

# **SECURITY ASSISTANCE PERSPECTIVES**

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## **Security Assistance to the Third World: The Challenges**

By

**Colonel Thomas L. Sims, USA**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper discusses the challenges faced by Security Assistance Organizations (SAOs) in administering security assistance programs in the Third World. It was originally prepared to address U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) unique problems, but has application to non-PACOM area countries as well.

In any effort to address "challenges" (a euphemism for problems) there is a danger that the reader will come away with a negative bias. If so that would be most regrettable, as I am firmly convinced of the success of security assistance as an instrument of foreign policy. However, such success is not without price, in this case the frustrations of those who are charged with making security assistance work in a Third World environment. Therefore, the reader should place the following comments in the perspective of the overall success of the program. What follows is an attempt to describe the real world environment faced by those executing the program. This article is not theory; it is written for the program executors who must take policy and, "where the rubber meets the road," make it work. I will first address the operating environment of the SAO in the Third World, accenting political, economic, and social/cultural factors. After establishing the operating framework, I will then describe the impact of this environment on SAO operations.

### **THE ENVIRONMENT**

*Politics.* Most Third World countries participate in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Whether this participation is politically or economically motivated varies with the countries involved and makes little difference to the SAO. What is important is that a country which is anxious to maintain its "non-aligned" credentials must, by definition, maintain a public posture of equidistance between the two major powers, the U.S. and the USSR. At the same time, it may be an active member of a variety of international organizations, the interests of which sometimes diverge from those of the U.S. The SAO which is trying to execute a program designed to help the host country, must do so with due regard for non-aligned sensitivities.

Some of these countries are staunchly anti-communist, a legacy of their more formative years when they overcame communist-inspired efforts to subvert their newly-won independence. These same countries realistically accept U.S. presence in their region as a hedge against Soviet expansion. The catch, however, is that the U.S. presence cannot be too visible. Thus, an over-

the-horizon presence is deemed much more acceptable than one which is visible, or even worse, established in country.

In understanding a Third World nation's true interests and intentions, an SAO must be sensitive to the conflicting political pressures inherent in the above. This often is further complicated by a nation's open pronouncements and voting record in international fora, such as the United Nations. For example, it is highly likely that largely Muslim nations will support votes in the U.N. calling for actions against Israel, or that those who are active NAM members will oppose South Africa's apartheid. Consequently, a country's voting records should not be the sole indicator of support of U.S. national interests. One should balance what a country *does* in its own region as opposed to what it *says* in international fora.

The Annual Integrated Assessment of Security Assistance [AIASA] provides an opportunity to help interpret the host nation's interests for the Washington community. This is especially critical for the smaller or lesser known countries which do not enjoy, or understand, lobbies and special interest group politics in our government. The Administration, and by extension the Country Team and the SAOs become the honest broker for expressing Third World requirements and for making clear the linkages between their interests and our own national goals.

Another political reality which must be kept in mind is the aversion many of these countries have to the forging of military alliances out of regional or economic organizations. For example, this means that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) may never be a military alliance. Instead, it is more likely to rely on a maze of bilateral military and defense arrangements to accomplish its security goals. This affects military training and operational considerations, particularly as nations begin to opt for increasingly sophisticated and expensive technology. Economics will force some of them into considering bilateral maintenance and logistics support arrangements for more complex defense technologies. Efforts to economize can lead to consideration of bilateral maintenance and logistics support arrangements for more complex defense technologies and thus, a more complicated process for obtaining, integrating, and maintaining the equipment nationally.

The post World War II histories of many Third World nations are replete with examples of their fierce nationalism. Suffice it to say that nationalism is as strong today as it ever has been. Most of these countries remain proud of their revolutionary heritage and often sympathize and identify with other countries who share the experience. This nationalism drives some countries to accent or overemphasize their native strengths in addressing complex problems of domestic development. The accent on self reliance sometimes works against their interests as it closes off certain foreign options in resolving internal problems. This is a result of a conscious effort by their leadership to downplay the role of external nations. Needless to say, this has a major impact on donor nations as they attempt to aid a sometimes reluctant recipient.

There is also a reluctance to participate with the U.S. in joint exercises or conferences. This is a fallout of their desire to remain non-aligned, as well as an aversion to any suggestion that they need to rely on outside powers. Thus, when they do attend such fora as PASOLS (Pacific Area Senior Officer Logistics Seminar), it is often as an *observer* and not as a *participant*. This also explains their reluctance to take part in joint training scenarios, such as exchanging small units or naval passing exercises with the United States. However, this does not preclude bilateral arrangements with other regional states, and this occurs on a fairly frequent basis.

For many of these countries, the unity of their nation is challenged by great geographic distances and hundreds of ethnic groups and languages, the result of arbitrary national boundaries drawn up during the colonial era. Thus, their real concern is in nation building and internal stability. This drives such nations to have greater concern with the internal rather than the external threat.

Finally, and for the SAO most importantly, the military is often viewed by the indigenous leadership--which may have deep military roots itself--more as a tool for nation building than national security. This is done through an active program of civic action where local units are tasked to assist in a wide variety of domestic work projects. However, this often goes much deeper than civic action in some countries. For instance, some military units may be involved in managing commercial enterprises. You also will find military personnel cross-assigned into other government agencies or private firms where they serve in a seconded status to allow the gaining agency to take advantage of the military's managerial and organizational talents. This also provides critical lines of communication from the seconded organizations back into the political structure, particularly where the military plays a key part in that structure. Sometimes one finds military men in active political positions, such as governors of provinces or mayors of major cities. The result of this active political involvement is to give the professional military a distinctly different orientation than that normally found in most western military establishments. One of the biggest impacts is in defining requirements for *operational readiness*. The definition of *operational readiness* in the above context is vastly different than *operational readiness* in the usual western context.

**Economics.** Several Third World nations are classified as *developing* or *lesser developed*, which translates into low per capita and national incomes, low life expectancies, and low literacy rates. These countries also tend to be tied economically to a handful of products, usually natural resources (e.g., sugar, coffee, oil, liquified natural gas, tin, rubber, timber, copra, etc.) for their economic livelihood and, most particularly, for their foreign exchange earnings. Thus, the weakening of the international cartels has directly and adversely affected their foreign exchange earnings and, by extension, their ability to finance foreign imports, including U.S. origin defense systems.

These countries tend to look to the west for their trade partners. They wish to emulate the modern image portrayed by the west's success in economic and commercial areas. Unfortunately, there simply are not enough people trained in the requisite managerial skills to propel these nations through the stages of economic development as fast as their leaders would like. To complicate matters even more, their economies are oftentimes based on a dual job system. Because of the paucity of talent and economic imperatives, many managers may be working two and even three jobs. For example, an officer may work his military job from morning until the afternoon, after which he moves to the private sector or another government agency for a second job. This of course impacts on the SAO if it needs to contact a counterpart for a quick decision and he cannot be reached. It also means that the local military does not concentrate 100 percent of their energies on resolving military problems.

In some countries, the allocation of priorities and resources stresses national development, not defense. Thus, the military receives a meager share of the overall budget. This forces the military, when seeking new weapons systems, to look for the cheapest deal and to pay particular attention to financing. Export credits and concessional terms, therefore, become key decision criteria in weapons acquisition decisions.

Because of the stress on nation building and the need to obtain the greatest benefit from resource decisions, the acquisition of high technology, especially technology which has both civilian and military applications, becomes an additional major factor in acquisition decisions. At the same time, these governments will bargain hard for offsets or joint production schemes where they can assure some local content and the use of local labor in providing services or in producing either the whole system or some of its components. The SAO must step lightly in this environment, as it often finds itself caught between the sometimes conflicting requirements of defense and development. Further discussion of this topic is provided below in connection with the subject of Defense Industrial Cooperation.

**Social/Cultural.** While political and economic factors present enormous challenges to the SAO, it is often the social/cultural barriers that most greatly affect the day-to-day performance of an SAO's mission. For instance, it is often very difficult for many Americans to fathom the importance of personal relationships in these environments. Such relationships are grounded in deeply rooted family, tribal, or ethnic ties, and often supersede established policy guidance for dealing with the host nation. These relationships are equally as important as policy for successful program implementation. Another fact to keep in mind is that formal organizational structures can be misleading. One may be furnished an impressive explanation of a complex decision making system only to find out that the real decision maker or process does not even show up on the organizational or decision flow chart!

Decision by consensus is attractive to many cultures. This mandates an extremely long process to discuss and massage decisions and enlist the support of special interest groups. Further, once a decision is made through such a process, it becomes very difficult to change.

Many of these cultures are very polite and find it most difficult to say "NO" to a direct request, at least while the requestor is physically present. The solution to this is to always say "YES," even though they know they cannot comply with the request. At least this way they will avoid hurting someone's feelings.

Another important element is deference to authority. This makes it almost impossible to question a decision, regardless of how wrong it may appear. Somewhat related is the lack of confidence placed in junior officers and NCOs. These people operate at much lower levels of responsibility than their counterparts in many western armies. The impact of this is to place an increased burden on an already overloaded managerial structure, as senior personnel must make decisions on extremely minute details normally handled at much lower echelons in western societies.

Based on the above, it is not surprising to find that there is only a vertical communications structure. Word travels down the chain of command, but rarely is communicated laterally to other staffs and agencies. This results in poor staffing and poor coordination throughout service and national level staff structures.

A further consideration involves the unfortunate truth that graft and corruption exist in varying degrees across the spectrum of the Third World. This impacts greatly on the weapons selection process and the very core of the professional militaries with whom the SAO must deal on a daily basis.

Ethnocentrism is another cultural trait that may affect the way an SAO does its business. Sometimes this translates into a suspicion of foreigners which may limit an SAO's ability to travel in country and perform its mission. This may also be reflected in an innate bias against western values and education. This of course can make an SAO's effort to implement an active International Military Education and Training (IMET) program difficult. Ironically, this is often counterbalanced by reluctant admiration for the West and things western.

Geographic and ethnic diversity lead to particular emphasis on a common national language. This also facilitates the development of a sense of nationalism and/or the recognition and acceptance of a central government. The effort to develop a national language, however, often impacts on in-country English language programs. First, there is competition for resources within the educational bureaucracy. Second, there is an underlying fear that the economic incentives for learning English may be too attractive for many students, thus impacting on the national language. This dilemma has a major impact on training programs such as the IMET program. Simply put, it

is getting harder and harder to find qualified English language speakers to send to the United States for IMET training.

Finally, many of these nations are still in the throes of sorting out conflicting loyalties between the relatively new state and the traditional identification and loyalty to a religion. The movements in favor of a theocratic state are indeed forces with which to be reckoned, and present a major concern to many emergent Third World nations. This also helps to explain the accent on internal rather than external threats.

Now that we have addressed some of the characteristics of the environment in which the SAO in the Third World operates, I would like to turn to a closer examination of the impact this environment has on an SAO's operation.

## IMPACT ON OPERATIONS

**Planning.** As might be expected, long range planning is extremely difficult, if not outright impossible in many Third World nations. Long lead times are required to overcome many of the environmental impediments described above to accomplish effective planning. Often, there is no sense of urgency which, of course, is a basic motivator to establishing any kind of planning cycle. Worse, once a long range plan is developed, the document itself often becomes its own end and, thus, remains static--a museum piece with little relation to actual day-to-day decision making. The added fact that host country fiscal cycles seldom coincide with the USG's budget and planning cycle means that the SAO is often faced with developing hard planning data as much as 12 to 18 months before meaningful local data is available. Naturally, the SAO must also balance U.S. needs with the host country's priorities. This often calls for especially innovative approaches as an SAO attempts to fit local requirements into translatable U.S. interests and vice versa.

**Coordination/Staffing.** As a general rule, lateral coordination between staffs or agencies within many of these countries is poor to non-existent. Sometimes this can be compensated for if the SAO has good access to its counterparts. This is true because the SAO is often one of the few organizations which is able to look across the entire planning and operations spectrum of a country and see a snapshot of what is going on at the national, service, and territorial level. Unfortunately, this does little good if the access of the SAO is constrained because of the security concerns of the host government. Other irritants which impede communications and coordination come from differing working hours or the inability to get in and see key decision makers. Remember that many of these people may be working other jobs. Also, the topic may not be of sufficient importance to warrant a decision maker's attention, which is a polite way of saying the U.S. program may not be the only one in town and the country may be more concerned with responding to its own or another nation's requirements. This often leads to rescheduled or missed appointments which only exacerbate the difficulties in staffing critical SAO actions. Field visits of SAO personnel or SAO visitors are often difficult and take an inordinate amount of time to arrange because of the need to submit travel authorization requests and security clearances. This makes it very difficult to arrange appointments on short notice. Everytime one does, one inevitably burns up some "green stamps" of good will which are usually in short supply to start with.

Probably one of the greatest impediments to good coordination and staffing is the security assistance system itself. Many smaller countries simply do not understand the system and view it as too complex, overly cumbersome, and unresponsive to their needs. Close allies who rely extensively on security assistance for support of their defense effort often become more expert at manipulating our system than we ourselves do. However, a Third World country which is only marginally supported by our security assistance program has little incentive to develop a stable of accomplished and knowledgeable experts in our system. It is very difficult to convince these countries of the utility to be derived in spending their hard earned foreign exchange to send officers to DISAM to master our security assistance system. It is much easier to rely on the local SAO to

alert them to required actions. Unfortunately, if this happens to be a country which also limits the access of the SAO to their program managers, they have a real, though often unrecognized, problem.

Another real problem in coordination stems from poor communications between a host country and its embassy in the United States, and the Washington, D.C. security assistance community. This occurs when an embassy element effects a major decision without fully informing its host government. This can have disastrous effects on a country's program, especially if the U.S. staff elements neglect to keep the SAO informed. In effect, the SAO becomes the last escape valve to avoid a real disaster in the Third World country's program. A simple information copy to the local SAO can do wonders at keeping a program on track and out of hot water.

Because of the coordination and staffing problems outlined above, it is imperative that the SAO be properly staffed and graded (have sufficient rank to take on an unresponsive foreign staff structure) for the task. This often requires knocking down doors to get to key decision makers in a timely fashion. Oftentimes, these "doors" are guarded by relatively senior officers of the host country who are especially sensitive to rank and precedence. This is not only a function of their individual culture, but also reflects sensitivity to any appearance that the United States is not according them equal treatment (e.g., the U.S. expects to send relatively junior officers to deal with them on a counterpart basis).

**Management.** As might be expected, the SAO often assumes many management functions on behalf of the host country. This is the result of a variety of factors. One is the paucity of management talent mentioned above. Another stems from the fact that the country's logistics system is often very poor, if one exists at all. There is usually a lack of basic maintenance philosophy (some countries use equipment until it breaks and then simply abandon it or sell it off for scrap). Compounding the problem is the fact that many of these countries are burdened with a plethora of weapons systems which they have either inherited from previous regimes or have deliberately purchased from a variety of sources to ensure they did not become overly dependent on any one source. Many times the mix of the equipment simply reflects marketing successes of foreign suppliers, some of whom are very adept at concluding *good deals* with responsible government officials. Whatever the cause, the legacy is still the same: a logistician's nightmare. Some of the common problems to be worked include:

- Poor or non-existent records.
- Lack of control of the freight forwarder system. This results in excessive inventory costs to compensate for an inefficient transportation system. Some repairables may take as much as a year in transit to and from the source of rebuild.
- Oftentimes the Quarterly Requisition Report (QRR) will provide the most recent status available on an item.
- An inefficient customs system where goods are held up for inordinate periods of time pending the payment of drayage fees.
- A general inability to follow through on a requisition. This stems from a notion that the job is done when the item or requisition is forwarded. It then becomes unseemly for a subordinate element to question a senior logistics echelon to determine status.
- Working through a decentralized logistics system. Given the geographic dimensions and poor communications of many of these countries, a decentralized system is not necessarily bad. However, even decentralized control needs some oversight from the center to make

it function properly, be it in the form of budget allocations or reliance on a central procurement authority for off-shore procurements.

The bottom line is that the management of logistics functions related to security assistance consumes an inordinate amount of an SAO's time.

**Joint Exercises.** Many countries find it impossible to participate in any kind of joint exercise with U.S. forces. As mentioned above, this is the result of political pressures to maintain the appearance of strict neutrality or non-alignment. It is a political reality with which the SAO must live. Some ways to get around this problem may be found through the use of Mobile Training Teams (MTTs). This subject will be examined further in connection with the discussion below of the IMET program.

**Support to U.S. Defense Contractors.** I continue to be amazed at the number of defense marketeers who arrive in a strange country, with little or no warning, and who expect to *close a deal* in time to make the next day's outbound flight. While many companies are familiar with the more developed parts of the world, most are walking into the Third World relatively cold. They appear to be unwilling to devote the time required to develop local markets, and instead take the attitude that they are there to pick up a *target of opportunity* which is ready to fall in their laps within the next 24 hours. In short, their expectations are far too high for the local market. Another major problem stems from local agent performance or support. Many companies contract for local agents before they really need them. The result is often substandard performance by the agents and the fact that the companies get locked into contracts they cannot break. It is sometimes better to first send someone in to conduct a market survey and a reconnaissance of the available agents before a contract is actually let. Often a visit with the Embassy economic counsellor, Foreign Commercial Service counsellor, and the SAO will save them much grief. In most countries a local agent is required before any deal is closed; however, they are not required in the initial stages.

**International Military Education and Training (IMET).** There are a host of challenges to be met in implementing an effective IMET program in the Third World. Some of them are detailed below:

- While we have gone to great lengths to develop a detailed planning guide to help the host country plan an effective program, it often is ignored. For one thing, the mismatch of fiscal years and an extremely poor personnel system make it virtually impossible for a host country to take advantage of the planning models developed by the IMET community. In many cases, host countries cannot identify a candidate for IMET training until it is almost time to send him to the States. All too often the long term projections are simply straight line projections of what was done the previous year, with little regard to what the host country's actual requirements will be 18 months out.

- Economics, not operational requirements, often drive the program. Many of the Third World countries are heavily involved in the development of their infrastructures. Thus, the priority of resource allocation goes to their civilian programs, as well it should. The result is that the military often operates on a shoe string budget which simply cannot be increased. Therefore, the priority within the military will almost always go for new system acquisition over more mundane things such as training or logistics support. This translates into several problems for the host country military. First, there is seldom any additional budget support to compensate for the vagaries of foreign exchange. Simply put, if the local currency falls in relation to the dollar, there is no additional budget allocation to compensate for the increased demand for foreign exchange. In the past years, some of the local currency costs for maintaining a foreign trainee have tripled, but the budget has not moved an inch. The result is that fewer foreign trainees can be sent abroad. Besides the per diem supplement that many countries provide, there are also local taxes and uniform clothing allowances which also eat into available funds.

- Poor English language. As bad as are the economic problems described above, they can be solved relatively easily by pouring money on the problem. The declining English language capability, however, is a problem of much greater scope. Many countries cannot find sufficient IMET candidates who can pass the necessary English language test to qualify for overseas training. In many cases, one finds an inordinately high number of repeat candidates which reflects the small population of English language speakers in a given country. Thus, there are people attending training in the States who actually will not be utilized in the field they are studying but are sent simply because they are the only ones who can pass the qualifying English language test. One remedy for this is to utilize IMET funds for English Language Training Detachments from our Defense Language Institute-English Language Center (DLI-ELC) to work with in-country English language training activities. While this is invariably expensive and time consuming, it is often a necessary first step to getting a country's IMET program back on track.

- Closely related to the English language problem is the overall issue of the educational credentials of many aspiring foreign military trainees. While there is a great deal of difference in the quality of indigenous educational systems throughout the Third World, some suffer from a deterioration in the overall quality of their educational systems. In some cases, local universities have become "paper mills," more attuned to grinding out respectable numbers of graduates, rather than competent engineers, scientists, or technicians. With the passage of time nationalistic pressures have stressed local culture, language, and traditions, as opposed to adherence to high quality professional academic standards. The end result is the degradation of basic competency in the physical and natural sciences, which in turn impacts on the capabilities of the foreign military trainee. Consequently, it is getting harder for locally produced college graduates (or for those from the military academies) to master the pre-qualifying examinations to enter U.S. education and training institutes. More and more academic preparation is required to insure an officer can pass the GRE, GMAT, etc., required by most reputable graduate schools. Unfortunately, the personnel system is not responsive enough to identify the prospective candidate in sufficient time to meet all the prerequisites. Therefore, many training opportunities are lost.

- Compounding the IMET utilization problem is a growing bias against many of the doctrinal courses found in the U.S. system (e.g., the U.S. Army's advance/career courses). Some countries have cut their participation in these kinds of courses to the bone. Their basic disagreement with this type of training is that it is not applicable to the host country environment. It is not applicable because it creates the wrong appetite for weapons or systems that are inappropriate to a host country's support capability, threat, defense resource allocation, or operating environment. Finally, there is a lingering suspicion that the entire process may have contaminated their officers' thought processes, not only in technical or tactical terms, but also in political, religious, or sociological ones.

One way to circumvent some of the concerns above is to maximize the use of Mobile Training Teams. This accomplishes many things:

- It reaches many more foreign trainees than CONUS training could ever hope to, especially given the resource constraints we are facing now and in the future.
- It avoids the local funding problems presented by a dropping foreign exchange rate.
- It compensates, to some extent, for failures in the planning and personnel system. It lets the local government off the hook of finding a trainee and getting him qualified in time for CONUS training.
- It avoids the English language problem because most instruction is done through local translators.

- It tailors training to the environment and to the unique mix of weapons, equipment, and support systems that are found in the Third World.
- It orients the MTT to a specific, local training problem.
- It provides a training opportunity comparable to a joint exercise.
- It provides an incomparable experience to U.S. trainers by presenting a unique training challenge which is difficult to duplicate in a CONUS environment.
- It provides a highly visible sign of USG sympathetic response to the host country's request for assistance. The public relations impact cannot be over-stated of having a group of U.S. professionals, on site, working shoulder to shoulder with the host country's military to resolve a specific training problem.
- Finally, it certainly enhances the access and rapport of the SAO with the host country. In many cases, areas which have been closed for years are suddenly opened and the SAO can visit grass roots level leaders to discuss real-time equipment and training needs.

With all of the above benefits, the reader might conclude that I am clamoring for the unrestricted use of MTTs under IMET. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am firmly convinced that a well-balanced approach which includes an appropriate mix of formal courses in CONUS, observer training, OJT, orientation training tours, MTTs, and selected high value education and training, such as postgraduate courses, is the best response. MTTs can be funded under MAP (especially now that U.S. military salaries are not charged), or by FMS credits, or with cash as well. Let us also not forget the judicious use of training aids and libraries. These are critical in helping to overcome some of the structural deficiencies in English language training. The current DSAA policy of selective exceptions for MTTs under IMET, based on a well-documented case-by-case justification, appears very appropriate

***Defense Industrial Cooperation (DIC).*** DIC is one of the tougher challenges facing the SAO because it often places the SAO directly between competing national interests. On one side is the host country which is anxious to develop the procedures and mechanisms to facilitate the transfer of selected defense technologies. This may be in the form of management/consultant services, technical data packages, data exchange agreements, actual equipment or material, training, and offset or coproduction schemes. On the other side is an often reluctant U.S. industry, Congress, or Administration which is concerned with the loss of defense markets or critical defense technologies.

Another particularly vexing problem is the inability of the principals to agree on what comprises "Defense Industrial Cooperation" (DIC). Each department or agency of both the U.S. and the host country government defines DIC in terms of their own special interests. Thus, an already complex issue becomes nearly impossible because there is a breakdown of communications from the start. It is far better to first define the specific goals of each DIC program and then talk of accomplishing specifics rather than depend on the rubric of DIC.

As might be expected, this lack of definition places the SAO in an uncomfortable position. For more advanced countries which are heavily engaged in technology transfer and reciprocal production arrangements, there are usually defined parameters, with personnel assigned from specific agencies to manage the program. Not so in the Third World. The "man for all seasons" is the local SAO because he represents the defense perspective--both for the USG and the host country, and also because most defense technology will have to be transferred via an FMS case. This often places him at the focus of disagreement between all parties concerned. Good luck!

Through this maze walks the SAO, armed with conflicting guidance. There are no safe ground rules to follow except that the exception is the rule. The SAO must guard against being overwhelmed by the host country's appetite for the latest technological *gimmick*. Keep in mind that most of the Third World countries do not have the internal markets to support their appetite, and they do not have the technical capability to be truly competitive in an unprotected environment. Add to this the increasing disdain with which these arrangements are viewed by Congress, and there is a real potential for disaster if a country opts for a major economic investment in a particular defense industry. Thus, the SAO should ensure that any such schemes are fully supportable and entail the transfer of dual use technology which can be used in other sectors. Given our pronounced aversion to approving third country sales of products utilizing our own technology, the host country would be better off relying on the U.S. for improvements in management rather than the transfer of specific technology. There are several other countries which view technology transfer more as a market tool instead of a foreign policy initiative and which are quite willing to transfer their technologies for a price.

While the above assessment is admittedly pessimistic, it is also realistic. The SAO, however, owes it to both sides to lay out the realistic costs and expectations. While there may be individual programs which can serve both U.S. and host country needs, they are seldom as broad in scope as economic and defense planners initially envision.

## RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE

*Personnel Policies.* Given the environment described above, the next question is: "Are we doing everything we can to adequately prepare and support our SAO personnel?" Let us first address the issue of preparation.

The current system for the selection and training of SAO personnel which has evolved through the years is very close to the mark. If it is to be faulted in any way it is more in the execution than in the theory. The sequencing of language training, DISAM attendance, and Phase III briefings in Washington, at the Military Departments, and at the unified commands is right on track for most personnel (presumably there are always exceptions). The problem with the *system* is with the manner in which the MILDEPs comply with the Joint Manpower Program (JMP), and how much oversight--or lack thereof--is exerted by the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), the unified commands, and the SAO to ensure compliance. The system will only produce what is required of it. That requirement is measured in the active involvement of all concerned, not just the coding of JMP documents. Too often the SAOs submit their requirements and blithely wait for the *system* to function. A better approach is to take an active part in the selection process by aggressive communication with nominees to ensure they meet all the necessary criteria and are fully prepared for their assignments. DSAA plays a major role in the selection for SAO chief billets, but generally relies on the unified commands and the SAOs themselves to manage all others. The unified commands operate more on a management by exception basis which puts the ultimate burden on the user, the SAO.

Language training, especially for Third World assignments, is extremely critical and requires extensive preparation. In many cases the SAO will find himself alone, surrounded by counterparts who do not speak English and who do not understand why the *system* has done something. There are usually two levels involved. It is much easier to ask a counterpart to do something, e.g., sign this form, pay this bill, send this letter, than it is to explain *why* he must do it. In establishing language requirements we too often concentrate on the former and not the latter to the detriment of our long term interests. Language also has application beyond the technicalities of the job. In the Third World, existence in a strange and often hostile environment is as much a part of the job as what goes on in the luxury of an air-conditioned embassy office. Language impacts greatly on how a family feels about its assignment and how it adjusts to the local environment. From a purely

practical point of view, if daddy can tell the plumber what's wrong with the sink, it does wonders for mommy's outlook on life. Finally, language does much to remove the fear of the unknown that surrounds many families who are meeting the rigors of their first experience with the Third World. This results in a quicker adjustment to the job and the environment, and a much more productive member of the SAO. It also encourages extensions which lead to the retention of key personnel and the maximization of training resources.

A stable family unit is a must. If there are any cracks in the fabric of the family, a hardship tour can turn them into crevices. Conversely, it can also draw a strong family together into a very tight, self-sustaining unit. The key is to have an extremely close scrub of the family records prior to finalization of the assignment. Because the only real information on the gaining member and his family is that which comes from limited letter traffic, this is an area in which it is difficult for the SAO to play. The review of family records by competent medical authority is a must and is sadly overlooked by many local commanders. Most medical facilities are not geared for the process and often give only a cursory review. The cost to the USG is malassigned personnel and the early return of dependents who are not medically fit for the assignment. The fix here is closer scrutiny of the SAO nominee and his family by his military department and local commander.

While on station the support provided to maintain morale in a difficult environment is exceptionally critical. This support must be measured not only in terms of the individual service member, but also his family. Housing, schools, medical treatment, environmental leave, and health, welfare, and morale issues all are magnified. Support from the staffs and commanders at the unified commands, DSAA, JCS, and DOD levels is absolutely a must. Unfortunately, military personnel still lag behind their foreign service counterparts in many of these areas. The recent initiative to provide funded environmental and morale leave (EML) travel for SAOs is a long overdue improvement and reflects many long hours of work on the part of several DOD staffs. A similarly beneficial and long-awaited development is the recently enacted authority for the funding of a trip home for the entire family between overseas assignments, especially for those who are going from a hardship tour to another overseas tour. In the SAO business, people, not weapon systems, are our most important resource. Unfortunately, the SAOs are minuscule in size in comparison to the other active forces and thus tend to get lost in the shuffle for resources. They also suffer from the "we've got to make it equal for everybody" syndrome. The support available to a soldier serving in USAREUR is far better than that available to an SAO in a remote hardship post; why then should the *special* benefits (e.g., funded EML and home leave) have to be the same? If the SAOs had commissaries, PXs, medical facilities, DOD schools, and more importantly, a modern and developed world outside their door, they would not need *special* benefits to provide them with the same quality of life enjoyed by their comrades in Europe or Japan.

There is always a debate between a two-year versus a three-year tour of service at an SAO. While I understand the arguments for the three-year tour, I would like to offer the following when considering the Third World. Watch out for "burn out." It is extremely frustrating for an individual to work his way through the challenges listed above. At some point in time, the individual may reach a point where he has rammed his head into the wall once too often and he simply may give up. The adjustment of the family is also a major factor. Many of these overseas communities are very small and the interaction of their members is crucial to their success. There is no place to hide, as all utilize the same facilities. Personal disagreements or differences can and do create havoc with both personal and professional relationships. (One reason I have always been a strong proponent of the funded EML program is to afford families an opportunity to get away and let off steam.) In the haste for efficiency and full utilization of training resources, we may lock an SAO into a thoroughly untenable position. I feel that it is better to bring an individual overseas for a two-year period, observe his behavior and that of his family, and then make the assessment as to how he will handle the longer tour. If he and his family adjust well, then the local SAO chief can support an individual request for a tour extension. The result is a system which allows the

SAO chief to enter into the decision process, fits the decision to the family profile, and results in a happier and healthier environment for all.

*Other Considerations.* The organizational structures of SAOs reflect the fact that purely management functions are not the only considerations. An appropriate rank or grade structure important to ensure access to the foreign decision maker or program manager.

Administration seems to consume an inordinate amount of time and resources. When dealing across cultural and linguistic barriers, a great deal more writing and record keeping is required. There are no post, base, or station support facilities, and this places an increased burden on the SAO for many housekeeping functions. Add this to the considerable effort to host and process visitors from abroad, and one has a major workload.

SAO's inevitably become involved in an advisory role. This derives from the desire of many countries to use the U.S. as a role model and entails responding to many queries on how the U.S. performs a certain function. This fits in with the basic long term goal of the SAO, to increase U.S. influence in a region, but often runs counter to more narrowly defined case management functions. It would be shortsighted to ignore this opportunity to expand our contacts and influence with Third World nations.

Frequent TDY to the field, if possible, is an excellent way for SAO personnel to spread the word about the U.S. and our programs, and also to check up on the information provided by the host country's staff on how a program is progressing. In many countries this may be difficult, as suggested above, due to security considerations. SAOs, however, should not allow themselves to become ensconced in the relative comfort of a capital city and to rely on a single source for assessment on how the program is progressing. There is no substitute for talking to the troops in the field.

## PUTTING IT INTO PERSPECTIVE

As warned at the beginning of this article, the subject matter stresses *challenges* faced by SAOs in doing business with the Third World. This, by definition, accents problems as opposed to accomplishments. In order to place the above comments into proper perspective, it would be useful to keep the following in mind.

There are several significant success stories in the security assistance business, for example Taiwan and Korea. Both of these countries started out at zero level in the not too distant past and have made significant strides in overcoming many of the challenges described above.

Many other Third World nations, while not at the level of the Taiwans and Koreans, are still a quantum leap forward of where they began in the post World War II and Korean War era. While much of their success can be attributed to their own efforts and leadership, the U.S. security assistance program certainly played a major role as well. These successes were ably assisted by U.S. SAO personnel who successfully met the challenges described above. They did this because they were, first and foremost, dedicated professionals who freely accept challenges as part of their way of life. The rewards were many, not least of which was the knowledge that they played a key role in the successful foreign policy of their nation.

## CONCLUSION

The Third World is an extremely difficult environment in which to work. It requires flexibility, patience, perserverance, and, most importantly, a strong belief in oneself and in one's mission.

Security assistance is a critical program. The bottom line is that the "gain is worth the pain." It is a program that is very much in our national interests. It is ideally suited for the Third World because it is an effective tool to favorably influence a foreign nation towards the United States. Finally, and most importantly, it is working.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

COL Thomas L. Sims is an Army Foreign Area Officer who is currently assigned as the Director for Army Programs, JUSMAG-Korea. He has extensive experience in security assistance in Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, and Indonesia. He holds an MA in Asian Studies and an MBA in International Business and has taught both subjects at the university level. He is a graduate of the Armed Forces Staff College and the Political Warfare College in Taiwan. He is also a graduate of the Defense Language Institute (DLI) for Chinese-Mandarin, Korean, and Indonesian.