

LETTERS

To the Editor—Thank you for emphasizing the importance of better understanding the strategic impact of the law on America's warfighting capability and culture through the topics recently covered in *Joint Force Quarterly* (Issue 48, 1st Quarter 2008). Your authors have done the Department of Defense and the Republic a great service by highlighting the importance of the legal instrument in support of U.S. strategic objectives.

In particular, the two articles by Colonel James Terry, USMC (Ret.), and the essays by Colonel Peter Cullen, USA, and Colonel Kevin Cieply, ARNG, effectively lay out both the scope and nature of the legal challenges that we face in the years ahead.

I am convinced that we win wars because of the way we fight, adhering to accepted standards of behavior that govern combat and the treatment of our enemies. These standards are central to our national identity; they provide the moral foundation for our actions on the world stage. Operators in all branches of the Armed Forces and leaders at every level of government must understand and embrace the principles that underpin our actions. Reinforcing these principles in both training and application will help us avoid the damaging effects of incidents such as Abu Ghraib.

Judge advocates continue to provide guidance on these subjects to commanders from tactical to strategic levels, as the Services come together to conduct operations in the joint commands around the world. Your exposition of these issues in *JFQ* helps ensure senior decisionmakers continue to fight the Nation's wars in a way that will make future generations of Americans proud.

—Col David C. Wesley, USAF
Commandant

The Judge Advocate General's School
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

To the Editor—After reading Robert Oakley and Michael Casey's "The Country Team: Restructuring America's First Line of Engagement" (Issue 47, 4th Quarter 2007), I wanted to give some candid feedback "from the field," as it were, in regard to U.S. Country Teams. The article is spot on, for the most part, and should be widely disseminated for *all* to read—not only in the military, but also in all Federal agencies that send representatives to U.S. Embassies.

I recently completed a 3 ½-year tour as the Marine and Navy Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, where I oversaw relations with Special Operations Forces, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), and counterterrorism efforts and activities. Several months after arriving at post, I realized that there were several different agencies working on soda-straw portions of counterterrorism-related issues but that there was no *integrated* effort on either the U.S. or Polish side.

To address this, I suggested to Ambassador Chris Hill that we create a Joint Interagency Counterterrorism Working Group (JIACWG) that could integrate and unify actions and better reach out to and coordinate activities with the host nation government. I proposed that in working with the host nation, we adopt a structure and approach that mirrored the PSI, which was launched by the United States in Poland and is now global in scope and application.

This suggestion was embraced by Ambassador Hill and all agency heads. The process of self-examination resulted in a critical assessment of what U.S. policy *was* in Poland and the surrounding region. It took several months to sort out what the various directives from Washington were and then how to weave these back together in Warsaw into an integrated and harmonized set of objectives. Receiving not only insubstantial but also contradictory guidance from Washington, we set out to approach the Poles and ask them to join us in putting all of their national agencies into a similar working group. While this met with some initial skepticism, over the following year we were able to merge into a collaborative working environment.

The capstone event took place last spring, when the U.S. Embassy, with strong support and interaction from Washington and the Polish government, held the first bilateral counterterrorism exercise. This was an "almost no notice," very closely held exercise in which six protagonists attacked the Embassy, seized hostages, and exercised the emergency action council at the Embassy and host nation responders at the same time. The exercise was very successful, and the JIACWG had gone from a concept to a reality.

This example serves as a textbook example of what Ambassador Oakley and Mr. Casey are driving at. All of their points resonated closely with me from my experience with Country Teams in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The delicate balancing act between the Ambassador and other leaders of various organizations who comprise the Country Team

requires both vigorous personal leadership and a strong organizational commitment to long-term personnel policies that will ensure effectiveness that is not personality dependent.

I do take issue with Ambassador Oakley and Mr. Casey's comments vis-à-vis the military. While I am sure that their remarks accurately reflect the Ambassador's experiences, they do not reflect, with only minor exceptions, the experiences that I have had with a great many Country Teams, from Warsaw to Canberra. When Ambassador Oakley states that "to this day the military is not routinely enjoined to work with Ambassadors," he overlooks the fact that, for example, the commander of U.S. European Command holds an annual Ambassadors' conference where he meets with all of the Ambassadors at length. Furthermore, the Joint Military Attaché School goes to great lengths to explain the role and mission of the Ambassador as the Presidential envoy to the host nation, and every attaché knows this upon assignment to post or station. When Ambassador Oakley notes that "non-State Department personnel often outnumber diplomats," he could also add that these personnel frequently have more overseas time and experience than their State Department colleagues, a fact that can further hamper the ability of the Country Teams and their respective staffs to work well together.

—LtCol D.J. Thieme, USMC
25th Marine Regiment

To the Editor—Robert Oakley and Michael Casey's article "The Country Team: Restructuring America's First Line of Engagement" (issue 47, 4th Quarter 2007) is an outstanding compendium of issues and challenges regarding interagency work in the Embassy "field environment" traditionally reserved for diplomats. The authors note that the goal of maximizing U.S. foreign policy in other countries is more complex than ever. They also point out that those selected as Ambassador do not necessarily have a proven track record of effectively representing U.S. interests and that the process often ignores language and cultural skills. Tellingly, Ambassador Oakley and Mr. Casey pen the same indictment for the training and selection of other agency heads. What is noteworthy is that a pool of capable, qualified officers able to represent the Department of Defense (DOD) in today's challenging global environment already exists.

This pool of officers should be a primary consideration when implementing the new DOD Directive 5105.75, which excised the term *United States Defense Representative* (USDR)

from the vernacular and established the Senior Defense Officer (SDO) as the “diplomatically accredited Defense Attaché (DATT) and Chief of the Security Assistance Organization (SAO),” in effect making the officer dual-hatted as both the SDO and DATT. The SDO/DATT is to “act as the [commander’s] principal military advisor on defense and national security issues, the senior diplomatically accredited DOD military officer assigned at a U.S. diplomatic mission, and the single [point of contact] for DOD matters involving embassy or DOD elements assigned to or working from the embassy.”

The action to establish a principal DOD official speaks to but one of many recent policy attempts to grapple with the contemporary operating environment and better prepare the United States to meet emerging national security goals. To that end, the existing Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program provides a ready solution to the problem of developing and placing the right military personnel—what the Army would term *Soldier-Statesmen*—in Embassies in order to effect a more seamless interagency solution, while at the same time providing regional experts capable of working effectively at all levels with both friends and allies. If we are to better prosecute the war on terror, we need not only to provide a single DOD authority for Ambassadors and country teams, as this new policy requires, but also to select and promote those who are best trained and best qualified to operate effectively in this arena.

The Army FAO program is synonymous with the parameters of the new SDO policy, which aims to provide selected personnel with the requisite skills to function as the DOD representative on the country team. In fact, the new policy articulates a broad set of requirements such as language, attaché, and security cooperation training, which are already part and parcel of an experienced FAO kitbag. While it is true that a number of positions affected by the new policy are already manned by qualified FAOs, there are two exceptions that must be addressed.

First, the Army and Marine Corps FAO programs have proven track records over several decades. However, until recently the Navy and Air Force programs have received minimal emphasis, and assignments to Embassy billets as often as not represented a final reward for long and faithful service, vice ensuring the best trained and most capable were sent. This often counterproductive approach is something DOD FAO guidelines should serve to eradicate.

Second, there remain key countries that, due to size of account (Egypt, Saudi Arabia)

or importance of the relationship (Turkey, Russia, China), have general officer/flag officer billets that have met the requirement for the USDR. The DOD program for FAOs states that “Officers with potential for service on political-military staffs and for effective military diplomacy shall be competitively selected within the Military Departments and be able to represent the U.S. Department of Defense to foreign governments and military establishments.” This has typically not been the case. A traditional lack of FAO competitiveness for promotion above O-6 means that countries important to U.S. goals often do not enjoy leadership selected from the FAO ranks. This has been succinctly captured by the authors. This new policy endorses FAO promotion to flag rank and would serve to ensure officers possessive of skills, area experience, and established credibility with the host nation are selected.

With the current emphasis on the war on terror, it is no wonder that the exploits of the likes of T.E. Lawrence have experienced a rebirth in U.S. military academic institutions such as the U.S. Army’s Command and General Staff College. But what was Lawrence if not the prototypical FAO? Lawrence intuitively understood the culture in which he was dealing because of travel, in-depth study, and experience in the region. His ability to draw upon this background contributed immensely to Great Britain’s efforts in World War II. Well-trained and effectively developed, FAOs understand jointness, inter-agency cooperation, and the multinational environment far better than traditional operators who rise to flag rank on the strength of Service-specific command performances.

It is time to recognize that the Cold War ended years ago, and we no longer find our enemy postured to attack the Fulda Gap. Our ability to operate effectively means the development of senior leaders who understand that efforts to force an answer in a foreign culture where no answer *is* your answer will harm, not help, U.S. interests. In short, it means recognizing that the U.S. military possesses an extant, but as yet only partially tapped, pool of experts who can make tangible, lasting, and meaningful contributions to the Nation’s security at a time their skills are most required, while concurrently effecting institutional change to capture their potential over the long term.

—Jeffrey D. Vordermark
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