The purpose of assisting foreign security forces is to build U.S. partner capabilities and capacity in order to enhance their ability to secure their own territory, fight national and international terrorism, and promote local and regional stability. Expanding relationships with African partners, both new and old, will allow us to share security interests, gain access to global basing and give ourselves strategic flexibility while developing culturally attuned leaders in our own land forces. In doing this, we’ll also enhance U.S. and African partner interoperability and develop partners capable of the full range of military operations on the African continent.

To achieve these objectives in Africa, the Department of the Army chose Southern European Task Force to become the Army component headquarters for U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in December 2008. Subsequently, U.S. Army Africa (USARAF) was designated as the Army service component command (ASCC) for AFRICOM in October 2009. The AFRICOM commander directed that USARAF focus on four major tasks: the support of ongoing operations, fulfilling its Title 10 U.S. Code responsibilities, executing theater security cooperation missions and being able to deploy joint task force-capable headquarters. USARAF, however, is without assigned forces and the typical theater enablers—a critical hurdle in accomplishing its theater security cooperation mission. From its inception, USARAF has been dependent on other organizations and the global force management process to accomplish its mission. In actuality, USARAF—indeed all ASCCs—require assigned forces to conduct security force assistance (SFA) in their theater of operations. Security force assistance is the unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority (FM 3-07).

The current status of SFA in Africa is the legacy of myr-
iad programs, exercises and activities that were once governed by U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) in what amounted to a secondary effort. As interest in Africa waned over the preceding 20 years, many of these programs and exercises operated on autopilot and did not necessarily serve strategic or theater security objectives in any meaningful or orchestrated fashion. To further frame the problem, USARAF conducted an inventory of security cooperation related activities, from training contact teams to senior leader engagements. This improved situational understanding also highlighted the magnitude of the task ahead.

The USARAF region consists of 53 countries (with U.S. Central Command responsible for Egypt) on a continent more than three times the size of the United States. It includes more than a billion people, dozens of ethnic groups and 35 major languages. With poor roads and few plane routes making transportation difficult, the quickest way to go from East Africa to West Africa is to fly north to Paris and board a new plane. The region possesses enormous and relatively untapped wealth and potential. Oil, minerals, forests and woodlands, farmland, mountains, deserts, and fishing off its coasts abound, but the nations within are among the poorest in the world. Africa has the most United Nations peacekeeping missions and the majority of UN field personnel. It hosts seven of the 15 UN peace support missions with more than 70,000 of the nearly 100,000 UN troops, police and observers deployed. More than 100 countries contribute military, police and observer personnel to UN peacekeeping operations. The level of multinational effort is indicative of the international interest in security and stability in Africa.

The very scale of these security cooperation requirements is daunting. The ends, ways and means to achieve the USARAF strategic objective of building partner capacity are further complicated by the lack of assigned forces. At its ends, U.S. strategy wants professional African land forces that are self-sufficient agents for peace and stability on the continent. For this to happen, U.S. Army Africa must become a trusted and reliable partner for African land forces and other agen-
cies and institutions working in Africa. Currently, these AFRICOM missions must be sourced through the global force management process and a request for forces (RFF) on a rotational basis. USARAF’s small staff of roughly 400 military and civilian personnel is easily overwhelmed when it attempts to internally source these requirements. Sourcing via the RFF process has not produced results—SFA requirements don’t typically fit a standard unit configuration—thus USARAF is hard pressed to add value to AFRICOM theater security cooperation requirements. The best it can do at present is to attempt to synchronize all Army activity in Africa, use small teams of skilled and experienced Army leaders and redirect those activities when required to fit theater security cooperation objectives.

The requirement for the ASCC commander to have assigned forces is clear and in evidence. USAREUR has helped European nations for decades to become reliable and interoperable partners. The joint multinational training center is the crown jewel of the Army’s security cooperation effort. With the end in sight in Iraq and the beginning of the end occurring in Afghanistan, the Army has an opportunity to repurpose a portion of the force. A modular brigade combat team (BCT) missioned to conduct security force assistance will go a long way in conducting capacity-building activities at the tactical and operational levels for African land forces—and helping to build a similar relationship with African land forces that USAREUR enjoys with European nations.

Built during the Army force generation (ARFORGEN) process and modeled on advise-and-assist brigades created for Iraq and Afghanistan, these modular SFA brigades would report to the ASCC commander task organized, augmented with specialists and possessing a prescribed level of regional expertise. Augmentation could range upwards to 50 field-grade officers and would cover “human terrain” functions such as law, military police, civil affairs, public affairs, engineering or even provincial reconstruction.

The “augmentation package” is essential and will likely differ from theater to theater. In Africa, many nations lack the corresponding U.S. functions at the ministry of defense level. Presently, most SFA takes place at the squad and individual level—but the greatest assistance will consist of institution building across the entire doctrine, organizations, training, leader development, materiel, personnel and facilities, establishing training centers and a professional NCO corps. With the advent of the ministry of defense advisor program (MODA) and the civilian expeditionary workforce, the DoD has taken steps in the right direction, but the Army will need to “operationalize” this in the ARFORGEN process and get those skill sets into the ASCC’s assigned modular brigade.

Despite the great need for institutional-level development in Africa, USARAF’s main effort should be helping to build the capacity of the five African standby force brigades. The African Union’s goal was to have five regionally oriented brigades fully operational by 2011; three of the brigades are operational. While the other brigades are making headway, they face significant challenges with many of their contributing nations. As the African Union moves towards its goal of producing five brigades that are oriented toward peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, the U.S. Army is well suited to assist. Our brigade-centric Army, with its advise and assist experience, is ideally suited for this mission.

Exercise Natural Fire 2010 exemplified the potential of partnering U.S. land forces with African regional brigades. The largest multinational exercise in Africa in 2009, the USARAF-led exercise in Uganda in October 2009 involved members of the East African community’s eastern standby force brigade and involved roughly 650 troops from five East African partner states: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Facing a disaster-relief scenario, participants

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trained in regional security and humanitarian and civic assistance, while improving interoperability and relations with military partners in East Africa. This exercise was sourced mainly by the USARAF staff. As the exercise concluded, it became clear that a modified BCT augmented at the field grade ranks and with enablers, could easily mirror what the ASCC staff did in its interactions with different African staff officers and conduct squad- through company-level train, advise and assist missions.

Natural Fire 2010 also represents a model for how SFA might be accomplished globally. While the African Union’s land forces capacity is still developing, albeit more slowly than we’d like, its ASF brigades are a tool that can bring about regional stability.

While exercises may be the “big ticket” event, there are many more ways a regionally aligned brigade can assist the ASCC commander in a theater that lacks a large presence. Conceptually, the BCT can operate from its home station with small command and control or liaison nodes forward in theater and at the ASCC’s headquarters. With this arrangement, the BCT is plugged into the ASCC’s security cooperation division and can execute senior leader engagements and act as mentors and advisors for units and institutions like NCO and officer academies. Other units in the BCT can carry out unit exchanges. Another portion of the brigade is trained and prepared for the full spectrum of operations and is available for contingencies and security in less permissive environments.

The Department of the Army has framed the problem similarly, but the outcome is far from certain. To source its SFA requirements, the Army may decide to meet combatant command (COCOM) requirements in accordance with guidance for employment of the force priorities through the global force management board and institutional processes. Accordingly, these forces must be scalable modular forces that are organized, trained and equipped for directed missions and provided to COCOMs via the Army service component command through the ARFORGEN process.

Army efforts to create regionally aligned BCTs with SFA enablers through ARFORGEN will necessarily focus on institutionalizing SFA training capability. Likely using the nascent 162nd Infantry Training Brigade, the Army can develop a regionally focused training capability and provide experienced regional, cultural, language and advisor/trainer expertise. To prepare the modular brigade, the Army could use or modify programs that are already in place. During the ARFORGEN process the brigade’s leaders and soldiers would attend regional language and cultural awareness classes and participate in regionally focused seminars. Language and cultural awareness capacity will be increased by personnel exchanges and site visits to SFA locations.

Early on in the process, the brigade plugs into the ASCC with liaison officer and senior leader visits. Most important, these brigades as well as their training and preparation are scalable and tailorable; they would receive only what they need. In addition, the BCT would not need to deploy as a whole. Command and control elements could be posted to the ASCC headquarters or forward operating stations such as Camp Lemonnier, where they would control “tactical” theater security cooperation. Some efforts would be large in scale, others would be small—advisory teams consisting of 10 to 15 people that resemble military transition teams in Iraq. Others could be infantry companies that partner and train with foreign security forces.

It’s obvious that USARAF or any Army service component command without sufficient and independent resources will have difficulty fulfilling its combatant command’s theater security cooperation objectives. A second-order effect that the lack of assigned forces creates is that it fosters a confused mission command functionality with U.S. Army Europe security cooperation objectives. In essence, the USAREUR commander has veto power over USARAF-use of theater enablers. Sharing theater-enabling capabilities like signal, military intelligence and logistics units may work well in theory but competes with the theory of self-interest, which implies that African requirements will be of secondary concern to a competing headquarters. Until the demand signal in Iraq and Afghanistan lessens and the force is once again in balance, the Army may not be able to resource USARAF with all the forces it requires, but the Army can set the conditions for regionally aligned brigades to be successful. With these regionally aligned brigades in place, all ASCC commanders can fulfill their vital role in theater security cooperation.

Chaplain (CPT) Andy Shepherd, Georgia National Guard, prays with school children and their teacher from the Ududui Primary School during an outreach visit near Soroti, Uganda, the remote training area for Atlas Drop 11.