



**INTERCONNECTED** The Global SOF Training, Education and Doctrine Community of Interest initiative seeks to create a network of SOF units and personnel through the use of technology and exchange of instructors between foreign SOF schools and the USAJFKSWCS.

# TAKING SOF GLOBAL: THE GLOBAL SOF TRAINING, EDUCATION AND DOCTRINE COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL LEE BRIAN

## Introduction

John Foster Dulles, U.S. Secretary of State from 1953-59, said, “There are plenty of problems in the world, many of them interconnected.”<sup>1</sup> He went on to talk of an existential threat, in the context of the Cold War. Today most people would not see the threat of Communism, but would readily agree with the interconnected nature of problems. Jared Diamond, in his research of interconnectedness in anthropology wrote in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, “Any society in turmoil today, no matter how remote...can cause trouble for prosperous societies on other continents and is also subject to their influence (whether helpful or destabilizing). But we also are the first to enjoy the opportunity of learning quickly from developments in societies anywhere else in the world today, and from what has unfolded in societies at any time in the past.”<sup>2</sup>

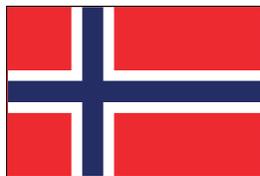
In lieu of an existential threat, he saw a global decline. Despite this difference of potential outcomes the thread between the two quotes, taken as representatives of their times, is the idea of common threats made possible by interconnectedness, noted by both Dulles in the Cold War and when Diamond’s book was published in 2005. A cursory review of 2015’s contingencies, crisis and current events certainly upholds the idea that the globe is interconnected and actions in one country, region or province do affect the situation in other areas.

For the U.S. Special Operations Forces community foreign internal defense, building partnership capacity and security force assistance and the concept of ‘with, through and by’ address the concept of interconnectedness. We conduct these activities so a foreign soldier can accomplish a new task or do an old one better; collectively these activities train foreign security forces that have some affect on the associated populace and the region. The regional effects can be enhanced by working with regional neighbors that share aspects of language, culture and general situation. In light of the last decade of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as in the assessment of current crises, U.S. SOF should train and educate with the intent that their current foreign training partner will have some level of interoperability with U.S. forces, so that when the time comes that they are a foreign operational partner, the startup cost associated with a crisis are not as severe.

## The Initiative

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School created and facilitated the Global SOF Training, Education and Doctrine Community of Interest, seeking to create a network of units and military personnel that are involved in SOF training, education and doctrine. This network has two main lines of effort: quarterly VTCs among global SOF special warfare centers and schools and the exchange of instructors between foreign SOF schools and the USAJFKSWCS.

The Global SOF Training, Education and Doctrine initiative is being submitted into the U.S. Army Special Operations Command’s Strategic Planning Process at the Capability Analysis & Solution Identification step. The initiative already addresses capability gaps identified by USASOC and the operational force and once approved in the SPP, will be included in the USASOC Guidance for Development of the Force. The Global SOF TED will continue in the SPP to the Resourcing & Integration step, culminating in the Program Objectives Memorandum cycle for FY18-22, as a program of record and capability gain for



the ARSOF operational force and the U.S. Special Operations Command.

### Quarterly VTCs

The Quarterly VTCs are key to the exchange of best practices, standard operating procedures and initiatives; collaborate on SOF training that enhances partnerships and capacity in SOF employment; and to deep dive into operational problems and success that SOF are having around the world.

The inaugural Global Training, Education and Doctrine Community of Interest event on Jan. 26 was attended by 45 nations from six continents, and four multinational training centers, making it the largest collection of nations focused on SOF training, education and doctrine. This level of interest serves to stress the importance of collaboration in enabling operational interoperability. The connectivity this event yielded also facilitated informal relationships that will help nations access effective SOF training options regionally and around the globe. Thailand, South Korea, the International Special Training Center, a Norwegian SOF representative and the USAJFKSWCS briefed topics that represent best practices for SOF training in their schoolhouses.

The Royal Thai Army's Special Warfare Command briefed a challenge that faces all of our forces. The operational force interacts with multinational forces on deployments and may have the lead on operations at home; therefore they have the most up to date tactics, techniques and procedures and firsthand access to other nation's doctrine and their forces to discuss it. In turn, SOF schoolhouses and training elements are responsible for meeting operational force requirements by training new SOF soldiers. Often it is a challenge for the schoolhouse to stay current and synchronized so it can operate from the same TTP and doctrinal base.

The Thai Special Warfare Command intends to address this with a combination of long-term training plans, integration of lessons learned, instructor training and TTP synchronization. It noted another venue to improve both internal; and external inter-

connectedness — joint combined exercises.

The Cobra Gold Exercise is seen by the Royal Thai Army's Special Warfare Command as a valuable source of interoperability opportunities, gaining new TTPs and experiencing the nuances of multi-national command and control. Cobra Gold and other joint combined exercises are held around the globe each year, as well as more local, bilateral events, all of which offer opportunities for observation and participation. These events assist SOF schools in staying synchronized with their operational force and enable the operational force improving its interoperability.

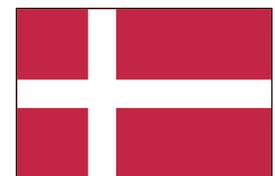
The International Special Training Center in Pfullendorf, Germany, briefed its model of "Bridging the Gap" — building interoperability between SOF allies and partners to standardize skill sets. The nine charter nations formed a partnership with equal ownership, increasing interoperability, standardization and cost savings to the nations. ISTC is an excellent example of a brick-and-mortar solution that provides multi-national interconnectedness to generate efficiencies and interoperability. In 2014, the center worked with 27 nations offering the following courses: NATO Special Operations Combat Medic Course, Desert Sniper Course (North Africa operations), Urban Sniper Course, Military Assistance Course (core task as outlined by NATO Headquarters) and a Conduct After Capture Symposium. These courses are attended by soldiers from the nine nations and are available to students, cadre and operational units from any nation.

Norway briefed its Desert Sniper Course (Pilot) concept, the requirement was proposed to ISTC member nations during the 2014 ISTC Sniper Symposium. At the symposium, 11 nations discussed future requirements for NATO Sniper training and operations in environments, such as Afghanistan and North Africa. A combined solution was found, which reduced the cost and resources that would be expended by each nation if it conducted the training unilaterally. The combined solution also offered use of appropriate terrain

by conducting the course in Alicante, Spain. This also provides Spain increased access to NATO SOF Allies and cross-level instructor knowledge. Overall, utilizing instructors from multiple nations, with a multi-nation student base, encourages sharing of operational tactics, techniques and procedures and standard operating procedures. In 2015, ISTC will validate the Desert Sniper Course and continue to host professional symposiums with sniper subject-matter experts across the SOF Community of Interest.

Joint Fires Observer course development and implementation was briefed from both Korean and U.S. perspectives. Korea's Special Warfare Command and the U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School talked about their progress implementing the internationally accredited training. Joint Fires Observer provides the ability to employ fires from air, sea and land platforms in support of lethal actions during both offensive and defensive operations, and is the maneuver commander's entry point into the close-air support lethal kill chain. The Joint Fires Observer also assists with the timely planning, synchronization and responsive execution of joint fires and effects. JFO training requirements are coordinated with the international community and the U.S. Army Fires Center of Excellence at Fort Sill, Okla. The program was developed in accordance with an established memorandum of agreement to ensure standardization and interoperability between U.S. services and multiple partner nations. After the Jan. 26 Global SOF TED VTC, multiple nations expressed interest in the JFO program. This is just one example of how a multi-national approach can address complications and expenses of SOF training and capability development.

The Republic of Korea's Special Warfare Command, Special Warfare Training Group also briefed its requirement for winter warfare/mountaineering capabilities. The ROK Special Warfare Training Group identified a plan to enhance the capability of mountaineering skills and tactical skiing operations while conducting special operations in mountainous Korean terrain and under



extreme weather conditions. The training center will increase instructor capability by conducting combined unilateral and bilateral Winter Warfare/Mountaineering training with partner SOF and is seeking increased connections to international SOF elements that have similar requirements.

As the force whose *raison d'être* is 'with, through and by' a foreign partner, it is critical for U.S. SOF to have those partners intimately involved in training future SOF Soldiers. The USAJFKSWCS has acknowledged this criticality and is actively seeking foreign SOF personnel to instruct, in various positions, within its courses. From an efficacy viewpoint, who better to teach the AK-47 weapons system than a foreign military NCO who has one as his primary weapon? From a cultural viewpoint, who better to advise U.S. SOF's future advisers on interaction, dos/don'ts and other techniques than a native who understands their own culture and general military culture?

As an example of international SOF training from the U.S. Government lens of the International Military Education and Training program, the United States Government spent an estimated \$100M on IMET in FY14.<sup>3</sup> One hundred and thirty-seven countries received support to send military personnel to U.S. military courses. The USAJFKSWCS trained soldiers from 21 countries in FY14. Of the \$100M an estimated \$13M went to African nations, for the same period the USAJFKSWCS received an average of one to two African students in every other qualification course.<sup>4</sup> Conversely financially well off countries are well represented in USAJFKSWCS courses.

Heavily represented countries are often the most common partner nations that U.S. SOF works with during international responses to contingencies and crises. As an example, the nations who contributed forces to ISAF also have routinely significant numbers of soldiers in USAJFKSWCS courses.<sup>5</sup> Having these nations also help train future U.S. SOF benefits both sides. Newly minted U.S. SOF enter the force already having interacted with foreign instructors, and likewise for the foreign

instructors returning to their nations. These instructors have first-hand knowledge of U.S. military TTPs, doctrine, task organization and capabilities. They can effectively transfer this knowledge to their home nation based on their experience instructing. Additionally, this complements existing theater security cooperation plans that drive the need for interoperability and interconnectedness.

Foreign instructors at the USAJFKSWCS from less well represented countries serve as a training multiplier. While a nation may not be able to send a large number of students, having an instructor at a course enables the same transference of TTPs and doctrine, as well as first-hand familiarity with training methodologies and processes. Connecting these instructors with U.S. SOF conducting TSCP events can also mitigate the limited number of students. Regardless of the nation, foreign SOF instructors can also help focus IMET for their nation's SOF. In conjunction with the U.S. Theater Special Operations Commands a plan for more effective numbers of students and course selection can also be developed.

## Conclusion

In his book, *The World is Flat*, Thomas Friedman wrote, "By 'flat' I did not mean that the world is getting equal. I said that more people in more places can now compete, connect and collaborate with equal power and equal tools than ever before. That's why an Indian in Bangalore can take care of the office work of American doctors or read the X-rays of German hospitals".<sup>6</sup>

The U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School seeks to "connect and collaborate" with foreign SOF partners so that where Friedman writes of one foreign national reading x-rays from another nation we can say one nation's SOF improved its unit's jungle skills at another nation's school because they were connected through the Global SOF Training, Education and Doctrine Community of Interest. That bi- and multilateral connections were, and are, being made to improve SOF capacity globally and decrease the startup capital needed

when two or more nations work together in a contingency of crisis environment. Combined SOF responses are more effective because of shared TTPs, doctrine and training enabled by the exchange of instructors. In a world that is continually seeking ways to address contingencies it is certain that some of the responses will be military forces, whether it be in combat or a humanitarian mission, and the forces of choice are often SOF.

## Post Script

Separate articles in this issue cover the Volckmann Operators and the Powell Initiative, the former embedding ARSOF personnel in foreign militaries, the latter embedding them in the interagency. Collectively, Volckmann and Powell, in conjunction with the information flow and connectivity of the Global SOF Training, Education and Doctrine Community of Interest, offers a powerful synergy to increase interconnectedness and thereby generate effective response options for the U.S. and our partner nations. The second Global VTC was held on April 14 and SOF from 74 countries on six continents participated. The next VTC is July 23. **SW**

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## Notes:

1. John Foster Dulles, quote, <http://www.qotd.org/search/search.html?aid=3709&page=2>.
2. Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, page 33.
3. Department of State, International Military Education and Training Account Summary, <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14562.html>.
4. Department of State, International Military Education and Training Account Summary, <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14562.html>.
5. <http://www.nato.int/ISAF/structure/nations/index.html> and USAJFKSWCS International Military Student Office records.
6. Thomas Friedman, quote, [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/t/thomas\\_friedman.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/t/thomas_friedman.html).

