



**ADVISORY** A Special Forces team member works alongside partner-nation forces in Africa. U.S. Army photo.

# THE VOLCKMANN PROGRAM

## MAXIMIZING THE PREVENT STRATEGY – VERSION 2.0

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### The 21st Century Environment

Unlike the battles of World War II, today's operational environment power is shifting below and beyond the nation-state. Governments once able to operate with few checks and balances are increasingly expected to be more accountable to sub-state and non-state actors — from mayors of mega-cities and leaders in private industry to a more empowered civil society. They must also contend with citizens enabled by technology. The younger generation has become a majority in many societies, and there exists a growing global middle class with higher expectations for governance and economic opportunity. While largely positive, these trends can foster violent non-state actors and foment instability — especially in fragile states where governance is weak or has broken down — or invite backlash by authoritarian regimes determined to preserve the power of the state.<sup>1</sup>

### The Restated Problem

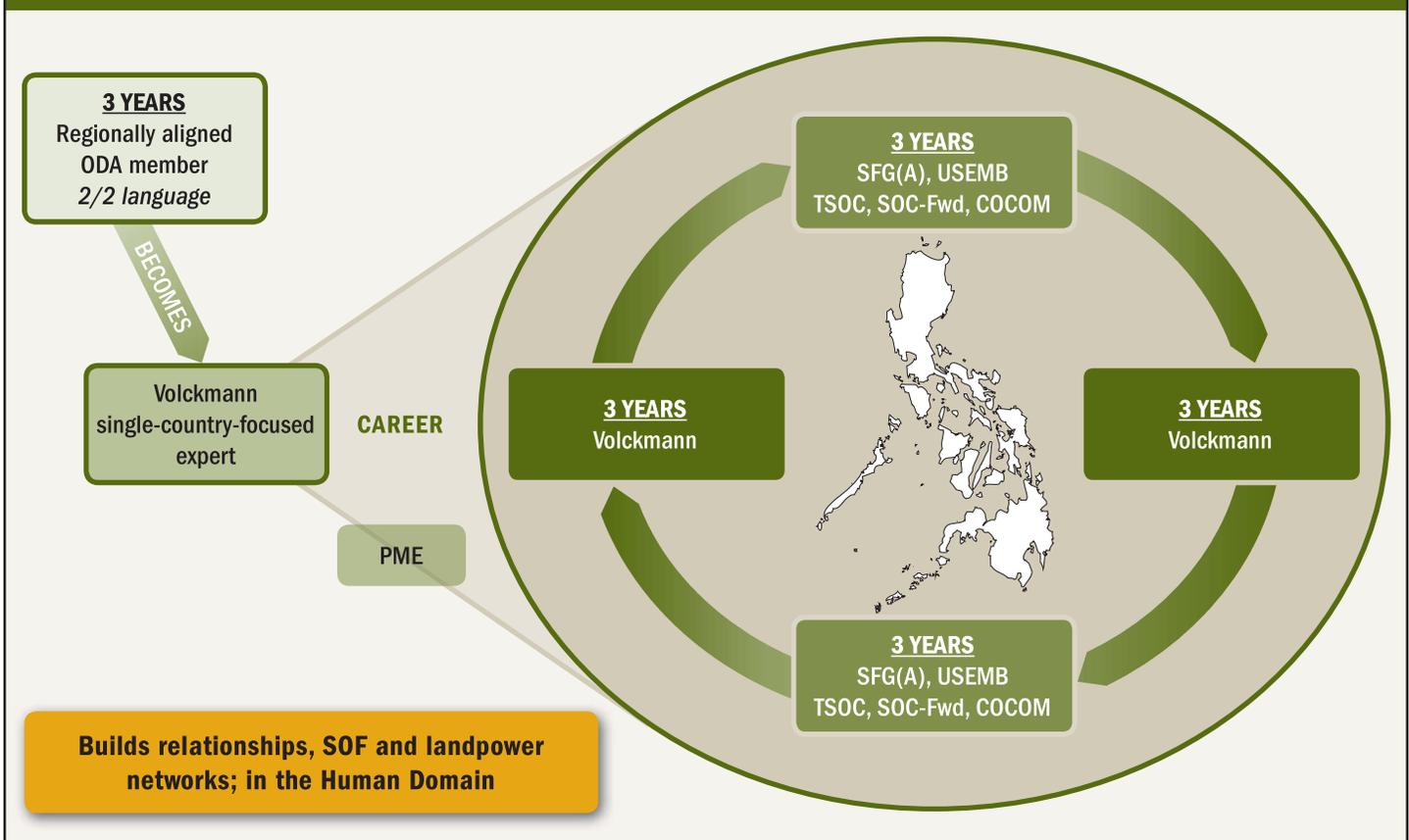
Throughout the world, al-Qaeda and its affiliates are conducting a multi regional insurgency designed to establish the Caliphate. As a measure of their success.

In competition with AQ, another organization called the Islamic State<sup>2</sup> has evolved into a hybrid entity that cannot be defined by our conventional understanding of terrorism and conflict. IS literally presents an enemy, the like of which has never been fought

before; an entity that is historically relevant because nothing in its likeness has ever existed and thus presents new challenges and problems. It is a terrorist group that is also a conventional army, which fights in the style of urban guerrilla warfare. Its asymmetrical expertise in recruiting foreign fighters is matched by its expertise in fielding a conventional standing army of trained militants.<sup>3</sup> Despite its lack of statehood, ISIL now controls expansive swathes of territory. This hybrid nature is matched by a post-conflict mastery of the conquered populations under its control. Of notable concern is the organization's ability to quickly and brutally bring order and stability and political functionality to the towns and cities captured.<sup>4</sup> Finally, a commonality between both organizations is their appeal to the younger generation in many societies, providing the ability to recruit from the mass because of the call to jihad and a growing rift in global middle class with higher expectations for governance and economic opportunity that cannot be fulfilled.

The United States does not have the capability, measured in either blood or dollars, to lead a fight throughout multiple regions of the world against AQ and IS. If we attempt to conduct the large number of U.S. unilateral operations needed to defeat both AQ and IS assaults, the United States along with its partners quickly play into their hands, exhausting ourselves and, in the process, negatively affecting long-term, global perceptions. There

## Title X Partnership Exchange Program, with Title XXII Training (ex. DISAM)



**FIGURE 1: INDIVIDUAL VOLCKMANN CYCLE** Selected individuals will work in conjunction with the theater special operations commands and remain focused on the same countries throughout their careers, progressing within their host-nation's SOF structure as they are promoted in the U.S. Army system.

are numerous lessons learned that demonstrate this from both Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The United States has the potential to further develop existing capabilities and introduce innovative capabilities into the environment that no other state or group in the world has, and that is why we must lead the effort to counter violent extremist organizations like AQ and IS that present us with these complex challenges.

### The Solution

While these challenges are new, there have been solutions recommended in the past that were not fully realized that may have been ahead of their time. Once such initiative proposed by then-Col. Eric Wendt, suggested looking at the success of U.S. embedded Soldiers and officers to create a network of U.S.-aligned partner nations and create a global network in close relationship with them.

Is this initiative still valid? Now almost four and half years later as the Commanding General, United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Maj. Gen. Wendt revitalized this concept. The idea is to implement the Volckmann Operator initiative to assist host-country forces in mitigating and preventing internal destabilization, while operating in support of U.S. goals by embedding U.S. military personnel with host-nation units in an advise and assist capacity. Framing the initiative at that

strategic level, the Volckmann operator is ideal for shaping operations (Phase Zero)<sup>7</sup> during any type of campaign or operation. This initiative provides engagement agility and increases interoperability and combat power within the human domain. Therefore, the Volckmann operator is a deterrence tool that decreases populace support to threat groups and host-nation and U.S. blood and treasure.

Army Special Operations Forces are focused on geographical regions; the Volckmann Operator Program focuses selected individuals on a single country with persistent engagements. These individuals will work in conjunction with the theater special operations commands and remain focused on the same countries throughout their careers, progressing within their host-nation's SOF structure as they are promoted in the U.S. Army system (Figure 1 and 2). To date, all theater special operations commands commanders and the Commanding General, U.S. Special Operations Command concur with testing the Volckmann Operator Program.

### Volckmann Operator Requirements and Duties

The Volckmann operator is an overt single-country expert with 2/2-speak/listen language rating. He or she is the primary TSOC point of contact in the country, creating and maintaining enduring relationships that contribute to the Global SOF Network supporting a globally responsive and regionally engaged Army

and synchronizing with the *National Security Strategy*. Selected Volckmann operators will have language and cultural skills, along with individual country and select partner-nation unit expertise, differentiating them from the foreign-area officer community. Additionally, Volckmann operators will embed in key host-country units using the existing authorities of the Title X Partnership Exchange Program,<sup>8</sup> and while operating as a part of those units would enjoy a unique perspective, which will assist them in the identification of the individual unit's shortfalls in equipment, schooling, training and operational capability. The end state of the Volckmann program is the creation of a synergistic approach; leveraging Title XXII security assistance authorities along with the Title X PEP embed status of the SF Volckmann operators.

### Volckmann Operator Training

Training includes attendance at applicable Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management courses.<sup>9</sup> As a result, Volckmann operators are equipped to identify key host-unit requirements to the U.S. Embassy's security cooperation office for proper attention, processing under Foreign Military Financing or Foreign Military Funding Sales programs and fielding, if approved. If potential

“The pilot phase targets four countries where the Volckmann Operators will embed as operations officers in select host nation special operations units in Italy, Colombia and Korea.”

Volckmann operator candidates are identified earlier on in their military careers, there exists the potential for additional language training to take place at the Defense Language Institute; increasing language ratings to 3/3, which includes reading comprehension.

Volckmann operators will PCS to the country of assignment with dependents (if applicable) on assignment to the partner-nation unit in an equivalent key-developmental position. Volckmann operators will serve tours under the administrative control of the U.S. Embassy Security Cooperation Offices (or equivalent) and OPCON to the respective TSOCs.

Using an Army SF officer to illustrate the Volckmann Program, the selected officer would serve at least three years on a Special Forces A-detachment (officers would serve two years on an A-detachment and a third year in another assignment within the SF group). At the end of that three-year apprenticeship in the regionally focused SF group, the Soldier would be eligible to apply for a three-year Volckmann position in the SF group's area of responsibility within a country chosen by the TSOC. After selection, the individual would serve an initial tour with the partner unit, return to the parent SF group and after three years return to the partner-nation unit to serve in an additional equivalent key-developmental position.

Between tours to their partner unit, the Volckmann can PCS to a TSOC, 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) (Provisional), U.S. Army Special Operations Command, USSOCOM or other commands that can use their country expertise and have available

positions appropriate to their rank. The Volckmann Program allows all Professional Military Education to occur on schedule.

As of the date of this article, TSOCs are coordinating with applicable U.S. Embassy and partner-nation armed forces to gain concurrence and determine unit and position placement. Each TSOC has the USD-P template for the memorandum of understanding to establish or modify a U.S. Army Military Personnel Exchange Program. Concurrently, with confirmation of the partner-nation unit, USAJFKSWCS will submit official requests to establish or modify the MPEPs to the Headquarters, Department of Army G-3/5/7 MPEP Manager.

### The Pilot Phase

By the time this magazine is on the stands, there will be several Volckmann operators in place as part of a pilot phase being implemented by the USAJFKSWCS Commander's Initiative Group to test the initiative. The pilot phase targets three countries where the Volckmann Operators will embed as operations officers in select host-nation special operations units in Italy, Colombia and Korea. The Volckmann Operators will embed using the MPEP and MOA mechanisms discussed earlier.

Individuals have already been identified, interviewed and selected against the requirements. Special Forces officers bearing the ranks of captain and major comprise the Colombian and Korean Volckmann Operators while the Italian Volckmann Operator is a Psychological Operations officer. These individuals will serve in assignments with U.S. Army equivalent duty title of operations officers. As a part of the pilot, all the Volckmann Operators will attend the Defense Institute of Security Management course as part of the criteria to be awarded the Personnel Development Skill Identifier. The USAJFKSWCS Commander's Initiative Group will carefully monitor and assess the pilot to keep it on track and to capture lessons learned, best practices and obstacles that need to be addressed prior to the Volckmann Operator initiative becoming a program of record.

Secondly, the pilot will test that Volckmann Operator actually meets its designed purpose, which is it assists host-country security forces to mitigate and prevent internal destabilization and support U.S. Government goals in a country or region by providing consistent and dedicated U.S. military personnel as embeds in host-nation units who advise and assist. Metrics are measured and captured in the identification of the host units' shortfalls in equipment, schooling, training and operational capability. Finally, there is a consensus that the Volckmann Operator is seen as part of an overall solution set that demonstrates engagement through interoperability and interdependence.

## Way Ahead

In order for the Volckmann Operator Initiative to become a successful program of record, administrative requirements need to address professional development models that capture the initiative as “most-qualified” key developmental assignments, address criteria for awarding Personnel Development Skill Identifiers and board guidance to mitigate risk to participating service members’ careers and ensuring they remain competitive for promotion, and facilitate talent management. Once Department of the Army G1 approves the PDSI request for the Volckmann Operator, the revisions to DA Pam 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management* and DA Pam 600-25, *U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide* will be published by Department of the Army and Strategic Communication informing the force and leadership dispersed.

The USAJFKSWCS Army Special Operations Forces Human Resources Directorate, in cooperation with the USAJFKSWCS Commander’s Initiative Group, requested establishment of a Personnel Development Skill Identifier for Volckmann Operators. Once approved, an announcement will occur through a Notification of Future Change to Army-wide Force Managers and Department of the Army, G1 will top-load the PDSIs as well as update the PDSI roster in DA Pam 611-21, *Military Occupational Classification Structure*. Volckmann Operators are eligible to apply for PDSI after 12 months of serving in their respective assignments. The award criteria for the Volckmann Operator PDSI: 2 /2 foreign language proficiency rating (cannot be waived), completed a designated Defense Institute of Security Management course and have served an approved tour of duty embedded (non-liaison officer) in a foreign special operations forces unit. Upon Commanding General, USAJFKSWCS approval, ARSOF Human Resources will provide the service member’s name to DA G1 to top-load the PDSI designator into the candidate’s record.

Concurrent to execution of the pilot individuals’ emplacement the Volckmann initiative is also being submitted into the USASOC Strategic Planning Process at the Capability Analysis & Solu-



**FIGURE 2: VOLCKMANN OPERATOR TITLE 10-22 CROSSOVER** Selected individuals will work in conjunction with the theater special operations commands.

tion Identification step. When executed the initiative will address capability gaps identified by USASOC and the operational force and once approved in the SPP it will be included in the USASOC Guidance for Development of the Force. Volckmann 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 for the ARSOF Operational Force and TSOCS. Simultaneously, the Volckmann initiative is being presented as a topic during the 2015 U.S. Army – U.S. Special Operations Command talks for further discussion and implementation. **SW**

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## Notes:

1. *National Security Strategy*, February 2015, Introduction.
2. Each of these acronyms (AQI, ISI, ISIL, IS) is used consciously by the authors of the multiple reports, executive summaries, and research journals depending on the time period in which they are discussing the organization. The use of the term “Islamic State” has been avoided by many for being seen as empowering the organization by legitimizing its expansion. The purpose in restating the problem is not to legitimize the organization or its expansion, but to use one acronym versus the many variants being used to identify the group. Whether the acronym is ISI or ISIL or IS (all of which refer to some form of “state-ness”), the name used does not elevate the organization to that of a legitimate state.
3. “Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL.” *U.S. Department of State Diplomacy in Action*. Accessed April 15, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/s/seci/index.htm>. Retired General John R. Allen is the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL. For more information on The Global Coalition to Degrade and Defeat ISIL, access the URL provided.
4. Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Nelly Lahoud, Daniel Milton and Bryan Price. “The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State.”

Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 2014, 6.

5. The three-phase construct presented is a historical representation of how insurgencies mature based on the Chinese communist model as articulated by Mao. From the perspective of the insurgent, Mao referred to the three phases as “Strategic Defensive,” “Strategic Stalemate” and “Strategic Offensive.” Respectively, current doctrine refers to the phases as “Latent or Incipient,” “Guerilla Warfare” and “War of Movement.” Refer to Army Techniques Publication 3-05.1, Chapter 2, Unconventional Warfare for more information.
6. For more information on the specific Army military personnel exchange program (MPEP), refer to Army Regulation 614-10, Assignments, Details, and Transfers Army Military Personnel Exchange Program with Military Services of Other Nations. This regulation sets policies, procedures, and responsibilities for conducting the Army military personnel exchange program.
7. For more information on the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) use the URL listed: <http://www.disam.dsca.mil>.