

Train

Advise

Assist



Security Force Assistance Brigades: An Introduction

by Lieutenant Colonel Todd Harkrader

In early 2017, the U.S. Army announced the creation of the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB) to assess, advise, support, and liaise with foreign security forces. A total of five active component SFABs and one National Guard SFAB are now either active, standing up, or planned. These specialized brigades are poised to become a critical instrument of national power and a key tool in the Army's inventory.

But what exactly are SFABs? What units are in an SFAB and what is their mission? Most importantly for the readers of the *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* (MIPB), what makes up the SFAB's intelligence warfighting function, how does the Army employ it, and what are the lessons learned from the past 2 years? This quarter's MIPB answers many of these questions and more.

The Army has specially manned, trained, and equipped these brigades for their primary mission of advising and working alongside foreign military partners. Consisting of an all-volunteer force of approximately 800 personnel, an SFAB is based on the structure of a traditional brigade combat team but without the junior enlisted and company grade officers. SFABs consist of two infantry battalions, a cavalry squadron, a field artillery battalion, an engineer bat-

talion, a support battalion, a headquarters and headquarters company, a military intelligence company, and a signal company. When fully employed, a single SFAB can produce 61 advisory teams across the various echelons and diverse warfighting functions of their foreign security force partner.

The SFAB's core mission set and purpose is threefold:

- ◆ First, an SFAB provides geographic combatant commanders with a purpose-built, sustainable theater security cooperation advising element to assess, advise, support, and liaise with foreign security forces. From preparing for great power competition to working with foreign security forces to counter threats to internal defense, SFABs afford combatant commanders a powerful and flexible tool to leverage their respective areas of responsibility.
- ◆ Second, SFABs "buy back" readiness for the Army by reducing the burden on brigade combat teams that are routinely called upon to support security cooperation missions. Years of this practice have reduced the readiness and capacity of brigade combat teams and the divisions they support at a time when a resurgent Russia and China threaten to tip the global balance of power.



1st SFAB



2nd SFAB



3rd SFAB

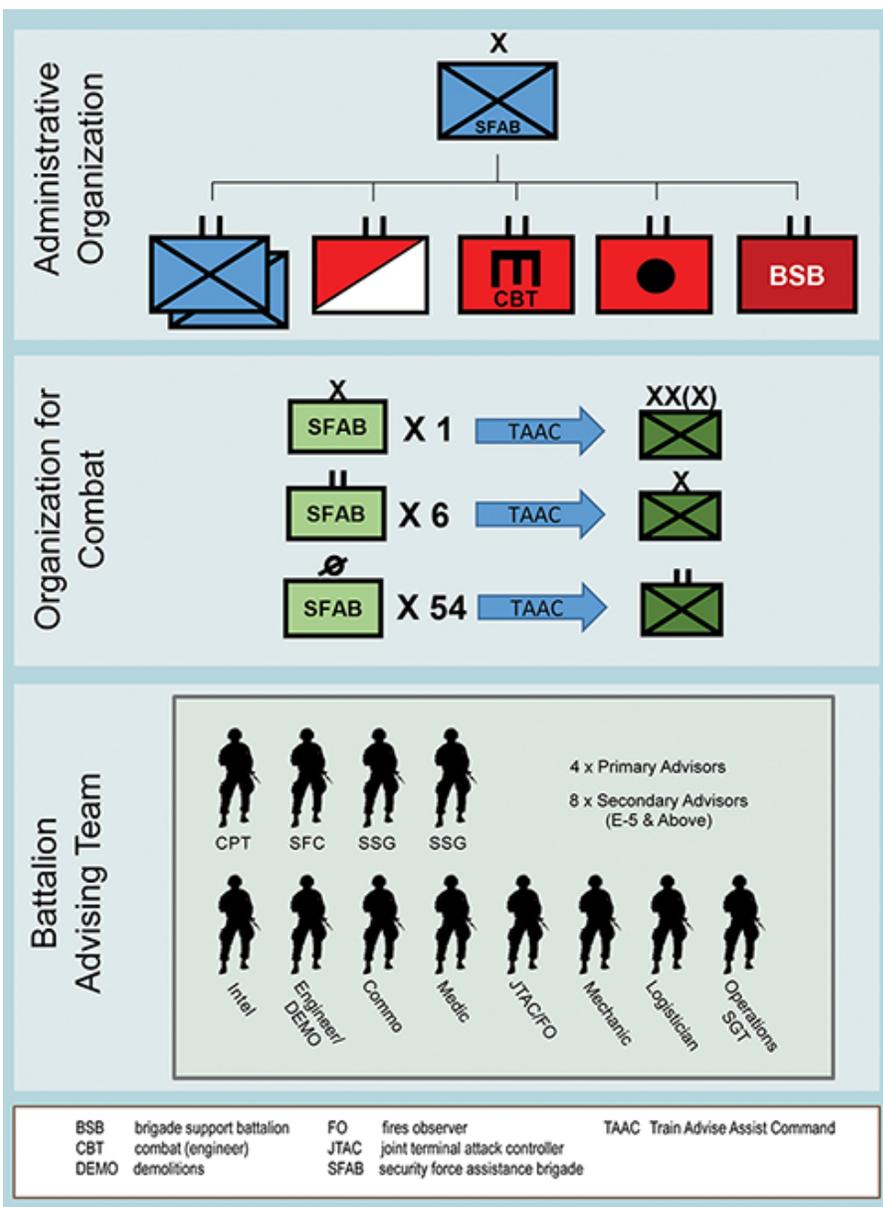


4th SFAB

◆ Third, in the event of a major high-intensity conflict, an SFAB consisting of senior officers, warrant officers, and noncommissioned officers can rapidly expand with an influx of junior personnel to form new brigade combat teams.

A relatively small yet highly effective cadre of intelligence professionals function within each SFAB. Consisting of officers, warrant officers, and noncommissioned officers of various ranks and disciplines, the men and women of the brigade S-2, battalion S-2, military intelligence company, and combat advising teams in an SFAB provide combatant commanders with a plethora of intelligence advising expertise. Unconstrained to a particular task organization, these personnel can operate in numerous configurations across more than one combatant command simultaneously if necessary for both persistent and episodic advising missions.

In this edition of MIPB, authors from the 1st and 2nd SFABs, and the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence Lessons Learned team provide readers a unique perspective on the training, employment, retraining, and mission command of SFABs, as well as the intelligence enterprise support provided to SFABs during their creation. Although new, the intelligence warfighting function of SFABs is already establishing a legacy rich with history, lessons learned, and strategic impacts that will continue to grow in the years to come. ✨



SFAB Organizational Design

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