastern Europe continues an important objective, but must be balanced with mutually beneficial relations with Russia—even as Russian democracy fails.
- We should encourage modern, pluralist societies in Africa, the Middle East and throughout the Muslim world, discouraging radical ideologies that espouse rigid, militant intolerance. But we should actively oppose only regimes that are actively hostile to us.
- In our Western Hemisphere neighborhood, democratic stability with economic and social development must be our focus, especially in Mexico, Brazil and the Caribbean. A hemisphere-wide free trade agreement should be a cornerstone strategic objective.

### **Bucking the Trend**

Let me end as I began, on a historical note—a cautionary observation, not a prediction. For the past 500 years, the world's leading power at the turn of each century has lost that position within the first 30 to 50 years of the new century. If we are to buck that historical trend, we will need to be much smarter and more agile than we have been recently.

Fortunately, we have managed that feat before. And we can do so again.

## Interagency Leadership

Mark Thompson

*Mr. Mark Thompson speaks on matters relating to counterterrorism and how the U.S. military needs to develop interagency leaders, capable of performing and succeeding in the complex whole of government environment.*

*This article is adapted from his June 9, 2015 address to the Richmond Marines.*

*Mr. Thompson joined the State Department as a U.S. Marine in 1996, transitioned to the Civil Service in 1998, and assumed the position as the Deputy Coordinator for Operations in the Bureau of Counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of State in 2006. In that capacity, he advised senior leadership on operational counterterrorism matters and ensured that the United States could rapidly respond to global terrorism crises. Mr. Thompson directed the coordination of policy and operational proposals; plans for crisis response during significant international events; collaborated with USG and international partners to develop technologies for countering terrorism; developed and conducted overseas counterterrorism exercises; and lead the Foreign Emergency Support Team (FEST). Mr. Thompson retired from the U.S. Department of State in June 2016.*

My remarks will be brief, on matters relating to counterterrorism and how the U.S. military needs to develop interagency leaders, capable of performing and succeeding in the complex whole of government environment. There are plenty of terrorism experts out there, and I do not count myself among them. However, I'd like to overlay my experiences with some events over the years to perhaps provide context to where we are today.

Looking back through the "20/20" prism of history, the many hostages held, and in some cases murdered by Hezbollah in the 80's (including LTCOL Rich Higgins) along with the attacks at Khobar towers in 1996, the twin East Africa embassy attacks in 1998 and the USS Cole in 2000, one could conclude we were at war with radical Islam long before September 11, 2001.

Today we still face an enemy who seeks to destroy us, and our way of life. The successes we have had in defeating that threat have been borne out of interagency teams and host governments who embraced a holistic and democratic approach. Unlike the past when a single Service or Department would fill a specific role, as was our experience in WWII when the "team" was the Marine Corps and the Navy or the Army and the Army Air Corps, today we join with our teammates from many branches of our government to defeat an amorphous foe in a very long conflict. Without this team focus we fail.

I'm sure many of you have your own examples of success to draw upon. I'd like to use a couple of my own to highlight the evolution of the nation's response and the contribution that leadership played in those successes. The first example is in the Philippines. As many of you recall, we have a long and storied history in the Philippines. We pulled out of Clark [Air Force Base] and Subic [Bay, Naval Base] in 1992 after deciding our peace dividend no longer required

our continued presence. Over the next decade the communist-inspired New People's Army threat was replaced by the Abu Sayyaf Group, an aspirational offshoot of Al Qaida in the southern Mindanao Region. They chose a series of hostage takings as their prime source of funding and intimidation. That's what ultimately focused our government's attention back to the Philippines. When the Burnham missionary family was taken in June 2001, and their plight was broadcast in November of that year on CBS, our government was compelled to reengage in the region. Eventually, but not overnight, we built a comprehensive strategy to provide the Philippines with the capacity to fight back. It was not military-centric, but the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines was a major component. Like many JSOTF's [Joint Special Operations Task Force] it incorporated non-military tools, such as law enforcement, economic growth and overall good governance. Over time, the PACOM [U.S. Pacific Command] commander, the IC [Intelligence Community], the FBI's [Federal Bureau of Investigation] LEGATT [Legal Attaché] and the Ambassador were collectively making substantial inroads in helping the Filipinos develop the capacity to defend their own nation from within.

"JSOTF Philippines incorporated non-military tools, such as law enforcement, economic growth and overall good governance."

The second example is Colombia. The FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia], ELN [National Liberation Army of Colombia], and M-19 [19th of April Movement] represented a significant national -- as well as regional threat in Latin America. When I first arrived there in 1993 as a Marine involved in counterdrug, riverine operations, the nation was still recovering from horrific attacks from a combination of drug cartels and terrorist groups. At one point their Supreme Court was attacked, and nearly half the justices murdered. Like the Philippines, the impetus for our heavier involvement, along with the drug trade, was hostage taking. In February 2003, a contracted single-engine surveillance aircraft crashed after suffering engine failure. All five aboard survived due to some superb airmanship. However, American Pilot Tom Janis and a Colombian NCO [Non-Commissioned Officer] were murdered on the spot. Pilot Tom Howes, and technicians Keith Stansell and Marc Gonsalves were taken by the FARC within minutes of their crash. Their plight lasted nearly 5 ½ years until the Colombians, using very creative tactics, rescued the hostages in July 2008 without firing a shot. The years leading up to their rescue were marked by a significant U.S. government investment via Plan Colombia and courageous Colombian political and military leadership. This was coupled with a full court press degrading the FARC that ultimately caused the FARC leaders to become more desperate while compromising their operational security -- which led to the daring rescue.

Both the Philippines and Colombia represent, in my view, successes in progress, and are "on course; on glide slope." They have uniquely different governments and cultures, but both have learned to work more effectively as interagency teams within their own governments rather than as separate entities, in part due to our example and assistance.

“We succeed as a team and fail when our efforts are parochial.”

In our own government – without exception – we succeed as a team and fail when our efforts are parochial. This teamwork requires interagency leadership, which like all leadership – is easily identifiable when you see it, but harder to define. With that said, let me take a stab at it.

An interagency leader must understand that the goal must be defined and understood by all involved – absent any unique jargon. Credit, and the corresponding accouterments of success, must be secondary to building cohesion and unity of purpose. An interagency leader must have a firm appreciation of the strengths, weakness and culture of the elements at his disposal. Interagency leaders rarely command, in the literal sense, rather they build a strong consensus – which leads to unity of effort and an intense rapport and trust amongst the various team members. Interagency leaders are not always the person designated to lead, but are the ones able to influence others to coalesce. Identifying and developing such leaders is the paramount challenge facing our CT fight today.

So where does the military fit into this interagency enterprise? One could assert that my description of an interagency leader is not too far adrift from a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) commander, a JTF commander, or JSOTF commander. Senior military leaders should have interagency experience, the academic background, and the skills to be team players while not compromising their own standards or being condescending in the process. Each of them, molded by their Service’s core values – and all of the Services embrace of integrity, courage (moral and physical), honesty, commitment, and respect.

“Senior military leaders should have interagency experience, the academic background, and the skills to be team players while not compromising their own standards or being condescending in the process.”

Our country desperately needs this kind of leadership, whether in the counterterrorism fight or in the many other challenges our nation faces. Military leadership is an essential piece of the many interagency, intergovernmental teams that are key in addressing our country’s current and future challenges. This kind of leadership can serve to illuminate objectives; focus efforts; synchronize the activities and goals of the disparate departments, agencies, and bureaus; and provide grounding and drive to various interagency teams that might otherwise devolve into the equivalent of an ineffective, single-cell, bureaucratic amoeba.

As we have all learned, actions speak much louder than words. The impression leaders make on others, as current service members or veterans, has an impact. The impact that a military leader can have on an interagency team, while difficult to quantify, can be significant. Yet the bottom line is that military leadership is essential. Not only can a military leader act as the rudder, he or she must also to act as the keel, the foundation of a multi-faceted organization. Additionally, I would encourage military leadership to rededicate themselves to the military’s

core values and by doing so inspire others outside the military to build young leaders. Our military still enjoys the respect of our nation. We should capitalize on that strong support in our day-to-day interactions. In the end, we are ultimately judged by what we hold most dear in our lives, and continuing to live our lives in ways that stand out as examples does just that.

## **MRTA Takeover of the Japanese Ambassador's Residence in Lima, Peru, 17 December 1996**

David Passage

*Ambassador David Passage describes the events surrounding the MRTA takeover of the Japanese Ambassador's residence and lessons learned by both the DOS and DOD in responding to that event, the importance the views of US Embassy personnel and the US Ambassador on the ground/on-site when making critical policy decisions, and why their views are of critical importance.*

November 4, 2016

*Ambassador David Passage, a retired career Foreign Service Officer, was director of Andean Affairs in the State Department's Latin American bureau at the time of the Lima hostage crisis. He previously served on the NSC under President George H.W. Bush and as Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command, at MacDill AFB, FL.*

Around 8:30pm on the night of 17 December 1996, a group of 14 or so guerrillas from the MRTA (*Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru*, one of two significant insurgent groups fighting the Peruvian government) seized the Japanese Ambassador's Residence in Lima, Peru during a reception in honor of Japanese Emperor Akihito's 63rd birthday. Trapped in the Residence were virtually the top echelon of Peruvian government and society as well as foreign ambassadors and other diplomats -- more than 600 in all. It quickly became clear that the event had the potential to become a long-term hostage situation since the MRTA guerrillas made a series of demands which the Peruvian Government was not prepared to accept, and the consequence was that the guerrillas themselves also became, in effect, trapped as hostages. This commentary is not intended to be a definitive recounting of that event, of which much has been written and is readily available to readers. Instead, it deals with the USG response, in particular, (a) from U.S. military forces tasked with being prepared to engage in a hostage rescue effort or to offer assistance to Peruvian forces to do the same; (b) the State Department's role in coordinating the USG response, whatever it might be; and (c) the role of the U.S. Embassy in Lima -- and specifically that of the U.S. Ambassador. My purpose is to emphasize the importance of taking into account the views of U.S. Embassy personnel, and, in particular, the U.S. Ambassador on the ground/on-site when making critical policy decisions, and to illustrate why their views are of critical importance.

Because I know the key individuals on the U.S. side, military and civilian, and consider them both personal and professional friends, I'm not going to identify them by name, but, rather, by institution.

Within an hour of the takeover of the Japanese Ambassador's Residence, the State Department Operations Center, White House Situation Room, NMCC [National Military Command Center], and SOUTHCOM's [U.S. Southern Command] operations center were all informed about the

event, as were, very quickly thereafter, SOCOM [U.S. Special Operations Command] and JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command]. Several American diplomats were initially among the hostages although the American Ambassador had left moments before. Within hours, the remaining Americans were released, perhaps because the MRTA feared a U.S. military response. Within the next several weeks, most of the remaining hostages were also freed, including all female hostages, with only about 80 remaining prisoners of the guerrillas. The U.S. Embassy immediately began closely monitoring the situation, trying to ascertain through official and unofficial contacts what the Peruvian Government intended to do. In consultation with the Embassy, the State Department-led interagency “Foreign Emergency Support Team” deployed to Lima in its own specially-equipped aircraft, the FEST mission being to assist embassies and, through them, foreign governments in this sort of crisis. SOUTHCOM asked that JSOC prepare to deploy a U.S. “national response team” which could be tasked with conducting a hostage rescue or assisting and working with the Peruvian security forces to do the same. This team also launched within hours, with both FEST [Foreign Emergency Support Team] and JSOC teams rendezvousing at Howard AFB, Panama, awaiting further guidance. The JSOC Commander flew directly into Lima in a smaller aircraft to assess the situation, in order to offer a tactical view of what the U.S. might do to help.

In this tense situation, with considerable potential for actions which could have complicated resolution of the crisis, and in which the Peruvian government had responsibility for actions on its territory, the U.S. response was not fully coordinated. The U.S. Ambassador gave approval **only** for the FEST team to enter the country -- not for further U.S. military personnel. Informed of the JSOC commander’s unexpected arrival, the U.S. Ambassador instructed that he come immediately to the Embassy to meet with the Ambassador, and, after a brief conversation, directed that he and those with him depart Lima and return to Howard or the U.S. as soon as feasible – which they did.

With the release of U.S. Embassy personnel seized during the Japanese Residence takeover, the rationale for a U.S. military response to rescue Americans disappeared. However, over the following four months, the U.S. provided highly valuable specialized equipment and limited training to Peru’s security forces -- but the clear understanding from Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori was that if military action were to be taken to resolve the crisis, it would be only by Peruvian forces. Fujimori initially worked various channels, both diplomatic and political, to try to resolve the crisis through negotiations, but he was not prepared to accommodate any of the MRTA demands.



The Ambassador's concern was that it was evident that Peru intended to end the crisis on its own terms, using methods and achieving results which would have been very difficult for the U.S. to be associated with or complicit in. And that is precisely what happened, and is the

“And that is precisely what happened, and is the reason both Washington authorities and combatant commands need to listen carefully to US embassy personnel and ambassadors on site in dealing with such situations.”

reason both Washington authorities and combatant commands need to listen carefully to U.S. embassy personnel and ambassadors on site in dealing with such situations. On 22 April 1997, four months and four days after the onset of the crisis, Peruvian commandos, entering through tunnels that had been dug underground, stormed the Japanese Ambassador's Residence killing all of the guerrillas and freeing all of the remaining hostages. President Fujimori intended to show no mercy to the MRTA and Peruvian forces were instructed that no

guerrillas were to be taken prisoner. Fujimori was determined not to allow the Residence takeover to be an example of a successful guerrilla strategy to force concessions from the GOP. A second reason was that the GOP already had plenty of MRTA prisoners and did not need more, who could be portrayed by sympathetic foreigners as “political opposition” to the GOP rather than as an armed and illegal guerrilla insurgency. It was vitally important for the USG not to be caught between a friendly foreign government determined to end an armed insurgency by whatever means, and human rights advocates urging trials through a civilian judicial system with full respect for individual civil and human rights.

In its simplest and clearest formulation, the responsibility of the U.S. Embassy and Ambassador is to be the steward of overall U.S. national interests. The State Department (I was Director of Andean Affairs, which included Peru) was primarily concerned with seeing an end to a destabilizing internal crisis in a friendly country with which the U.S. wanted (and needed) good relations. The prime driver for SOUTHCOM, SOCOM and JSOC was “capability”: what could U.S. forces accomplish.

Yes, the U.S. had the capacity to help Peru's military forces end the hostage crisis — but the question was should we? Did the U.S. want to associate itself with a highly problematical Peruvian military operation which would surely be contentious within Peru (not all of Peruvian society supported President Fujimori) and which could inflame international opinion (including in the U.S.) against the GOP, and U.S. relations with it?

I take no position on what the U.S. can or should do in such situations, given that each one is unique. But U.S. diplomatic representatives on the ground are in the best position to assess what the host nation response is likely to be, to report their best judgment about host nation capabilities, and those appraisals need to be very carefully weighed when U.S. policymakers at the national level, including the President's closest national security advisers, consider the twin issues of (1) U.S. military capabilities and (2) whether and to what extent those capabilities should be employed in a U.S. response.

In the end, responsibility for maintaining an acceptable bilateral relationship between the U.S. and [the country the U.S. ambassador is accredited to] is the Ambassador's — not the State Department's, and not the geographical combatant command's. That's a responsibility given to every U.S. Ambassador by the President of the United States, who sends the Ambassador to represent him or her and the U.S. in the country concerned. The Embassy, the State Dept., and the Combatant Command all have to operate in synch — or its U.S. interests which suffer. And if there is a conflict in judgment between any of the three, it may fall to the President — not the Ambassador or the combatant commander -- to determine what action the U.S. should take.

“In the end, responsibility for maintaining an acceptable bilateral relationship between the US and [the country the US ambassador is accredited to] is the Ambassador's — not the State Department's, and not the geographical combatant command's.”

## Working With the U.S. Military

### 10 Things the Foreign Service Needs to Know

*Here are some pointers for members of the Foreign Service working with the military today, from a retired senior FSO and the first political adviser to the U.S. Strategic Command.*

Ted Strickler

*Mr. Ted Strickler highlights those things that Foreign Service officers need to know when they're working with the US military – military commands, size of the Services, doctrine, the military profession, legal restraints, tensions within DOD, the Army, what the Services want from DOS, and expectation gaps.*

*This redacted article was first published in the Foreign Service Journal, October 2015*

*Ted Strickler, a retired senior FSO, is a graduate of the National War College and the Department of Defense's Capstone program. He was the first political adviser at the U.S. Strategic Command and is currently an interagency subject matter expert for Army experimentation at the U.S. Army's Mission Command Battle Lab at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The views and opinions expressed in this article are entirely the author's own and do not represent official U.S. military policy.*

American diplomats have a long history of working alongside the U.S. military. In many cases, U.S. forces have literally come to the rescue of besieged American diplomats and their families. A cohort of FSOs [foreign service officers] spent their first assignment in Vietnam, many working directly with the military in the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program known as CORDS. More recently, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan gave almost the entire FS [foreign service] cadre a closer look at the military when many members of the Foreign Service worked with provincial reconstruction teams or other military units. Currently the military's Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa offers ample evidence of embassies and the military working well together.

The Foreign Service takes pride in its foreign cultural expertise and language proficiency. Similar preparation is needed when working with the U.S. military. To be effective in those situations, FS members require a good understanding of military procedures, organization and culture along with a minimum 2+ fluency<sup>1</sup> in the military's jargon and acronym-laced lexicon. The following 10 points skim the surface of what the Foreign Service needs to know when working with the U.S. military today.

#### 1. THE BASICS

Since the National Security Act of 1947 was amended in 1949, U.S. military forces have been organized under the Secretary of Defense in three military departments: the Department of the Army, Department of the Air Force and Department of the Navy (which includes the U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> "A minimum 2+ fluency" refers to the individual's language proficiency and understanding as measured by the Defense Language Proficiency Test or DLPT.

Marine Corps). The Coast Guard is the responsibility of the Department of Homeland Security. The secretary of each military department and the chief of staff of each Service (known as the commandant in the Marines and chief of naval operations in the Navy) are responsible for recruiting, training and equipping the force and dealing with attendant budget issues. The secretaries of the military departments then provide forces to combatant commanders as directed by the Secretary of Defense but have no command authority or operational control over how the combatant commanders use or deploy those forces.

There are nine combatant commands (COCOMs), as defined and established by the Unified Command Plan issued by the Secretary of Defense. They fall into two categories—geographic and functional. The six geographic COCOMs are: U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Central Command and U.S. European Command. The three functional combatant commands are: U.S. Transportation Command, U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Special Operations Command. These commands are responsible for operational control of military personnel and units in combat as well as during peacetime activities, such as theater security cooperation programs. The U.S. Special Operations Command is a hybrid organization, which has responsibility and authority for the “organize, train and equip” function, as well as command authority for operationally engaged troops.

## **2. SIZE MATTERS**

The U.S. military is big, if not enormous. The Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps currently have a combined total strength of about 1.3 million uniformed personnel, plus well over 600,000 civilian employees. Including National Guard and Reserve forces adds about another 825,000 uniformed personnel to the total. The State Department’s roster of approximately 14,000 career Foreign Service members and nearly 11,000 Civil Service members pales in comparison. This immense disparity in size has several consequences for the Foreign Service. Given the nature of its missions, the military is accustomed to and proficient at doing things on a grand scale, but this can only be accomplished with detailed advanced planning. This planning imperative at times will appear to diplomats to be overdone, especially since “winging it” is an honored Foreign Service tradition.

Another consequence of size is the need for extensive coordination within and among military organizations. This is accomplished at the COCOMs, for example, with an extensive framework of coordinating boards, bureaus, cells and working groups. Supporting such extensive coordination may easily overwhelm embassy staffing, and a more selective apportionment of embassy resources may not satisfy the military’s coordination appetite.

Size alone gives the military a voice in nearly every foreign policy issue. It is organized on a global basis with geographic combatant commanders focused on their individual area of responsibility (AOR). The Navy and the Air Force provide a global and regional conventional reach and are the custodians of the nation’s nuclear forces. The military’s Global Response Force, drawn primarily from the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division, stands ready to respond to

immediate crisis situations. And the nation’s military cyber defensive and offensive capabilities are handled by the U.S. Cyber Command under the U.S. Strategic Command.

The challenge for the Foreign Service is to provide the leadership to incorporate this dynamic capability into a coherent, coordinated foreign policy. To use military terminology, State’s diplomatic efforts need to be “supported” by the military, which is preconditioned by its culture and training to understand this type of supported/supporting relationship. The FS needs to expand this essential cooperation, hopefully drawing on the 25 percent of its members who have prior military experience to help grow and nurture the relationship.

“State’s diplomatic efforts need to be “supported” by the military, which is preconditioned by its culture and training to understand this type of supported/supporting relationship.”

### **3. DOCTRINE COUNTS**

To anyone who has never served in the military, especially the Army, the concept and role of doctrine will be entirely alien. It codifies current Army concepts, provides a set of fundamental principles, establishes policies and procedures, details tactics and techniques, attempts to inspire, and mandates a common lexicon of warfighting terms and concepts. To understand the military and its methods and jargon, FS personnel will need at least a passing acquaintance with doctrine. But be prepared for an extensive amount of reading. Army doctrine alone consists of 16 Army Doctrine Publications (ADPs), 16 Army Doctrine Reference Publications (ADRs), more than 100 Army Techniques Publications (ATPs) and more than 200 Field Manuals (FMs).

### **4. THE MILITARY AS A PROFESSION**

Much has been written about apparent differences between FSOs and their military counterparts. The “Venus/Mars” distinction was described 25 years ago. Many now believe that depiction is outdated, but differences do still exist. The military, for example, tends to see things in black and white, while the Foreign Service is more sensitive to shades of grey. Military characterizations frequently are in absolute terms; FS personnel are more comfortable with nuance and subtlety.

An important element of a military professional common to all the services is the mastery and credentialing of essential military skills and abilities. In addition, military members are subject to continual professional development and education throughout their careers, attending military schools such as the Command and General Staff College as majors and the Army, Naval, Air Force, Marine Corps and National War Colleges as colonels. Correspondence and Internet-based courses also abound. It is, therefore, not surprising that most military officers have an advanced degree. Many have two or more.

### **5. LEGAL RESTRAINTS**

The military contends with an extensive amount of legal and regulatory strictures: international law, domestic legislation, military regulations and operational rules. These are enforced with a separate judicial system known as the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Consequently, all

commanders, unlike ambassadors, have lawyers on their staff to help navigate this massive legalese and to help administer the UCMJ.

Unfortunately, the Army is at times captured by the legal process itself. What has evolved is a

“State’s activities or actions are usually considered favorably for implementation unless explicitly prohibited in writing.”

belief by many in the Army that almost every proposed action or activity requires explicit legal authorization or approval from someone higher in the chain of command. This cautious approach contrasts with the view of rules and regulations held both by the Navy and the Foreign Service. For those two organizations the view is reversed, with

activities or actions usually considered favorably for implementation unless explicitly prohibited in writing. This caution may explain an initial circumspect reaction by a commander to the ambassador’s request or suggestion due to the need to first check with the lawyers.

## 6. TENSION IN THE RANKS

Congress created the U.S. Special Operations Command in 1987 and deliberately gave it distinct, Service-like responsibilities, making it unique among the nine COCOMs. Unlike the others, it is the responsibility of the USSOCOM commander to organize, train and equip special operations forces (SOF) for current and future requirements in addition to commanding their day-to-day operational missions. The USSOCOM congressional charter overrides the historical division of responsibility between commanders and the secretaries of the military departments (Army, Navy and Air Force), giving USSOCOM greater bureaucratic independence and operational freedom. Some now see the U.S. military as consisting of the five traditional service branches, plus the hybrid USSOCOM operating as a de facto sixth branch.

This bureaucratic independence in Washington is mirrored with command independence in combat as well as peacetime missions. Traditionally, in an area of operations (AO) there would be an Army or Marine Corps commander in charge of all land forces reporting to the geographic COCOM. With the advent of USSOCOM, there are now two separate land commanders sharing responsibility for land operations. With SOF under a separate command, a conventional commander’s view of the AO may have significant blank spots, making it more difficult to integrate capabilities and avoid fratricide. Having two separate commanders in the same AO increases significantly the coordination required. Complicating this coordination is the “black ops” or compartmentalized nature of many SOF missions, which precludes sharing all operational details with other commanders. The Army and SOF do work to overcome this tension, but each case provides unique coordination challenges which may gain the attention of the ambassador.

## 7. THE ARMY'S IDENTITY CRISIS

The Army is the oldest service, established by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1775. For the next two centuries its purpose and mission were clearly understood by the public, congressional committees and its soldiers. The Army had a role, and usually a critical one, as the “force of decision” in every major conflict during that period. Times and the potential

threats facing the United States have changed, and the Army is now concerned that its central role in the defense of the nation is being challenged, giving the other military branches—especially the Marine Corps and USSOCOM—an advantage in public support and congressional funding. The Army’s response has been to become a more agile and expeditionary force in an effort to meet today’s range of threats.

But that comes at a price. Does it cut back on the number of tanks and other heavy equipment to gain deployment speed at the expense of firepower and maneuverability? It is not an easy question, and the Army continues to explore it. Pending cuts in the number of Army soldiers and uncertain congressional support make shaping the force of the future even more difficult.

## **8. WHAT THE AIRFORCE AND NAVY WANT FROM STATE**

The Air Force and Navy have similar needs. Each is concerned with access and use of host nation facilities, ports and air fields for military and humanitarian missions. The Navy also seeks to maintain freedom of navigation in disputed or contested areas such as the Black Sea and the South China Sea. State Department and embassy involvement in negotiating access and related agreements is critical in meeting these Air Force and Navy operational requirements.

## **9. WHAT THE ARMY WANTS FROM STATE**

The Army wants two things from State. First, it wants greater State involvement in planning for and handling civil affairs responsibilities during and after combat operations. War games—or “experiments,” in Army jargon—have identified a need for increased numbers of civil affairs units capable of dealing with the myriad issues once combat forces have moved on. However, many in the Army would like the civil affairs responsibility turned over largely to State and USAID altogether. The Army wants the two organizations to be responsible for reestablishing the full range of local government institutions and the conditions needed to promote private enterprise. To help meet its advance planning requirements, the Army wants Foreign Service help in developing more explicit and measurable policies and practices to guide civil affairs efforts.

Second, it wants our embassies to support its program of regionally aligned forces (RAF). The RAF units operate in what the military calls the Shaping Phase or Phase 0 of its planning continuum. For the Foreign Service, this is a period of normal, routine, non-crisis conditions. The RAF concept calls for units to be forward-deployed, stationed and operating in a COCOM’s area of responsibility with the full knowledge and consent of the respective ambassador. These units conduct operational missions, bilateral and multilateral exercises and theater security cooperation activities. The expectation is that the RAF program will provide military units and personnel with a better understanding of local cultures and languages, thus enabling stronger relationships with host nation militaries. Finally, the Army expects the RAF to foster a better, closer integration between the Army and State’s ambassadors and country teams abroad.

## 10. THE EXPECTATIONS GAP

The military wants State to live up to its perceived responsibilities and provide needed policy guidance to help shape the range of military operations... State's biggest shortfall is a failure to provide military planners and commanders with achievable political objectives. Without those clearly defined political objectives, the military will focus on strictly military objectives and establish a military definition of victory. In addition, it expects State to stay closely engaged during hostilities to provide guidance on how to adjust to and exploit the developing political situation, knowing that merely killing bad guys will be insufficient to achieve a sustainable, stable outcome. As combat operations wind down, the military expects State to provide the leadership to enable a legitimate and functioning civil authority to help obviate the need for a continuing U.S. armed presence. The military—and the Army, in particular—see State as being able to fill in many of these gaps and blanks. Doing this with increased State involvement in planning for and executing military operations would be welcomed warmly by our colleagues in uniform.

### Conclusion

It is evident that diplomacy and the conduct of America's foreign policy are no longer the sole domain of the Department of State and its diplomats in the Foreign Service. But if diplomacy has multiple players, then it is essential to know the other team members well and to become more proficient at team play. One way to accomplish this with the military is to take full advantage of its extensive educational and training opportunities, and to further support its planning efforts. As noted above, the disparity in size makes this difficult for the Foreign Service. But with a realignment of FS priorities, giving greater emphasis to continuing professional education, the military stands ready to welcome increased numbers from the Foreign Service to its existing programs.

Further, it can be argued that a military assignment of either an educational or operational nature should be a requirement for deputy chief of mission and ambassadorial assignments. With the military's Geographic Combatant Commanders having overlapping area responsibilities with State Department regional bureaus and embassies abroad, with SOF and RAF presence becoming more ubiquitous, and with the Navy and Air Force maintaining global reach, the military's nearly universal presence and impact are inescapable. Dealing with this reality and incorporating it into our overall diplomatic effort may well define America's foreign policy for the future. A better appreciation by the Foreign Service of the U.S. military based on more integrated working relationships, shared planning and common educational experiences will help move this effort forward.

"A better appreciation by the Foreign Service of the U.S. military based on more integrated working relationships, shared planning and common educational experiences will help move this effort forward."



## A Window on State-Defense Relations: The POLAD System

### The POLAD Program: History and Current Circumstances

*This article presents a brief history of the Political Advisor (POLAD) and highlights issues discussed at the POLAD Conference – resources, selection, culture, training, authorities, assignment, and questions for further consideration.*

*This article is part of previously published material for the Political Advisor (POLAD) Conference conducted May 10, 2013 sponsored by the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Simons Center of the Command and General Staff College Foundation.*

The Foreign Policy Advisor (POLAD) program has been a longstanding facet of the U.S. foreign defense policy structure. The POLAD program was initiated in World War II when Ambassador Robert D. Murphy was assigned as an advisor to General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Murphy, who wrote about his experience in *Diplomat Among Warriors*, initially reported directly to President Franklin D. Roosevelt but later was incorporated into Eisenhower’s staff, the organizational template for POLADs today.

When formally initiated by the Department of State in the post-World War II period, the POLAD program was quite modest, both in scope and mission. In the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, debates took place within the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), the POLADs’ “home” bureau, about the future utility of the program as a whole. Even as recently as the beginning of the last decade, senior Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) were assigned only to a small number of military service chiefs, service secretaries, and combatant commanders and, as of 2004, numbered only 17.

However, with the advent of the post-9/11 terrorism era, the U.S. government recognized that the country faced a complex, multifaceted threat that would require close interaction between State and the Department of Defense (DoD)—indefinitely. Largely in the context of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and sparked by greater attention from senior leadership at the Departments of State and Defense, the POLAD program, as a basic tool to address this environment, was steadily expanded.

Now numbering over 90 FSOs, the program no longer provides the equivalent of “handcrafted Lamborghinis” to a small number of senior officials, but rather a wide array of “muscle cars” throughout the politico-military spectrum.

This commitment represents a significant percentage of State’s senior FSO strength. POLADs traditionally were assigned directly to commanders as staff advisors, not as liaison officers or formal representatives of the State Department. Under this model, the POLAD works for and under the direction of the commander—while maintaining substantive and professional links to the State Department. With the enlarged POLAD complement, the essential POLAD function remains the provision of dedicated support to the

“The POLAD works for and under the direction of the commander—while maintaining substantive and professional links to the State Department.”

military officer and staff to which the POLAD is assigned. While “reach back” to State is meant to channel effective information to the commander, the POLAD is not a State representative on the military staff. Rather, the commander “owns” the POLAD. For State, the POLAD provides a straight channel to top-level military command echelons. For Defense, the officer provides insight into policy and the workings of the State Department, personal advice, and a conduit for expanding a commander’s influence.

The latest State-Defense Memorandum of Understanding on exchange of personnel between the two departments (January 4, 2012) sets forth terms of personnel exchange of non-reimbursable positions. It reiterates the State-Defense staff relationship while formalizing the significant expansion in the numbers.

For POLADs, it institutionalizes the program’s growth and constitutes a State commitment to maintain the program at the current level. However, it also commits DoD to significantly increase uniformed military personnel at State. The number of military officers working at State is expected to more than double.

The State program is administered by a small office within the Political-Military Bureau. The number of FSOs seeking POLAD positions has risen in recent years, reflecting heightened career interest in interacting with senior military officers. POLAD work requirements are integrated with the tenets of State’s Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), providing greater promotion potential.

The expansion is aimed at increased whole-of-government integration, as well as furthering more sophisticated civil-military operational concepts. While the formal job description for POLADs has not changed, the dramatic increase in their number and distribution throughout the military command structure—a significant thickening of the personnel connective tissue—has interesting implications for cooperation between the State Department and DoD.

Key Observations and Recommendations General: Conferees uniformly praised the expanded POLAD program as an important advance toward greater whole-of-government integration and an essential contribution to increased State-Defense understanding and coordination—a matching of resources to needs. At the same time, all recognized that State has a limited bench and even the 90+ POLAD billets represent a significant strain on the Foreign Service personnel base. With the impetus of the State Department’s QDDR, POLAD assignments are increasingly sought as fulfilling promotion requirements for interagency experience. There is no shortage of bidders for POLAD posts—an anticipated 400 for 40 openings next year.

Program management: Organizers of the conference encountered a great deal of difficulty in identifying a point of contact for the POLAD program in the DoD, unlike the Department of State where a specific office in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs is responsible for program management. The organizers recommend that DoD identify a POLAD point of contact equivalent to the PM/POLAD office at State, at a minimum, for the purposes of information and coordination.

**Resources:** There are limited funds and personnel to support an effective POLAD program, and no prospect of expanding the number of full time equivalent (FTE) positions much beyond 90. It

is possible, however, to re-allocate positions to ensure POLADs go where they are most needed. Reciprocal military billets in the Political-Military Bureau and regional bureaus at State, as provided in the State-Defense MOU, are useful, both for the experience of the military personnel involved and for their interaction with counterpart State Department officials. The number of POLADs assigned to lower level commands should remain limited because of the overall limitations on the size of the POLAD corps. When such assignments are considered essential, it is important that the POLADs have maximum opportunity to bond with the unit before deployment. State should also draw on retired FSOs as needed to fill POLAD ranks.

**Selection:** Consideration should be given to formalizing the processes of State selection and DoD acceptance to obtain optimum agreement on job qualifications and requirements.

“Personal ‘chemistry’ appears to be the key to an effective POLAD-commander relationship.”

Particularly at the most senior levels, personal “chemistry” appears to be the key to an effective POLAD-commander relationship. Care should be taken to provide commanders with slates of good candidates. The right person is important—but even more important is avoiding assignment of the wrong person.

Commanders should interview potential POLADs personally and have the opportunity to interact with them on a temporary trial basis if necessary. Both commander and prospective POLAD should be able to step back from an assignment. Regional Bureaus and/or the PM Bureau should have input and/or review POLAD efficiency reports written by senior military commanders.

**Culture:** Moving from State to the more structured and planning-based environment of a military command requires a flexibility and willingness to adapt not always found in Foreign Service ranks. Combatant commanders and service chiefs tend to want ambassador-rank POLADs, but some worry that an experienced chief of mission may not adapt easily to a staff role. An effective POLAD should be agile, aware of the working environment, and able to provide value by having detailed knowledge of the State Department and its equities. State should reach out more to POLADs, providing greater support, backup, and regular connectivity. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) should establish a mechanism to track, develop, and evaluate the POLAD experience.

“An effective POLAD should be agile, aware of the working environment, and able to provide value by having detailed knowledge of the State Department and its equities.”

**Training:** While only some military officers need exposure to State, most diplomats need exposure to the military. Appropriate education for junior- and middle grade FSOs should include at least basic orientation on the U.S. military. This experience could be combined, at least for some, with assignments to work with and in military organizations.

Selected mid-level officers should be offered three to six month temporary duty stints at military commands. Likewise, POLADs without previous military experience or exposure should have assignment-specific training/orientation on military culture and especially the role of military planning doctrine. This training should be much more comprehensive than the current three day FSI program—at least three weeks, including some field exposure.

**Authorities:** POLADs should have a solid understanding of the complementary and convergent roles and authorities of State and DoD as codified in Title 22 and Title 10. This background may facilitate sensitive navigation of differing priorities that may emerge between military commanders and their counterparts at State and embassies in their respective areas of responsibility.

**Assignment at brigade level:** There is significant military interest in having mid-grade political advisors down-range, even at brigade level. Such assignments are difficult for State to resource, although there has been a push to get more mid-grade officers into the program. There is not enough depth at State or in the POLAD program to staff such assignments. If the officer pool cannot be expanded, there is a danger that less-than qualified officers may be offered for available POLAD positions.

#### **Questions for Further Consideration**

Senior military commanders have often regretted the lack of a State Department partner at the Regional Geographic Command level. Although State's regional assistant secretaries would appear to be the obvious officials to fulfill this role, such coordination has not occurred.

- Does an expanded presence of State Department officers across DoD's operational command level offer an opportunity to pursue this objective?
- What is the possible interest for the State Department in this perspective?
- More broadly, what constructive actions could State initiate to take advantage of possible opportunities offered by the expanded POLAD presence to improve State-Defense relations?
- At the same time, what initiatives could DoD and especially the combatant commands take to exploit possible opportunities for better State-Defense cooperation?
- As the U.S. involvement in Iraq and now Afghanistan winds down, some commentators have speculated that there is a need and an opportunity for a re-balancing of the roles and responsibilities between State and DoD. If such is desired, in a post-Iraq and Afghanistan world, can the expanded POLAD program play a role? And if so, how?

## US. Army South Foreign Policy Advisor

Dr. Bridget F. Gersten

*Dr. Bridget Gersten discusses her experiences and insights as the Political Advisor (POLAD) to US Army South – the roles, daily activities, challenges, experiences, and goals of the POLAD.*

*This article was first printed in the January 2015 issue of US Army South's Defense & Fraternity and written by the U.S. Army South Public Affairs Office*

*Dr. Bridget F. Gersten served as the Foreign Policy Advisor to U.S. Army South from 2015 to 2017.*

*Prior to joining Army South as the Foreign Policy Advisor, she was assigned as Senior Fellow at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Medford, Mass., where she focused on policy making and security studies and taught a U.S. Public Diplomacy course.*

*Before joining Army South, Gersten held a variety of public affairs positions in U.S. Embassies abroad, advocating foreign policy during her public diplomacy tours of duty in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Colombia, Russia, Tunisia and Washington, D.C.*

### **Can you please explain your role as the Foreign Policy Advisor at U.S. Army South?**

**BG** - My role as the Foreign Policy Advisor, also known as "POLAD," short for Political Advisor, is to provide U.S. Army South's Commanding General and the Command team with analysis on foreign policy and foreign affairs issues in the area of responsibility.

As a career diplomat and Foreign Service Officer with the Department of State, I am an interagency bridge, of sorts, between the DOD and the DOS, passing on my insights, professional knowledge, and substantive field experience to the command, in support of the commander's intent.

In today's globalized, interconnected, and multicultural world-with 24/7 communications at our disposal-foreign affairs work is highly challenging and demanding. Add to this the fact that we, as a nation, are faced with a plethora of threats that work against global peace and prosperity, and you get a sense of how an understanding of foreign policy and foreign affairs is critical to achieving the success we strive for in both the diplomatic and security arenas.

In a nutshell, my role is to explain foreign affairs developments as they unfold and provide reach back to the Department of State to create a closer nexus between the diplomatic and defense perspectives.

### **What is typical day like for you?**

**BG** - First, let me say I love my job at Army South. As I like to say, there is never a dull moment. I start and end each day by reading State Department reporting and guidance on developments in the AOR. Given the range of countries in the region, and international foreign policy priorities that are the focus of both DOS and DOD professionals, there is a fair amount of reporting every day.

As a result, I have to decide which countries and issues to focus on, depending on the command's top priorities at any given moment. If the commanding general is due to travel for

staff talks or key leader engagements, I pay close attention to what is happening on the policy and political front in those countries. I also interact with Embassy leadership in the AOR. Early in the day, I also sift through multiple news reporting sources, in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, from DOS, DOD, and major news outlets, as well as morning and afternoon reports from State's Special Operations Center-an important source of breaking news. But reading and analyzing all of this would serve little purpose if I was not synthesizing what I think matters most to the CG, command team, and broader command community.

So that's what I do: I make my colleagues here aware of foreign policy issues during meetings and more informal interactions with them.

But that's not all. Beyond my work as Army South's POLAD, I have my FSO life to attend to as well, by communicating with both U.S. Southern Command POLAD colleagues and State desk officers back at headquarters in a variety of State bureaus, to remain networked and to keep abreast of a breadth of issues in the AOR.

### **Can you describe some of the challenges you have as the FPA here at U.S. Army South?**

**BG** - Acronyms! State and DOD use a variety of acronyms that tie both cultures together as closely knit professional communities. But there's more to it than just learning new acronyms

"These acronyms, once decoded, mirror critical differences in how colleagues at State and DOD approach every facet of their professional existences."

every day: These acronyms, once decoded, mirror critical differences in how colleagues at State and DOD approach every facet of their professional existences. In a way, acronyms are a language in and of themselves, and within both organizations-DOS and DOD- they spell out particulars of the organization's hierarchy, organization, training, forms of address, and more.

Initially, understanding ranks was another challenge, namely the insignia on uniforms that tell you who is what rank. Having lived in foreign cultures for over 15 years as a Foreign Service Officer -in Tunisia, Russia, Colombia, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia -and before that in Italy and Czechoslovakia-I know the importance of speaking the local language and being respectful within a foreign culture. As a DOS civilian at a DOD command, there are some similarities here, in the sense that I felt more at ease and effective once I became conversant, so to speak, in the language and symbols that are part of Army culture.

### **What do you enjoy most about being a part of U.S. Army South?**

**BG** - There are really many things I enjoy about being a part of the team here. First, I like serving as a member of the command group where I communicate directly with the commanding general and directors each day, listening to priorities and immediate business at hand and looking for ways to add value to that conversation, from a foreign policy perspective. Second, I like being surrounded by highly competent, professional, and dedicated officers, enlisted service members, and civilians who pour their heart and soul into the important work they do

in service to their nation. It's a tough world out there and we are all working to safeguard American freedom, values, and liberty -with many risking life and limb.

Finally, I cannot express how thankful I am to be living leadership as I watch the commanding general and directors in action, always looking out for team members and being excellent mentors. I must say that shortly after arriving I said to myself, "This is better than any leadership course," with each interaction and encounter an opportunity from which to learn and grow professionally.

I am very impressed as well by the importance the command puts on recognition through its many ceremonies and celebrations when promotions and retirements occur.

**Throughout your career you've had many interesting experiences. Can you share one or two that stand out?**

**BG** - Well, where to start! I am thankful that my career has been so rich and blessed with the people I have met along the way. One of my favorite moments was when I traveled to Siberia with colleagues from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and we set up a summer education program for youth from the Republic of Tuva, near Mongolia. The program was done in partnership between the U.S. and Russia, aiming to develop mutual understanding and trust between the two countries.

It was a project I initiated from scratch, allowing me to use my creativity and critical thinking skills in a leadership position with both American colleagues and the local community. My husband and I later traveled to the region to experience first-hand the wonders of the Russian steppe, Tuvan throat singing -a type of acapella range of singing that sounds like four people singing at once, out of one human being-and Bactrian, two-humped camels. I am thankful to have done my part to develop mutual understanding between two countries that spent decades in the shadows of the Cold War.

**What do you hope to accomplish during your time at Army South?**

**BG** - I hope to be seen by the broadest number of colleagues here as a contributing member of the command, providing assistance to anyone who may need it. I also hope to provide the command with insights into State's thinking and perspective, and shed light on foreign policy issues as reflected in State's bilateral talks, strategic dialogues, public diplomacy programs and products, and Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. Lastly, as I move forward in my diplomatic career, I hope to weave all of the good I will have gained as POLAD here into my jobs in the senior ranks of the Foreign Service, strengthening further the tight bonds between State and DOD.

## Acknowledgements

The Center for Army Lessons Learned would like to thank all of our contributors for helping produce this bulletin.

We would like to express our appreciation to AMB Edward Marks with the Diplomacy Center Foundation and Ms. Shawn Dorman from *The Foreign Service Journal* for their assistance, recommendations, and permission to print articles written for their organizations.

We would also like to thank the Arthur D. Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Cooperation (<http://thesimonscenter.org/>) for the use of information provided during the Political Advisor (POLAD) Conference.

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