
United States Military Training Mission: A Paradigm for Regional Security

By

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As former coalition leaders celebrate the anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait and reflect on the ten years that have passed since the Gulf War, there has been renewed criticism with regard to U.S. policy in the Middle East. While the U.S. struggles to control the problems of guaranteeing the flow of Arabian Gulf oil, deterring Iran and Iraq, and moving the Arab-Israeli peace process forward, anti-American sentiment, increasing terrorist threats and regional conflict and tensions continue to overload the resources of the U.S. military.¹

In response to these trends, the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) has developed a theater strategy that encourages regional security arrangements that includes the Arab countries themselves taking greater responsibility for the region's defense. Specifically, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the United States Military Training Mission (USMTM), USCENTCOM's security cooperation organization, has assisted the Saudi Arabian armed forces (SAAF) in developing, training and sustaining capable deterrent and self-defense forces for over forty years. This article describes the history, mission, organization, function, and role of the United States Military Training Mission and its relevance to the future of security and stability in the region.

Significance of the Region

The Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf Region have a distinct strategic location in the southwest corner of Asia. The Arabian Peninsula is at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa. Being surrounded by important international waterways (the Hormuz Strait - the gateway to the Arabian Gulf, the Bab Al Mandab Strait, the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea), the Arabian Peninsula enjoys a strategic position in terms of communications and transportation. From an economic point of view, the Arabian Peninsula is home to the largest producers and exporters of oil, the main source of energy for the industrialized world. Currently, the Arabian Peninsula houses over 65 percent of the world's oil reserves, and Gulf countries produce 33 percent of the world's oil. Because of its communication, transport, and economical importance as well as its strategic depth, the Arabian Peninsula, and Saudi Arabia specifically, will continue to be strategically important to the United States for the foreseeable future.

Background: U.S. and Saudi Arabia Relations

The United States and Saudi Arabia share common concerns about regional security, oil exports and imports, and sustainable development. Close consultations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have developed on international, economic, and development issues such as the Middle East peace process and shared interests in the Gulf region. The continued availability of reliable sources of oil, particularly from Saudi Arabia, remains important to the prosperity of the United States as well as to Europe and Japan. Saudi Arabia is the leading source of imported oil for the United States, providing more than 20 percent of total U.S. crude imports and 10 percent of U.S. consumption. The U.S. is Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner, and Saudi Arabia is the largest U.S. export market in the Middle East.²

Since 1933, when diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia were first established, the Saudi Arabian government has cooperated with the U.S. government and private organizations for technical expertise and assistance in developing its human and mineral resources. The two countries established a Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation in June 1974. Under commission auspices, cooperation between the two countries has grown in technical training and education, agriculture, science and technology, transportation, government administration, industrialization, and solar energy research. In addition to economic ties, a longstanding security relationship continues to be important in U.S. and Saudi relations.³

The United States Military Training Mission

The U.S. Military Training Mission was formally organized in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in 1953 under the terms of the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabian governments. Specifically, it was agreed that USMTM would administer assistance under the terms of the *Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949* and the *Mutual Security Act of 1951* to assist and advise Saudi Arabian armed forces with respect to plans, organization, administrative principles, and training methods. Additionally, USMTM would provide training and support in the use of weapons and other security-related services as required. A Memorandum of Understanding dated 8 and 27 February 1977 governs the day-to-day relationships between USMTM and the Ministry of Defense and Aviation (MODA).

After the Gulf War, the role of USMTM changed, when, in an effort to overcome the financial burden of the Gulf War, the Saudis desired to significantly realign their financial commitments into a manageable system by reprogramming their financial obligations. This effort became a major focus of USMTM when they became the frontline managers of approximately \$60 billion representing 375 foreign military sales cases. In 1997, the security assistance role of USMTM changed once again. The focus of USMTM shifted from a focus on equipment procurement to enhancing the existing Saudi Arabian armed forces capability and sustainability from focusing on the transfer of technology to the transfer of technological know how.

Today, USMTM is a joint training mission and functional component command under the military command of the USCENTCOM, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.⁴ USMTM's mission is to advise and assist the Saudi Arabian armed forces through security cooperation efforts in developing, training and sustaining capable deterrent and self-defense forces for Saudi Arabia in order to facilitate regional security. The mission of USMTM directly supports USCENTCOM's theater strategy to shape, respond and prepare, through forward presence, bilateral and multilateral exercise programs, security assistance activities, and foreign military sales⁵.

USMTM is organized into a headquarters, three service divisions, a joint advisory division and a directorate staff.

The Joint Advisory Division (JAD) advises the general staff of the MODA. This staff corresponds to the Joint Staff in the U.S. Department of Defense. Personnel of the JAD work with their Saudi counterparts in all aspects of planning, operations, and training generated by the Ministry of Defense and aviation joint and special staff for the Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF), Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF), Royal Saudi Air Forces (RSAF) and the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces (RSADF). In addition, they serve as principal assistants to the directors, Foreign Procurement Department, and Foreign Assistance and Cooperation Department in their management and administration of Saudi Arabian foreign military sales (FMS) cases as well as advise the faculty of the Saudi Armed Forces Staff College.

The Land and Air Defense Forces Division (L/ADF) is responsible for providing advisory, training, and security assistance support to the RSLF and the RSADF.

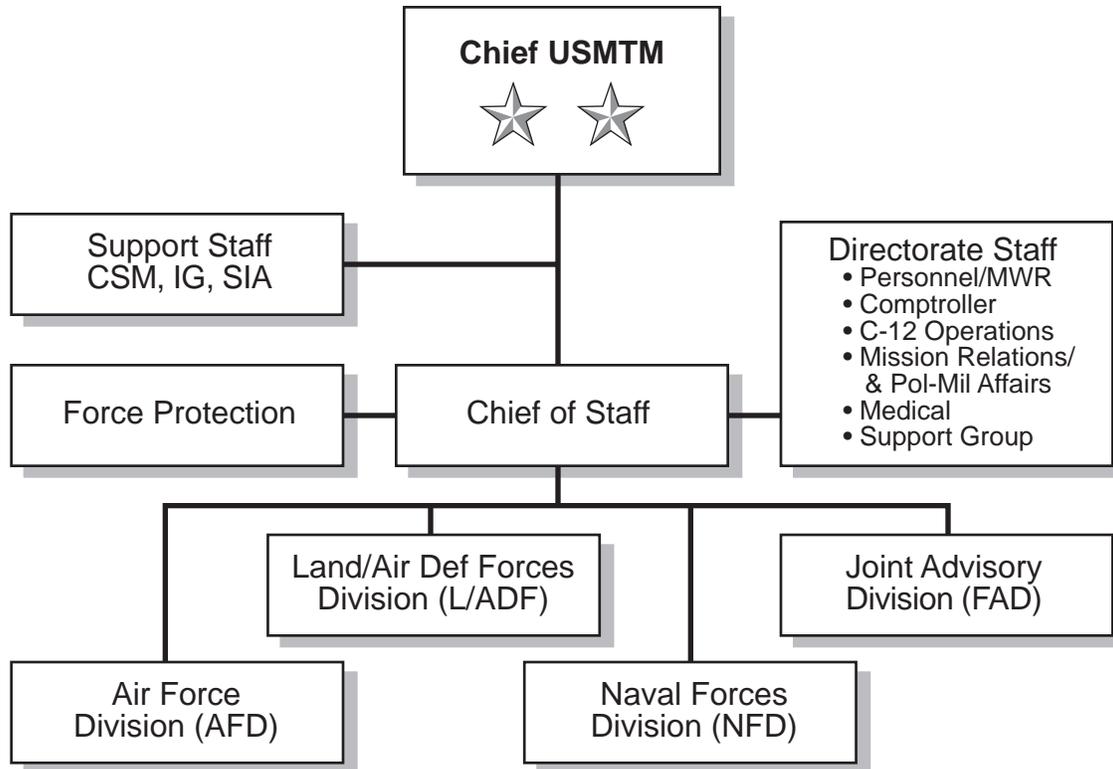


Figure 1: USMTM Organization

The Naval Forces Division (NFD) works with their counterparts in all aspects of operation, planning, logistics, and training for the RSNF and their Marine Force (RSNF-MF).

The Air Force Division (AFD) works directly with their RSAF Headquarters counterparts on all logistics, operational, and FMS issues.

The USMTM Strategic Plan

In 1997, in order to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the shift in the focus of the USMTM mission ... from a focus on equipment procurement to sustainability, USMTM developed a strategic action plan to transform its organization to continued to be responsive to the needs of our Saudi counterparts and to support the National Military Strategy. The strategic direction outlined in the plan is based on the needs of the Saudi Arabian armed forces, the mission and vision of USCENCOM, the aims and objectives of the U.S. embassy country team, Defense Security Cooperation Agency guidance, the 1977 accords, and the uniqueness of the USMTM operational environment.

The plan focuses on synchronizing the six imperatives of modernization: doctrine, manning, force structure, training, leader development, and logistics systems in order to assist the Saudi Arabia armed forces in fully capitalizing their long term defense investment. Additionally, it recognizes the importance of improving the stewardship of FMS, increasing the efficient use of resources, enhancing quality of life, and ensuring force protection. Finally, you will see that we continue with our initiative to improve the productivity of USMTM in order to sustain its capability and capacity to achieve our end state vision. The action plan is a living document that is periodically updated to validate our strategic direction. The planning process that was used to

produce the updated plan validated the USMTM strategic direction that is defined by the USMTM mission, vision and guiding principles.

USMTM Mission

As previously stated, the USMTM mission is to “advise and assist the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces through coordinated security cooperation efforts in developing, training, and sustaining capable deterrent and self-defense forces for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to facilitate regional security.” Simply put, USMTM provides MODA with a single point of contact to facilitate coordination between the Office of the Secretary of Defense, USCENTCOM, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and the American Embassy in KSA.

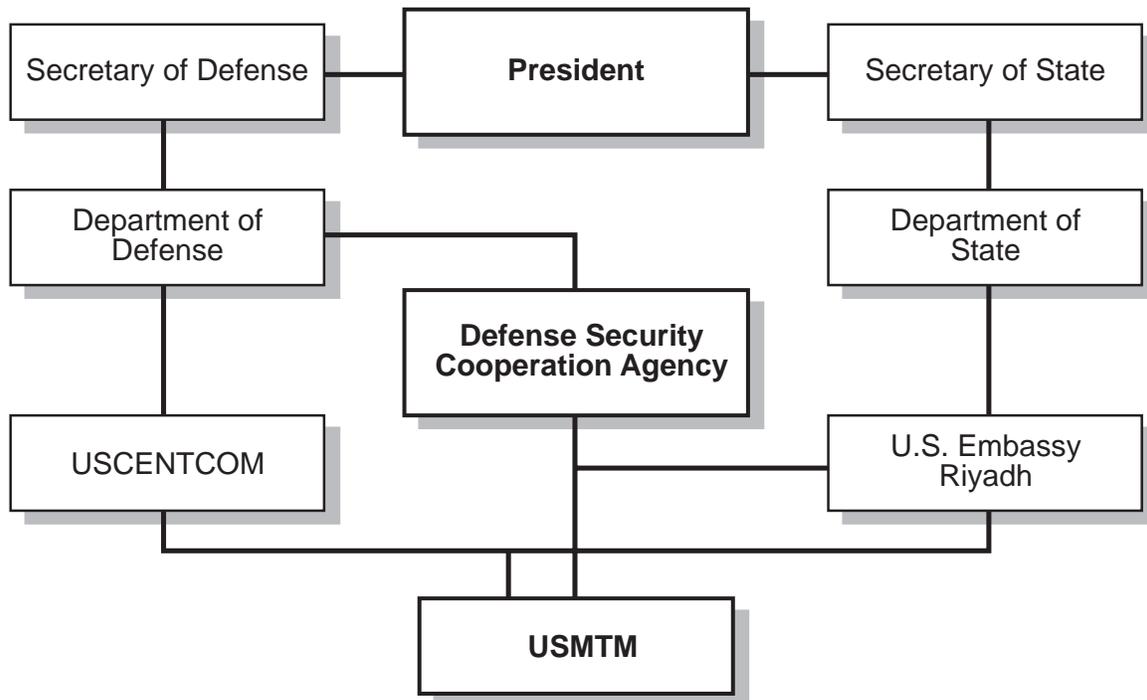


Figure 2: Organizational Relationships

USMTM Vision: Professionals Providing World Class Security Cooperation

The long-range vision of USMTM is as follows: a motivated diverse team of professionals operating in an environment of cooperation, innovation and continuous improvement; leveraging technology and proven management practices; executing a security cooperation program for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that thrives, based upon mutual respect and the value added of our expertise; and advising and assisting the most capable self defense force in the region.

Most readers will be familiar with mission and vision statements, guiding principles and other language akin to total quality management. Considering the long-term nature of our relationship with KSA, a strategic plan is the formula for long-range success in this region.

USMTM Goals

There are seven goals that USMTM has set to attain its strategic vision. Just as important as the goals are the supporting plans which each division and directorate must draft and execute. Each division's supporting plan better enables them to accomplish their goals.

- Advise and assist SAAF in maintaining capable deterrent and self-defense forces.
- Advise and assist SAAF in achieving and maintaining interoperability within SAAF and with their allies.
- Advise and assist SAAF in the development and implementation of a long range, requirements-based FMS Program.
- Effectively and efficiently use USMTM resources.
- Ensure the highest practical quality of life for the USMTM community.
- Execute a practical, effective force protection program.
- Improve the productivity of the USMTM Top Team.

New Initiatives

The USMTM staff is currently in the midst of planning for the next meeting of the Joint Planning Committee, scheduled to occur in October 2001.

The Joint Planning Committee is a forum for senior United States Department of Defense and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Defense and Aviation officials to review ongoing issues, provide an exchange of ideas, and continuously strengthen the military relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia. As stated by General Saleh bin Ali Al-Muhayya, Chief of General Staff, Saudi Armed Forces, the purpose of the Joint Planning Committee is "... that the United States-Saudi relationship would benefit from a systematic annual review process that would address ongoing issues and provide a forum to exchange ideas on ways to enhance the military relationship."

The United States Department of Defense Near East-South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA Center) celebrated its inaugural opening 31 October to 2 November 2000, and was attended by two Saudi general officers. The purpose of the NESA Center is to provide an inclusive, neutral institution where regional military, diplomatic and national security professionals can broaden their understanding of the national strategy formulation process, examine regional security issues, improve their defense-related decision-making skills and develop cooperative relationships with one another. As currently envisioned, the Center's program will address regional security within the context of four broad themes:

- The international and regional strategic environment
- Transnational security issues
- Security related decision-making (defense policy planning)
- Regional cooperation and conflict management

Participation will be open to military and official civilian representatives of all countries within the NESAs region that maintains formal diplomatic relations with the U.S. government. Non-NESA countries, which have strategic interests in the region, are also included.

The remainder of the JPC was dedicated to discussion of select KSA and U.S. proposed agenda items. The JPC concluded with an agreement between Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Franklin Kramer and General Muhayya that a JPC follow-up committee would be created with the purpose of addressing “whatever issues were necessary requiring immediate attention and expert level consultations.” In his closing remarks, Mr. Kramer thanked all the participants and stated the discussions had been extremely useful and productive and he would relay that to the Secretary of Defense. General Muhayya agreed with Mr. Kramer’s assessment that the JPC had been a very productive meeting. He also stated that it was important to establish a framework and direction for all future work.

Conclusion

The United States Military Training Mission has successfully assisted the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces in developing, training and sustaining capable deterrent and self-defense forces for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Ongoing initiatives such as the Joint Planning Committee described above continue to show the relevance and importance of security cooperation organizations to the future of security and stability initiatives in the region. The continued success of USMTM show that it is a model for a theater strategy that encourages regional security arrangements which acknowledge the greater role for the region’s defense on the part of the countries themselves. USMTM has developed, nurtured, and reinforced the partnership between the U.S. and the KSA and continues to strengthen the relationship between MODA and DoD that has been ongoing for over forty years (and will continue long into the future.)

End Notes

1 For an overview of U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East, as well as a discussion of U.S. plans for increasing stability in the region, see Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, *United States Security Strategy for the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, May 1995).

2 See “Background Notes: Saudi Arabia, September 1998,” on-line, Internet, 7 March 2001, available from www.state.gov/www/background_notes/saudi_0998_bgn.html.

3 Ibid.

4 Additionally, the Chief of USMTM also serves as the senior United States Department of Defense Representative (USDR) in Saudi Arabia and has been given coordinating authority over other Department of Defense agencies in country. These agencies include the Office of the Program Manager of the Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPM-SANG), and the Defense Contract Management Command (DCMC). The Chief of USMTM works under the general guidance of the American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

5 Saudi Arabia has spent \$83.1 billion in foreign military sales since its inception in fiscal year 1973. The United States has sold Saudi Arabia military aircraft (F-15s, AWACS, and UH-60 Blackhawks), air defense weaponry (Patriot and Hawk missiles), armored vehicles (M1A2 Abrams tanks and M-2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles), and other equipment.