

Putting the First Team on the Field

Irregular warfare and Marine combat advisors

by Gil Barndollar & R. Sam Long

The Marine Corps is and always has been an irregular warfare organization.¹ Born in the fires of revolution in 1775, we have spent most of our 241 years of service engaged in messy, low-intensity conflicts, not conventional set-piece battles. In 1805, 1stLt Presley O'Bannon led the original SFAAT (security force advisory and assistance team), a detachment of seven Marines and two Navy midshipmen. This intrepid band advised, motivated, and led a motley force of Christian and Muslim mercenaries to the Barbary pirate city of Derna, Tripoli, where the Stars and Stripes was hoisted on foreign soil for the first time and the Marine officer's Mameluke sword was earned.² A century later, the Marine Corps literally wrote the book on irregular warfare: the *Small Wars Manual* of 1940. It is still the seminal work on the subject almost 80 years after it was published. Even amidst the tragic waste and incompetence of the Vietnam War, Marines stood out as irregular warfare practitioners. Whether as *co vants* (advisors) to South Vietnamese Marines or through the innovative CAP (Combined Action Platoon) program, Marine advisors shone.³ During the unipolar American triumphalism of the 1990s, Marines saw that irregular warfare was in our future. Our 31st Commandant, Gen Charles C. Krulak, was prophetic when he said that, "The war of the future will be the stepchild of Somalia and Chechnya, not the son of Desert Storm."⁴

Working with foreign forces in irregular warfare is clearly "in our DNA" as Marines.⁵ This task, and its centerpiece, combat advising, remains as vital to our national security as it was when Presley

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O'Bannon's men stood on the shores of Tripoli. The 15 years of expeditionary warfare in the Islamic world after 9/11 have affirmed the foolishness of large-scale, third-party counterinsurgency and nation building, and have magnified the importance of working "by, with, and through" local partners. As then-Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates

told the Association of the U.S. Army in 2007, "The most important component in the war on terror is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we enable and empower our partners to defend and govern their own countries."⁶ The sudden onslaught of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan have dem-



Georgian Army Senior Sergeant Firuzi Mskhvilidze receives the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device, Tbilisi, Georgia, 2015. (Photo by U.S. Embassy, Tbilisi, Georgia.)

onstrated the price we will pay when we fail to ensure we have credible partner armies in chaotic regions of the greater Middle East. For reasons that have been evident for decades, irregular warfare remains the most likely challenge Marines will confront around the world.⁷

Combat advising, contrary to some misperceptions, is not a task reserved for SOF (special operations forces). Our joint counter-insurgency doctrine, *MCWP 3-33.5, Counterinsurgency Operations*, declares that “training foreign forces is now a core competency of regular and reserve units of all Services.”⁸ While UW (unconventional warfare) is rightly the province of U.S. Army Special Forces, a tiny percentage of our engagements abroad fall in that category. Most of our recent wars have instead involved FID (foreign internal defense).⁹ In practice if not in statute, FID has been a Marine core competency for many years. The best way for the Marine Corps to prepare for future FID and irregular warfare operations is to institutionalize the selection and training of highly capable Marine combat advisors.

Problem Identification

Marines have been heavily employed as combat advisors around the world since 9/11. Working from the squad to the corps level, Marines have mentored and advised foreign partners from the jungles of the Philippines to the peaks of eastern Afghanistan, usually operating in austere conditions and with minimal supervision. In spite of this diverse and superficially-successful record of combat advising, we have little to brag about. The Iraqi and Afghan armies and police forces that we invested so much blood, sweat, and treasure mentoring and training have manifestly failed against inferior opposition. We can tell ourselves that the collapse of the Iraqi Army in 2014 had a thousand fathers and that the ANA (Afghan National Army) is hamstrung by its culture. There is certainly ample truth to both contentions.¹⁰ But at the end of the day, the facts on the ground are what they are. The armies we spent over a decade advising have proved to be hollow forces. Taliban flags fly across most of Helmand Province while ISIS



There should be no daylight between combat advisors and their foreign partners. (Photo by author.)

is only now being pushed out of Anbar Province in Iraq. Both campaigns were once declared hard-won victories. “We were winning when I left” is, at best, a poor joke. As an organization, we have repeatedly failed to institutionalize the critical task of combat advising. The Marine Corps has over two centuries of experience in advising, highlighted by some of the most heroic episodes in our history. Yet we still take on the combat advising mission in a manner that borders on negligence, with predictable results.

Even if we were to focus on inputs and not outcomes, we should not hold our heads high. Former Marine combat advisor Owen West has written,

Advisers need a wonk’s cultural awareness, the rudimentary language capability of a border cop, a survivalist’s skills, and the interpersonal savvy of a politician.¹¹

Yet, for this mission, one of the most difficult that our Nation can ask its ser-

vicemen to perform, we have repeatedly failed to send our best and brightest, and we have failed to properly train those whom we have sent. There has been no barrier to entry as a Marine combat advisor and hardly any pre-deployment attrition. Training has been focused on basic combat skills and maximizing the odds of advisors coming home alive as opposed to maximizing their odds of accomplishing the mission. The result has been a slapdash effort, where some advisor teams excel while others are transparently ineffective, derided as dumping grounds for unwanted officers and SNCOs. We are lying to ourselves if we say we ever made combat advising the main effort. Indeed, it is a stretch to say that, as an institution, we have ever taken advising seriously since 9/11.

Advisor Selection and Preparation: Ad Hoc Solutions versus a Permanent Capability

Several units associated with training and teaching combat advising have

existed in the Marine Corps over the past 15 years. In 2005, the FMTU (Foreign Military Training Unit) was activated at Camp Lejeune with the mission of providing combat advisor teams to support FID operations. By 2009, however, the creation of MAR-SOC (Marine Corps Special Operations Command) led to the absorption of the FMTU into what has become the Marine Raider Regiment. From 2008–14, the ATG (Advisor Training Group) at MCAGCC Twentynine Palms provided Block IV training and certification for deploying advisor teams, usually in conjunction with a MOJAVE VIPER or Enhanced MOJAVE VIPER exercise. In 2011, the MCTAG (Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group) and the SCETC (Security Cooperation Education and Training Center) merged, forming the MCSCG (Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group) at the site of the former Amphibious Reconnaissance School, Fort Story, VA. Although an exhaustive recounting of the various entities involved in training of Marine advisors (both pre-surge combat advisors and those deployed to train Latin American, Asian, and African allies) is beyond the scope of this essay, two key observations are worth making: first, that no true “center of excellence” has ever existed for Marine combat advising, and second, that our ability as an institution to select high performing Marines for advisor duty has actually declined despite 15 years of continuous conflict.

From 2009–16, most Marine advisor teams were assembled and trained at the I MEF and II MEF ATCs (Advisor Training Cells), units comprised of a roughly a dozen permanent personnel and 40 to 60 TAD (temporary additional duty) Marines assigned to fill the variety of billets necessary to run a de facto schoolhouse.¹² The TAD model allowed the MEFs to tax subordinate units, primarily the 1st and 2d MarDivs, for individual Marines to work at ATC for temporary stints as instructors or staff. Unfortunately, this “blind sourcing model” birthed a schoolhouse in name only. Though there were some notable individual exceptions, the ATCs largely became a dumping ground for

Marines who were unwanted by their battalions. This phenomenon was not limited to ammo drivers and radio operators—throughout ATC’s history, key instructor staff often lacked the requisite advisor experience to train incoming teams. One example will have to suffice, although an entire article could be filled with them. In July 2014, the senior corpsman sent to lead the CLS (combat lifesaver) training division at I MEF ATC had never taken a CLS course, had never treated a casualty, and had spent the previous three years at Camp Pendleton’s dental clinic. When the ATC officer-in-charge inquired as to why her command sent a HM1 without Fleet Marine Force experience to lead a course she was completely unqualified to teach, a course that had a tangible and demonstrable impact on whether Marine advisors could survive battlefield injuries, her command articulated that the HM1 was in need of further leadership development and they hoped that her stint at ATC would be useful in that regard.

In August 2014, as Islamic State militants swept across western Iraq toward Baghdad, only two of the approximately 40 personnel at I MEF ATC had ever served as combat advisors, and only one in Iraq. As I MEF scrambled to cobble together an advisor team in the only way it knew how, the Marine Corps began to reap what it had sown. Despite nearly a decade of warfare involving partnered forces, the ATC staff’s major contribution to the Marines hastily assembling for pre-deployment advisor training was coordinating vaccinations and assisting in the drawing of cold weather gear.¹³

Yet, poor coaches do not necessarily guarantee poor athletes. The ATCs did not guarantee battlefield mediocrity for Marine advisor teams. The Marine advisor selection process, or lack thereof, birthed teams with disproportionately high numbers of castoffs and unproven junior leaders, not the experienced and initiative-driven officers and NCOs desperately needed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2004, then-CENTCOM Commander GEN John Abizaid admitted to then-LTG David Petraeus that when it came to advisor teams, “We didn’t give you the best and

the brightest. We put the third team on the field.”¹⁴ That the Marine Corps committed the same sins with its human capital as our Army cousins is testimony to our squandered advisor legacy.¹⁵

Marine advisor teams checking into ATC were largely sourced from within I or II MEF, with little thought given to a Marine’s suitability for advising other than the checklists certifying the rubrics that make modern Marines deployable. (Read: annual training complete, PFT/CFT complete, and sexual harassment brief attended.) To fill the teams, an MEF or division taxed its subordinate units for combat advisors by rank and MOS. So, on an 18-man team sourced from across I MEF in late 2012 for a deployment with a foreign infantry battalion, 1st Marines was tapped for one infantry captain, 5th Marines for another, and 1st LAR for a third. 11th Marines was taxed for the field grade combat arms officer-in-charge, while the officers and enlisted Marines filling the logistics, intelligence, and communications billets came from a plethora of units from 1st MarDiv, 1st Marine Logistics Group, and even 3d MAW.

Unfortunately, the unofficial mechanisms in place to guarantee that the MEF’s supposed main effort was receiving highly-qualified and experienced Marines routinely failed. The temporary nature of the ATC staffs disincentivized push back against all but the most egregious selection errors. Battalions and squadrons largely sent Marines they could afford to lose or Marines they had no desire to keep. Many advisor billets were “one up/one down,” meaning that taxed units could provide Marines within one rank of an articulated task organization. Newly-minted corporals reported for sergeants’ billets, and inexperienced lieutenants filled roles meant for post-company command captains. Data pulled from three years’ worth of Afghanistan-bound Marine advisor teams by the Center for Naval Analyses confirms the widespread nature of this practice: from March 2010 to March 2013, 56 percent of the enlisted Marines who advised Afghanistan National Security Force units were below the rank of sergeant, and 61 percent of the officers were lieutenants.¹⁶ The level of

inexperience in our putative main effort was embarrassing. Forty-year-old Afghan commanders who had been fighting for most of their adult lives sometimes found themselves “mentored” by 24-year-old lieutenants fresh out of MOS school. Small wonder that many advisors seem to have had trouble building rapport.

The preparation that our haphazardly selected Marine combat advisors received at ATC was mediocre at best, and it was only marginally improved by a four-week stint at ATG (prior to ATG’s closure in mid-2014). Future advisors were taught basic combat proficiencies, given PowerPoint classes meant to generate embryonic language skills, and certified to drive mine-resistant vehicles (God forbid our Marines ride in the same vulnerable “danger Rangers” as their partners). ATC staff taught introductory interpersonal skills classes aimed at building basic cultural awareness and coordinated ranges and ammunition for easily executed 25-yard-and-in “CMP shoots” and crew-served weapons familiarization fires. In the end, when sent to execute one of the Corps’ most challenging 21st century missions, our advisors muddled through and sometimes made progress—but they did so in spite of their training, not because of it.

The Marine Advisor Training Center

Our present ad hoc approach to combat advising is a failure by any measure that matters. Some defense thinkers have advocated the opposite extreme, the creation of a standing “Advisor Corps.”¹⁷ The case for a permanent Marine advisor corps has been made in *Gazette* pages.¹⁸ As our Nation’s smallest Service, and in a time of declining budgets yet high operational tempo, we cannot afford to fence off forces for one mission. Between the two poles of ad hoc advising in a crisis and a permanent advisor corps lies the answer. We need to seed our Operating Forces with rigorously selected and highly trained Marine officer and enlisted combat advisors, Marines who are proficient in their MOSs and possess the right personality and mindset to advise and mentor foreign forces.

The introduction of the foreign security force advisor MOSs (0570 and 0571) is a small step in the right direction. Identifying Marines who have successfully served as combat advisors may provide us a nucleus of advisors for the next crisis, but it will be a weak foundation.¹⁹ The long-term answer is a permanent, formalized, and properly resourced MATC (Marine advisor training center). This new schoolhouse, falling under the overall aegis of MCSCG, would have the mission of selecting, training, and educating Marine officer and enlisted foreign security force advisors. MCSCG’s focus is currently on theater security cooperation, but its heritage, ethos, and location make it a good home for MATC.

MATC should be one of our highest-priority and best-resourced formal schools. Its four-month program of instruction should include:

- Military culture,
- Advising case studies,
- Rapport building and interpersonal skills,
- Information operations,
- Foreign weapons instructor course,
- Combat lifesaver, to include live tissue training,
- Tracking and evaluating unit progress,
- Tactical planning with foreign counterparts,
- Use of interpreters, and
- Fire support planning.

We envision an MATC that both trains and educates.²⁰ Advisor candidates would be taught about the structure and culture of foreign militaries, to better understand the different logic by which foreign security forces operate. For example, understanding that centralized command and control is the norm in many armies is critical to a young officer or NCO who is accustomed to our system of delegation and decentralization. The advisor should learn in the classroom, not by bitter experience, that an Arab colonel often only wields equivalent authority to a Marine gunnery sergeant.²¹ Case studies will provide critical opportunities to learn anecdotally through class discussion, guest speakers, and role playing.

Because building genuine and lasting rapport is the key to creating conditions for success in advising, rapport building and interpersonal skills is a key module of the course. Advisor candidates should understand that their relationships with their counterparts should be carefully cultivated and frequently measured. All combat advisors, sooner or later, find themselves using social capital with their counterparts to influence their advised units, and it is important to introduce this mindset while exposing candidates to methods for developing genuine connections with their future foreign counterparts. Detecting deception is also a key interpersonal skill that must be taught—it is a far more valuable contributor to force protection than either MRAPs or guardian angels.²²

Advisor teams must also be able to honestly assess the progress of their advised units. NCOs and junior officers at MATC would be exposed to several frameworks, which would assist them in efficiently and accurately assessing and tracking unit proficiency in key tasks and in holistically evaluating combat readiness.

Our experience suggests that advanced medical skills are critical for deployed advisors and not only because they increase survivability. Proficient combat lifesavers increase unit cohesion and morale, enhancing a team’s ability to work together and trust one another. They also provide demonstrable skills that an advisor can teach to his counterparts, providing avenues of empowerment and rapport building beyond traditional weapons systems and tactics. In the same vein, expertise with foreign weapons is a must for Marine advisors, who will often teach advised militaries how to employ a wide array of weapons and may find themselves using a foreign weapon in extremis. School slots at the Foreign Weapons Instructor Course in Quantico should be set aside for all MATC students.

Tactical planning with foreign counterparts would be reinforced with live fire training designed to force candidates to simultaneously confront the four tasks that compete for an advisor’s attention under fire: fighting the enemy, leading fellow Marine advisors, leading

his advised force (more often than not this occurs through an interpreter or across a language barrier and requires the need to command without appearing to be in command), and reporting to higher or liaising with supporting arms. To this end, tactical planning with foreign counterparts is a different exercise than normal MCPP (Marine Corps Planning Process) and merits extra focus on simplicity, strong SOPs, and contingency planning.

Following MATC, qualification as a joint fires observer should be mandatory for all combat advisors. Our foreign counterparts admire the fitness, enthusiasm, and discipline of their Marine advisors, but there are few things they value more than our ability to quickly and accurately employ supporting arms and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities. In the wars of yesteryear, we trusted sergeants and corporals to spot and control these fires, and we should return to this practice instead of requiring aviators or joint terminal attack controllers to be on scene when ordnance needs to be delivered.

What about language? Language skills are obviously critical to a combat advisor's ability to build rapport and function effectively in an irregular warfare environment. Unfortunately, as then-Secretary of Defense Gates noted in 2011,

When it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never once gotten it right.²³

Thus, building a base of language skills in anticipation of future conflict in specific areas is not the best use of valuable training time. Our pool of trained foreign security force advisors should certainly sustain existing language skills and nurture new ones if able, but our focus should be on enabling rapid, immersion-style language training once it becomes clear that advisors are needed in a conflict zone. Training time at the MATC would be better spent making our future advisors extremely comfortable with using interpreters and understanding the benefits and poten-



Coalition operations with multiple partners are increasingly the norm for U.S. forces. (Photo provided by author.)

tial pitfalls of working through local contracted linguists.

Marines desiring to attend MATC should be screened prior to attendance, as the course must be both physically and mentally demanding. Additionally, a candidate should pass an MOS-specific exam that evaluates his proficiency at his assigned MOS. If a Marine is not a top quartile practitioner of his own craft, he has no business advising others. We recommend that MATC instructors travel quarterly via mobile training team to administer screening exams at the larger Marine Corps installations in Okinawa, Southern California, North Carolina, and Hawaii. This eliminates the subjective nature of command certifications and would be cheaper than sending advisor candidates to MATC only to have them dropped from the

course because of unsuitability. These two-day screening exams would test maturity, emotional intelligence, MOS proficiency, physical fitness, and basic tactical skills, and would ensure that all advisor candidates are qualified to commence training and education at MATC.

Graduating MATC would not be a given. Throughout the course, students would be challenged, both in their mastery of hard skills and in demonstrating that they have the temperament necessary to succeed as combat advisors. MATC would not strive to attrite a certain percentage of its students, but it would be under no mandate to graduate all or even most of its students. Failing MATC would not be a career ender for a Marine. If a Marine is not temperamentally suited for advising, it

is preferable that he be sent back to his unit rather than pushed through the course so that he does not receive an adverse fitness report.

Integrity is perhaps the key virtue for an American combat advisor, and one of the most important elements of MATC would be to test the integrity and character of Marine advisors during field training evolutions. A decade of rosy progress reports from American advisors in Iraq and Afghanistan yielded forces that fell apart in combat. The last Marine we need as a combat advisor is a spineless careerist or a Dr. Pangloss.

Certification and service as a foreign security forces advisor should be highly regarded in a Marine and viewed by promotion boards as equivalent to service in the most challenging of B-billets. A school seat at MATC should be the result of a highly-competitive application process with demand that far exceeds availability. PME-complete staff sergeants and senior first lieutenants should be the target population for MATC, giving our new advisors ample time to use their new expertise at the hands-on, company level. Incentives can be used to encourage Marines to attempt to become qualified combat advisors, though we believe that in a post-Iraq and Afghanistan Marine Corps the ability to volunteer for combat advisor duty in far flung hotspots will motivate the right Marines. MATC instructors should be selected from the ranks of proven MATC graduates as soon as practical.

Our newly-certified foreign security force advisors would return to the Fleet Marine Force and continue to carry out their primary duties in their MOSs, while being first in line for any advising or theater security cooperation deployments that will inevitably appear. If there were a sudden large-scale demand for Marine advisors as in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, our pool of trained and certified combat advisors would not provide enough Marines to fill all advising billets. With MATC graduates, however, we would have a solid nucleus of trained combat advisors who could provide a baseline of knowledge while also serving as quality control for a full-scale advising effort. Fully-

trained Marine advisors would know what to look for if they were required to vet, build, and lead advisor teams during a future contingency. The goal of MATC should be 10 school-trained Marine combat advisors per battalion, with at least one being a field grade officer and one a master sergeant or first sergeant.

Conclusion

Writing in the pages of this journal in 2003, then-Capt Owen West argued that one of the Marine Corps' three primary forms of warfighting

grants broad authority to noncommissioned officers and company grade officers to act with local militia to destroy the opposition.²⁴

But, West lamented with remarkable prescience, "The next Smedley Butler will come from SOCOM, not the Marine Corps."

It doesn't have to be that way. In an era of reduced budgets and dwindling public support for large U.S. troop commitments, the value of the "indirect approach" of foreign security force advising has never been more clear. Indeed, it is the most essential tactical and operational component of irregular warfare. Our expeditionary and adaptable Marine Corps is a natural fit for the advising mission. We are a force that prizes self-reliance, one of the most crucial traits for military advisors. The Marine Corps pushes more responsibility on its small unit leaders than any other Service, and our Marines boast cultural fluency gained the old-fashioned way, by training and fighting with foreign forces across the globe. At a time when there are growing concerns about the viability of forcible entry operations, demonstrated proficiency in security force assistance and combat advising offers a clear and critical mission for our Corps.²⁵



Rapport is the coin of the realm for Marine combat advisors. (Photo by author.)

As *MCDP 1, Warfighting*, reminds us war is fundamentally a human enterprise. Irregular warfare, as “a struggle for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population,” is the most human form of warfare. We will not win the irregular wars of the future with newer and better drones, surveillance blimps, or precision munitions. Irregular warfare demands that we match reality to our rhetoric and prioritize men not machines. Forming enduring partnerships around the globe, with elite Marine advisors at the point of friction, is key to success in the fights to come. Institutionalizing the proper selection and training of combat advisors is the best step the Marine Corps can take to help our Nation and our partners win the irregular wars of the 21st century.

Notes

1. Irregular warfare, as defined by *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, is, “A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s).” See *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington, DC: February 2016).
2. Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, (New York: Basic Books, 2014).
3. *Co van* means “trusted friend” in Vietnamese. It was the term used for American advisors to Army of the Republic of Vietnam units. The CAP Program was an advising and mentoring program that partnered handpicked Marine squads with the Popular Forces, village defense militias. See John Grider Miller, *The Co-Vans: U.S. Marine Advisors in Vietnam*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000), and Bing West, *The Village*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1972).
4. Terry Terriff, “Of Romans and Dragons: Preparing the US Marine Corps for Future Warfare,” *Contemporary Security*, (Online: April 2008), available at <https://www.tandfonline.com>.
5. Maj Arlon Smith, Maj Devin Myler, and Capt Adam A. McLaurin, “Institutionalizing Security Force Assistance in the USMC,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Online: September 2015), available at <https://mca-marines.org>.
6. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Meeting of the Association of the United States Army, 10 October 2007.
7. See William S. Lind, et al., “The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Online: October 1989), available at <https://mca-marines.org>; T.X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*, (New York: Zenith Press, 2006); and Gen Charles C. Krulak, “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Online: January 1999), available at <https://mca-marines.org>.
8. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, Counterinsurgency Operations*, (Washington, DC: 2006).
9. UW (unconventional warfare) is defined as, “Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.” FID is defined as, “Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security.” See *Joint Publication 1-02*.
10. For one example, see C.J. Chivers, “After Retreat, Iraqi Soldiers Fault Officers,” *The New York Times*, (Online: July 2014), available at <https://nytimes.com>
11. Owen West, “Can the United States Build a Foreign Army?,” *Slate*, (Online: May 2012), available at <https://www.slate.com>. See also Owen West, *The Snake Eaters: An Unlikely Band of Brothers and the Battle for the Soul of Iraq*, (New York: Free Press, 2012).
12. Both authors completed advisor training at the I MEF ATC in 2013. One of the authors later worked at I MEF ATC for nearly a year, first as the Operations/Training Officer and then as the acting Officer-in-Charge.
13. Simultaneously with this new demand for combat advisors, ATC became a branch housed under the umbrella of EOTG (Expeditionary Operations Training Group).
14. “Can the United States Build a Foreign Army?”
15. Marine *co vans* in Vietnam were invariably highly capable officers with combat experience. See *The Co-Vans*, passim.
16. William Rosenau, et al., *United States Marine Corps Advisors: Past, Present, and Future*, (Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 2013).
17. John A. Nagl, *Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps*, (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Strategy, June 2007).
18. “Institutionalizing Security Force Assistance in the USMC.”
19. A discussion of the metrics by which combat advisors are evaluated as successful comprises another essay unto itself.
20. Training prepares the trainee to execute known tasks. Education, in teaching the student how to think, not what to think, prepares the student for the unknown. See Peter Rickman, “Education Versus Training,” *Philosophy Now*, (Online: 2004), available at <https://www.philosophynow.org>, and Thomas Ricks, *The Generals*, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012).
21. Norvell B. De Atkine, “Why Arabs Lose Wars,” *Middle East Quarterly*, (Online: December 1999), available at <https://meforum.org>.
22. *United States Marine Corps Advisors*.
23. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Speech at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, 25 February 2011, available at <http://archive.defense.gov>.
24. Capt Owen O. West, “Who Will Be the First to Fight,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Online: May 2003), available at <https://mca-marines.org>. West’s other two primary Marine Corps warfighting roles were safeguarding Americans worldwide and serving as the Nation’s shock troops.
25. Executing the plan we describe would obviously necessitate a far more deliberate planning process across the domains of DOTMLPF-P (doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy). A training and readiness manual for combat advisors is a crucial step in this process. Space precludes fully addressing these issues in this article.

