

Security Force Assistance Brigade Maneuver Advisor Teams in Large Scale Combat Operations

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INTRODUCTION:

During exercises at the Joint Multinational Training Center, units can struggle with the effective integration of attached partnered and allied units in a decisive action training environment. These challenges are often associated with interoperability and can be replicated in large-scale combat operations against a near-peer competitor, which can ultimately reduce the effective combat power of attached partnered and allied units.

A maneuver advisor team from 1ST Security Force Assistance Brigade was attached to the 13TH Mechanized Infantry Battalion from Slovakia during Combined Resolve XII in order to assess its ability to enhance interoperability. . The Slovakian unit was attached to 1/1 AD for the duration of the rotation. Observation and analysis from Combined Resolve XII indicated that maneuver advisor teams are uniquely well suited to enhance interoperability with foreign supported forces in large-scale combat operations. However, this effective employment highlighted additional considerations and requires both the higher supported headquarters and the maneuver advisor teams to adjust their tactics, techniques and procedures. These adjustments focus on the higher headquarters enabling the teams when they need to modify their tactics, techniques and procedures from a stability or security operations framework to a large-scale combat operations framework.

A CHANGE IN MINDSET:

Employment of an SFAB MAT in large-scale combat operations requires a mindset adjustment for the maneuver advisor teams when compared with their customary employment in support of security and stability operations. The teams that deploy in support of security or stability operations usually have the luxury of time to establish relationships with partnered forces, conduct pre-deployment site surveys, conduct relief in place with other counterparts and conduct other preparatory activities. Additionally, in security and stability operations, maneuver advisor teams typically deploy nested under their organic SFAB's Battalion headquarters. The SFAB Battalion headquarters assists in the assessment, sustainment and equip functions of the mission, focused on developing the capacity and capability of the foreign supported forces.

In security and stability operations, the team typically seeks to avoid executing command and control whenever possible so that the partnered force builds its own capabilities. Under this mindset, the partnered force's ability to command and control²,

even at a reduced capacity, is the primary objective. However, when engaged in LSCO, the mission success must be the primary objective for the maneuver advisor team, with all other aspects of building warfighting function capacity constituting secondary objectives. This may force the maneuver advisor teams to exercise command and control or provide other unilateral capabilities in situations during which they normally would not. Furthermore, in security and stability operations, there are minimum survivability, sustainment and force protection standards that, if not met, require the team to disengage with their foreign supported forces. Yet, during large-scale combat operations, the conditions will typically not support these standards and require the maneuver advisor teams to remain engaged in conditions under which they would otherwise disengage.

CAPABILITIES BY INTEROPERABILITY COMPONENT:

NATO organizes interoperability into three components: human, procedural and technical. The human component consists of language, culture and terminology. The procedural component addresses doctrine, techniques, procedures, the orders process and command and control. The technical component consists of the systems and platforms used.

The SFAB maneuver advisor teams facilitate increased capacity across all three of these interoperability components.. A team consists of 12 advisors specially trained to increase capabilities in their foreign supported forces counterparts across all warfighting functions. These advisors possess operational experience in their area of expertise and specialized training in how to assess, assist, advise, train and equip a foreign supported forces. (See Figure 1)

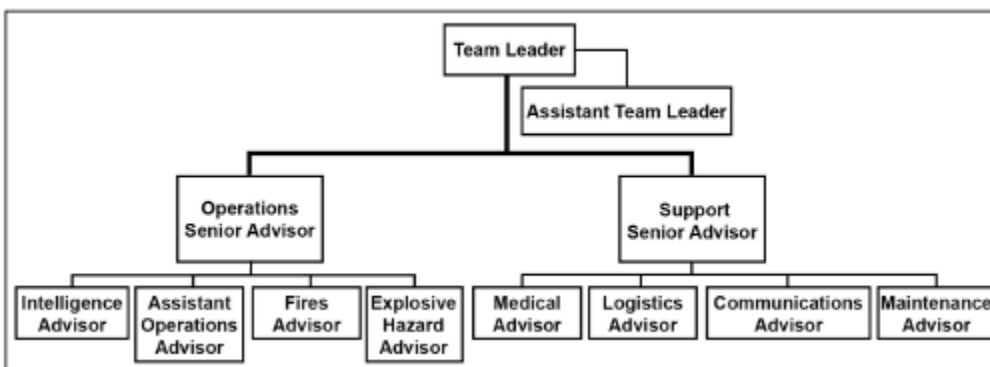


Figure 1: SFAB MAT Advisor Organization

HUMAN The SFAB maneuver advisor teams have training and systems that help them to quickly assess a partnered force, develop a training plan, and measure progress. In security or stability operations, much of this training and development focuses on the human domain. Maneuver advisor teams advisors strive to build trusting relationships

with their counterparts to increase buy-in, develop shared understanding and increase the operational capacity of their counterpart. Trust is paramount between the teams and the foreign supported forces as the large-scale combat operations fight stresses these relationships.

Additionally, each team receives specialized cultural training specific to their foreign supported forces prior to deployment. This helps the teams identify and close capability gaps. These teams provide US commander's candid feedback on the capabilities and limitations of the foreign supported forces and can help bridge cultural differences. Moreover, the advisors can ensure that the foreign supported forces fully understand the higher supported headquarters commander's intent and end state and any associated nuance.

Large-scale combat operations stress relationships. Building trusting relationships in an abbreviated timeline is difficult if the parties are unfamiliar with each other. The maneuver advisor teams' ability to build capacity across the procedural and technical components of interoperability could be limited by their ability to build relationships early in the assess phase of their mission.

PROCEDURAL By virtue of experience and training, maneuver advisor teams are well versed in US doctrine. The teams can partner with a foreign supported forces at the company, battalion and brigade level to assist in building capacity across all warfighting functions. They provide their partnered force with resident procedural proficiency in the military decision making process), command and control, tactical operations center operations and speed the integration of foreign supported forces. This all helps ease the learning curve of partnered and allied forces working subordinate or adjacent to US forces.

Each maneuver advisor team advisor is trained to advise up to two levels above their current position. Ideally, the team is aligned with a foreign-supported forces company, but they may be aligned with a brigade or battalion partnered force if required. US allies and partners have varied experience with NATO and US Forces doctrine. Most allies and partners do not conduct military decision making process or troop leading procedures consistent with those of a US higher headquarters. In such circumstances, the SFAB maneuver advisor team can serve as an interpreter between the higher supported headquarters and the foreign supported forces. In this role, the maneuver advisor teams assist the foreign supported forces in translating the way the higher supported headquarters operates at the staff level and speeds the integration of them into US forces command and control systems and techniques.

TECHNICAL Maneuver advisor teams also bring a robust array of secure communications equipment, which serves to enhance interoperability with the partnered force and reinforces the communications architecture between them and the higher supported headquarters. The fires advisor provides joint fires observer capabilities to the partnered force, thus enabling the employment of close air support and close

combat aviation in addition to indirect fires. The maneuver advisor teams also possesses the ability to transport, secure and sustain themselves independent of the foreign supported forces.

The maneuver advisor team has organic secure FM, HF, TACSAT, JBC-P, DTCS, ATAK systems as well as Raven and PUMA small unmanned aerial systems which most partnered and allied forces lack. This capabilities package allows them to supplement their partnered force with command control and communication platforms that are more in line with the higher supported headquarters' communications plan. These systems assist in building shared understanding both up and down echelons of command.

BEST PRACTICES:

HUMAN Early coordination between the maneuver advisor team, higher supported headquarters and foreign supported forces is paramount to increasing interoperability. The maneuver advisor team relies on early coordination with the foreign supported forces to assess capabilities and limitations, and identify training and support requirements. Additionally, but equally important, the team must use this time to build trusting relationships with their foreign supported forces counterparts. Large-scale combat operations abbreviates the time available for this phase. Without prior coordination, the maneuver advisor team finds itself in a position where they are trying to assist the foreign supported forces in satisfying the demands of the higher supported headquarters without the necessary understanding and buy-in of the foreign supported forces leadership.

If the higher supported headquarters has an established relationship with the foreign supported forces, they should consider fostering a relationship between the foreign supported forces and the maneuver advisor team prior to deployment. The more opportunities the team has to assess, advise and build relationships- the more effective their partnership will be.

PROCEDURAL The maneuver advisor team serves as a liaison between the higher supported headquarters and the foreign supported forces. If the maneuver advisor team and higher supported headquarters are equipped with disparate command and control systems and procedures, these discrepancies must be resolved before the execution of large-scale combat operations.

SFAB maneuver advisor teams require time to learn and assess the specific systems of the higher supported headquarters, such as planning standard operating procedures and tactical standard operating procedures . Therefore, the higher supported headquarters must distribute its PSOP and TACSOP to the team and foreign supported forces prior to deployment to assist the maneuver advisor team in building and sharing the common operating picture. Finally, the higher supported headquarters maneuver

advisor team and foreign supported forces should participate in a distributed command post exercise before deploying together.

A maneuver advisor team typically deploys in support of the SFAB (BN) that directs and aligns the efforts of multiple maneuver advisor teams in support of FSFs that are engaged in security or stabilization operations. When a maneuver advisor team deploys without their SFAB headquarters, the higher supported headquarters should clearly define the command support relationship between the higher supported headquarters, the maneuver advisor team, and the foreign supported forces. Ambiguity in the command structure can create a fragile seam between the higher supported headquarters, maneuver advisor team and foreign supported forces so it is important to establish the command support relationship clearly, early and to all parties.

TECHNICAL The higher supported headquarters should conduct analysis of their command and control systems and coordinate what additional systems the foreign supported forces requires. Additionally, the higher supported headquarters must coordinate with the maneuver advisor team on the disposition of their communications systems so that the communications plan can be established and rehearsed before deployment.

Although the team's capabilities suite facilitates shared understanding to the partnered foreign supported forces at the company level and below, the maneuver advisor team does not possess the requisite density of command and control systems to replicate a tactical operations center and would require additional systems from the higher supported headquarters if required to do so.. Specifically, the maneuver advisor team may need additional JBC-P TOC kits and AFATDS if the higher supported headquarters is using those systems for command and control and digital fires.

CONCLUSION:

The SFAB maneuver advisor teams are uniquely trained and equipped to build interoperability between a US headquarters and a FSF. The teams possess the ability to quickly assess the capabilities of a partnered force, develop an advisory plan and establish trusting relationships that they then leverage across the human component of interoperability. The advisors possess expertise in the systems that US forces use to execute command and control and manage warfighting function. This expertise closes a procedural gap that many partnered forces struggle to overcome when deployed subordinate to US forces. The team's ability to provide turnkey secure communications equipment enables the rapid development of shared understanding at echelon. These communications systems, along with the maneuver advisor teams joint fires observer, mitigate technical disparity with the partnered force and enable the effective employment of fires, close combat aviation and close air support.

Coordination during pre-deployment phases, specifically through distributed command post exercises, will greatly benefit the maneuver advisor teams ability to build relationships, become familiar with their higher supported headquarters and FSF procedures, and align their technical capacity to support command and control and build shared understanding. Additionally, the SFAB maneuver advisor teams must acknowledge that the success of the mission might require them to execute C2, or provide other necessary capabilities unilaterally, potentially at the cost of the long-term development of the partnered force.