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Joint Improvised
Explosive Device Defeat
Organization (JIEDDO)



Attack the Network – Defeat the Device – Train the Force

SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE ADVISOR TEAM (SFAAT) ATTACK THE NETWORK (ATN) STUDY

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Security Force Assistance Advisor Teams (SFAAT) Attack the Network (AtN) Study
Final Report

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Project Overview

The objective of the Security Force Assistance Advisor Team (SFAAT) Attack the Network (AtN) Study is to identify an integrated set of solutions that, collectively, will satisfy the needs of Security Force Assistance Advisor Teams and Brigades (SFAB), and better prepare them to enable Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to conduct AtN operations by leveraging the methods and solutions of the original AtN study.¹ The study took place over an eight month period, beginning in August 2012 and concluding in March 2013. These solutions, when implemented, will aid U.S. and International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) advisors in enabling Afghans to conduct effective AtN operations and increase ANSF ability to prevent the local populace from participating in Improvised Explosive Device (IED) networks, therefore adding capacity and legitimacy to the ANSF as an institution.

The methodology creates and refines solutions through an iterative process—informed by exhaustive research, interviews, and analysis to create proposed solutions that evolve and are continuously refined over time (pictured below). Please see Appendix A for a holistic experience map which represents the collective interviews conducted thus far in support of this study.

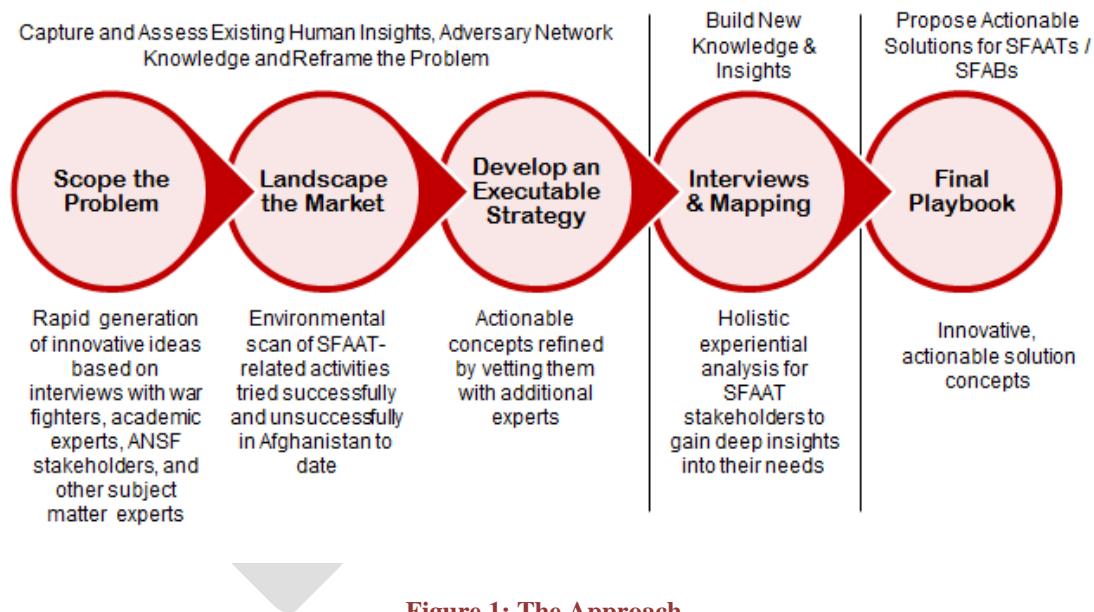


Figure 1: The Approach

¹ In 2009, JIEDDO sponsored a study of needs and solutions for Marines in Afghanistan's Regional Command-Southwest (RC-SW). The final report, *Attack the Network, An Innovation Project, Final Playbook*, (delivered in September 2011) accurately portrayed the needs of Marines in Helmand, and it rapidly identified innovative solutions to satisfy the Marines' needs by employing a unique method that combined experiential mapping and open-innovation techniques.



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The study team began the process by working with Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) key leadership to clearly understand the priorities surrounding the subject matter, the study team conducted primary and secondary research to better understand the complexity of the issue and the operating environment. The analysis has uncovered a number of existing issues related to task organization, cultural awareness, pre-deployment training, and ANSF integration that make it difficult for stakeholders to accurately understand and execute the SFAAT mission. This final project report serves to provide a detailed review of these opportunities and recommendations and approaches to address these issues to facilitate execution of the SFAAT mission.

Concurrent with deep-dive research efforts, the study team is continuously extending the outreach to stakeholders in the SFAAT community (including current and former SFAAT warfighters, commanders, and trainers), academia, think-tanks, regional experts, and cultural and social science experts to ensure that the team grasps a holistic view of solutions to a complex problem set. Interview subjects were selected based on their experiences and familiarity with the SFAAT mission set, pre-deployment training and included both civilian and active duty military personnel. Though rank was not a determinant factor when selecting interviewees, due to the nature of the SFAAT mission, most interviewees were senior enlisted personnel (E7-E9) or command-level officers (senior O3-O6). The interview process is uniquely designed to elicit the needs, wants, and ground truths from a myriad of SFAAT stakeholders, including those living the mission and influencing and shaping policy. Included in this are a number of detailed experiential maps of warfighters who currently execute the SFAAT mission by occupying a training, strategic or operational role. The analysis is based on the inputs received directly from SFAAT warfighters and is designed to uncover and illuminate needs, focus areas for improvement, and critical knowledge gaps for those planning for, facilitating, and conducting the SFAAT mission in the Nation's current and future operations.

Following initial outreach efforts and over 80 hours of interviews with SFAAT members, commanders, subject matter experts as well as policy makers and academics, JIEDDO sponsored a workshop on October 1, 2012 which was facilitated and hosted by Toffler Associates. This "Where to Play" workshop served as a forum to leverage input from various subject matter experts (SMEs) and reach consensus regarding the selection of a specific geographic area within Afghanistan on which to focus the analytical efforts. During the workshop, the study team facilitated the participants' exploration of the various tribal, adversarial, political, and security related drivers shaping the battlefield in Afghanistan.

Throughout the course of the study, team members have attended numerous After Action Reports (AARs) with multiple units to continue refining the team's understanding of the situation, including:



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- 4th Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Army)
- Regimental Combat Team-5 (USMC)
- 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (Army).
- 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, (Army)

Throughout the course of the study, members of the study team have also traveled to numerous training centers, such as:

- Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Ft. Polk to meet with Advisor Academy instructors and curriculum developers, and to observe pre-deployment combat and maneuver training
- United States Military Academy (USMA) to gain and better understand a strategic view of the problem set with leadership from the Social Sciences Department and Combating Terrorism Center (CTC)
- U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) to discuss Counter-IED (C-IED) doctrine and current training curriculum
- Multiple Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) in Regional Command – East (RC-E) and Regional Command – South (RC-S) in Afghanistan to interview SFAAT members currently conducting advisory missions

The study team also conducted interviews with and sought feedback and input from subject matter experts from numerous policy centers and institutional lessons learned organizations, including:

- Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDA) Program, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OSD-P)
- Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA)
- Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL)
- Doctrine and Collective Training Division, Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE)
- Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office (CTTSO)
- Headquarters ISAF Joint Command (HQ IJC) Lessons Learned Section

The interviews, detailed analyses, and travels undertaken have yielded numerous insights into critical issues and solutions concepts and recommendations.

Finally, JIEDDO sponsored a “Solutions Workshop”, facilitated and hosted by Toffler Associates, and chaired by selected SMEs that further assisted the team in identifying and developing innovative and actionable recommendations to build ANSF capacity. The team then identified, developed, and refined a set of solutions which, when implemented, will aid SFAATs in building ANSF capacity.



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Limitations and Assumptions

Limitations

Our travels in Afghanistan were, as one would expect, limited by logistical challenges and security escort capacity. That being said, we were unable to conduct deep dives into specific geographic areas as originally intended, and some of our intended interviews were cut short or passed over due to time constraints in theater. We went to great lengths to augment this with VTC, conference calls, and conversations via email, but our compressed time in Afghanistan limited some of the insights we gleaned from the Warfighter. We augmented our travel with significant presence at SFAAT After-Action Reviews (AARs) and planning meetings, and outreach to experts and stakeholders across the SFAAT problem set.

It is also important to note that the interviews, analysis and findings of this study precede any discussions that took place during the SFAB Training Conference hosted by NATO Allied Joint Force Command (JFC) Brunssum in the Netherlands, in January 2013.

Assumptions

Our findings are derived directly from those executing the SFAAT mission. Our interviews and research were focused on the ground truth, from the mouth of the warfighter, so there may be some dissent or conflicting viewpoints represented in this document. Working under the assumption that open communication and collaboration yield the greatest results, we are assuming that potentially conflicting viewpoints—between those in the field and those in command or policy positions—won't immediately result in the dismissal of ideas for innovative solutions. All of our interviews were conducted on a not-for-attribution basis, and we conducted this research under the assumption that anonymous feedback and insights from current warfighters could drive great change across SFAAT problem sets.



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Executive Summary

This final study report presents the research and analytical process that the study team employed to identify actionable recommendations to facilitate SFAATs in building ANSF capacity. As a key part of this process, it was discovered that the SFAAT / SFAB program has opportunities for improvement defined by four specific focus areas which provide the basis for the recommendations delivered in this report:

- **Focus Area 1 – SFAAT / SFAB Mission Clarity**
- **Focus Area 2 – Pre-Deployment Activities**
- **Focus Area 3 – Selection and Assessment Process**
- **Focus Area 4 – SFAAT Incentive Program**

These areas are critical not only to the successful development and implementation of the SFAAT and SFAB concepts, but also to the ultimate goal of developing ANSF capacity to conduct AtN operations and successfully sustain unilateral operations. Furthermore these underlying themes represent a crossroads whereby gaining an understanding of their causes will allow action to be taken to eliminate or mitigate their effects.

Using the above focus areas as a guide to identify and better understand the associated problems, each focus area has been separated into multiple issue subsets. This facilitated the alignment and refinement of hypotheses which were discussed in detail at the Solutions Workshop, and ultimately evolved into the recommendations described below. These subsets and the corresponding recommendations are summarized in the table below and are discussed in detail on the following pages.

Focus Area	Issue Subset	Recommendations
SFAAT / SFAB Mission Clarity	SFAAT elements have expressed a need for a baseline for developing AtN capabilities and capacity in ANSF units throughout Afghanistan that is clearly aligned with ISAF AtN objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of ANSF-centric “Analog” Counter-IED (C-IED)/AtN systems ● EvBO Master Trainer Course and Certification
	SFAATs have expressed the desire for the Department of Defense (DoD) and/or ISAF command elements to communicate clear guidance on the use and integration of SFAATs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● DOD-level vision on future of advisory mission integrated with ISAF’s phased approach to transition



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Focus Area	Issue Subset	Recommendations
SFAAT / SFAB Mission Clarity (cont.)	SFAATs want to overcome the negative perceptions regarding information sharing/hording that challenge the relationship between tactical and operational/strategic ANSF elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate SFAATs on the various supporting programs and tools available to them in Afghanistan prior to deployment Institute a feedback response process that demonstrates the value and resultant outcomes of proper information sharing
	SFAATs want continuity and assessment standards to quantify and report the progress and capabilities of their respective ANSF units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Mobile Evaluation Teams (METs)
	SFAATs want an articulated phased approach to ISAF transition that better reflects the realities within—and align with the situations faced in—the battle space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Government (USG) emphasizes Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) legitimacy and integration of message to ANSF Use of marketing messaging and visuals to inculcate phased transition to lowest levels of ANSF/SFAATs
Pre-Deployment Activities	SFAATs want to be effectively and properly utilized by unit commanders during Combat Training Center (CTC) rotations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater integration of Advisor Academy and Advisor Training Group with CTC training/scenarios
	SFAATs need formal training and evaluation on essential and mission critical advisory or staff-level skills prior to deployment to Afghanistan to reinforce the importance of their ability to function as a staff section and to advise ANSF counterparts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory doctrine and training at military education centers Training Scenarios to understand and develop ANSF process similar to US Army's Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) Expand Advisor training to include elements of existing training courses focused on advisory missions and Foreign Internal Defense (FID) best practices (U.S. Army Special Forces Qualification Course, Civil Affairs training, etc.)
	SFAAT Leaders want additional time to assemble their teams prior to deployment in order to significantly extend the planning, training, and team building timelines imperative to small unit operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardize a training model that provides additional time for advisor-specific training and the development of team cohesion



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Focus Area	Issue Subset	Recommendations
Assessment and Selection Process	SFAATs want commanders and senior leadership to consider candidates' capabilities, desires, or experiences when selecting and assigning SFAAT members, rather than by selecting solely based on rank and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) staffing requirements provided by service relevant forces commands (U.S. Army Forces Command [FORSCOM] & USMC's Marine Forces Command [MARFORCOM])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFAAT member selection based on aptitude test to evaluate advising and mentoring capability
SFAAT Incentive Program	There is no incentive program within the DoD to encourage officers and non-commissioned officers to stray from their clearly delineated career paths to pursue the SFAAT assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a DoD-wide comprehensive incentive program for SFAAT warfighters that encompasses professional as well as personal benefits

Figure 2: SFAAT Focus Area, Issue Subset, & Recommendations Overview



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Focus Area 1 –SFAAT / SFAB Mission Clarity

In both the corporate world and within the government, an entity's success rests on its ability to first articulate and earn stakeholder buy-in around a clearly developed mission, vision, and set of goals. Similarly, SFAAT warfighters during interviews expressed a need for a uniform or shared understanding of the SFAAT mission, intent, and end-state across Battle Space Owners (BSOs) and stakeholders. SFAATs perceive a lack of understanding from leadership on how these teams can be best utilized and integrated to compliment the mission and tasks of general purpose forces and ANSF counterparts. SFAAT members indicated that overall mission progress and ANSF partnership is hampered by confusing and often conflicting channels of communication that prevent a shared understanding around key objectives.

“They [the BSO] are of the mindset that they’re going in there [...] doing all the targeting, getting after the enemy, driving operations; ‘I’m driving the train.’ Wherein this [SFAAT] mission that we have to do now is to get the Afghans forward doing that type of stuff.”

– SFAAT Executive Officer

Issue 1.1

SFAAT elements need a baseline for developing AtN capabilities and capacity in ANSF units throughout Afghanistan.

Interviews and research show that SFAATs need a better understanding of AtN concepts in order to deliver AtN-focused training to their ANSF counterparts. AtN is a broad and somewhat amorphous term used to describe a number of Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) ranging from the tactical (such as specific C-IED techniques) to the strategic (building trust amongst human networks, etc.). SFAAT team members interviewed for this study expressed frustration stemming from the fact that they themselves did not have a solid understanding of what it means to ‘Attack the Network,’ let alone to advise their ANSF counterparts on best practices from an Afghan point of view., and were therefore not emphasizing AtN concepts with their ANSF counterparts.

A standard set of plans would prevent the wide variance in levels of ANSF AtN and Evidence Based Operations (EvBO) training among individual SFAATs and across teams. SFAAT personnel currently conducts AtN training and development as a function of the unit's command guidance coupled with individual advisor / team experiences and familiarity with the subject matter.

Recommendation

Development of ANSF-centric “Analog” Counter-IED (C-IED)/AtN systems: Creating a training environment in which SFAATs focus on mastering “analog” systems that best correlate to ANSF capacity for AtN functions, will provide pre-deployment teams with a baseline



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understanding of advising around Afghan best practices when conducting AtN and C-IED operations. In addition, pre-deployment SFAAT integration with ANSF (and role players) within the training framework of “live, be, do” as ANSF, will further advance SFAATs deeper understanding of Afghan culture and TTPs for advise and assist operations. Such practices will ensure that ANSF gain the skills and capacity to operate unilaterally beyond the drawdown of ISAF forces in 2014. It is counterproductive to the long term success of ANSF—and of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) as a whole—to provide capabilities or equipment that cannot be independently sustained. SFAAT priority should be to ensure ANSF counterparts are operational in terms of what is realistically feasible within an independent Afghanistan operating environment, rather than in terms of a traditional ISAF or U.S. standard.

EvBO Master Trainer Course and Certification: Instituting an EvBO Master Training course (and certification) for select SFAAT team members (while mandating for at least 1 certification per team) will enable a common understanding of best practices and lessons learned and will facilitate training and advisory for ANSF counterparts on how they can implement AtN TTPs. The EvBO course should focus on providing SFAAT team members an understanding of Afghan best practices and TTPs so attention can be paid to providing ANSF counterparts with an enduring capability—one which they will understand and implement after the 2014 drawdown of ISAF personnel. This will enable SFAAT members to properly align their training and advisory efforts to the capabilities and development goals of ANSF, thus bridging a critical barrier to progress across the country.

Issue 1.2

ISAF elements lack comprehensive education on SFAAT capabilities and their stated purpose, which often results in inefficient and ineffective utilization of SFAATs.

SFAATs have expressed the desire for the DoD and/or ISAF command elements to communicate clear guidance on the use and integration of SFAATs into planning cycles, execution of operations, lines of communication, and synchronization of efforts to unit commanders and BSOs to prevent underutilization or misuse of these unique advisory forces. Additionally, SFAATs want an articulated phased approach to ISAF transition that better reflects the realities within—and align with the situations faced in—the battle space.

“Higher command elements must exercise expectation management with regard to SFAATs; they don’t really know what we can do, or what we are supposed to do.”

SFAAT Sergeant Major



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Recommendation

DOD-level vision on future of advisory mission integrated with ISAF's phased approach to transition: Realizing that ANSF are ISAF's largest ally in Afghanistan, DoD/ISAF should establish a clear and concise vision on the future of the advisory mission and integrate it with ISAF's phased approach to transition. This vision should be integrated at all levels of maneuver and advisor elements in order for all to comprehend and operate under a common understanding of the larger campaign plan.

Issue 1.3

SFAATs want to overcome the negative perceptions regarding information sharing/hording that challenge the relationship between tactical and operational/strategic ANSF elements.

SFAATs described that there is an inefficient flow of information that has resulted in a common perception held by ANSF junior leaders that any information given to headquarters (HQ) will be ignored without follow-up or sharing, will be utilized for another individual's personal gain, or will be exploited by the enemy. This leads to decreased reporting from tactical units and minimal Weapons Technical Intelligence (WTI) collection.

SFAATs see this issue of trust most visibly in ANSF's AtN and EvBO capabilities. Due to mission constraints, tactical situations, and minimal availability of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and forensic SMEs, ANSF units destroy the majority of IEDs upon discovery, prior to exploitation or collection of forensic evidence. Additionally, often when ANSF units do collect forensic and/or biometric evidence and report through the appropriate ANSF channels, pertinent intelligence is not returned to the reporting unit. This frustrates tactical ANSF units and reinforces the notion that exploitation and evidence collection area wastes of time and resources.

Recommendation

Educate SFAATs on the various supporting programs and tools available to them in Afghanistan prior to deployment: There are currently a number of programs being conducted by various organizations throughout the US Government designed to increase Afghan intelligence collection, reporting, and sharing capacity. One such program entitled Legacy, sponsored and conducted by the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office (CTTSO), is designed to establish an effective police intelligence bureaucracy that is as good if not better than terrorist security and intelligence underground. The program seeks to create a police intelligence mechanism with the enhanced capabilities that will be needed to root out criminal and insurgent covert infrastructure. Currently, numerous SFAAT teams are co-located with Legacy teams and are often providing mutual support/security. However, since most SFAATs are unaware of the existence of the Legacy teams and are unfamiliar with how they may be utilized to achieve common goals until they are in theater, the full resources of the Legacy teams are not utilized



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immediately. Educating SFAATs on the programs they have available to them prior to deployment will increase efficiency and decrease time lost in theater establishing bona fides.

Institute a formal feedback response mechanism that demonstrates the value and outcomes of effective information sharing: SFAATs at all levels of the chain of command should encourage information sharing and proper intelligence reporting through the institution of a feedback mechanism that highlights the value of evidence collection and sharing. This can be accomplished through developing a system which provides follow-up responses and communicates outcomes of information/intelligence reporting to those individuals whom reported via the proper channels. As ANSF may be slow to adapt to the new process, SFAATs can drive concurrence at the various operational levels at which they reside.

Issue 1.4

SFAATs want continuity and assessment standards to quantify and report the progress and capabilities of their respective ANSF units.

SFAATs and higher command echelons currently rely on the Commander's Unit Assessment Tool (CUAT) to accurately assess the level of transition of their respective ANSF unit. SFAATs expressed that CUATs are a highly subjective rating mechanism and, as such, can sometimes result in disparate views of ANSF skill levels. As a result of the subjective nature of the reports, they are often disregarded or underutilized, particularly during Relief in Place / Transfer of Authority (RIP/TOA) from unit to unit. Additionally, SFAATs believe that CUATs currently do not allow for honest assessment of ANSF units for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to the following:

- CUATs are shared with ANSF leadership so unsatisfactory performance/reviews are often edited or removed so as not to embarrass ANSF units or leadership
- Unit leadership often requires unrealistic edits of CUATs that support the phased-approach progression and timeline of the ISAF campaign plan

Due to the aforementioned issues, CUATs are sometimes dismissed outright as unhelpful or misleading by replacement units leading to inefficient and misaligned training focus and decreased levels of trust between SFAATs and their ANSF counterparts.

Recommendation

Independent Mobile Evaluation Teams (METs): Such teams (similar in nature to GEN McChrystal's Tiger Teams) can be created to assess and determine ANSF units' respective level of development. These teams need to be an independent body with no influence over the assessment of the SFAATs' performance (which would continue to rest within the traditional chains of command). This would then create a standard from which to accurately assess ANSF



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“We need to develop a cohesive message and drive that top down.”

**SFAAT Commander,
RC-E**

capacity. The assessments made by these evaluation teams should be made in conjunction with the SFAAT advisor’s input. This will allow for the most robust and well-rounded picture of the ANSF unit under evaluation.

Furthermore, SFAATs should become intimately knowledgeable as to the proficiency level of the ANSF unit to which they are assigned in order to build upon prior SFAAT’s training and ultimately advise the ANSF unit to a higher level of proficiency.

Issue 1.5

SFAATs want an articulated phased approach to ISAF transition that better reflects the realities within—and aligns with the situations faced in—the battle space.

ISAF has identified a four-phased process that allows “ISAF troops to facilitate the transfer of full security responsibility to Afghan security forces as their capabilities improve.”² Progression of Afghan forces through the stages of transition (identified below) will be determined by their evolving capability and by conditions on the ground:

- Stage 1—Afghan security forces “developing” with ISAF partners and advisors present
- Stage 2—Afghan security forces are “effective” with partners and have advisors present
- Stage 3—Afghan security forces are “effective” with advisors and have partners on standby
- Stage 4—Afghan security forces are “independent” with advisors and have partners withdrawn

While conceding that ANSF units will transition at different speeds and stating that the overall transition is “conditions-based,” ISAF states that all ANSF units should be completely transitioned by 2014 in adherence with the state timeline. Furthermore, ISAF directs that coalition forces will provide combat support and enablers as requested by their ANSF counterparts. As described by Marines from RCT-5, “ANSF will generally always request such support.” For this reason, it is incumbent upon ANSF advisors to be comfortable refusing certain Afghan requests for support. Marines observed that ANSF needed to become familiar with operating outside the umbrella of full ISAF support before they truly understood their operational requirements and capabilities.

²NATO Media Backgrounder, “ISAF Mission Evolution,”
http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2012_10/20121008_media-backgrounder_isaf_mission_evolution_en.pdf



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Recommendations

U.S. Government (USG) emphasizes GIROA legitimacy and drives integrated messaging to ANSF: The US Government's goal is to reinforce GIROA legitimacy. This message should be nested at all levels of partnering forces and government officials. It will lead to the common understanding of ISAF's phased approach to transition and clearly communicate the American-Afghan partnership.

Use of marketing, messaging, and visuals to inculcate phased transition to lowest levels of ANSF/SFAATs: The use of marketing materials and visual aids, such as posters, fliers, presentations, etc., that depict ISAF's phased approach to transition will allow ANSF at all levels of education and literacy to understand the larger picture and how their position facilitates the larger campaign plan, and ultimately that they play a critical role in the future of their country. This will also remind SFAATs/ANSF of their desired goals and foster the partnership between the two forces.



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Focus Area 2 –Pre-Deployment Activities

SFAAT members serve as operational and strategic advisors to their ANSF counterparts. The success of the SFAAT mission is crucial to prepare ANSF to assume a lead role in securing the country and enabling GIROA success during and after the 2014 drawdown. Despite this, interviewees indicated that the majority of SFAATs' pre-deployment training is focused on small unit tactics and simple Key Leader Engagement (KLE) instruction. While critical to mission success on a tactical level, the mastery of these skills does not adequately prepare SFAATs for their advisory role. Confirming this, the results of an HQ IJC SFAAT Pre-Deployment Training Survey conducted in October 2012 of 900 responses, 700 of which were from US advisors, indicated that only 60% believed that they were “at least adequately prepared” to assume their assigned billet upon arrival. Of the same respondents, only 54% considered their pre-deployment training to have positive benefits. Furthermore, SFAATs indicated that rather than employing quantitative metrics such as number of missions run, number of meetings conducted, etc. to gauge success during advisory rotations in Afghanistan, it would be more helpful to incorporate a number of qualitative measurements around as battlefield integration, advisory efforts, and ANSF development. The increase in qualitative metrics suitable for the advisory role would provide a more comprehensive picture of mission status and a more realistic assessment on areas which need improvement.

“JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center], I think, still has a long way to go in order to truly get over being able to teach and coach where the ANA [...] are the target. The ANA should be your focus.”

– SFAAT Executive Officer

Issue 2.1

SFAATs want to be effectively and properly utilized by unit commanders during Combat Training Center (CTC) rotations.

During the study team's observations from and interviews with SFAAT warfighters, it was discovered that during CTC rotations, unit commanders often direct SFAATs to focus on maneuver operations or employ them to support ancillary requirements that detract from the SFAATs' mission to advise and assist. In such cases, SFAAT's primary focus becomes Counter-Terrorism (CT) or Direct Action (DA) rather than ANSF capacity building, development, and training. Such direction exacerbates the aforementioned divide between BSOs and SFAATs, ultimately driving a wedge between partners who should share a singular mission focus. The relegation of SFAATs to act as 'Afghan Shepherds' promotes negative legacy views of ANSF and the SFAAT mission set, which degrades unit morale, cohesion, and integration between adjacent or supported elements.



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Recommendation

Greater integration of Advisor Academy with CTC training/scenarios: In coordination with codifying doctrine on the advisor mission, greater integration of advisory training units – e.g. 162nd Infantry Brigade’s Advisor Academy, USMC Advisor Training Group (ATG) – with CTC training/scenarios will result in a comprehensive and realistic training experience for SFAATs preparing to deploy. This will also serve to institutionalize the advisor mission/role within DA/DoD operations.

“SFAATS require more familiarization with Afghan Ministry of Defense and how their systems operate in order to be more effective with partnering efforts.”

**SFAAT Sergeant
Major**

Issue 2.2

SFAATs need formal training and evaluation on essential and mission critical advisory or staff-level skills prior to deployment to Afghanistan to reinforce the importance of their ability to function as a staff section and to advise ANSF counterparts.

More specifically, SFAATs require instruction on developing and understanding ANSF ATN capabilities and the ANSF Military Decision Making Process (MDMP).

Recommendations

Advisory doctrine and training at military education centers: The current joint advisory doctrine should be further developed and formally codified by Department of Defense (DoD). Moreover, the instruction of this doctrine should be integrated into all levels of training at military education centers as an essential part of the comprehensive military instruction pipeline:

- A DoD codified SFAAT mission and purpose articulated as part of basic military training
- A DoD codified SFAAT mission and purpose articulated at the start of each round of pre-deployment training

This will ensure DoD’s capability to conduct advisory missions in the future and ensure that emphasis is placed on how to effectively teach, instruct, and advise throughout the pre-deployment training cycle.

Training Scenarios to understand and develop ANSF process similar to US Army’s Military Decision Making Process (MDMP): SFAATs should not only understand the traditional US Army MDMP, but also be able to use and apply that knowledge in influencing and shaping the ANSF equivalent of MDMP. ANSF MDMP differs from traditional MDMP in that the former is a product of Afghan societal norms and takes into consideration Afghan military capacity and resources. Understanding these nuances prior to deployment will enable SFAATs to



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better understand Afghan capabilities and limitations, while focusing the advisory mission around the critical staff functions of operations that ANSF are best equipped grasp and execute.

Expand Advisor training to include elements of existing training courses focused on advisory missions and Foreign Internal Defense (FID) best practices: Improving upon the current Advisor Academy training to include specially selected elements and best practices from the range of advisory instruction currently being offered across the DoD, would provide SFAATs access to over 60 years of US foreign military advisory operations best practices and would reinforce SFAAT understanding of the overall complexity and gravitas of their role.

- The US Army John F Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) is the preeminent authority on partnering with foreign forces. The SFQC includes essential Civil Affairs Training and Operation ROBIN SAGE, in which students are organized and isolated as they would be on an actual partnered mission to execute training, advising and assistance in weapons, communications, medical, and demolitions with “partnered nation” forces
- Applicable Foreign Internal Defense (FID) best practices encourage true partnership building between SFAATs and ANSF: Help friends and allies build forces in their own way; do not ‘mirror image’ and recognize how other nations define threats and allies differently from the US
- USMC Advisor Training Group (ATG) acknowledges that “mentoring is often an exercise in pushing the Afghans to be effective leaders,” thus equipping SFAAT warfighters with crucial mentoring and leadership tools to enable Afghan counterparts to command effectively

Issue 2.3

SFAAT Leaders want additional time to assemble their teams prior to deployment in order to significantly extend the planning, training, and team building timelines imperative to small unit operations.

SFAATs are currently comprised of individuals from numerous units who are attached operationally to a BSO in theater. This composition prevents team members from effectively forming, storming, norming, and performing until late in the planning and pre-deployment training cycle or even in the initial phases of deployment. Additionally, this hampers SFAAT operational efficiencies in theater. Though the construct of the SFAB will alleviate this to an extent, the issue will persist as teams will still be formed from a brigade-sized resource pool (vs. the current service component-wide resource pool).

When SFAAT Leaders assemble teams shortly before deployment, it also results in a condensed team training rotation cycles i.e.: red-amber-green cycles. In this case, each SFAAT member



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receives a different amount of exposure to intensive full-spectrum training cycles, thus creating a wide variance among teams in both capacity and capability.

Recommendation

Standardize a training model that provides additional time for advisor-specific training and the development of team cohesion: The USMC's advisory mission staffing model is successful because of the focus on team building and advisor training. Marines tasked with the advisor mission undertake a 120-day pre-deployment training cycle which includes immersive rehearsal of common advisor situations (with host-nation role players), live-fire of foreign weapons and foreign vehicle familiarization, C-IED training (including AtN), integrated training with parent battalions to support partnered operations, and academic instruction focused on "partnered operations and ANSF development" of staff functions. Though these subjects are addressed during the Army's SFAAT training, a few key differences exist, chief among them are the focus on the advisor mission and team building. In the USMC process teams are formed as early in the pre-deployment process as possible and their primary focus is training for the advisor mission. In the Army's sourcing and pre-deployment training process however, SFAAT warfighters are still accountable for their "day job" responsibilities—e.g. performing intelligence duties or other staff functions—which prohibits an unadulterated focus on the advisor mission. In fact, numerous SFAAT warfighters interviewed for this study have stated that the first time their full team was able to train together as a single unit occurred at JRTC, sometimes just two months before their deployment.

A training model that provides additional time for advisor specific training and team building would lead to an increase in effectiveness and cohesion of SFAATs. Critical in this solution is the identification of the SFAAT makeup of personnel as well as their target region in order for the team to be as fully prepared as possible



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Focus Area 3 –Assessment and Selection Process

Ask any successful organization—be they a startup venture, a Fortune 100 company, or a government agency—what their strongest asset is and the answer will be the same—their people. As over ten years of protracted conflict have demonstrated, no amount of money, equipment or technology is in itself sufficient to achieve victory; it is imperative to have the right people for the job at hand. Recruiting and retaining a competent, capable, and motivated workforce is essential to developing a wholly-independent ANSF and ensuring a successful transition.

The process for staffing SFAATs with individuals varies widely throughout the U.S. Army. Individual service members possess myriad strengths and capabilities that are not always quantified by Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or rank and are sometimes disregarded in the SFAAT staffing process. Selection criteria do not address potential SFAAT members' proclivity for, and ability to conduct, knowledge transfer to another distinct culture, nor do the criteria address a members' amenability to working closely with Afghan counterparts. This results in sporadic and somewhat erratic advisory support across the operating environment.

“Current SFAAT members generally do not have the mentality to be effective trainers; we should screen for aptitude. Success of the SFAAT is based on the person, not technology.”

– SFAAT Commander

Issue

SFAATs have expressed a desire for commanders and senior leadership to consider candidates' capabilities, desires, or experiences when selecting and assigning SFAAT members, rather than by selecting solely based on rank and MOS staffing requirements provided by the U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) and USMC Forces Command (MARFORCOM).

SFAATs expressed that there is currently no deliberate process within identified Brigade Combat Team (BCT) elements for selecting or nominating the best members for SFAAT missions. Selection is a purely subjective task with limited (if any) guiding frameworks or best practices disseminated to leadership. This process of selecting team members based solely on rank and MOS makes SFAATs vulnerable to staffing risks with regard to broader capabilities, while ignoring critical variables such as personality, non-MOS capabilities, and teaching aptitude.

Recommendation

SFAAT member selection based on aptitude test to evaluate advising and mentoring capability: A framework can be developed to identify and assess SFAAT warfighters' ability to instruct and effectively transfer knowledge. The exam should not only evaluate an individual's general decision-making and organizational skills, but also if he possesses specific strengths needed to be an effective advisor and teacher:



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- Can the team member impart information to their targeted audience beyond simply re-stating the knowledge they possess?
- How does the team member link the lesson he is trying to impart to the targeted audience members' backgrounds and help them understand its significance in the context of their everyday realities?
- Is the team member aware that there are different teaching/advising/mentoring methods that can be employed based on the needs and literacy level of a targeted audience?
- How does the team member feel about advising and assisting counterparts of varying physical and mental capabilities within the same unit or team?
- What is the level of patience the team member exhibits when advising an audience comprised of individuals who have varying levels of motivation?
- Can the team member operate objectively? Is he willing to put his western cultural or educational biases aside for the success of the mission?

An aptitude test that evaluates an individual's coaching/mentoring capability and MOS skill would assist in SFAAT member selection. Such a framework would enable SFAAT commanders to realign their teams based on each member's aptitude for integrating with and transferring knowledge to ANSF counterparts. Such a test could be administered routinely or once as part of a basic training pipeline. Individuals would be scored with (1) "Natural" (2) "Needs Training" or (3) "Unsatisfactory". This will provide an inventory of pre-selected candidates for SFAB team selection and takes the onus off the unit to find team members. It enables proactive team planning. In the longer term, this aptitude test could be conducted at the start of every training course throughout an individual's military career to gauge capability in this regard.

"It is critical for the chains of command to pick the right people for the SFAAT mission. SFAATs should be personality-based. It comes down to knowing your Soldiers and picking the right ones for the job."
**SFAAT Sergeant
Major**



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Focus Area 4 – SFAAT Incentive Program

SFAATs are called upon to do an increasingly difficult and ambiguous job with minimal training and guidance. There is no incentive program within the DoD to encourage officers and non-commissioned officers to stray from their clearly delineated career path to pursue this endeavor. In nearly every interview conducted for this study, service members pointed to this fact as a major hurdle to obtaining operational buy-in from SFAAT stakeholders.

“These guys are burnt out and we need to figure out a way to make it worth their effort. Give these guys some command or leadership credit for their time on SFAATs.”

– SFAAT Sergeant Major

The main factor that contributes to this focus area, derived from multiple interviews from both SFAAT officers and NCOs of all levels, is the perception that DoD actions to date do not champion the importance of the advisory mission. This is demonstrated via a lack of consistent follow-through with professionally enhancing career opportunities and promises to warfighters. The championing of the SFAAT by DoD is critical to attracting the right personnel to the advisory mission, and thus successfully accomplishing said mission in Afghanistan by 2014. A key dictum derived from historic advisory missions is that, “humans are more important than hardware”. The nature of the SFAAT mission is a personal one – warfighters are responsible for successfully accomplishing the advisory mission through their mastery of personal relationships and transferring knowledge to their ANSF counterparts. However these critical personnel, those skilled and knowledgeable in the commonly described “soft skills” are also those that make the best platoon and company first sergeants, as well as company and battalion commanders. These officers and NCOs, critical to the war effort, should be incentivized to detour from the traditional career path, and thus receive various professionally enhancing incentives within their respective professional development tracks for serving in this difficult advisory role.

Recommendations

Implementation of a comprehensive incentive program: In each service, incentive programs are offered to entice warfighters to conduct hazardous, difficult, challenging, and dangerous jobs – all of which necessitate additional training and the mastery of uncommon skill sets: SFAATs are a perfect example of this type of unit.

To this end, it is recommended that DoD construct a comprehensive incentive program for SFAAT members, one that encompasses professional as well as personal benefits to the warfighters.



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Professional incentives: As stated above, the perception that the SFAAT mission is not one of importance resonates with former and current SFAAT warfighters and leadership, and cuts across services. To that end, warfighters find that previously made promises from branch or assignment officers/NCOs are often not honored, and the Soldier or Marine then feels taken advantage of by their branch or service. As with other various incentive programs currently underway within DoD, in the short-term DoD can implement the following professionally enhancing incentives to SFAAT members:

- Command, leadership, or joint credit within respective MOS/branch/service, and commensurate with their rank and duty position
- Additional Skill Identifier (ASI) or service equivalent for advising partner nation forces, that is linked to an increased weight/favorable viewing when the warfighter is considered for promotion or follow-on assignment
- Choice of duty assignment in accordance with their MOS/branch/service
- DoD education opportunities such as an inter-service/agency program, Ranger School, Defense Language Institute (DLI), USMC Combat Tracking School, or a foreign military school such as the Colombian Army's Lancero School
- Civilian education program that conforms to the MOS/branch/service/DoD needs such as a graduate degree in counter-terrorism studies or international relations

“Whether it is through command credit, making SFAATs key and developmental (KD) positions, extra pay, or skill identifiers, you have to recognize these soldiers for the tough job they are doing.”

**Advisor Academy
Instructor**

Personal incentives: To highlight the concept of providing SFAAT members with monetary incentives, a parallel can be drawn from the U.S. Army Special Forces (USSF). Fully qualified USSF warfighters receive the following monthly incentive payments:

- Professional pay
- Jump (airborne) pay
- Language proficiency pay
- Demolitions proficiency pay
- Hazardous duty pay

While USSF are called on to do a wide array of missions, similarities can be drawn between this force and SFAATs, as partnering with host nation units is a key skill set of USSF. As annotated above, most incentive payments are *proficiency* payments, therefore the USSF Soldiers do not receive the additional pay unless they have meet certain monthly, quarterly, or annual requirements which certify them as proficient.



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In the long-term, creating a monthly “advisor proficiency pay” incentive at a commensurate level with other proficiency payments could have the desired effect to incentivize warfighters on a personal level.

No single incentive outlined here will have the desired effect of completely incentivizing enough Soldiers and Marines to volunteer for SFAAT duty, or increase the input of effort to the task required, but a combined and comprehensive plan, consisting of both professional and personal incentives will solidify DoD’s support of the SFAAT mission, thereby increasing the mission’s legitimacy in the eyes of those tasked to perform advisory missions, and help to institutionalize Security Force Assistance within DoD doctrine.

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Conclusion

The focus of this project was on the methods and techniques that SFAATs are employing to provide their ANSF counterparts with an enduring capability to conduct AtN and defeat the IED network in Afghanistan. The solutions proposed here are specific to the experiences of SFAATs and SFABs who were in Afghanistan in 2012 -2013. The diversity of the SFAAT mission set means that not all of these solutions will be applicable for every team or SFAB. Other solutions that address issues universally present when conducting advisory and assistance missions will be applicable beyond the borders of Afghanistan.

The figure on the following page demonstrates both the criticality of the aforementioned recommendations as well as an assessment of the degree of difficulty of implementation. The x-axis represents the ease of implementation of the recommended solutions, beginning with those recommendations that will be the most difficult to implement (due to current force structure and or/constraints, cost, policy cycles, etc.) on the left and moving to those solutions that can be implemented easiest, and therefore, generally the quickest, on the right. The y-axis represents the relative level of impact of the recommendations, beginning at the bottom with those solutions that are important to the long-term success of the SFAAT mission, whereas those located at the top of the figure represent solutions that are critical to mission success. Solutions located in the upper-right quadrant are easiest to implement and will have the highest impact on mission success, therefore should be given priority focus for implementation.



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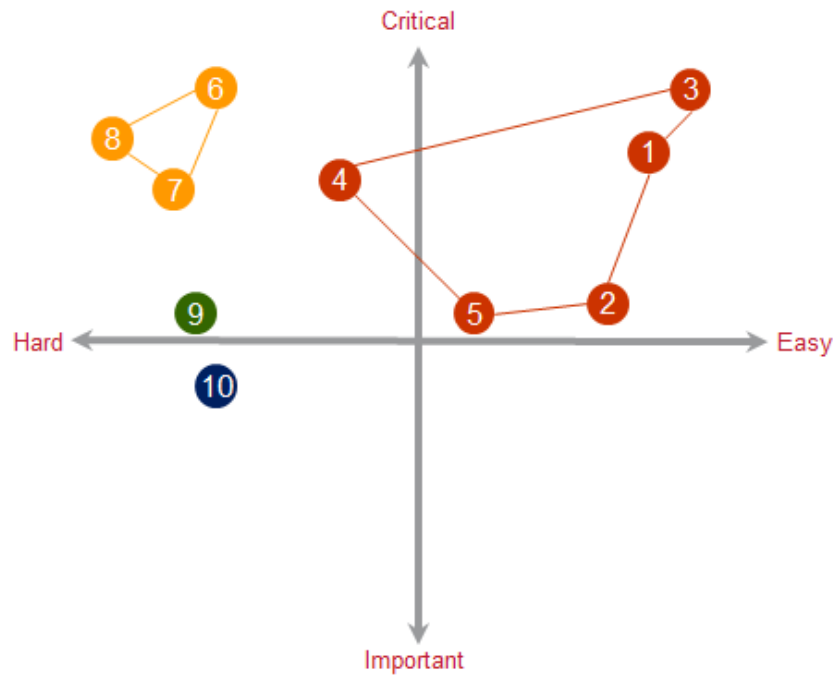


Figure 3: Star Quadrant

Legend	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of ANSF-centric “Analog” Counter-IED (C-IED)/AtN systems EvBO Master Trainer Course and Certification
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOD-level vision on future of advisory mission integrated with ISAF’s phased approach to transition
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate SFAATs on the various supporting programs and tools available to them in Afghanistan prior to deployment Institute a feedback response process that demonstrates the value and resultant outcomes of proper information sharing
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Mobile Evaluation Teams (METs)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Government (USG) emphasizes Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) legitimacy and integration of message to ANSF Use of marketing messaging and visuals to inculcate phased transition to lowest levels of ANSF/SFAATs
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater integration of Advisor Academy and Advisor Training Group with CTC training/scenarios
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory doctrine and training at military education centers Training Scenarios to understand and develop ANSF process similar to US Army’s Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) Expand Advisor training to include elements of existing training courses focused on advisory missions and Foreign Internal Defense (FID) best practices (U.S. Army Special Forces Qualification Course, Civil Affairs training, etc.)
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardize a training model that provides additional time for advisor-specific training and the development of team cohesion
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFAAT member selection based on aptitude test to evaluate advising and mentoring capability
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a DoD-wide comprehensive incentive program for SFAAT warfighters that encompasses professional as well as personal benefits



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Appendix A: Holistic Experience Maps

This project will deliver innovative solutions built on insights drawn from multiple “holistic experience maps.” Each map will detail the holistic experience of SFAAT stakeholders, including SFAAT warfighters, team leaders, trainers, warfighters, and BSO and BSI command elements.

While many interview techniques and research methods elicit the surface level experiences of their subjects, the study team utilizes a best-in-class Open Innovation Methodology which is designed to uncover an in-depth understanding of the respondents’:

- “Mind”: Mental experience including beliefs, needs and decisions
- “Body”: Sensorial experience such as hot, cold, tired or awake
- “Soul”: Emotional experience including emotions and frustrations
- “Task”: Actions taken during the experience

A “holistic experience map” renders the elements of the respondents’ experience. The map on the following page represents the collective experiences of the interviewees to whom we have spoken to date during the conduct of this study and is grouped by the four Focus Areas detailed throughout the document.

The experience maps will inform the integrated set of solutions that, collectively, will satisfy the needs of SFAATs / SFABs and better prepare them to enable Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to conduct Attack the Network (AtN) operations. Based on the in-depth depiction of the holistic experience of each individual, the maps allow us to exhaust the creative space when identifying innovations to surmount barriers.



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Appendix B: List of Terms and Acronyms

AAR	After Action Review
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
ASI	Additional Skill Identifier
ATG	Advisor Training Group (U.S. Marine Corps)
AtN	Attack the Network
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BSO/BSI	Battle Space Owner/Battle Space Integrator
C-IED	Counter-Improvised Explosive Device
CT	Counter Terrorism
CTC	Combat Training Center
CTTSO	Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office
CUAT	Commander's Unit Assessment Tool
DA	Department of the Army
DA	Direct Action
DLI	Defense Language Institute
DoD	Department of Defense
EvBO	Evidence Based Operations
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FORSCOM	Forces Command (U.S. Army)
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
HQ	Headquarters
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JCISFA	Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance
JIEDDO	Joint Improvised Explosive Devices Defeat Organization
JRTC	Joint Readiness Training Center
KLE	Key Leader Engagement
MARFORCOM	Marine Forces Command (U.S. Marine Corps)
MCCLL	Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned
MCoE	Maneuver Center of Excellence (U.S. Army)
MDMP	Military Decision Making Process
MET	Mobile Evaluation Teams
MoDA	Ministry of Defense Advisor
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty



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NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
OSD-P	Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy
RC-E	Regional Command East (Afghanistan)
RCT	Regimental Combat Team (U.S. Marine Corps)
RC-S	Regional Command South (Afghanistan)
RC-SW	Regional Command Southwest (Afghanistan)
RIP/TOA	Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority
SFAAT	Security Force Advisory and Assist Team
SFAB	Security Force Advisory Brigade
SFQC	Special Forces Qualification Course (U.S. Army)
SME	Subject Matter Expert
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
USAJFKSWCS	U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
USG	United States Government
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USSF	United States Special Forces (U.S. Army)
WTI	Weapons Technical Intelligence