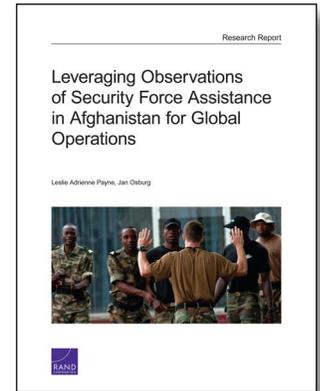




# Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations

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Interviews with Security Force Assistance (SFA) practitioners in Afghanistan reveal insights that can be applied to future global operations. The enduring nature of most challenges that these practitioners face suggests that solutions still remain uncertain. Future SFA missions, such as those envisioned for the U.S. Army's Regionally Aligned Forces, can benefit from the experience gained from SFA in Afghanistan as captured in this report.



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do operational-level practitioners view their Security Force Assistance missions at this stage of the Afghan campaign?
- What suggestions do they have regarding the future of their trade?
- What observations and insights from Security Force Assistance efforts in Afghanistan can be applied to future advising efforts in other theaters?



## KEY FINDINGS

### Security Force Assistance Practitioners Face Several Interrelated Challenges

- Foundational or structural challenges lie in how the Army perceives, values, and incentivizes advising compared with how it does so for other missions.
- Operational challenges arise from the way the Army is conducting Security Force Assistance operations, including how it selects, trains, assesses, and rewards advisors.
- Advisors must manage the complex motivations and interpersonal dynamics of the advising mission.

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## Interviews Revealed Insights at Institutional, Operational, and Personal Levels

- Incentivizing security force assistance will improve the talent pool for future missions.
- The Army should build on Special Forces practices and training.
- The U.S. Army's Regionally Aligned Forces must master the difficulties and nuances of relationship building.
- Advisors must remain security focused.
- Personality and behavioral dynamics will unequivocally affect security force assistance outcomes.
- The mission's end state must override an advisor's personal end state.
- An advisor must maintain mental fortitude.
- Revamped security force assistance doctrine can function as a mobilizer.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Modernize Army advising and combat-related narratives to generate capable and confident advisors.
- Aggressively leverage the experience and institutional knowledge gained by Special Forces conducting foreign internal defense.
- Seek out the best advisor candidates.
- Provide sufficient time for training to ensure quality.
- Ensure that attention to the mission's end state overrides attention to advisors' personal end states (i.e., advisors' personal goals and objectives).
- Remain focused on team operations and security during the advising mission.
- Maintain mental fortitude while advising.
- Communicate and adhere to existing doctrine.

