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## THOUGHTS ON U.S. MILITARY REPRESENTATION OVERSEAS

By

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In 1911, Major Hans Kundt of the German Army came to Bolivia as the head of a military advisor mission. He brought with him four other officers and three NCOs. One officer was an artillery advisor, one became Commandant of the Bolivian Military Academy, another the Commandant of the Bolivian NCO Academy, and the fourth was a Technical Advisor to the Bolivian General Staff. The NCOs moved into the barracks and, in fact, became advisors-soldiers in the Bolivian Army. The officers too were a part of the Bolivian Army and exercised executive and command authority, as well as provided military advice. All members of this group were fluent in the Spanish language, and they understood the culture and the aspirations of the Bolivians. As an indication of the calibre of officer that the Germans sent to this type duty, one of Major Kundt's assistants, Captain Ernst Roehm, was later to become the organizer of Hitler's storm troopers, one of the elite military organizations of its day.

These German advisors shared the privations of the Bolivians in those days, but all the while they worked from within, and here is the key phase--from within--to raise the standards of the Bolivians and to teach the techniques as they, the Germans, understood them to modernize the Bolivian Armed Forces.

The Germans left Bolivia in the 1930s and were replaced in the early 1940s by the Americans. Those of you who have visited Bolivia or have seen movies of the Bolivian Army will have noticed that the Bolivian Army still goose-steps when it marches; they still wear the tightly billed cap of the Wehrmacht, and even today, buy their officers' insignia from Germany.

I do not mean to deprecate the effects of the American advisory efforts in Bolivia. Indeed, it was with considerable American assistance that these same Bolivians were able to train a force and mount an effort that tracked down and eliminated Che Guevara, perhaps ending for our time the myth of the invincibility of the foreign guerrilla insurgent. But, I think we can see from the German example, the things that are lasting--the things that cross cultural lines come from within, and are brought about by "advisors" who transcend cultural boundaries--advisors who, in fact, understand and become a part of those whom they would seek to advise. I think the U.S. Armed Forces would be well advised to emulate this German example, and I think the beginning rests in a realistic, aggressively pursued foreign area specialist training program.

How can we identify a likely candidate? Basically we look for three crucial qualifications: professional competence, cultural empathy, and linguistic fluency.

Unequivocally, the foreign area specialist must be first and foremost qualified in his military specialty. He must be an expert. If he is to be an

operations advisor, he must be a high calibre, experienced military person who can say, "This is the best way to do it because I've been there. We had to do it, we did it this way, we were successful, and it is the best of many ways we tried." To insure that the individual maintains his "professional competence," he must not serve continuous overseas tours, but must return to "operations" to update his knowledge.

The second most important qualification is to have cultural empathy--"the right attitude." We have to select people who have a genuine interest, not only in the area, but in the people in the area where he is going to serve. He must have a genuine interest in wanting to become a part of the area and people, so that he, in fact, can gain the understanding which he and we can translate into meaningful programs to enhance the attainment of national objectives in his area. How do we find or instill this attitude? I think many people with the right attitude will surface themselves once the program is in being. Also, I think we can be perceptive enough in our selection process so that, for example, if we find an individual who seemingly meets all the qualifications but can't stand rice, we either teach him to eat rice or not send him to the Orient.

Many times, foreigners have told me with rare candor, "You Americans are inconsistent. You send NCOs to my country to be advisors, and they live like Colonels and cannot meet an NCO from our Armed Forces on his own terms. You say you cannot have your NCOs live like ours, but then you send your Peace Corps and they live with the Indians in the remote villages. They are the ones who are valuable to us."

We all know the value of the NCO in our service, but if he is to be equally valuable in a foreign country, he must meet his counterpart in the local environment. Maybe the NCO, and even some of the officers who would aspire to be foreign area specialists, should be required to serve a short (4-6 months) initial hardship tour--to leave the family and golf clubs behind--to transcend cultural boundaries, as did the Germans in Bolivia, if we are to realize the full potential of the program to bring about change from within.

Finally, our representatives must have linguistic fluency or else neither their professional competence nor their cultural empathy will be transmitted. This, after all, is our goal--to reach out, teach, mold, influence and persuade.

Now that we know what our candidate looks like, we must find and retain those precious individuals. Once again, the answer to this concern is utterly simple and readily attainable. If we provide adequate (at least "equal") rewards (promotions, schools, good assignments) to our candidates, they themselves will become our best advertisement. Additionally, consider them for "command assignments" and you thus will insure that some of your best personnel become area specialists.

For a start, we can begin by implementing the following recommendations:

a. Revise and re-emphasize DOD Dir 2055.3, "Selection and Training of Security Assistance Personnel." [Editor's Note: this directive has

been revised and reissued on 11 March 1985 under the new title, "Manning of Security Assistance Organizations and the Training of Security Assistance Personnel." See the article on pages 21-23 of this issue which discusses the new directive.]

b. Review the career progression potential for officers who work in security assistance. Insure there is reasonable promotion opportunity, including promotion to general officer levels. Provide for the early identification of officers with high skill levels and aptitudes for security assistance (and related duties such as attaches), and insure that they are not lost in the system after being trained and finishing one assignment.

c. Insure a DOD wide program for foreign area officer management.

d. Upgrade the benefits for military personnel in security assistance and similar duties. There remains a great disparity between DOD and State Department benefits.

If we want good representation, we must pay good prices. Otherwise, we will get what we deserve . . . a shoddy product.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colonel Hector Andres Negroni, a recent USAF retiree, wrote this article while assigned as South American Politico-Military Planner in OJCS/J-5. Prior to his retirement, he served on the Air Staff as Chief, Policy and Management Division, Directorate of International Programs. Col Negroni also had previous security assistance assignments with the JUSMAAG, Spain and the U.S. Military Group in Bolivia. An Air Force Academy graduate who also holds an MA degree from the University of Puerto Rico, he is now employed by McDonnell-Douglas in St. Louis, Missouri.