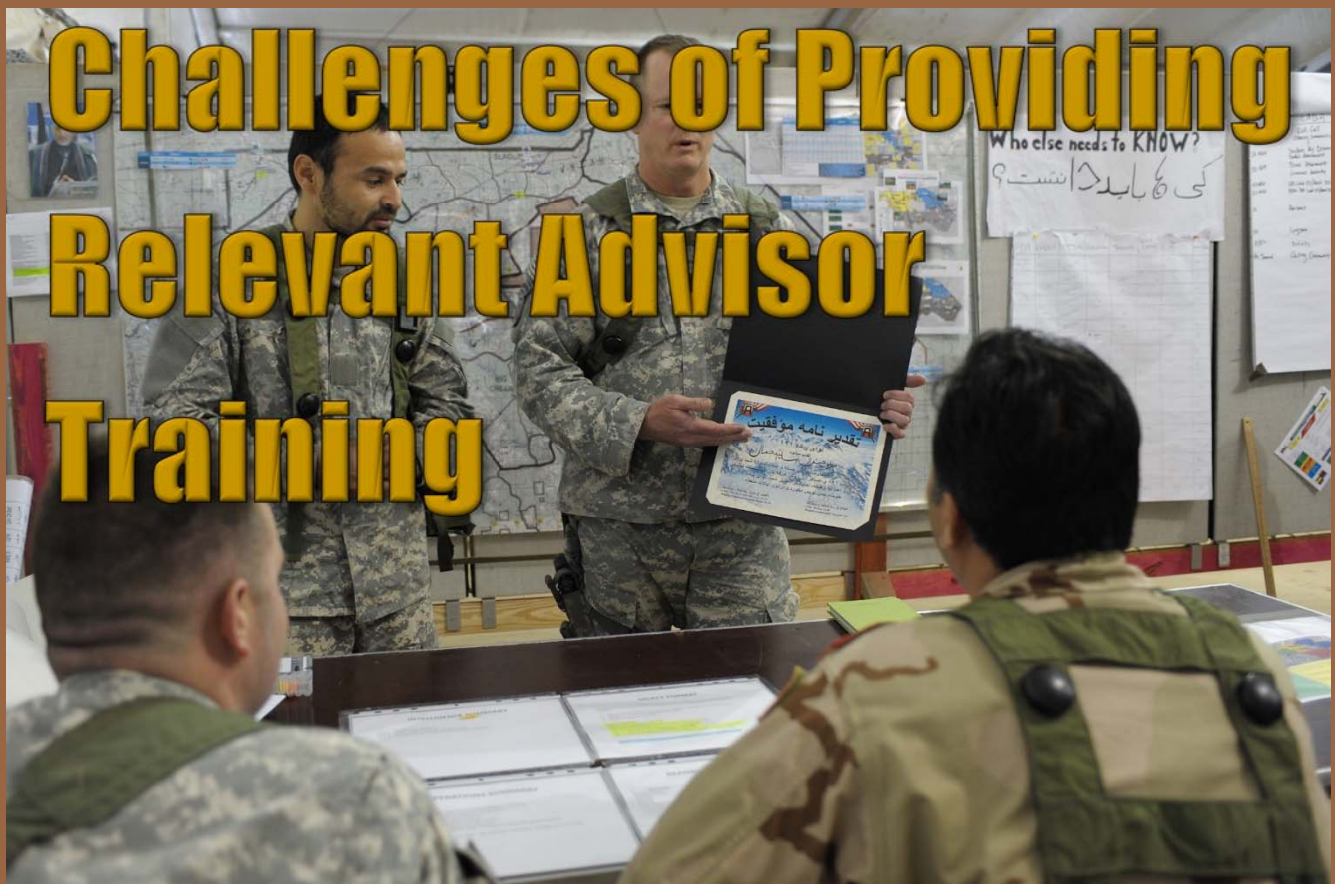


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## **Challenges of Providing Relevant Advisor Training**

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### **Executive Summary**

The author discusses some of the challenges that the Security Force Assistance (SFA) academy faces as one of the staple courses of the 3-353<sup>rd</sup> AR BN for preparing future advisors. The goal of the academy is to teach the two categories of individual advising skills: Enabling Skills and Developing Skills.

# **Challenges of Providing Relevant Advisor Training**

**CPT William Schmidt 3 – 353<sup>rd</sup>**

Training advisors is a difficult task in today's Army. One potential reason is that as advisors there are many types of missions and tasks. As a result of no two missions being the same, training advisors with a myriad of skillsets and a constantly evolving environment requires tailored training. The ability to provide flexible training that replicates the current environment is a challenge that the 3-353<sup>rd</sup> Armor Battalion faces head on.

The overall mission of an advisor is training, advising, and assisting to directly increase the capacity and capability of Foreign Security Forces (FSF). The Security Force Assistance (SFA) academy is one of the staple courses of the 3-353<sup>rd</sup> AR BN for preparing future advisors. The goal of the academy is to teach the two categories of individual advising skills: Enabling Skills and Developing Skills. Enabling Skills include understanding human nature, communicating across cultures, building rapport, influencing, and negotiating. Successfully employing these enabling skills sets the conditions for advisors to move forward with their mission. Developing Skills are the main advisor tasks of teaching, coaching, and advising. Advisors use these skills to develop the capabilities of the FSF. These skills are taught in the classroom and exercised through engagements with cultural role players.

To maximize training and ensure advisors are best prepared for their deployed mission, the 3-353<sup>rd</sup> AR BN tailors the academy to the needs of the unit. For example, the 77<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade required training focused on advising and teaching logistical operations in Iraq. The 3-353<sup>rd</sup> analyzed the unit's mission, duty positions, and their possible duties and responsibilities downrange to prepare training. Obtaining this information assisted in focusing the training and building tailored scenarios and problem sets. Before the scenarios were built, the 3-353<sup>rd</sup> researched lessons learned, contacted the unit that is currently in country, the Asymmetric Warfare Group, and other organizations that could provide valuable feedback on what the training unit would be facing in country. For the 77<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, they were going to be facing a variety of logistical issues such as property accountability, maintenance, and facilities access. This laid the framework for issues and what would drive the leader engagements.

The 3-353<sup>rd</sup> relied heavily on insight from Liaison Officers, 09L interpreters, and the unit currently executing the mission in Iraq to overcome one of the challenges of building a logistics scenario for an unfamiliar Iraqi logistics system. Replicating and not duplicating situations is another challenge to building tailored training. Replication of situational scenarios mitigates the chances of sensitive information spillage to personnel without clearances. After gathering information and ensuring that the scenarios were not information sensitive, the 3-353<sup>rd</sup> was able to develop scenarios centered on logistics and exercise the advisors' skillsets. Before the training unit conducted any engagements, the 3-353<sup>rd</sup> AR BN sourced role players that were ethnically and culturally accurate to the location the advisors are going, in this case Iraq. This provided the advisors a more realistic experience when dealing with their counterparts.

Training engagements gave the advisors a chance to practice the enabling skills they learned in the classroom. This is when they used the “Plan, Prepare, Execute, and Assess” cycle of engagements. Before the 77<sup>th</sup> SB executed their first engagement they received a Relief in Place (RIP) brief from their lead Observer-Coach/Trainer (OC/T) that gave them an overview of the situation they were facing. This briefing helped the advisors focus their talking points in preparation for their first engagement with their counterparts. The 3-353<sup>rd</sup> tailored the amount of engagements needed for each course depending on the objectives of the training unit’s commander. In the case of the 77<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, they had five engagements; one was the initial engagement used to build rapport with their counterpart, arguably one of the most important aspects of being an advisor. The remaining four engagements involved advisors mentoring and coaching their counterparts to identify and solve logistical issues. These scenarios included: assessing the Iraqi supply systems, an emergency resupply issue, counterparts not wanting to turn in unserviceable ammunition, and property accountability.

After the last engagement scenario of the SFA academy, the cultural players broke out of character and spoke with the advisors, giving them honest feedback on what they did well and what they could improve on. To maintain a professional and relevant course, the 3-353<sup>rd</sup> receives assessment cards from the Soldiers in the course and maintains contact with units who have gone through the academy. Maintaining contact after completion of the SFA course enables the validation of the advisor training and ensures the training is relevant and accurate.

Advising is a skill that is applicable to any mission, whether it is training, combat, sustainment, or even staff work. The challenge is developing a flexible and adaptive course that can meet the training needs of multiple units and missions. The SFA academy provides a solution by furnishing future advisors with doctrinally correct basic advising skills and relevant practical exercises producing trained advisors that are prepared for current situations and can adapt to emerging issues.

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