

NEWS FROM THE CTC

December 2019



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A Peek Behind the Curtains

Leveraging Interagency at the Joint Readiness Training Center for Successful Real-World Engagement

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“Neither diplomacy nor the military can succeed at delivering for presidents and for our country without the other.”

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo
Lecture at Texas A&M University, 15 APR 2019

SETTING THE STAGE

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo recently remarked on the interdependence of defense and diplomacy during an address at Texas A&M University noting that, “Neither diplomacy nor the military can succeed at delivering for presidents and for our country without the other.”¹ A key element of “delivering for our presidents and for our country” is projecting influence overseas in accordance with United States foreign policy priorities. There are two principal means for doing so: through diplomatic persuasion and military force. The Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of State (State), and other agencies of the U.S. government (USG), such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the intelligence community, comprise some of the most important members of the complex bureaucratic structure within which most U.S. foreign policy is formulated and decisions are made about policy implementation. This bureaucratic structure, the interagency (IA), is led by the President in Washington, D.C., and under the authority of the Chief of Mission (COM) abroad (usually the U.S. Ambassador) and through combatant commanders.

In Washington, the National Security Council (NSC) best illustrates the wide range of the IA and how the whole-of-government collective formulates and directs national security policy. It includes the President, Vice President, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Energy as its five statutory members. The NSC also has many non-statutory members with equities in the national security process, for example, the Secretary of the Treasury.

U.S. military doctrine recognizes the critical nature of IA and a whole-of-government approach that “optimizes the instruments of national power to achieve operational objectives and attain strategic end states”². Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, 25 MAR 2013, states, “Challenges to the U.S. and its interests demand that the Armed Forces operate as a closely integrated joint team with interagency and multinational partners.” Adding, “whole-of-government approach is essential to advancing our interests to strengthen security relationships and capacity by, with, and through military forces of partner nations, U.S. and foreign government agencies, state and local government agencies, and intergovernmental or nongovernmental organizations”³. In simpler terms, the USG is more effective and efficient when its various components work together.

The purpose of this article is to facilitate effective engagement between unified action partners (UAP) and the centerpiece of the Army's formation, the brigade combat team (BCT). This facilitation is by providing insights from IA and international organization experts who have supported dozens of training rotations at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). The goal is to help BCT leaders and units better navigate and leverage UAP, particularly IA, in the operational environment (OE).

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

Although there is broad agreement among stakeholders that we accomplish more and do better when we work together to strategically leverage and synchronize our collective capabilities, it is easier said than done. As David Eaton and Gus Otto point out, "[A] whole-of-government approach is only possible when every government department and agency understands the core competencies, roles, missions, and capabilities of its partners and works together to achieve common goals"⁴. At JRTC, the Interorganizational Cooperation Program provides the BCT rotational training unit (RTU) with a dynamic and complex OE and plenty of opportunities to learn firsthand about the competencies, capabilities, and priorities of UAP; work with and leverage UAP to achieve critical objectives in a tactical environment; and explore solutions to the inevitable problem of interorganizational [mis]communication. JRTC scenarios force RTUs to think on their feet and react to a relentless succession of challenges. Like theater, there are actors (role players and subject matter experts), special effects, and props. However, all the challenges are from real life and are likely to occur in the field. These challenges reinforce the importance of effective civil-military relations.

Role players replicate various host nation (HN) actors including a provincial governor, chief of police, health clinic director, and minister of communications among others. The JRTC also brings in a complement of seasoned experts to serve in various capacities as part of the OE. Over the course of dozens of training rotations, these experts have observed a range of practices, for better and worse, that affect the RTU's engagement with UAP. What follows is a peek behind the curtains – brief descriptions of key IA and international organization elements in JRTC scenarios and what they wish BCTs knew about them, their functions, and their capabilities in order to maximize the benefits of these interactions during and beyond training rotations.

Consul General

The Consul General (CG or CONGEN) is the most senior U.S. diplomat in a city, province, or territory, but is subordinate to the Ambassador in the capital. He leads a team working out of a consulate, a diplomatic facility enjoying similar



Figure 1. CONGEN Dara Lam facilitates the rotational training unit meeting with host-nation officials.

privileges to an embassy. Embassies are always in capital cities; consulates are in political, economic, and social centers of gravity. Given the demands of diplomacy and the intensity of contact with HN governments, it is often difficult for embassy staff to leave the capital. Thus the purpose of a consulate, especially in a large country, is to extend the reach and breadth of U.S. diplomatic presence; interact with local people from the government, private sector, and wider community; report on the host's developments of

interest to Washington; and address the needs of the American community living in the consular district.

A consulate can be quite large but usually has far fewer officers than an embassy. In times of crisis, only a skeleton crew remains. Career Foreign Service officers from State, USAID, and other agencies, to include the intelligence community, provide staffing for consulates. If the decision is made to keep a consulate open during a crisis, the focus is primarily on advancing U.S. interests with the political leadership of the region, addressing humanitarian assistance needs and collecting information for reporting to Washington.

What the CONGEN wishes the RTU knew:

“[A] whole-of-government approach is only possible when every government department and agency understands the core competencies, roles, missions, and capabilities of its partners and works together to achieve common goals.”

David Eaton and Gus Otto
“Interagency: Nice to Talk About...Hard to Do”
InterAgency Journal, Volume 6, Issue 3, Summer 2015

- We all have bosses. The CONGEN reports to the Ambassador, who in turn, reports to senior-level officials at State and the NSC. For the CONGEN, getting a query or instruction from the Ambassador is tantamount to an order.
- Tell us sooner rather than later, there are numerous red flags to be aware of, things that will quickly transcend the local environment and hit Washington. Washington believes in the “no surprises” rule. A few of these red flags are deaths of American citizens; attacks on civilian buildings such as schools or hospitals; incidents of friendly fire; and chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive attacks. Such incidents are BIG DEALS, so communicating them timely and accurately (you to us and us to Washington) is critical.
- The consulate building has special status under international law as a diplomatic and consular facility. It cannot be used for military purposes.
- The CONGEN has a direct line to the political leadership in country. It makes no sense and can be counterproductive to go around the CONGEN. The CONGEN can introduce you to HN officials, serve as an honest broker, and offer insight and advice behind the scenes as to possible reactions from HN political leadership and key local decision makers.

Foreign Policy Advisor

Occasionally when requested by DOD, State assigns career FSOs as policy advisors (POLADs) to commanders in the field. The intent of the POLAD is to facilitate closer integration of efforts on the ground and de-conflict military and diplomatic equities. The POLAD is often a senior FSO; sometimes he has a military background that helps him assimilate comparatively easily. POLAD assignment is at the division or joint task force (JTF) level, but may be at subordinate levels when circumstances dictate.

At JRTC, the operational environment includes a POLAD who has been assigned to the Commander of JTF 21, the organizational senior to whom the RTU reports. The POLAD is an

in-house resource to enhance the commander's regional knowledge. The JTF commander in turn uses the POLAD as his direct representative to influence and enhance subordinate commanders' knowledge of the IA.

What the POLAD wishes the RTU knew:

- The POLAD can provide key social, economic, and political interpretations to the BCT commander, staff, and subordinate commanders. That said, having the POLAD as a resource does not relieve the BCT commander of the need to establish and maintain close communication with the CONGEN. The CONGEN is the principal conduit to local HN government representatives as well as to the wider nongovernmental organization (NGO), business, and civilian communities.

- In the peer or near-peer fight, the BCT commander will inevitably become occupied with the maneuver problem to the exclusion of all else. Although the fight is the principal focus, in the interests of U.S. policy, the BCT commander cannot afford to ignore the civil and civil-military aspects of the unit's presence. The appropriate amount of command attention invested in nonlethal issues when they first arise, coupled with delegation of authority to the BCT's enablers to solve problems in accordance with the commander's intent, is critical to efficient time management and utilization of resources.



Figure 2. Policy advisor and the rotational training unit leave Consulate Dara Lam.

- If empowered by the BCT commander, the POLAD can be a key resource in recognizing issues and identifying solutions to free the commander and subordinates to focus on defeating the enemy.

Regional Security Officer

The regional security officer (RSO) is a U.S. federal law enforcement officer. Many RSOs have U.S. military experience, virtually all think like the military, and they have spent years being successful in the IA environment abroad. The RSO's primary responsibility is the security of USG personnel, information, and property under the COM's/Ambassador's authority in a foreign country. This effort involves potentially every federal agency of the USG from the Peace Corps to DOD. These agencies are required to follow security guidance implemented by the RSO and originating in Washington, D.C., by an IA board.

The RSO's role is much broader than dealing with locks, alarms, guards, and other internal security issues. RSOs are the primary security advisor to the Ambassador, other senior staff, various committees, and the U.S. private sector on events throughout a country. They have counterterrorism, counterintelligence, and information technology responsibilities. They manage the Rewards for Justice Program and have tactical control over Marine security guards and Marine fleet antiterrorism security teams, when present. The HN and nearly all U.S. law enforcement agencies rely on the RSO for various forms of assistance and guidance. RSOs have a stake in most, if not all, activities and reports of a U.S. Mission including embassies or consulates.

What the RSO wishes the RTU knew:

- The RSO and staff are invaluable intermediaries for the U.S. Army within the unique IA environment made up of the entire U.S. government and well beyond the walls of the compound.
- RSOs, thinking like our military brethren, can help guide BCT commanders through the IA maze. RSOs can alert commanders to the personalities of key IA leaders, allowing commanders to smoothly engage and establish a rapport to work through the issues jointly confronted. The same goes for key leaders outside of the IA, including HN officials, third-country diplomats, and local and U.S. businesspeople in country.
- The RSO develops relationships with leaders, and normally, with working-level staff. Thus, the RSO can facilitate a quality relationship across the spectrum of HN security services and business sectors. Additionally, as happens commonly in most every country of the world, RSOs can help keep or get Soldiers of all ranks out of unintended difficulties.
- RSOs often have or are able to obtain critical information that can improve the BCT's tactical situation, root out insider threats, identify local organized crime elements, help rescue missing Soldiers, and keep the consulate and its staff safe.
- U.S. Army units should understand the RSO's role in a noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO), remembering there are many evacuations that are not NEOs. A NEO is the only evacuation that involves U.S. military forces. The USG prefers the NEO as a last resort after internal, commercial, contracted, or stolen means of transportation have been attempted, are unavailable, or are too risky. The RSOs are also the primary authors of emergency plans for evacuations. They select rally points and routes, prepare staff and other U.S. citizens desiring to leave, and preselect or obtain on-the-fly resources used to facilitate a safe evacuation. Trying to conduct an evacuation without RSO involvement is likely to result in redundancy of effort and increased risk to all participants at best.
- RSOs are involved in much more than security and evacuations, including things that do not fall neatly into others' boxes. They rescue citizens, conduct unusual investigations locally, chase fugitives, help handle VIP visits, pursue spies, and work closely with all of the entities that make up the IA. They sometimes swim against an IA or COM tide and are expected to dissent when necessary. The RSOs are direct and honest brokers for people, events, and interactions while asking for the same in return.

Intelligence Fusion Cell

The intelligence fusion cell (IFC) provides real-time intelligence and atmospheric conditions occurring during the JRTC decisive action training environment (DATE) framework's ever-changing environment. The IFC provides strategic as well as tactical intelligence allowing the commander and staff to shape the conventional battlefield. The information provided to a BCT commander comprises ongoing intelligence as it pertains to civilian population movements, village atmospherics, population attitudes, and the enemy. It additionally comprises intelligence pertaining to U.S. military dispositions, equipment, and personnel accountability, and the commander's intentions and perspectives concerning the conventional battlefield. The IFC is

usually located at the consulate or embassy and supports the BCT/special operations forces and fellow IA elements.

What the IFC wishes the RTU knew:

- The key to the IFC's impact is effective and secure two-way communications between the IFC and RTU from the very beginning of the exercise and continuing with every interaction.
- The IFC's function is most successful when it is able to work with a BCT liaison team or human intelligence officer. The impact is the BCT's ability to get near real-time and potentially actionable intelligence and information rather than having to rely on a stale 72-hour feedback loop.

Public Affairs Officer

The public affairs officer (PAO) is an FSO specializing in public diplomacy, the art of communicating directly with foreign audiences. The PAO routinely writes speeches for the Ambassador or Consul General; orchestrates outreach events; monitors local press and social media; watches for and then counters disinformation, fake news, or inaccuracies; and looks for new themes and possible openings to insert a U.S. perspective. In addition to local media, PAOs deal with international media and U.S.-based reporters who may be in the region to cover a big story.

What the PAO wishes the RTU knew:

- The BCTs should get to know the PAO early. PAOs have local language abilities, can address live media, and have the contacts and the expertise to get out a message.
- The PAOs coordinate closely with Washington. Each day, spokespersons for State, DOD, and NSC jointly construct and agree on press guidance; this ensures the USG speaks with one voice.
- In the event of a major development likely to gain headlines, a PAO is a crisis manager able to explain, offer context, and mitigate the worst aspects of the news.
- There are also obvious good news stories that many BCTs fail to consider, such as the successful delivery of humanitarian assistance, because of the BCT's focus on coordinating logistics. The PAO can help you to identify and leverage the goodwill these events engender.



Figure 3. The rotational training unit responds to questions from the media and citizens of Dara Lam.

- Reach out to include the HN leadership or other relevant local figures in any media event. They are the faces and voices that the HN population knows. Their presence at your media event can mitigate or diffuse local hostility over the presence of U.S. troops.
- The PAOs differ in several crucial ways from PAOs in military units. PAOs do not engage in propaganda, psychological operations, intelligence collection, or any type of covert activity. Their credibility rests on their ability to convince local people that they are who they say they are and nothing more.

U.S. Agency for International Development

The USAID is the lead USG agency for international development and disaster response. The USG's foreign aid is a tool for the promotion of U.S. foreign policy through development assistance. The USAID development officers are part of the country teams in most countries. Some smaller embassies may be covered by a USAID regional office. At the JRTC, Soldiers are introduced to the three types of USAID entities that they may come across overseas:

- The USAID FSOs working in U.S. Missions (in association with an embassy or consulate) on long-term development programs.
- The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) is the lead agency for responding to a humanitarian crisis created by a complex emergency. Once there is a humanitarian disaster declaration by the USG, USAID (through the OFDA) is responsible for managing, organizing, and providing the resources for the humanitarian response.
- The Office of Transition Initiatives works to support the USG's political policy through programs focused on conflict mitigation, countering violent extremism, post-conflict reconciliation, inter-ethnic peacebuilding, and promoting democratic institutions. It often implements programs in hostile or kinetic environments.

What the USAID wishes the RTU knew:

- State and the USAID are separate and independent organizations, but they work together closely to promote U.S. foreign policy priorities.
- The OFDA is the lead USG agency for the coordination of disaster assistance once the Ambassador has issued a formal disaster declaration.
- The USAID generally, and the OFDA specifically, work through U.S.-based consulting firms and nonprofit organizations to provide services to affected populations. The nonprofit organizations include local, national, and international NGOs as well as United Nations (UN) organizations. Consulting firms work under different contracting mechanisms and provide the USAID with greater speed, flexibility, and control over programs and projects.
- In a post-conflict scenario, donors (e.g., USG, European Union, World Bank, etc.) work together, establishing and contributing to a multi-donor trust fund.
- The OFDA can make formal requests for U.S. military assistance through a mechanism called a mission-tasking matrix. In these cases, the initial needs assessment for these relief supplies and their onward (downrange) distribution would be the responsibility of the USAID and its partner organization. However, the significant "lift" or transport

capabilities of the U.S. military are to convey these critical supplies to the affected region.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The JRTC includes the presence of the international humanitarian community. Within the JRTC construct, a subject matter expert or technical advisor represents the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In real-world humanitarian disasters, this office's representation is normally within the UN system through the Emergency Relief Coordinator at Geneva, Switzerland, or the UN country team. In the JRTC scenario, as in real life, OCHA is responsible for coordinating relief operations on the ground by appointing "cluster lead" agencies and providing adequate funding for relief operations. Each cluster lead is responsible for oversight of a particular sector of the relief efforts. Appointments of cluster leads are from agencies already operating in theater. This coordination reduces redundancies and facilitates the sharing of relief operations on the ground with the HN government and cooperating agencies. At JRTC, the humanitarian element of the scenario is an opportunity for Soldiers' exposure to important stakeholders in a conflict in the context of today's complex geopolitical environment.

What the OCHA wishes the RTU knew:

- International law requires that the Geneva Conventions, Law of War, etc., be considered when fighting any adversary in order to protect civilian lives and noncombatants. Tragedies such as the strike on the Médecins Sans Frontières Hospital in Syria illustrate the importance of this cooperation.
- While maintaining a neutral posture in order to conduct life-saving activities, humanitarian agencies may require the assistance of military elements in theater to assist with humanitarian operations (usually a last resort) at some point. The inclusion of these international actors in the JRTC scenario exposes Soldiers to their presence and activities in the battlespace. Together, these exchanges in a training rotation are, without exception, a challenge for commanders as well as a valuable learning tool.
- Soldiers are awed by the experience with the humanitarian element of the JRTC scenario. Regular infantry Soldiers, such as those positioned at entry control points, get training on how to handle issues such as freedom of movement and proper recognition of vetted humanitarian actors.
- The JRTC's whole-of-government approach encourages the BCT to integrate the collective IA/NGO/international organization community for a successful end and holistic mission accomplishment.

PARTING THOUGHTS: ONE MORE (KEY) POINT

During the IA seminar at a recent JRTC Leaders Training Program, a BCT commander turned to his staff and pointed out what should be, but rarely is, obvious: the BCT is part of IA. Joint Publication 3-08, *Interorganizational Cooperation*, 12 OCT 2016, reinforces this point, defining IA as "of or pertaining to U.S. government agencies and departments, including the Department of Defense." In fact, doctrine that is joint or otherwise generally emphasizes the necessity of whole-of-government solutions and the importance of interorganizational cooperation in the tactical environment. The whole-of-government approach however, implies that the government is organized well, running smoothly, and unanimous in its opinions. Nothing could be further from the truth. Anyone who has worked IA is familiar with its messiness and the cumbersome

aspects of IA processes. For Soldiers used to straightforward chains of command and rules of engagement, ambiguity and obscurity can be an unpleasant revelation. Furthermore, the leap from understanding to execution is significant, especially since whole-of-government extends to the individual Soldier, diplomat, and humanitarian worker. This last point is why JRTC provides the many and varied opportunities for leaders and units at all levels to engage with IA and other UAP. The key point taken for BCT leadership and units departing JRTC is an understanding of how tactical- and operational-level IA efforts and outcomes are linked to the USG's desired strategic outcomes, regardless of the OE (counterinsurgency, DATE, or otherwise), and how the BCT can leverage IA to achieve these strategic outcomes.

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Figure 4. The rotational training unit greets dislocated civilians near Janan.

¹Michael R. Pompeo, "Why Diplomacy Matters" (Lecture, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas), 15 APR 2019.

²Joint Publication 3-08, *Interorganizational Cooperation*, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C., 12 OCT 2016.

³JP 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C., 25 MAR 2013, incorporating Change 1, 12 JUL 2017.

⁴David Eaton and Gus Otto, "Interagency: Nice to Talk About...Hard to Do," *InterAgency Journal*, Volume 6, Issue 3, Summer 2015.