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# FEATURE ARTICLES

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## **International Relationships: Critical Enablers for Expeditionary Air and Space Operations**

By

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We live in a world where relationships matter. Popular international support, legitimacy, and the shared values of our allies and partners are as important to winning the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) as the capabilities of the air and space forces assigned to coalition headquarters. We share with our partners the common view that freedom for all should not be held hostage to the violence of the radical few and that moderation and tolerance are precious values that build global opportunity.

Strengthening alliances and partnerships is a national priority and a primary theme in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The Airmen and civilians in the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs (SAF/IA) live this priority, we are a critical enabler for our expeditionary air and space forces. We build the relationships that insure regional stability and access and work with partner air forces to meet requirements with the appropriate capabilities to assure their national security, bolster regional stability, and contribute to the security of the United States.

Our partner air forces understand the value of air and space power and its effective against the broad range of threats we will encounter in the coming years. In the face of traditional, irregular, catastrophic, or disruptive threats, air and space power's agility, precision, speed, and flexibility make the whole coalition team better. We have learned this lesson in joint training and operations; our partners have learned it by fighting side-by-side with us in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). SAF/IA has transformed and is continuing to change to meet the challenges of current operations, and we are laying the foundations of stronger alliances and partnerships based on air and space power. We have moved away from a security assistance focus that previously put foreign military sales (FMS) in the spotlight. Now we emphasize relationship-building activities involving more collaboration and partnership efforts. These activities include people-to-people contacts through our personnel exchange programs, as well as armaments cooperation activities that enhance interoperability with our friends and allies. A key planning tool in determining our strategies for relationship-building is politico-military analysis, understanding the economic, social, political, and cultural affects on military, air, and space issues. In order to meet ally and partner requirements, we seek to provide capabilities, not platforms. We work with experts from around the Air Force to build interoperability, logistics compatibility, complementary concepts of operations (CONOPS) and proficiency. We have implemented the International Affairs Specialist (IAS) Program to build a core of officers with



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international affairs and regional expertise. All these transformational efforts lead to capable allies and partners who can stand with us in a fight that crosses borders, languages, and cultures.

*Today, we face brutal and determined enemies - men who celebrate murder, incite suicide, and thirst for absolute power. These enemies will not be stopped by negotiations, or concessions, or appeals to reason. In this war, there is only one option - and that is victory.*

*President George W. Bush  
27 May 2005*

Since September 11, 2001, a defining moment in history for our nation and the world, one thing became abundantly clear: There is no substitute for cooperation with allies and friends as we wage the global battle to defeat terrorism. In line with the U.S. strategy that recognizes allies and friends as indispensable to the war on terror, SAF/IA is working to change mind sets and perspectives. We initiate and sustain cooperative contacts with air forces around the globe. This is how SAF/IA builds, sustains, and expands the relationships that are the critical enablers for our expeditionary air and space force conducting global operations, and now, fighting a global war on terrorism. We support global Air Force operations; we assist our friends and partners in achieving the necessary capabilities to protect their interests, maintain security, deter aggressors, and win decisively. Most importantly, we ensure complementary and compatible capabilities that can be used with U.S. Joint Forces in training and operations. We are focusing our efforts on building relationships with allies and friends that make us individually and collectively stronger. Strengthening our defense relationships and developing the capability to cooperate with the U.S. improves our ability to build successful coalitions. To effectively cooperate with the U.S., our allies and friends must be interoperable and have complementary training, logistics, proficiency, and concepts of operations. Air Force efforts to build partnerships through military-to-military contacts, operator-to-operator talks, security assistance, armaments cooperation, technology transfer, and personnel exchange programs establish personal and institutional relationships. All of the mentioned relationships are the foundation of improved capabilities and enduring coalitions. This view of security cooperation is a departure from a previously held perception that security cooperation equals FMS. The expanded view of security cooperation offers many paths to achieving security objectives, U.S. objectives, ally and partner objectives, and regional objectives.

Shortly after my arrival in SAF/IA in the fall of 2003, we began work on the first ever *U.S. Air Force Security Cooperation Strategy* (AFSCS). Published in October 2004, our strategy was written with reference to *Department of Defense (DoD) Guidance and the Combatant Commander (COCOM) Theater Security Cooperation Strategies* (TSCS). It is subordinate to the *Security Cooperation Guidance* (SCG), and it supports and complements the TSCSs. Security cooperation activities in SAF/IA and throughout the Air Force support all National Defense Strategy objectives. Success in objective one, securing the United States from direct attack is critical for all of us. Our second objective, securing strategic access and retaining global freedom of actions are at the heart of what we do. SAF/IA does a great deal of work supporting the following objectives:

- Strengthen alliances;
- Partnerships; and
- Establish favorable security conditions.

Now, more than any time in recent history, Air Force security cooperation activities are at the center of our nation's security strategy. We are in an era of unprecedented responsibility and opportunity. President Bush, in this 2002 National Security Strategy said;

No nation can build a safe, better world alone. Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations.

Relationships are the linchpin to our approach to building capabilities. We have changed our focus in SAF/IA and implemented new programs to transform from an FMS centric to a relationship

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based organization. We have accomplished much in the way of reform over the last two years, but continue to do more. Understanding the role relationships play in defining our mission is essential.

The transformation in SAF/IA is action that supports national and DoD Strategy. The *DoD Security Cooperation Guidance* (SCG) defines security cooperation (SC) as all DoD interactions with foreign defense establishments to:

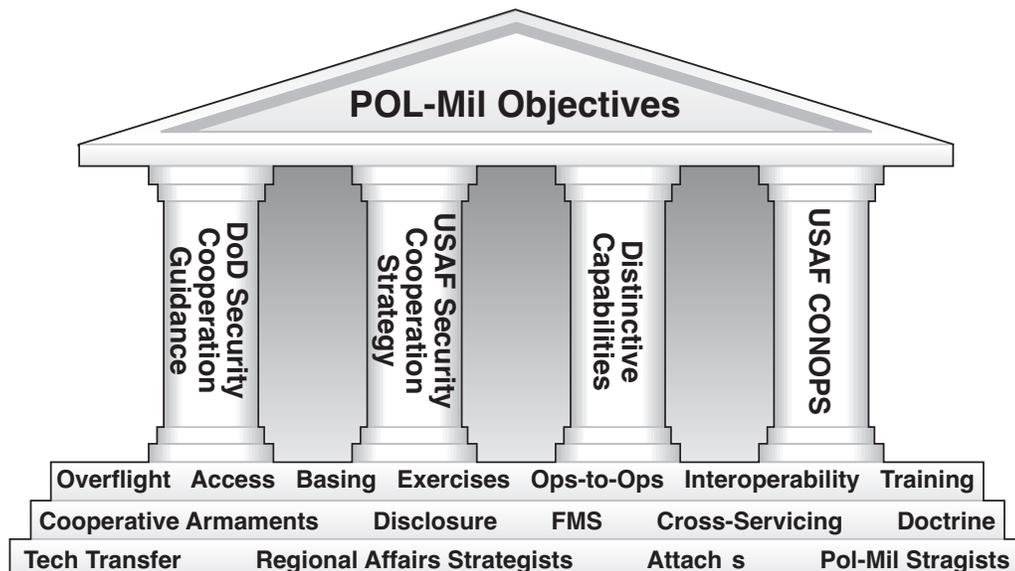
- Build defense relationships that promote specified U.S. interests;
- Develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and coalition operations, including allied transformation;
- Improve information exchange and intelligence sharing to help harmonize views on security challenges; and
- Provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access and en route infrastructure.

From SAF/IA's perspective, we achieve our nation's politico-military objectives in peace and war using four pillars of support:

- DoD Security Cooperation Guidance;
- USAF Security Cooperation Strategy;
- Air Force Distinctive Capabilities; and
- USAF CONOPS.

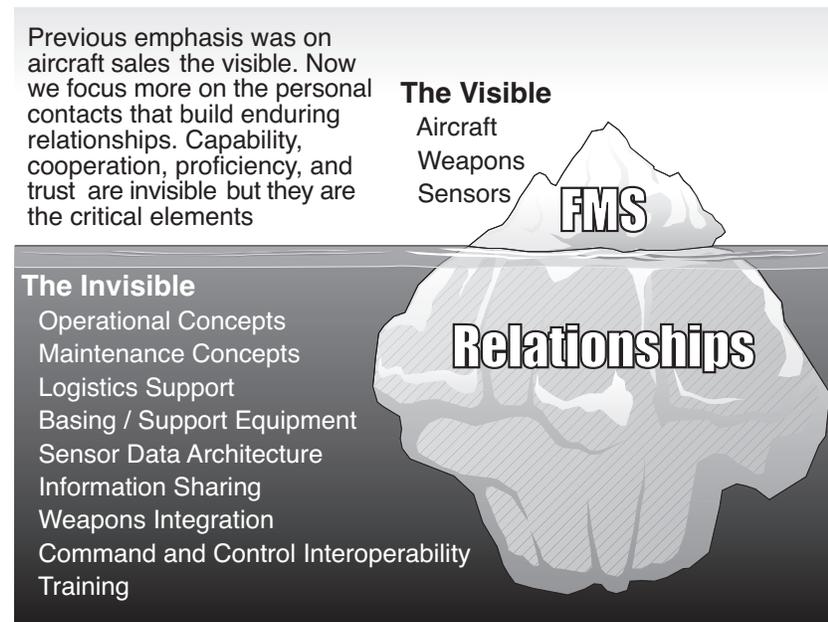
These pillars rest on the foundation provided by security cooperation tools such as basing and access agreements, exercises, cooperative armament development, FMS, and international affairs people like our attachés, regional affairs specialists and pol-mil strategists. Our Air Force delivers six distinctive capabilities; SAF/IA wants to be sure coalition air forces can also provide these capabilities. Coalition commanders need the following:

- Air and space superiority;
- Information superiority;
- Global attack;
- Precision engagement;
- Rapid global mobility; and
- Agile combat support.



U.S. ally and partner air forces help supply these capabilities. Some partners have decided to focus on one or two niche capabilities while others cover more. We work with all of them to build air force-to-air force relationships that produce tactical and operational concepts compatible with USAF CONOPS. We use the *Office of Security Defense Security Cooperation Guidance* and the *USAF Security Cooperation Strategy* to focus the programs, resources, people, and relationships that serve as a foundation for our global expeditionary operations.

The USAF and DoD have adopted a capabilities-based approach to meet emerging challenges, SAF/IA uses the same method. We have expanded the way we think and work to build capabilities



with our allies and partners. It is no longer just the transfer of airplanes, weapons systems, and sensors. It is interoperability, CONOPS, training, logistics support, maintaining and improving proficiency. All contribute to the solid foundation of effective, enduring relationships that help provide the influence, interoperability, and access necessary for our expeditionary Air Force.

We approach other air forces with the goal of understanding their requirements. We then collaboratively determine what capabilities they need to meet those requirements. Because we can work most effectively

with our allies and regional partners when our capabilities complement one another, we provide information to partners so they can allocate scarce resources while assuring the capabilities they need. When I meet with a foreign air chief or defense chief, instead of highlighting particular aircraft systems, I tell them that I am there to listen to their requirements and talk about how we can help them achieve the capabilities they need. This resonates well when we seek to build capability, we look below the surface, beyond jets on the tarmac. We recognize that we need to build common concepts of operations, increase levels of interoperability, share the perspectives that flow from similar training, and use common parts and supply systems. All of these discussions must take place early and cannot be divorced from aircraft, weapons, or sensor purchases. Security cooperation along these lines produces a proficient force that supplies the air component and coalition force commander with the capabilities they need to succeed in every mission from humanitarian relief to major combat operations.

### Interoperability

The first question is, “what is it?” There are many definitions and variations on themes, but most leaders agree on at least one thing: they want more. When we talk about interoperability, we think in terms of command and control systems, aircraft, weapons, parts, and supply; common logistics, information and intelligence sharing architectures, and tactical communication; and targeting and situational awareness. Interoperability is almost always some mix of hardware, software, procedures, and training all are important. Sometimes trades must be made to balance requirements and resources. We work with partner air forces to evaluate these trades. Hardware and software are the most costly paths to interoperability, but they also yield the greatest returns. The most advanced system needs

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trained operators who understand both the systems and the operating procedures. Interoperability is not just “things,” it is people.

Our Armaments Cooperation Division is a key player in fostering interoperability among our friends and allies by pursuing agreements and relationships resulting in cooperative initiatives in research, development and acquisition. These efforts advance U.S. technology and help close technology gaps among allies, making coalitions more interoperable. More importantly, armaments cooperation makes allies increasingly potent. This bolsters coalition capabilities, and it allows combatant commanders to rely more heavily on support from allies. Examples of armaments cooperation activities include the development of unmanned air vehicles (UAVs), Joint Strike Fighter; interoperable tactical and intelligence networks and advanced space systems. These are capabilities that will shape the future battlefield. Projects like C2 Warrior with Australia provide advanced air battle management decision aids to enhance the air battle manager’s situational awareness. Another example is The Network Centric Collaborative Targeting initiative with the United Kingdom that defines new technologies and operational concepts for the Joint/Coalition processing of Time Sensitive Targets.

Our Disclosure and Technology Transfer Division works closely with our Weapons Division, Armaments Cooperation Division and our Security Assistance Policy Division to cover all interoperability bases. Together with regional experts, they form a country team to analyze options, receive COCOM recommendations, and build the case for the release of appropriate technology and know-how. In collaboration with the partner air force, the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC), defense contractors, the Air Force Security Assistance Center (AFSAC), and the Air Force Security Assistance Training Squadron (AFSAT), they develop plans to transfer the right mix of hardware, software, Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (AFTTPs), and the training. Technology transfer is often appropriate in the pursuit of U.S. interests, but sometimes meets interagency or Congressional resistance; SAF/IA must make the case to our government. We must prove every transfer is a win-win proposition based on regional security considerations, competitor technology, and the focus of the relationships, risks, and mitigation plans.

One of the most important initiatives in SAF/IA is recapitalizing the human side of our business. In the past, we have delivered no clear career track for our foreign area officers, we failed to deliberately develop these officers, and we gave them no management priority in career field prioritization plans to ensure foreign area officers were available or assignable. We often found ourselves unable to fill key international affairs billets with properly trained and experienced officers. With no formal training program, our foreign area officer cadre relied heavily on self-obtained skills. We studied the problem and developed an action plan to transform our people. As a result, we established the International Affairs Specialist (IAS) Program to collectively develop and manage all international affairs officer skill requirements and are setting out to deliberately build a cadre of International Affairs Specialists.

The IAS Program is the answer to developing the full potential of our human capital. The IAS Program is managed along two distinct career paths. Both paths offer full command and promotion opportunity into the general officer grades. The Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS) is a regional expert with professional language skills and detailed cultural knowledge. The Politico-Military Affairs Strategist (PAS) is an international pol-mil specialist trained in international relations, political science, and strategy who provides a wide breadth of regional understanding. Selection for the IAS occurs after qualification in the officer’s primary AFSC, normally at the 7-12 year point. Training for these career paths is gained through an Intermediate Development Education program in which RAS candidates earn a regionally focused advanced degree and the appropriate language training. They then embark on dual-track career development of alternating assignments in primary AFSC and RAS billets. PAS candidates, on the other hand, complete an international affairs-related advanced degree and receive managed career broadening with a focus on developing future leaders who understand pol-mil analysis and understand international affairs. Airmen need deliberately developed regional, language, and cultural skills because success in international affairs depends on getting the details

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right. At the same time, it is highly nuanced and fraught with the opportunity for missteps. Security cooperation cannot be executed from a checklist; practitioners need understanding, insight, and creativity to build the relationships that will carry-through to Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) victory. Clear pictures of the cultures and politico-military environments of foreign nations enable us to tailor our security cooperation activities to ensure we achieve bilateral and regional objectives. The IAS Program develops the international experts who can see through the clutter to the underlying pictures and patterns, the vision we need.

Successful military relationships are founded on understanding and trust. International Airmen programs, professional exchange programs, security assistance, armaments cooperation, and a core of deliberately trained international affairs specialists are the tools we need to build these relationships. Security assistance and armaments cooperation provide the opportunity for International Affairs professionals to interact extensively with partner air forces, addressing financial, programmatic, legal, security, and other politico-military issues. Our International Airmen programs, including personnel exchange programs, Air Force attachés based around the world, and the IAS, help U.S. and foreign officers develop an appreciation for one another, and establish close ties and long lasting personal relationships. All these activities combine to produce enduring air force-to-air force relationships.

International relationships are the key enablers for Expeditionary Air Force operations. Our Air Force needs capable, interoperable, allies and coalition partners that are willing to join us in operations around the world. In humanitarian relief efforts, in response to emerging crises, and in achieving victory in the GWOT, allies and partners play a key role. The SAF/IA Team works everyday to build, sustain, and expand these relationships. We work with offices and agencies around the Air Force, with foreign attachés and our attaché corps, and with the combatant commanders air components to ensure that our forces are organized, trained, and equipped for coalition and allied operations in support of national and regional strategies and plans. We have transformed from an emphasis on FMS to a focus on air force-to-air force relationships and we are training a new generation of international affairs specials. We will continue to transform SAF/IA and provide new levels of security cooperation to build the relationships to support and enable our Airmen in operations around the world.

#### **About the Author**

Bruce S. Lemkin, a member of the Senior Executive Service, is the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington D.C. Mr. Lemkin graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1971 with a Bachelor of Science degree in aerospace engineering. He completed Navy Nuclear Power Training in 1972 and entered the Navy's Nuclear Submarine Program and served in six nuclear submarines, including command of the attack submarine, USS Hyman G. Rickover, and the Trident ballistic missile submarine, USS Michigan. He served in numerous Pentagon assignments, including those on the Navy Staff as Nuclear Officer Program Manager, Deputy Director of Investment and Development, Head of Nuclear Affairs and International Negotiations, and Director and Deputy Director of the Strategy and Policy Division. As Chief of the Asia-Pacific Division with the Joint Staff, he negotiated landmark agreements with China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Vietnam and the Philippines.

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