
FEATURE ARTICLE

Saudi Arabia: The Changing Paradigm and Implications for the United States Military Training Mission

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As the international community and the United States continue to enforce *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441*, the Middle East region finds itself again at the forefront of attention. Rumors abound as to the intentions of governments that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council. This is no less true for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a principal partner in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The media have focused on comments made by the Saudi government with respect to their post conflict intent. This same media have reported that the Saudis want to rely less on the United States government for security and support. This will cause the United States to wrestle with post conflict security commitments within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The decision making process by the United States must take into account the rich history of the Muslim culture, current political and economical climate, and the modernization efforts of the Kingdom to improve the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces (SAAF) before the U.S. can develop strategies and policies of implementation.

A paradigm shift is occurring with the SAAF. It occurred with the creation of the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces (RSADF) and the making of the RSADF as a separate and equivalent service, equal to the Land Forces, Air Forces, and Naval Forces. The RSADF is no longer subordinate to the Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF). The impetus behind this shift is the ever-changing threat. The concern by the Kingdom of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their mechanism of delivery, resulted in the early understanding by the SAAF of the requirement to transform, and thus the creation of the RSADF.

To this extent, this article will provide a brief historical background of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the command structure of the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces, the history of Saudi Air Defense (and how air defense fits into this structure), and, finally, from an air defense perspective, the impacts a change in paradigm by the Saudi government on the RSADF modernization and the United States Military Training Mission.

Historical Background

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as a country, is fairly young. Its heritage, developed over thirteen centuries, is derived from the nomadic Bedouins whose customs and culture are even older. This culture has had a tremendous historical impact that is evident in biblical times and readings.

In 1902, not long ago from a historical standpoint, a young Arab prince, who had been raised in exile in Kuwait, led a band of about fifty warriors on a desperate raid to regain control of his family's ancestral fort in Riyadh. The attack was successful and the youthful victor, Abd al Aziz bin Abd ar Rahman Al Saud, launched other campaigns to reestablish the dominion of the House

of Saud throughout Najd in Central Arabia. By 1926, Abd al Aziz, through tribal conquest and diplomatic maneuvering, had brought most of the peninsula under his hegemony and, in 1932, proclaimed the establishment of the present-day Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.¹

Geography

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia occupies approximately 80 percent of the Arabian Peninsula, an area roughly equivalent to the United States east of the Mississippi. Eight countries and two bodies of water make up the boundaries of Saudi Arabia.

The Arabian Peninsula is at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa. The Peninsula enjoys a strategic position in terms of communication 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.²

Economics

For the past twenty-five years, the economic development of Saudi Arabia has been broadly governed by five-year economic plans. The first five plans emphasized the development of the Kingdom's infrastructure, with later plans focusing increasingly on human resources and private sector development. The Sixth Plan, which began in 1995, called for broadening the technical skills of the Saudi population and an even stronger emphasis on economic diversification of industrial and agricultural sectors by increasing the private sector's role in the economy. The Seventh National Development Plan (2000-2005) will continue reforms of privatization and economic diversification of the economy and add even greater emphasis on such additional sectors as training and employment of the Saudi population.³

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's chief export is its oil. Saudi Arabia is the world's leading oil producer and exporter with 264.2 billion barrels of proven oil reserves (more than one-fourth of the world total) and up to 1 trillion barrels of ultimately recoverable oil. The United States imports approximately 17 percent of its oil needs from Saudi Arabia, a drastic reduction from previous years. Europe and Asia have, on the other hand, surpassed the United States as the major purchaser of oil from the Kingdom, with Europe accounting for over twenty percent of the oil exports and Asia accounting for nearly 50 percent of the Kingdom's oil exports.⁴

Other major industries within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia include petrochemicals; with Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), one of the largest petrochemical producers in the world, accounting for nearly 70 percent of global petrochemical output. Saudi Arabia is home to the largest mineral resources in the Gulf, including precious and base minerals, as well as industrial minerals.⁵

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is among the world leaders in per capita consumption of electricity, water, and gas, and demand for such services continues to grow. From 1975 to 1996,

1 Richard F. Nyrop (editor), *Saudi Arabia: a Country Study*, Foreign Area Studies, The American University, 1984, p 26-27.

2 Major General Silas R. Johnson Jr., USAF, "United States Military Training Mission: A Paradigm for Regional Security", *The DISAM Journal*, Volume 23 No. 4, (Summer 2001), p 97.

3 U.S. – Saudi Arabian Business Council, 6 March 2003, *The Saudi Arabian Economy*, Chapter 2, p16. http://www.us-saudi-business.org/015-052_chapter%202.pdf.

4 Energy Information Agency (EIA), Saudi Arabia, Washington, Department of Energy, June 2001, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/saudi.html>.

5 U.S. – Saudi Arabian Business Council, 6 March 2003, *The Saudi Arabian Economy*, <http://www.us-saudi-business.org/Petrochemicals>.

the generation capacity of electricity companies in the Kingdom increased sixteen times from 1,173 to 18,780 megawatts (MW).⁶

The Saudi agricultural sector has become one of the largest and most successful non-petroleum sectors in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The sector has grown at an average annual rate of 8.7 percent since 1970 and accounts for more than 9.4 percent of Saudi Arabia's GDP.⁷

The importance of industrialization of the country cannot be overstated. As the population will double by 2020, there will be more demand on the government to provide business opportunities and employment.⁸ This will have a direct impact on many areas of the Kingdom's economy and future military modernization plans. The momentum of this change must also be a consideration of any strategy and policy the United States intends to pursue.

Religion⁹

In the eighteenth century in Najd, the Saudi homeland in central Arabia, a local leader named Muhammad bin Saud aligned himself with a local religious leader, Muhammad bin Abd Al Wahhab. Together, they planned a jihad to purify and, in the process, conquer Arabia. A series of intermarriages, the most important being Muhammad bin Saud's marriage to Abd Al Wahhab's daughter, cemented the relationship. Muhammad bin Abd Al Wahhab was a fundamentalist reformer who reshaped the worship and social practices of virtually all elements of the Sunni society during this period.

Today, Saudi society is based on a strict form of Wahhabi Islam. Saudi Islamic practices are generally more conservative than those of other Islamic states. Both the Saudi interpretation of Islam and the Saudi clergy are heavily influenced by the values of Muhammad bin Abd Al Wahhab.

The importance of religion within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is such that the Saudis do not distinguish between Islam and the state. The Kingdom is the custodian of the two holiest sites of Islam, Mecca and Medina. This, for the Saudis, carries a responsibility unlike other Islamic countries. It is this responsibility that must not be ignored when making strategic decisions and policies.

Government

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy; the country does not have a constitution. Shari'a, the sacred law of Islam, is the fundamental law within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom is often described as an absolute monarchy. However, a more descriptive phrase could be an absolute monarchical system operated as a "family affair." The King derives an important element of his authority from the influence of Wahhabi Islam over all aspects of life. The King's power is limited by other power centers within the royal family, by religion, by customs, and the need for consensus within Saudi tribes, technocrats, business leaders, and religious figures.

The Saudi clergy play a powerful role in ensuring that Shari'a is enforced and limits the pace at which the king and royal family can modernize and still maintain a Saudi social consensus. The

6 U.S. – Saudi Arabian Business Council, 6 March 2003, *The Saudi Arabian Economy*, <http://www.us-saudi-business.org/Power%20and%20Energy>.

7 U.S. – Saudi Arabian Business Council, 6 March 2003, *The Saudi Arabian Economy*, http://www.us-saudi-business.org/economic_indicators.htm.

8 Anthony H. Cordesman, Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), *Saudi Arabia Enters the 21st Century: Economic, Demographic, and Social Challenges*, May 2002, <http://www.csis.org/burke/saudi21/index.htm#reports>.

9 Anthony H. Cordesman, Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), *Saudi Arabia Enters the 21st Century: Politics and Internal Stability*, August 2001, chapter III, p.1-2, <http://www.csis.org/burke/saudi21/index.htm#reports>.

pressure created after the Gulf War led King Fahd to reorganize his cabinet and included the formation of a Council of Saudi Citizens or Majlis al-Shura.

The King has made broader reforms, including the creation of thirteen provincial assemblies and thirteen regional councils. There is a Saudi cabinet that reflects the distribution of power within the royal family. The King heads the cabinet of some twenty members, including six ministers of state. There are twenty-two separate ministries, with the King acting as prime minister. Prince Abdullah is the First Deputy Prime Minister and head of the National Guard. Prince Sultan is the Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense and Aviation.¹⁰

This background information, though condensed, provides insights into the complexities of the different fragments of Saudi society that must be understood and considered by strategic planners if the United States is to continue to be a vital and relevant entity in the political and economical sphere of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, an understanding of the distinct cultural ancestry that brought Saudi Arabia to where it is today and the role of religion and royalty provides an understanding of how the armed forces in the Kingdom are influenced, organized, and directed.

Armed Forces of Saudi Arabia and U.S. Support Organizations

The Land Force of Saudi Arabia divides its manpower between two main entities, the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) and the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces (SAAF).

The present-day Saudi Arabian National Guard evolved from the *Ikhwan* (The Brotherhood) or the White Army, as it was sometimes called. His Royal Highness King Abdul Aziz Al Saud, the first King of Saudi Arabia, organized and led the White Army in the early decades of the 20th century to subdue tribal resistance and unify the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula into what is now the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. From this origin, the SANG has a long honored tradition of bravery and loyalty to the nation and its ruling family.

The Saudi Arabian National Guard is a full-time, standing, land-based, defensive force of approximately 75,000 regulars and 25,000 militia. Commanded by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince and First Deputy Premier of the Kingdom, the SANG is headquartered in the capital city of Riyadh, with regional headquarters in two provincial capitals: Jeddah in the West and Dammam in the East.

The Saudi Arabian National Guard is a separate but equal force with the land-based components of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense and Aviation, and the Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF). Each force plays a complementary role in the defense and security of the Kingdom. The SANG is a mechanized infantry and light infantry force that relies on rapid mobility and firepower to defeat its adversaries. It complements the heavier armor of the RSLF and is fully capable of conducting integrated operations.

The Office of the Program Manager - Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPM-SANG) is a security assistance program that was established by a 1973 Memorandum of Understanding between the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United States. The Program Manager is the principal U.S. military advisor to the Crown Prince, and is a member of the U.S. Ambassador's country team.¹¹

The other U.S. military organization present in the kingdom is the United States Military Training Mission (USMTM).¹² USMTM is a joint training mission and functional component

10 Anthony H. Cordesman, Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), *Saudi Arabia Enters the 21st Century: Politics and Internal Stability*, August 2001, chapter III, p.12-13, <http://www.csis.org/burke/saudi21/index.htm#reports>.

11 An Historical Perspective, 9 March 2003, <http://www.opmsang.sppn.af.mil/Default.htm>.

12 Global Security, United States Military Training Mission, 8 September 2002, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/usmtm.htm>.

command under the auspices of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM). The Chief of USMTM has been designated as the senior United States Defense Representative in Saudi Arabia and has been given coordinating authority over the other Department of Defense agencies in country. The Chief of USMTM works under the general guidance of the American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, who has overall responsibility for all U.S. government activities within the Kingdom.

The mission of USMTM military is to advise and assist the SAAF through 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.

USMTM, with a headquarters, four service divisions, a joint advisory division, and a directorate staff, was formally organized in 1953 under the terms of the *Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement* between the United States and Saudi Arabian governments. USMTM maintains a headquarters on Eskan Village in Riyadh. There are five major divisions within USMTM that perform an advisory role to the SAAF.

Joint Advisory Division

The Joint Advisory Division (JAD), located in Riyadh, advises the General Staff of the Ministry of Defense and Aviation. This staff corresponds to the Joint Staff in the U.S. Department of Defense. Personnel of the JAD work with their counterparts in all aspects of planning, operations, and training generated by the Minister of Defense and Aviation joint and special staff for the Royal Saudi Land Force (RSLF), Royal Saudi Naval Force (RSNF), Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) and Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces (RSADF). In addition, JAD personnel serve as principal assistants to the Director, Foreign Procurement Department, and Director Foreign Assistance and Cooperation Department in their management and administration of Saudi Arabian foreign military sales (FMS) cases.

Land and Air Defense Forces Division

The Land and Air Defense Forces Division (L/ADF), with offices at the Royal Saudi Land Forces building in Riyadh, is responsible for providing advisory, training, and security assistance support to the Royal Saudi Land Force (RSLF) and the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces (RSADF). The advisors in Jeddah and Tabuk represent USMTM in their areas by coordinating and managing the requirements of Department of Defense personnel in these communities as well as serving as advisors to various Saudi Arabian Armed Forces activities in their areas.

Air Force Division

The Air Force Division (AFD), Riyadh, is located within the Royal Saudi Air Forces (RSAF) Headquarters. The division has supporting advisors in Dhahran, Khamis Mushayt, and Jeddah. Personnel assigned to Riyadh work directly with their RSAF Headquarters counterparts on all logistics, operational, and foreign military sales (FMS) issues. In addition, E3A/KE-3A Extended Training Service Specialists (ETSS) personnel provide training and assistance to the RSAF in a variety of flying operations out of Riyadh Air Base.

Naval Forces Division

The Naval Forces Division (NFD), Riyadh, works with its counterparts in all aspects of operation, planning, maintenance, logistics, and training for the small but rapidly growing Royal Saudi Naval Force (RSNF). In Jubail, Navy personnel assist and advise the Base Commander, King Abdul Aziz Naval Base, and provide assistance to the Eastern Fleet Commander in naval warfare operations. In Jeddah, similar assistance is provided at King Faisal Naval Base and to the Western Fleet Commander.

Marine Force Division

The newly created Marine Force Division (MFD) is based in the Royal Saudi Naval Forces Headquarters, Riyadh.¹³ The MARFOR Division Chief is dual-hatted as the Chief of the Marine Corps Technical Assistance Group (MCTAG), which annually provides advisors to both Saudi Marine Forces Brigades in Jubail and Qadimah. Additionally, they provide technical advice to the Director of Marine Forces Schools at Ras al Gar.

USMTM reflects the organization of the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces. The SAAF Command structure provides for a Commander of Naval Forces, Commander of the Army, and a Commander of the Air Forces. Prior to 1984, the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces fell under the command of the Land Forces Commander (Army). However, in 1984 the Kingdom established a separate professional service dedicated to the relatively high-technology air defense mission.¹⁴

The Ministry of Aviation and Defense exercises operational control over the SAAF, civilian aviation, and the national air lines of the Kingdom. The function of Minister of Defense and Aviation is similar to the following organizations in the United States: the Department of Defense and the Federal Aviation Administration.

The sizes of the services are as varied as their missions. Today, the Saudi Army has several thousand soldiers, a substantial inventory of tanks, other armored vehicles, and a variety of major artillery weapons. It is headquartered in Riyadh and has five staff branches:

- Personnel (G1);
- Intelligence and Security (G2);
- Operations and Training (G3);
- Logistics (G4);
- Civil and Military Affairs (G5).

It also has field commands organized into eight zones under Military Area Commanders.¹⁵

Saudi Arabia built a large base near Hafar Al Batin called King Khalid Military City. The city houses some 65,000 military and civilian personnel and is capable of housing and supporting three full army brigades. The Gulf Cooperation Council Peninsular Shield Force is located in King Khalid Military City.¹⁶

The Saudi Air Force is headquartered at Riyadh. Like the Army, it has a modern headquarters staff with five major branches: G1, G2, G3 or GS, G4 and G5. The RSAF also has a military academy and an extensive system of training schools and support facilities. Its operational command is structured around its Air Command and Operations Center and base operations. The main Air Command and Operations Center is near Riyadh and there are Sector Operating Centers at Tabuk, Khamis Mushayt, Riyadh, Dhahran, and Al Kharj (Prince Sultan Air Base – PSAB). These centers control air defense operations by fighter aircraft, surface to air missiles and air defense artillery.

13 Colonel Rodney Fitzpatrick, Chief of Staff, USMTM, 8 March 2003.

14 Anthony H. Cordesman, Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), *Saudi Arabia Enters the 21st Century: The Saudi Air Defense Force*, April 2002, p.1, <http://www.csis.org/burke/saudi21/index.htm#reports>.

15 Anthony H. Cordesman, Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), *Saudi Arabia Enters the 21st Century: Saudi Army*, January 2002, Chapter VII, p.1, <http://www.csis.org/burke/saudi21/index.htm#reports>.

16 Anthony H. Cordesman, Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), *Saudi Arabia Enters the 21st Century: Saudi Army*, January 2002, p.2, <http://www.csis.org/burke/saudi21/index.htm#reports>.

The Saudi Navy has a modern headquarters staff with five major branches similar to the Army and Air Forces. Its operational command is divided into two major fleets plus command of the Marine regiment. The Arabian Gulf Division is headquartered at Al Jubail and has bases at Dammam, Ras Tanura, and Al Qatif, plus a naval aviation element. The Red Sea Division is headquartered at Jeddah and has bases at Haqi, Al Wajh, and Yanbu.

The Saudi Air Defense Force, a separate service since 1984, is similarly organized as the other services with five major branches: G1, G2, G3, G4, and G5. The RSADF shares its headquarters with the RSLF in the RSLF headquarters. However, a modern headquarters facility is under construction in Riyadh and will be completed and occupied sometime in 2004. There are six major Group Commands

- 1st Group in Riyadh;
- 2nd Group in Jeddah;
- 3rd Group in Tabuk;
- 4th Group in Khamis Mushayt;
- 5th Group in Dhahran;
- 6th Group at Hafar Al-Batin (King Khalid Military City).

The SAAF are directly under the control of the King, who is prime minister and commander-in-chief. Prince Abdullah, the Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister commands the National Guard (SANG). Prince Sultan, the Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense and Aviation, is responsible for the regular armed forces.

There is a modernization effort that has occurred in the Saudi military forces. Air defense, as a relatively new service, is at the forefront of this effort. There are several areas in which the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces have to examine and find competing resources to maintain and evolve their current capabilities. Most of the weapon systems of the Air Defense Forces were purchased in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Saudi government sought and purchased systems from many nations to include those from Europe, the United States, and Asia. It is this “sharing” of the wealth that will influence the future modernization of the Saudi Armed Forces and the desire to acquire the best at the best price. Governments and contractors alike must be prepared to accommodate the Kingdom’s needs with proper understanding of the cultural sensitivities that exist in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its armed forces.

The Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces

The Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces (RSADF) has been a separate service since 1984 and has the responsibility for the air defense of the Kingdom. To successfully achieve this protection, the RSADF has purchased Short Range Air Defense Systems (SHORAD) and high to medium range air defense (HIMAD) missile systems. It is these weapon systems, facilities that support and train their forces, and the changing threat within the region that the Saudi Arabian government will examine over the next decade to determine the direction it will take.

The RSADF has several vital locations and facilities that are instrumental in providing training and education for all their soldiers and officers that successfully make it into the ranks of Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces. The headquarters, located in Riyadh, provides the operational and logistical planning and coordination support for the six group commands that are similarly aligned with the defense sectors that are in the Kingdom. It is also the location of the Staff College that trains field grade officers in staff operations. Jeddah is the home of the Air Defense Forces Institute (ADFI), the Maintenance and Technical Support Depot, and the location for all RSADF initial entrance and weapon systems training. It is at the ADFI that the officer basic course and the officer advance course are taught to the company grade officers. The ADFI is also the location of the RSADF military college. The college is new and in its second year of existence at the

ADFI. Currently, the college is designed as a three-year program providing graduates with a bachelor's degree in military studies. The goal of the college is to emulate other prestigious military academies such as the United States Military Academy.

The Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces use the old city gates as the entrance to their headquarters.



Another view of the old city gate.

The Maintenance and Technical Support Depot is a superb facility that supports modernization initiatives within the RSADF. The Depot is divided into three critical sites:

- Theater Readiness Missile Facility;
- System Integration and Check-Out Facility;
- Technical Support Facility.

The Maintenance and Technical Support Depot is a multi-million dollar HIMAD missile inspection facility that enables the RSADF to inspect missiles in the Kingdom, precluding the requirement to send them back to the U.S. This is a tremendous savings of millions of dollars to

the RSADF. The TRMF has been designed as an Ammunition Storage Point for storage of the missile and other ammunition that supports the RSADF. The System Integration and Check-Out facility conducts all of the weapon system integration, system checks and evaluations, and upgrades prior to standing up an air defense battalion. Finally, command, control, and communications are driving the Technical Support facility. Their goal is the integration of all the RSADF air defense weapon systems under one command and information center (CIC).

The current inventory of air defense weapon systems is varied. The RSADF maintains an inventory of gun systems, self-propelled SHORAD systems, and HIMAD missile systems. To support this complex array of weapons, the RSADF has an Air Defense Operations Center (ADOC) located in each of the six group commands.

The weapon systems and capabilities that the RSADF are able to bring to bear on a potential foe are divided into the following categories and capabilities:¹⁷

- Gun Weapon Systems;
- Man Portable Missile Systems;
- Short Range Missile Systems;
- Medium Range Missile System;
- Long Range Missile System.

The gun systems within the RSADF are used in support of maneuver units and other air defense operations as deemed necessary. Close-in, as well as medium range, systems can be found within all Group commands.

The first generation of man-portable missile systems are beginning to reach the end of their shelf life and are in the process of being destroyed. This effort was of vital importance to the Department of Defense and a significant effort for the air defense advisors within USMTM. The Mistral, a French man-portable missile system, was purchased by the SAAF in support of its armed forces. The missile is deployed throughout the different group commands. The Crotale/Shahine is another short-range system.

The HAWK missile system was purchased by the RSADF from the United States and has gone through several product improvement plans (PIPs). The improvements help the system in targeting and missile detection. There were improvements made in radar capability, both acquisition and detection, to the command and control interface, and missile warhead. The Patriot missile is the RSADF's newest acquisition, first purchased in 1990.

Finally, the Air Defense Operations Center is currently undergoing modifications that will allow it to integrate all air defense assets under one command and control system. There have been some decisions by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States that have impacted the progress of the modifications. Completion of this effort should be achieved during 2003 when a final certification and acceptance test is expected to be conducted and successfully completed.

The RSADF has many weapon systems within its arsenal. However, age and technological improvements have required the RSADF to examine how to resource all of the requirements it sees as essential to the future. This provides a unique environment for security cooperation operations within USMTM. How this is accomplished will reflect the potential changes by the RSADF and therefore the requirement by USMTM, the U.S., and contractors to understand the changes that are occurring within the Kingdom and to plan and respond accordingly.

Some examples of how USMTM advisors can influence the direction of the RSADF can be shown through recent cultural, military, and support assistance efforts. After the tragic events of

17 Robin Keil and Dr. Norman Friedman, Raytheon, *Missile Systems of the World*, 1999, section: Air Defense.

September 2001, the effects on the Saudi military reflect the “perceived” attitudes and action taken by the U.S. Cancellation of training and schooling in the United States was immediate and a self-protection mechanism for the SAAF. Breaking this mold was paramount for the advisors. The air defense advisors used several mechanisms that resulted in the thawing of relations and a return of confidence in the U.S. government.



A Shanine Short-Range Missile.

The deployment and rotation of Patriot Task Forces to the Kingdom every four months makes the interface and exchange between the RSADF and U.S. Patriot forces difficult at best. The air defense advisors are in the Kingdom for one to two years. Understanding that relations within the Saudi culture are built over time allows the air defense advisors to be the conduit through which military-to-military exchanges occur in a more relaxed and routine manner, despite the ebb of constant change.



Several Patriot Missile Batteries.



Breaking several cultural barriers is also vital to the understanding of the cultural differences that exist. The air defense advisors can bridge this gap and did so in 2002 with the first inductions of RSADF soldiers into the Order of Saint Barbara, the air defense and artillery fraternal organization. This brought an artillery tradition of Christian origin to an Islamic military, which was extremely well received. The understanding and brotherhood that was developed helped improve the understanding of service-oriented traditions and the role they play in moral and unit esprit de corps.

The air defense advisor always plays a vital role in ensuring that the security cooperation program is correctly implemented and executed. A prime example is the monumental effort by several key members of the air defense branch in planning, coordinating, and executing the closure of a foreign military sales case relating to the Stinger missile weapon system. Advisors had to coordinate between the RSADF, RSNF, the 2nd Group, and Staff agencies in the RSADF Headquarters and Minister of Defense and Aviation, and then plan and execute the destruction of the Stinger missile system. The importance of this effort took on a more ominous role after September 11, 2001 in that it ensured, with RSADF assistance, that none of these highly lethal Stinger missiles made it into the hands of terrorists. This cooperation is indicative of the role advisors in USMTM play and the value that the Saudi Armed Forces place on the mission advisors conduct.

Training of the RSADF officer corps is extremely valued by the RSADF headquarters. Most officers speak multiple languages, as most are educated in the west. After September 11, 2001, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had scaled back the number of officers sent to the United States for advanced training. The efforts by the advisors to alleviate preconceived beliefs by the RSADF that officers would be at risk resulted in a resumption in school attendance in the U.S.

Current SAAF organization reflects the RSADF as a separate service. Having air defense subordinate to the Army has worked well for the military of the United States. However, this is not the case for Saudi Arabia. Understanding the Saudi culture and the mindset of the RSADF provides focus to the new paradigm.

The creation of an Air Defense Division (ADD) within the USMTM might provide the SAAF and the RSADF confirmation that their organizational structure is understood and correctly perceived. A new ADD would mirror the historical and cultural partings of the RSLF and the RSADF. This separate service organizational change had a definitive impact on both the RSADF and the Air Defense advisory team within the Kingdom. The military experiences brought by a change in USMTM to create an Air Defense Division could be broad and varied and provide greater flexibility for the RSADF and the USMTM air defense advisors.

The question becomes “how”? Division chiefs are colonels and the experience of a brigade level air defense commander would be an asset to the RSADF. Additionally, with the ADD being headquartered in Riyadh, permanent deployment of a detachment to Jeddah and Dhahran would provide daily operational interaction between advisors and RSADF soldiers. The inclusion of a U.S. military non-commissioned officer at each detachment would assist in the RSADF experience, fostering understanding of how to use this vital “asset” on which the U.S. Army depends so heavily. Currently, the level of responsibility and dependency upon the noncommissioned officer in the U.S. Army is critical to mission accomplishment. Within the RSADF, the noncommissioned officer’s role is not as pronounced as in the U.S. Army.

This implementation could influence how the U.S. government and contractors interact with the RSADF. Advisors, historically, have performed liaison functions in this capacity successfully. It might also allow the RSADF to have a greater appreciation for the complexities it faces with future modernization efforts.

From an air defense perspective, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will face many challenges. The expertise that the United States Military Training Mission brings in this arena will influence the security assistance that is brought to bear. The expertise of the air defense advisors within

USMTM will assist and help guide the paradigm shift that will occur over the next decade. Some of the areas that will be influenced by this organization will include the Patriot Configuration III and PAC3 Missile acquisition, Surface Launched Advanced Medium Range Air to Air Missile (SLAMRAAM), early warning improvements, and future integration efforts beyond the ADOC modifications.

The RSADF is quickly becoming a premier service. The potential regional hostilities and concerns of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are influencing the resourcing and direction the RSADF is taking. The lethality of a single ballistic missile can cause tremendous death and destruction when it is configured with a weapon of mass destruction warhead. The other services will continue to focus on the conventional threat while the RSADF must consider the ominous technological changes occurring now and in the future. The pace of change for the RSADF is much quicker than the other services, making it more difficult on the leadership within the RSADF and their decision making process. It is the air defense advisor's role to improve efficiency and the security cooperation provided to the RSADF, which would only be enhanced by a more robust advisory team.

Failure to implement change may not be seen as any great loss. However, as the militaries of the world transform and watch the direction and changes of the U.S. military, failing to understand the paradigm shift within the Kingdom will reduce long-term influences, from an air defense perspective, on the strategic plans of the United States and national business industries. Understanding the uniqueness will, in time, allow Saudi Arabia to be less reliant on actual U.S. military forces but more dependent on U.S. military expertise. The result will be an increase of U.S. government influence within the Kingdom in a much more positive and appreciative role. The creation of a separate Air Defense Division might just be the key combination within USMTM that will assist the RSADF to continue on the path of transformation.

About the Author

Lieutenant Colonel Sippel's primary military occupation specialty is Air Defense, and his functional area is Operations. His academic education includes a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from Penn State, and a Masters of Arts in Management from Webster University.