
Closing a Security Assistance Organization

By

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There are arguably as many reasons for closing a security assistance organization (SAO) as there are SAOs. Nonetheless, it is not a common occurrence. For that reason there appears to be little information on how to systematically close one. Within the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR), partly as a result of the Gulf Crisis, we recently had to effect the reduction, relocation, or closure of several SAOs for the first time. With the paucity of information available, we had to develop our plan from the ground up as we first tackled a complete withdrawal from The Sudan. Hence, the Sudan case will serve as the focal point for this article. We were later able to apply the lessons from Sudan to a rapid evacuation of Somalia, a more orderly withdrawal from Yemen, and reductions in Jordan and Pakistan. Also, at the outset of Desert Storm on 16 January 1991, the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti was engaging in a voluntary evacuation which was not immediately impacting our SAO there.

As we noted, the crisis in the Persian Gulf prompted SAO withdrawals and evacuations of American citizens from countries throughout the USCENTCOM AOR. Two important factors impacted on our ability to assist the embassies and SAOs. These factors provide perspective to what will follow in this article. The first factor we have already mentioned. There was a lack of worthwhile information on how to close a SAO when the luxury of time is available. Secondly, within a few weeks of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, USCENTCOM headquarters was largely deployed to Saudi Arabia, leaving a relatively small staff to man a rear headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. Consequently, those of us at USCENTCOM Rear who were challenged with coordinating the staff guidance for the closing of an SAO were unable to take advantage of the expertise normally available in a fully manned unified command headquarters. Moreover, throughout Operation Desert Shield, USCENTCOM, by necessity, was almost exclusively focused on the build-up in the Persian Gulf. While these circumstances were understandably unique, they do dictate the necessity for SAOs and unified commands to engage in some prior planning to offset the exigencies of a worst case scenario such as the one we encountered.

Upon reflection, in the aftermath of the orderly closure of the U.S. Office of Military Cooperation (USOMC) in Khartoum, Sudan, we at USCENTCOM felt we could have shaped our preparations into three phases. (1) Policy Imperatives, (2) Planning Considerations, and, (3) Execution Phase. This article will be structured within the framework of these three phases. (An outline of this approach is provided as an appendix at the end of this article.) It should be emphasized at this juncture that we are concentrating on a relatively orderly inactivation of a SAO, without resort to immediate emergency evacuation of U.S. Mission personnel, nor the sometimes contentious manning reductions implemented under the procedures of National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 38.

POLICY IMPERATIVES

Theoretically, numerous agencies within the security assistance (SA) community could initiate a proposal to inactivate a SAO. Among the potential players would be the SAO Chief, the Chief of Mission (COM), the Unified Commander, the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), some other component of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Department of State (DOS), or, of course, the National Command Authority (NCA). Notwithstanding the fact

that the President is the ultimate authority under NSDD 38 procedures, in reality the final inactivation decision will probably be made in coordination between the Department of Defense (DOD) and the DOS. In point of fact, to quote from the Department of State *Emergency Planning Handbook*, "The Secretary of State has statutory authority to determine the scope of programs and staffing levels for all U.S. Government agencies abroad (22 USC 4802)."

It is therefore necessary for the proposing agency to coordinate effectively and in writing with the other potential players. No matter what the coordination scheme, we were well served by remembering that in accordance with paragraph 20304, page 203-7, *Security Assistance Management Manual (SAMM)*, "the Department of State determines that it is necessary to suspend FMS [Foreign Military Sales] or GA [grant aid] to a particular country. . . " and that the "Director, DSAA will issue instructions to the appropriate MILDEP (military department)" after DOS suspends FMS or GA.

A possibly overlooked consideration involves who is to be appointed to inform the host government of the pending U.S. action, and when such notification is to be made. This is an important consideration because it may directly impact on the degree of cooperation the host government will give the SAO in its efforts to effect all the in-country coordination necessary for closure. We discovered in the process of closing USOMC Khartoum that it was best to defer to the COM on this issue. Otherwise, depending perhaps on the level of importance attributed to the host country by the DOS, they may wish to apprise the host country through the latter's embassy in the U.S., or delegate the notification function to OSD. The COM in Khartoum later decided to use the OSD notification option.

The final policy imperative involves a decision as to which agency should be the designated manager for SAO closure. DSAA is responsible for overall FMS case closure management. However, the SAO, as a subordinate organization of the unified command and dependent on the unified command for operational guidance, is best served by having the unified command's security assistance division serve as its drawdown manager. We did not experience any objection to this procedure in USCENCOM, so presumably it is an acceptable methodology within the security assistance community.

In the case of USOMC Khartoum, DSAA initiated the message proposal for inactivation to USCINCENT (Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Central Command) in early September 1990. At that time The Sudan was under a variety of legislative sanctions [Section 513 (coup), Brooke-Alexander, and Section 620 (q)] as a grant aid country having failed to make necessary interest payments on its FMS and economic loans. By the end of 1990, Sudan's debts exceeded \$50 million. The SAO's only remaining functions were to maintain a presence and to continue some form of dialogue with the host country military. The expenses associated with maintaining a seven person SAO when the host country's SA program was under sanctions for the foreseeable future were unwarranted. Security conditions in the country were also deteriorating.

Coincidentally, the U.S. Ambassador to The Sudan was considering a reduction in his mission's overall manning level. The two actions "dovetailed" nicely. By mid-September USCINCENT agreed to complete SAO closure and appointed his Security Assistance (SA) Division at USCENCOM Rear headquarters as the drawdown manager.

By the end of September, DSAA had coordinated with DOS for their approval, which came within the first week of October. By early October, both USOMC Khartoum and USCENCOM's SA Division were actively engaged in planning the former's withdrawal in anticipation of DOS approval. Those planning considerations are the subject of the next phase of the closure process.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

On the same day in October that the DOS issued its approval of USOMC Khartoum's closure, USCENTCOM's SA Division issued its preliminary drawdown guidance to the OMC. That initial guidance represented several weeks of coordination initiated by the SA Division—the drawdown manager—among various joint staff directorates.

Our initial planning objective was to determine the date by which the OMC Chief and the COM would agree the SAO should close. As is to be expected, the SAO had begun this discussion with the Ambassador at the point at which it became apparent an inactivation would likely occur. The COM's decision was simple in this case. The majority of the SAO personnel could leave as soon as the OMC Chief and USCENTCOM could work out the assignment details, providing that one officer remained until all SAO issues were resolved and all bills were paid. Since USCENTCOM Rear's Manpower, Personnel, and Administration Directorate (J-1) had been working personnel reassignments from the onset of closure discussions, we were able to determine fairly early in the process the timing requirements: we had approximately two months in which to effect closure in Khartoum during which the majority of the SAO personnel would still be in country to accomplish the myriad close-out tasks.

It is worthwhile to mention that we had not had any security assistance teams (SATs) in The Sudan for some months. Therefore, we were able to confine our preparations to dealing only with the OMC and its personnel. Planning for SA team removal and the attendant issues of property turnover to the host country, housing lease terminations, and personnel reassignments would have added a new and expanded dimension to the process because SA teams actually represent FMS cases and require more intensive coordination with DSAA and the MILDEPS.

Our second planning objective was the evaluation of the resources available for the removal of personnel and equipment. In The Sudan's case, we had commercial air, ground, and sea, plus U.S. military air with which to work. Part of that planning had to incorporate a cost comparison between commercial transportation and military air in order to make the most cost effective decisions when shipping SAO property to other SAOs. Of course, balanced against that was convenience to the SAO. In Sudan's case, it was often difficult for OMC personnel to pack and transport major items of equipment to a Sudanese military air base for loading onto U.S. military aircraft. Hence, while maximum use was made of military air for household goods and major high value equipment, there were a couple of instances in which we chose to employ commercial transportation.

Finally, our execution planning involved brainstorming all the issues we felt the SAO would need to address. We were able to organize these issues into four areas: (1) personnel and administration; (2) logistics; (3) fiscal; and, (4) aircraft disposition. Having organized ourselves in this fashion, the drawdown manager was then able to task the various USCENTCOM staff directorates concerned for information to incorporate into an initial guidance message to which we referred earlier.

With one exception—aircraft disposition—we will elaborate on the particulars of each area of drawdown in our discussion of the execution phase. Aircraft disposition deserves special attention because unique coordination is required when an SAO operates a DOD airplane.

While the unified command generally provides the SAO with operational guidance on its aircraft, DSAA is the overall aircraft manager for the security assistance community. Use of the aircraft can also be influenced by the COM as well as by any support missions provided to the U.S. Mission's Defense Attaché Organization (DAO). In Sudan, the OMC C-12 aircraft was used for SA missions and reimbursable COM requirements in a very austere environment where

commercial air resources are limited. At the outset of the drawdown discussion, the COM wanted the aircraft to remain in country indefinitely. However, that would have required maintaining two SAO pilots and the local aircraft maintenance contractor representative in country. In the course of the planning phase, agreement was reached to evacuate the airplane to another country, thereby allowing us to resume planning for the removal of the SAO personnel as had been originally decided. The process was not without its challenges, however. While too lengthy to recount here, suffice it to say that aircraft disposition requires intensive management and coordination by the drawdown manager with DSAA, the SAO, the U.S Air Force, and the aircraft maintenance contractor.

There is no definitive break between planning and execution phases from our perspective. In this situation we could easily demonstrate where some elements of execution occurred before the drawdown manager issued his initial guidance. By the same token, planning continued as the SAO executed its drawdown. Nevertheless, we feel a point is reached in the drawdown process where the SAO engages in a major thrust to dispose of its equipment, terminate its leases, pay its bills, close its books, and send its people out.

EXECUTION PHASE

Our first order of business in Sudan was the arrangement on relatively short notice of new assignments for our SAO personnel. Not surprisingly it was the SAO's first priority as well. It is therefore fitting that the drawdown manager make personnel and administration his first execution priority. Coordination with the J-1 is obviously critical. In fact, it is probably best to allow direct coordination between the SAO and the unified command J-1 on this assignment issue. Of course the culmination of that process is the publication of reassignment orders. Another issue in which direct coordination is well-advised is the retention of SAO billets from which the personnel are to be removed. The direct coordination should take place between the unified command J-1 and DSAA.

Evaluation reports and awards submissions, if any, are subjects worthy of mentioning to the SAO. These leadership responsibilities within the SAO may be neglected in the rush to accomplish the larger, though no more important, drawdown tasks.

Proper files disposition is a regulatory requirement that, in our experience, is fairly simple to accomplish. Files management is governed by the regulations of the Service which serves as the executive agent for the unified command concerned. As DSAA implements case closures with the MILDEPS, the SAO case files may become important sources of information for the MILDEPS. It is imperative to keep this in mind while deciding when files will be shipped back to the U.S. Classified material, such as operations plans, are best destroyed and properly documented by the SAO.

Finally, it is best for the SAO to terminate its publications and forms accounts at an early stage in the process. By and large, the unified command J-1 can provide the drawdown manager with the personnel and administrative information necessary to advise the SAO.

In the area of logistics, one needs only examine an SAO property book to realize the magnitude of the task faced by the SAO in disposing of its property. USOMC Khartoum was no exception, with equipment valued at roughly \$4 million. That equipment, however, has varying utilitarian value. With that idea in mind, we felt that to simplify this large task it would be best to first identify the outstanding equipment needs of other SAOs in the USCENCOM AOR. Then using equipment condition reports from the closing SAO, we were able to direct appropriate shipment to the receiving SAO. In coordination with our Comptroller division, we determined it was best to charge shipping costs to the closing SAO's account. For the resource manager that

means establishing proper obligation documents. In retrospect, it may have been useful to notify other unified commands of the availability of this equipment as well.

Once certain equipment has been allocated to other SAOs, the closing SAO will find it most convenient to turn the remaining equipment over to the embassy general services office (GSO) for sale. The funds generated from any sales make their way back to the DSAA general funds account, which in turn benefits the SA community at large.

There is, as always, at least one exception to this simplified equipment disposition procedure. The SAO probably has communications and automation equipment, weapons, and other self defense equipment which may need to be returned to the unified command or a designated agency. It is imperative that the drawdown manager address each of these exceptional pieces of equipment with the appropriate staff directorate or designated agency; the drawdown manager should provide complete shipping instructions for this equipment to the SAO at the outset of the execution phase.

In general, the use of commercial means of transportation within a country appears to be the most convenient for the SAO, and logically so. If the SAO can have a commercial carrier prepare and ship its equipment, it relieves the SAO of significant work, especially when one considers the usually limited number of personnel in a SAO. Moreover, as in the case of The Sudan, our SA personnel often had to live and work in austere environments in which the conveniences which we normally take for granted are simply not available. Hence, the SAO may even find it difficult to acquire the necessary packing and crating material for shipment. For U.S. Missions served by Military Airlift Command (MAC) channel flights, the SAO has an added source of transportation. However, MAC naturally has its shipment standards and the SAO may not have all the necessary material with which to properly prepare its equipment for shipment by military air. Depending on the frequency of these flights into the closure location, the drawdown manager is well-advised to coordinate at the earliest opportunity with both the SAO and MAC (through a liaison office or the unified command mobility division) to ensure that the SAO receives any packing material it may need for future equipment shipments via military air. A prime example is pallets and tie-down straps.

Clearly the logistics aspect of a drawdown is critical by virtue of the dollar values involved or equipment utility to other SAOs. At the same time, the SAO's fiscal responsibilities are equally important because, in addition to leadership, proper resource management arguably contributes materially to the effectiveness with which a SAO accomplishes its mission.

The drawdown manager is again well-advised to coordinate early on with his Comptroller or Resource Management colleagues within the unified command headquarters to obtain fiscal closure instructions and shipment cost management guidance for the SAO. After that initial guidance is transmitted, and much like in the case with the J-1, the SAO and Comptroller are best served by being encouraged to engage in direct coordination and communication as specific questions arise.

Recognizing that USCENTCOM utilizes an automated security assistance resource management system which differs from that of other commands, the general fiscal guidance nonetheless should be generally applicable. The overarching fiscal objective is to settle all outstanding bills. Secondly, if refunds are due (e.g. for lease terminations), attempt collection. Thirdly, reconcile outstanding orders entries, make any payments required, and forward required documentation. Next, the SAO should settle outstanding travel orders and vouchers. Then, resolve issues for any local national employees whose employment will either be terminated or transferred to another U.S. Government entity. Finally, to complete fiscal operations, the SAO should be tasked to prepare a final status of funds report. While outlined in order here, these functions will be performed concurrently in most cases.

Our SAO in The Sudan also benefitted from a brief staff assistance visit by a Comptroller representative toward the end of the drawdown process. We felt it went a long way toward properly closing the SAO.

In conclusion, we at USCENTCOM who were and are thrust into the role of managing an SAO drawdown or closure feel that we have benefitted from analyzing our first SAO closure experience and subsequently applying some lessons learned to other similar situations. We recognize that the validity of our effort is only borne out by the actual successful closure of an SAO. And we take a certain amount of pride in the fact that USOMC Khartoum has been closed with few, if any, unresolved issues. Other SAO reductions also are proceeding apace. We trust the security assistance community will derive some value from this article and its appended outline.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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CLOSING A SECURITY ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATION Outline for Planning and Execution

I. POLICY IMPERATIVES

- a. **Closure/Reduction proposing agency**
 - (1) Recognize State primacy to suspend FMS
 - (2) Recognize DSAA primacy to close FMS cases
 - (3) Coordinate well with all SA players
- b. **Who will notify host government of closure?**
- c. **Designate drawdown manager**

II. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- a. **Date for SAO closure—backwards planning**
- b. **Evaluate transportation resources**
 - (1) Commercial air, ground, sea
 - (2) Military air, ground, sea
 - (3) Do cost comparisons—commercial vs. military
- c. **Organize SAO closure tasks to be executed**
 - (1) Personnel and administration
 - (2) Logistics
 - (3) Fiscal
 - (4) Aircraft disposition (accomplish separately)
- d. **Drawdown manager issue initial guidance**

III. EXECUTION PHASE

- a. **Personnel and administration**
 - (1) Personnel assignments
 - (2) Evaluation reports and awards
 - (3) Files Disposition (include classified)
 - (4) Terminate pubs and forms accounts
- b. **Logistics**
 - (1) Identify/ship equipment to other SAOs
 - (2) Alert other unified commands to equipment availability
 - (3) Turn in remaining equipment to Embassy GSO for sale
 - (4) Identify/ship special equipment (i.e. , commo, wpns)
 - (5) Close property book
- c. **Fiscal**
 - (1) Settle outstanding bills
 - (2) Collect refunds
 - (3) Reconcile outstanding orders/make payments/forward documents
 - (4) Settle travel orders/vouchers
 - (5) Resolve FSN/LN employment termination or transfer
 - (6) Prepare final status of funds report