

Rotational Training Centers and Security Cooperation in AFRICOM

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Abstract

This paper presents a brief overview of the relationship between rotational training centers and security cooperation as related to the AFRICOM area of operations by presenting a brief overview of the process to train a foreign force at a combat training center in the United States, outline Security Force Assistance Brigades' roles in security cooperation in AFRICOM, and state how these operations are aligned with AFRICOM and national defense security objectives.

Keywords: rotational training center, security cooperation, combat training center, AFRICOM, Africa, SETAF-AF

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Foreign participation at the United States' Combat Training Centers (CTCs) is by no means a new concept. As early as 2004, a revision of AR 350-50 (Combat Training Center Program) incorporated Army guidance regarding foreign nation integration training into CTCs. In recent years, participation increased radically; there has been a 150% increase in foreign activity (visits and training) at U.S. CTC's from Fiscal Year 2017/2018 to Fiscal Year 2018/2019 (n.d.). While Fiscal Year 2020/2021 and the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited training audience participation around the world, it is prudent to expect a resurgence in demand for foreign nation participation and involvement in our Combat Training Centers. The purpose of this paper is to present a brief overview of the process to train a foreign force at a Combat Training Center as well as the impact of Rotational Training Centers in Security Cooperation Operations in the AFRICOM area of operations.

The Army Combat Training Center (CTC) Program includes the Joint Multinational Readiness Trainer (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany, Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) in Fort Polk, Virginia, and the National Training Center (NTC) in Fort Irwin, California (AR 350-50, ch 1-5p.9e, 2018). NTC, JRTC, and JMRC have the capacity to execute 10 rotations per year (AR 350-50, 3-6a, 2018). African partner participation in combat training rotations traditionally take place at Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) in Fort Polk, Louisiana, and Joint Multinational Training Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany. This is due to the design and location of these training areas. JRTC is designed for dismounted infantry brigades, which is the overall composition of African partner armies. In contrast, NTC is designed for mechanized brigade combat teams, and therefore, would not offer the same training value. JMRC is a feasible

choice to train African partners given its geographical location and similar time zone to many priority African countries, which streamlines training opportunities.

Participation of military units and personnel from other nations at U.S. CTCs is “encouraged and authorized” (AR 350-50, Appendix B, B-1b, 2018) in order to foster military relationships, mutual understanding of doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures, and to improve interoperability with U.S. allies and partners (AR 350-50, Appendix B, B-1b, 2018). This participation most commonly occurs in two forms. The first form is a visit, which is strictly defined as short duration, generally less than 5 days, and consists of 20 or less foreign national personnel. The purpose of a visit is to observe ongoing training and the operation of the CTC. Therefore, visitors will not interact with or impact the ongoing training in a competitive manner, and visitor action and performance is not included in a formal After Action Review (AAR).

The second form of participation is training. Training can include participation in classes, situational or lane training exercises, and participation in a combat training rotation event that is expected to impact the training scenario outcome. During training, foreign partners are a competitive part of the rotation, and serve as either friendly or opposing forces. Their action and performance will directly affect the training scenario and will be included on the formal AAR.

It is essential to obtain appropriate clearance for foreign partners visiting or participating in a CTC during the planning process. Approval for another nation to access a Combat Training Center for either training or visiting is governed by Army Regulation 12-15 Joint Security Assistance Training and requires the Deputy Commanding General, G-3/5/7 approval (AR 350-50, Para B-2a, 2018). Long term individual access to Combat Training Centers can also be

authorized under provisions of other Headquarters of the Department of the Army managed programs (AR 350-50, Appendix B, B1, 2018).

When planning a training event it is also important to consider host nation requirements. For example, bringing foreign partners to Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Germany requires additional clearance from the German government. It is essential to utilize proper planning in order to schedule training events with foreign partners. U.S. Army rotations (to include all Brigade, division, Corps, and Joint rotations) will be ideally scheduled five years out during Army Synchronization Resourcing Forums. This also occurs on the Army Synchronization Tracker (AST), in which the training calendars of all Army units are visible. Units are able to add their own training events, but FORSCOM populates CTC rotations (FORSCOM, 2021). Scheduling and integration of foreign units into a CONUS CTC rotation occur upon the DCS, G 3/5/7 approval (AR 350-50, 3-5A, 2018) and are not subject to this timeline. Once a foreign unit has been confirmed as participating in training with a CTC, they will be added to the training calendar on AST.

The Tunisian Army is a strong example of security cooperation operations taking place through CTC training. In April 2017, The Tunisia Army Training Forces Center of Excellence partnered with US Army Africa to train and gather best practices of observer, coach, trainer (OC/T) teams during exercise Allied Spirit VI at JMRC (Sampson, 2017). The Tunisia Army Training Forces Center of Excellence is Tunisia's Readiness Training Center (RTC), and was established in 2015 (Sampson, 2017). Conducting training at a U.S CTC is a critical step in the training glide path as the U.S. assists the Tunisian Army to enhance their national training center capacity to train, exercise, and assess individual and collective tasks. During the three-week multinational exercise, Tunisian Army personnel shadowed JMRC OC/Ts as they evaluated 12

allied and partnered nations' performance and interoperability in a tactical environment. Army Regulation 34-1, Multinational Force Interoperability, defines interoperability as "the ability to routinely act together coherently, effectively, and efficiently to achieve tactical, operational, and strategic objectives" (Fogg, Heritage, Balga and Stuart, 2020). Two months later, Tunisian Army personnel participated in a JRTC rotation for the first time, learning about the military decision making process and building partnership with the United States (Dubiel, 2017).

Prior to this training event, two Senior Tunisian Army Leaders, Col Maj Jelloul Hammami, commander of the Tunisian Applied Army School, and Col. Nouredine Riahi, commander of the Tunisian Army Training Forces Center of Excellence, visited JMRC in 2016 to familiarize themselves with 7th Army Training Command's capabilities at JMRC (Sampson, 2017). This visit is referred to as a Military to Military Familiarization and is a necessary engagement in the case plan for Tunisia and many African Partners.

Conducting U.S. CTC training and visits with African partners must align with one or more SETAF-AF lines of effort that in turn will enable USAFRICOM and USAREUR-AF campaign and competition objectives in the USAFRICOM Area of Operations. These lines of effort include gaining and maintain operational access with partners in Africa to support competition efforts, command, control, and enable designated operations and exercises, and strengthen African land forces to accomplish shared security objectives (G5 Strategy, 2021). Gaining operational access, forming partnerships, and strengthening African partner forces are commonly the primary objective that will drive African partner participation in Combat Training Centers. Training and visits to a Combat Training Center must also align holistically with the country's glide path, which are created for designated countries in the AFRICOM Campaign Plan in order to further U.S. interests and influence. SETAF-AF's mission statement includes

strengthening partnerships with African nations (G5 Strategy, 2021). This may make collaborating with the U.S. more attractive to African nations than U.S. competitors who may not support partner initiatives.

The objective of developing cooperative training locations in the form of RTCs is to effectively train and assess individual to collective tasks for battalion size units. For many of our African partners, such as Senegal and Uganda, this means preparing to deploy in support of peace keeping operations and crisis response operations (G5 Strategy, 2021). The desired partner end state for developing RTCs are:

- *African partners capable of self-training and responding to regional and continental crisis*
- *training institutions possesses the processes and procedures to develop and assess training*
- *regional partners collaborate and share lessons learned and methodologies*
- *U.S forces develop and increase understanding of the operational environment. (G5 Strategy, 2021).*

U.S. CTCs are designed to replicate combat by stressing every warfighting function, and to provide a “crucible experience” (AR 350-50 Para 1-5a, 2018) for units and leaders training in a decisive action training environment. The end state of the Army’s CTC program is that units and leaders are prepared to deploy worldwide and win against any adversary (AR 350-50 Para 1-5a, 2018). U.S. CTC doctrine are used as a baseline for assessments, as well as the U.S. CTC’s experience to provide an objective view during exercises. U.S. forces partnering with designated training centers have the ability to enhance capacity and capability to train both U.S. and African forces, as well as develop enduring institutional relationships (G7 Training, 2018). U.S. CTC’s utilize the “Five Pillars of a Combat Training Center” (Combat Training Center Program, AR

350-50, 2018) as a foundation for internal management. Using the Five Pillars model, SETAF-AF's end state for African partners own national and regional training centers are "strong institutions that achieve full training capability as designated by Partner Nation" (G7 Training, 2018). The five pillars consist of the training unit, the operations group, operational environment, training aids, and facilities. When partnering with African Forces in regards to a RTC, all pillars must be carefully evaluated and leveraged in order to produce holistic and best value results for both the U.S. and partner nation.

In recent years, AFRICOM has gained an additional asset in order to conduct security cooperation – the Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB). The SFAB was first formed in 2017 as a way for experienced Soldiers in conventional forces to advise and train partner nations (South, 2021). Currently, the 2nd SFAB is regionally aligned with the AFRICOM area of operations. Based in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 2nd SFAB is expanding its presence in Africa with continuous rotations (AUSA, 2021). The 2nd SFAB rotates small teams to the continent for persistent and episodic engagements with African partner nations. The arrangement, set for at least the next two years, offers African partners a wide variety of training and advising capabilities with the end state of increasing partner and allied nation capabilities to improve local security and counter the influence of peer adversaries (South, 2021). Colonel Michael P. Sullivan, commander of 2nd SFAB, has stated that he expects the SFAB mission to grow and that there will be "persistent partnerships with at least six to seven nations and intermittent deployments across the continent" (South, 2021). The training and support offered by SFAB is wide ranging; African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership, Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, Global Peace Operations Initiative, and Partnership Regional East Africa Counter

Terrorism are but a few initiatives that 2nd SFAB's efforts support (2nd SFAB and Lubinksi, 2021). These initiatives are nested in AFRICOM and USAREUF-AF's campaign objectives.

In addition to missions on the continent, 2nd SFAB has already executed CTC rotations at both JRTC and JMRC with African partners, serving as a valuable asset to accomplish training. Due to the nature of their mission, 2nd SFAB is in the unique position to provide training, build relationships with African partners, and serve as eyes and ears for what is happening at the small unit level in real time. This has proven to be a formidable asset to security cooperation in Africa and will no doubt continue to develop and refine shared security objectives of both the United States and African partners.

In summary, the Army's combat training center program enables unique opportunities to familiarize, train, and assess our African partner nations in accordance with AFRICOM campaign priorities and lines of effort. While this requires careful planning from many echelons, it is a powerful tool that can foster military relationships and interoperability, facilitate mutual understanding, and improve tactics for both parties. This desired end state aligns with Army Regulation 350-50 Combat Training Centers, and AFRICOM's goals and vision for partner forces in Africa. In addition, 2nd SFAB provides an important enhancement which can accelerate results and continue to build on security cooperation objectives for all parties; protecting the security of both our African partners and the United States.

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