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14. ABSTRACT U.S. engagement in Latin America centers on Security Cooperation; however, USMC permanent personnel staffing does not support that mission effectively as it relies too heavily on Personnel Exchange Programs(PEP). Restructuring some of these PEP positions into Security Assistance Officers within the region would vastly improve USMC support to COCOM Security Cooperation goals. Assuming a zero sum game for staffing for Latin America, that paper analyzes the three types of permanent personnel positions in Latin American: Attaches, Security Assistance Officer(SAO), and PEPs and shows that SAO's have the greatest ability to have strategic impact. The paper provides recommendations on how/where to switch existing PEP billets to SAO billets and also recommends some changes to the current PEP order to allow "one-way" exchanges and tying PEPs to the SAO's in Latin America.					
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The Marine "Mission Chief"

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Executive Summary

Title: The Marine "Mission Chief"

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Thesis: U.S. engagement in Central and South America centers on Security Cooperation; however, USMC permanent personnel staffing in the region does not support that mission effectively as it relies too heavily on Personnel Exchange Programs. Restructuring some of these PEP positions into Security Assistance Officers within the region would vastly improve USMC support to COCOM Security Cooperation goals.

Discussion: US Marine Corps staffing in Latin America constitutes an economy of force effort in support of Northern and Southern Command's Security Cooperation goals. The hope is that US engagement can remain in phase zero throughout the region in order that the US can continue to focus elsewhere around the globe. The stability of the countries in this hemisphere is vital and it is critical that the resources the Marine Corps applies to this hemisphere tailor to the mission.

There are three types of permanent positions that the Corps maintains in Latin America: Defense Attachés, Security Assistance Officers, and Personal Exchange Program (PEP) officers and enlisted. The Defense Attaché's contribute little to meeting Security Cooperation as that is not their charter. The Personal Exchange Programs only meet tactical requirements and are very limited in their ability to affect change. Yet they are the most numerous. The most useful position is that of the Security Assistance Officer (SAO) especially when charged to directly support a foreign nation's Marines as is evidenced in Colombia.

Security Cooperation is a term that captures the opus of materiel, training, and advice given to a foreign country to improve, professionalize and develop cooperative capabilities. The first and most important hope is to maintain stable governments and ultimately to have capable military partners that can respond to regional crisis. This mission is the purview of the Security Assistance Officer and he has the greatest access to the entire interagency via the Country Team in each Embassy. Priority countries around Latin America, with standing Marine Corps, need an SAO following the model found in Colombia. Assuming that additional manpower cannot be spared from elsewhere in the Marine Corps it should be drawn from the ranks of the already present PEP officers assigned to the region. This would give these officers the ability to have strategic impact in their respective partner nation vice tactical.

A modification of the current PEP order could enhance utilization of the remaining PEP positions and better incorporate them into the security cooperation plan by placing them under the review of the Marine SAO, though still working day to day for the partner nation.

Conclusion: Shift currently assigned permanent personnel in Latin America from PEPs to SAO "Marine Mission Chiefs" in vital countries. The remaining PEP's would remain at the tactical level still working for the host nation but with direction and performance review by the Marine SAO. The foreign officers that currently take part in their half of the PEP exchange can continue as "one-way PEP's" where applicable so that those officers and enlisted continue to receive the benefit of the exchange.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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List of Acronyms

AOR	Area of Responsibility
COCOM	Combatant Command
DAO	Defense Attaché Office
DAT	Defense Attaché (Normally refers to the overall Commander of the DAO)
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
EDA	Excess Defense Articles
EUM	End Use Monitoring
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FSN	Foreign Service National
IMET	International Military Education and Training
JMP	Joint Manpower Program
MAAG	Military Advisory Group
MarForSouth	Marine Forces South
MILGP	Military Group
MPP	(Ambassador's) Mission Program Plan
NAS	Narcotic Agency Section (part of the State Department)
ODC	Office of Defense Cooperation
PEP	Personal Exchange Program
PLU	International Issues Branch (Office Code, Plans Unified Commands)
SAO	Security Assistance Officer
SDO	Senior Defense Officer

Preface

This work is the natural outcome of three years spent in the only true security assistance job that a Marine Officer might serve in Latin America. It was really when my “research” was conducted. Those halcyon days were ones where the limit to affect change was constrained only by imagination and the number of hours in a day. I was blessed to have some great leadership from the Military Group under Colonel Trombitas (USA), my MILGP Commander, and LtCol Hamm the XO. I was fortunate to see the stars align with a magnificent team to support, the Colombian Marine Corps (COLMAR) led by Adm Soto (CNO Colombian Navy) and Adm Yance (CMC) and an excellent foe to beat, the FARC. I was able to build a superstar team with two civilian contractors Steve Berger, Riverine Plans Officer, Mark Nicholson, Riverine Logistics Officer, and Sgt Jimenez USMC who helped me make it all happen. Far to the North we enjoyed superior support from Marine Forces South under Colonel Gandy and later Colonel Lopez.

The capabilities and improvements created put the COLMAR on the cutting edge in their war. It's more than tons of cocaine captured or guerillas killed; we now see last month 129 Panamanian Security Force personnel trained under the Colombian Marine Corps at the enlisted training center at Covenas. It is a superb enlisted training center and they are growing self-sufficient. If one of the missions of Security Cooperation is to build partners able to help us achieve our goals, then we have made some vast strides with the Colombian Marine Corps. Security Cooperation done by experts is the best future for engagement in this vital hemisphere, now we just have to get some more Marine Officers into the job.

I would also like to thank Dr. Otis for having patience with me during this process and for caring about South America, which is rare.

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INTRODUCTION

The main goal of US engagement in Latin America is to help shape events in the region that prevent conflicts from occurring; these are phase zero operations.¹ Maintaining peace and security in the hemisphere is vital to national interests as it promotes economic prosperity and prevents the need for US engagements. Operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere are the current main effort of the nation and thus engagement in Latin America must be an “economy of force.” The importance of an effective and successful economy of force mission and the building of cooperative partners in the hemisphere is critical as demonstrated by the events such as the Haitian earthquake or war against organized crime in Mexico. The primary means to leverage the military aspect of national power in phase zero operations is through Security Cooperation.²

Since Security Cooperation has now become the primary focus for both Northern and Southern Command’s interaction with Latin America, it falls upon each service component to do its part in meeting the Combatant Commands (COCOMs) requirements.³ The Marine Corps has its share of this responsibility in this endeavor. This paper will examine the permanent staffing support that the USMC currently provides to the COCOM’s responsible for Latin America. It will analyze if the current manpower resources are being used effectively.

There are three types of permanent positions that the Corps maintains in Latin America: Defense Attachés, Security Assistance Officers (SAO), and Personal Exchange Program Officers (PEP.) The Defense Attaché’s contribute little to meeting Security Cooperation goals as that is not their primary mission.⁴ The Personal Exchange Programs only meet tactical requirements and are limited in their ability to affect strategic change. Yet they are the most numerous. The most powerful and effective position is that of the Security Assistance Officer especially when charged to directly support a foreign country’s Marine Corps as is currently evidenced in

Colombia. Other SAO's serve in Military Group headquarters staff as operations officers such as in Peru and Ecuador and have great overall influence on those countries' programs.

Security Cooperation is a term that captures the entire opus of materiel, training, and advice given to a foreign country to improve, professionalize and develop cooperative capabilities.⁵ The first and most important hope is to maintain stable governments in the region and ultimately to have capable military partners. The heavy lifting to accomplish this mission is the purview of the Security Assistance Officer as he has the greatest access to the entire interagency via the Country Team in each Embassy. Priority countries in Latin America, with standing Marine Corps, need a dedicated U.S. Marine SAO following the model found in Colombia.¹

Assuming that additional manpower cannot be spared from elsewhere in the Marine Corps to create these Marine SAO's, it is feasible to draw from the ranks of the PEP billets already present in the region. This would give these officers the ability to have strategic impact in their respective partner nation. A further modification to current Personnel Exchange Policy (MCO 5700.4E) would better utilize the PEP positions that remain in Latin America to incorporate them into the security cooperation plan for that country as led by the SAO. The restructuring of some of these PEP positions into Security Assistance Officers within the region would vastly improve USMC support to COCOM Security Cooperation goals.

This paper will accomplish this by discussing the current situation of USMC permanent staffing in Latin America and the primary military functions performed in a foreign country. The intent is to show that current USMC staffing placement cannot achieve the Security Cooperation goals of the COCOM's. A brief discussion of the merger of the Defense Attachés and Security

¹ Priority Countries with large standing Marine Corps are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. There are other countries with Marine Corps but these are currently the most vital to U.S. interests due to size and capability.

Cooperation offices under a single Senior Defense Officer (SDO) is required to recognize current DoD changes.

The analysis of the current situation will show the deficiencies of the current staffing plan. The larger number of PEP's vice SAO's in the region is an inefficient system. Finally, after the analysis and discussion of where the USMC could better serve the Combatant Command, there will be specific recommendations of how and where to adjust the current plan. It is improbable at this time that the Marine Corps will increase its permanent personnel in the Latin America because of the high demand for Marines elsewhere. This paper will show a better way to use USMC permanent manpower to achieve COCOM Security Cooperation goals using a holistic analysis and recommend moving officers into the Security Assistance Officer role of a "Marine Mission Chief."

SECTION 1: CURRENT SITUATION

United States Southern Command is one of the geographic combatant commands for the nation and responsible for the vast majority of the Caribbean, Central and South America.⁶ (The primary area of Northern Command's AOR discussed herein falls solely upon Mexico.⁷) The main effort of U.S. foreign policy, resourcing and military operations are currently and justifiably on conflicts in other continents outside of the Western Hemisphere and thus Latin America finds itself treated as an "economy of effort" mission. Despite this backseat importance to other regions, all too often the U.S. finds itself painfully reminded of the importance of the rest of the Americas. The current instability of countries to the South, transnational criminal and "narco-terrorist" organizations, natural disasters and Venezuela's destabilizing influence on the

region are all examples of problems that if ignored could have dire consequences on U.S. vital interest. The Marine Corps has responsibilities to the Combatant Command in order to help achieve those strategic goals, specifically by provided manpower and military to military contact with the numerous Marine Corps in the countries of Latin America

Both Southern Command and Northern Command have recognized that one of the premier facets of its ability to influence events in its Area of Responsibility (AOR) is via Security Cooperation engagements to strengthen bonds, help professionalize foreign militaries, and ultimately to help create viable partners for peace in the hemisphere.⁸ The United States has seen its attention to Mexican border issues raise exponentially. Adding to the confusion is that even though Mexico is in Northern Command's AOR, SouthCom leads all security assistance efforts for Mexico.⁹ The current chaos along the border clearly signals that Security Cooperation is vital.

Southern Command does not levy the Marine Corps heavily as a rule, but it does has certain obligations for permanent staffing in Latin American countries in various posts including Defense Attaché, Security Assistance Officers (SAO's), and Personnel Exchange Programs (PEP.) (DoD Directive 5132.03 8a) These far-flung and independent duties are where the daily contact between foreign militaries occur and can have great impact despite the small numbers involved. These few but critical billets are crucial to both identifying the goals of engagement and in their execution. Unfortunately these billets can also see outstanding talent squandered by placing Marines in positions where their ability to affect change is limited by the nature of the current paradigm and failure of policy to think creatively.

The Country Teams, led by a Chief of Mission or Ambassador, is the proverbial "tip of the spear" for interagency interaction with each country in Latin America. The key executive

branch organizations that have an international element to them usually have representation in each country to varying degrees depending upon the importance placed upon that specific country's current relationship with the United States. Examples include, but are not limited to, State Department, USAID, FBI, DEA, and ICE. In some countries, such as Colombia, which had the largest Country Team in the world prior to the war with Iraq, the presence of these organizations numbered over a thousand people or as few as 20.¹⁰

Table 1 shows where all Marine permanent Manning is currently located. There is a mix of Defense Attachés, Security Assistance Offices, and Personnel Exchange Positions throughout the theater. Mexico is included despite being part of Northern Command's AOR because it still represents Latin America despite how the United States has decided to carve up the hemisphere.

Country	Marine Attaché	SAO	PEP	Enlisted PEP
Argentina			Maj	
Brazil	Maj		Maj	
Chile			Maj	SNCO x 2
Colombia	Maj	LtCol (USMC Rep)	Capt	SNCO
Ecuador		Maj (MILGP OpsO)		
Mexico	Maj			
Peru		LtCol (MAAG OpsO)	Maj	
Total = 14	3	3	5	3

Table 1¹¹

The military component of the interagency is either represented at its most meager by a Defense Attaché Office (DAO) with only two to three personnel representing all DoD or up to several hundred as seen in Colombia with a security cooperation component and a DAO office (exact numbers are classified.)

The form and function of these two organizations mirror the two primary missions of the military component of the country team. One mission is to maintain a military-to-military liaison with foreign countries and to report on public information of that country's current security and military situation, and usually is the purview of the Defense Attaché. This includes capabilities and purpose. The other primary mission is to execute security cooperation, covering everything from improving foreign military capability and professionalization to supporting the purchase of American defense systems. Until recently, these two organizations were separate and functioned apart from each other.

THE DEFENSE ATTACHÉ OFFICE

The first examined function is the role of the Defense Attaché Office (DAO) on a country team. The primary function of the DAO is not the improvement, professionalization or advancement of the host nation's military. There are situations where this might be a secondary function but their primary mission is information and intelligence. DAO's simultaneously serve both the Ambassador and the Defense Intelligence Agency.¹² In countries where there is no Security Assistance organization, then DAO will also take up that mantle but usually it means then that the level of security cooperation between that country and the U.S. military is so negligible that the DAO can handle all activities without help.¹³ The DAO's primary responsibility is to feed information up the chain while maintaining positive military-to-military relationships. Not having the COCOM as part of its chain of command organizationally divorces it from the security cooperation goals of the COCOM, though they are aware of what they are and will coordinate efforts.¹⁴

A single Defense Attaché commonly called the “DAT” leads each country’s DAO but usually also has numerous subordinate attaché’s who connect to their respective services. It is common to see Navy, Army and Air Force Attaché’s work directly with the partner nation’s respective services and report to the DAT. Attaché’s enjoy full diplomatic protection and may have certain travel permissions not afforded to all military members in the rest of the country team. As with the majority of these billets, they are usually “one-deep” and thus the success of their service ties to the quality of that individual officer. The DAO office has limited ability to provide material resource, training, and advice to a foreign country.¹⁵

Mexico, Colombia and Brazil have Marine attachés. They focus upon information and military diplomacy. These positions exist due to the requirement of DIA to have Marine specific information generated on these nation’s militaries. The DAO plays no role in Security Assistance in Mexico or Colombia and have a limited SAO function in Brazil. The SAO in Mexico (Office of Defense and Cooperation) attempted to dual task the Marine attaché but the workload was too overwhelming. Ultimately, the Marine Attachés play an important role in theater but their efforts are far less meaningful to Southern Command’s pursuit of Security Cooperation goals in comparison to a Security Assistance Office.¹⁶

THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE OFFICE

Security Assistance Officers’ purview is Security Cooperation. Security Assistance specifically focuses upon the utilization of the Foreign Military Sales and other means to procure, field, and train foreign nations in U.S. military equipment. Security Cooperation is an encompassing term that captures security assistance functions but also includes other training,

exchanges, and advice given to foreign militaries and their governments in order to enhance their security posture. This includes specific military advisors that travel and assist foreign field units engaged in combat operations. Bi-lateral or multi-national exercises and engagements are also under SAO's cognizance. The level of assistance and the lateral limits given to each office charged with Security Assistance is dependent upon each situation and the current challenges in each country.¹⁷

Combatant Commander's and the State Department rely upon Security Assistance/Cooperation offices to realize the military cooperation goals that they set in each country. Unfortunately when talking about the entire region there is no common name for this organization. In Colombia, it is the Military Group (MILGP); in Peru, it is led the Military Advisory and Assistance Group (MAAG); and in other countries, it is the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC). Regardless of the name, the function is the same and for the sake of ease, this paper will use "MILGP" as the acronym for this organization. The MILGP's serves both the Ambassador and the Combatant Commander directly. COCOM's execute their security cooperation plans via the MILGP offices. The MILGP organization bears discussion as it makes its purpose and means clear.

The MILGP has a Commander and a headquarters staff of varying size depending upon the size of the effort needed for that particular country. The staff is joint in nature; for example, a Marine Lieutenant Colonel fills the operations officer in Peru. The MILGP is usually further subdivided in the appropriate service missions such as the Army Mission, Naval Mission, and Air Force Mission. Colombia is the only country in Latin America with a dedicated "USMC Representative to the Colombian Marine Corps" and serves the same function as a "Marine Mission Chief." (Not a current doctrinal term) He also doubles as the Deputy Naval Mission

Chief and works directly for the Naval Mission Chief. There can be further subsets where there is a dedicated staff to run function areas such as a separate Foreign Military Sales section (FMS) and Logistics Mission. Most MILGP's maintain some level of contracting support that enables them to obligate money directly in country with local contractors. (For example, Colombia saw well over a billion dollars in aid provided to it during Plan Colombia and only a robust mission could affect such a transfer.)¹⁸

The MILGP's are greatly assisted by State Department hired Foreign Service Nationals (FSN's) and the host nation also usually provides further assistance with secretaries, translators and active duty military who assist in day to day efforts.¹⁹ The MILGP headquarters is located in the Embassy, but subordinate units may be co-located with appropriate level partner nation headquarters. (An example would be in Colombia where the Naval Mission is located in the Colombian equivalent to the Pentagon and was several doors down from the Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Colombian Marine Corps.) This embedded relationship provides important direct rapport and access.

SAO's receive training to learn how to utilize various forms of monetary assistance. The first and best-known type of assistance is the program called Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and grant money called Foreign Military Financing (FMF). FMF money falls under United States Title 22 and has specific rules and regulations governing its use. FMF grant money must be funneled through the established FMS system run by the DoD. While this is a State Department program, they rely upon the military to execute almost every detail of the program.²⁰ All utilization of these funds has overall approval from State Department and the individual Ambassador's of each country through the Ambassadors Mission Program Plan(MPP). The COCOM's have input into this program in coordination with State Department and use a staff

process in coordination with the MILGP to build requirements and execute the program.²

These programs can run the gambit from multi-national development of aircraft such as the joint strike fighter with countries like Spain and England to the selling of M-16 service rifles to nations via grant monies.²¹

This program serves multiple purposes. FMS supports the United States defense industrial establishment. It enhances interoperability between the United States and partner or allied nations so that commonality of equipment will ease multi-national operations. It serves as a method in which to discard obsolete, Excess Defense Articles (EDA), gear from U.S. inventory to include ships and aircraft. (While these platforms might be obsolete to the U.S. military much of this equipment is still very viable in third world countries where the latest gear is not only beyond their capacity to maintain logistically but is also beyond their needs.) It provides the legal means in which foreign countries seeking to purchase military equipment can do so and simultaneously seek the advice from U.S. military members on the equipment in question. Foreign nations can apply their own funds and input it into the Foreign Military Sales system to develop nearly any capability they wish to create with some great advantages.²²

The FMS system uses SAO's to support the partner nation by providing the advice to ensure that the entire process is carefully planned. Some countries may wish to procure a weapon system but fail to consider the supply, logistics, training, doctrine, and maintenance requirements to field the system. The SAO's assist that nation by making sure that fielding plans are holistic and addresses the full range of requirements. The FMS system is robust, albeit highly complex, but ultimately can provide every aspect of support to include training, translated

² FMS training for SAO's is at Wright Patterson Air Force Base and teaches its students the business of military sales to foreign countries.

documents and even lines of supply. The FMS system will assist in the transport, customs, final delivery and verification of receipt of purchased or granted equipment.²³

SAO's have additional responsibilities to conduct End Use Monitoring (EUM) for all equipment provided via Title 22 and the FMS system. This means that prior to funds being obligated the partner nation must agree to use the purchased equipment for defense only and in accordance with international law. SAO's in country are required to conduct yearly inspections of all gear provided and report it accountability, level of safeguarding and appropriate use. This is a daunting task for SAO's in countries where large amounts of transferred equipment.²⁴

FMS and State Department regulations determine what equipment and technologies transfer to foreign nations, depending upon their status with the United States. Latin American countries have limited access to premier weapon systems and this can lead to some friction. This becomes particularly problematic with night vision and communications equipment. State Department dictates that security assistance in Latin America cannot sell any equipment that would create a capability that would undermine the relative balance of military forces in the region.²⁵ Knowledge of these limitations is critical prior to discussions with Latin American militaries as too often high level visits or other interactions by DAO or PEP's may lead discussions into realms that are unsupportable by U.S. law.

SAO's have additional tools, particularly in Latin America, which goes beyond Title 22 activities. Title 10 counter-drug money, authorized by the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) and others, provided via Southern Command directly to the MILGP's parallels many of the functions accomplished by the traditional FMS system. These Title 10 monies come with different rule sets that allow money utilization inside the partner nation and in other specific programs all with the goal of creating the desired capabilities in accordance with Congressional

legal limitations.²⁶ These counter-drug monies allow the State Department's Narcotic Agency Section (NAS) to coordinate efforts to train national police forces with military assistance. There is often great mutual support between NAS and the MILGP to share and tap into various sources of training that would never be available via a pure military chain of command. The members in the MILGP can further call upon other resources available via the Combatant command by using exercise funds, Traditional Commander's Activities, and the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET) to realize meaningful enhancement of the partner nation's military.²⁷

A critical aspect to understand is that the SAO's in country are the ones who come to have the greatest understanding of the capabilities and requirements of that nation's entire service. It is typical that the MILGP will be the ones who actually create and write the security cooperation plan for the COCOM in coordination with the partner nation and the country team. Parallel coordination of the plan with the COCOM staff massages the plan in accordance to available resourcing and in constant dialogue with all concerned parties. It is then that available resources are matched to execute the plan and the SAO's coordinate with the component commands to plan and execute the myriad of training exercises, exchanges, and deployments into a country. SAO's become experts at writing and creating deployment orders, vetting partner nation units for human rights abuses, locking on training areas etc etc. Since most countries lack a Marine in the MILGP it is up the Navy officer (usually 1 deep) to remember to include Marine training for the forces in country. Since most South American countries have Marine Corps, but each one belongs to the Navy, this seems like a simple matter. The reality is that MarForSouth has to "push" engagements since most Naval Mission Chiefs simply do not have the requisite

knowledge base to create meaningful engagements for the Marine component of that country's naval force.²⁸

US Marines fill the MILGP positions in Ecuador and Peru as Operations officer billets and are located in the MILGP headquarters. These joint billets are vital to the operation of the MILGP as they coordinate the deployments and activities of every service mission with Southern Command and the country team. It is impossible for the MILGP operations officer to carry both hats as a "Marine Mission Chief" and as the operations officer. At best, he can provide some input and assistance to the Naval Mission Chief. The fact that Marines hold these positions does increase the frequency of interaction and dialogue with MarForSouth and have led to a more robust engagement with these countries.²⁹ These billets directly contribute to achieving Southern Commands Security Cooperation goals in a joint sense but do not directly tie into Peruvian or Ecuadorian Marine improvement.³

Colombia is the best model to explain the ideal way to organize a robust Marine Security Cooperation office. The SAO position in Colombia, formally called the "USMC Representative to the Colombian Marine Corps" is the only "Marine Mission Chief" in Latin America. He has the additional responsibility as the "Deputy Naval Mission Chief" as makes sense since the Colombian Marine Corps is part of the Navy.

The Colombian Marines number at 23K making it one of the largest in the world and a significant player in the war against illegal armed groups.³⁰ The U.S. Marine in this billet has vast access and capability to create, shape, and drive the security cooperation goals in Colombia. This pure SAO billet is highly effective and capable of helping create significant improvements

³ Their history of Riverine involvement also ties Marine into the area with previous security cooperation missions, particularly in Iquitos, Peru.

in the Colombian Marine Corps and thus its part of achieving SouthCom's and the Country Team's goals. It is also a full joint billet, which can be beneficial to the officer's career.

What follows is a very basic example of a typical "Marine Mission Chief" SAO activity. It reflects a myriad of accomplishments that an SAO can achieve and the power and capability of a MILGP.

The Marine SAO in Colombia determined that a critical river/littoral network in Colombia was insufficiently controlled allowing unimpeded FARC utilization of that principal Line of Communication (LOC). The SAO concluded after discussions with various members of the country team, visits to the area, discussions with partner nation commanders and all the way to Minister of Defense that an enhanced capability in the area was vital. This was in accordance with Southern Commands overall stated security cooperation goal of creating a sufficiently robust Colombian military to reduce the amount of ungoverned spaces of Colombia and help that nation defeat illegal armed groups. The SAO then in coordination with the partner nation helped establish a new Riverine Battalion. The Colombians provided the base and personnel and the SAO used available funds to buy boats, equipment, weapons etc and coordinated with Corps of Engineers to improve the facilities to support operations in this remote location. Training teams coordinated by the SAO included SEALs, Special Boat Team 22, USMC training teams, and civilian contractors to teach everything from maintenance to nighttime riverine assaults. Logistics training and supply management was incorporated. The melding of the new battalion into the larger Riverine Brigade was enhanced by the U.S. equipment, training, and advice.⁴

A new mandate from OSD merges the DAO and SAO functions under a single commander, usually, but not always the DAT. The position is the Senior Defense Officer (SDO) and he/she will have responsibility for both organizations. For USMC positions in Latin America, this will be transparent because no Marines serve as MILGP commanders or as the head DAT. The individual functions of the DAO and MILGP will remain the same but will now fall under one senior military officer. This reasoning is that it will reduce the friction to both the partner nation and to higher headquarters as to who is in charge of military matters in a country team.³¹

⁴ Experience from the author.

PERSONNEL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The final permanent position for a Marine in Latin America is the Personnel Exchange Program (PEP), meant to provide a means for allied countries to exchange officers and enlisted in order to increase interoperability.³² The Marines trade places and are able to perform essentially the same functions as they normally would but in an allied country. This is normally at the Battalion, Brigade or training institution level.

The Marines on PEP programs spend two to three years attached to the partner nation's military. The Marines have fitness reports written by the host nation's immediate commander as the reporting senior and then, as in the case of SouthCom's AOR, MarForSouth will conduct the reviewing officer portion.³³ These positions are at the tactical level, provide a detailed knowledge of the respective service, and improve relationships between countries. While in the host nation, the U.S. Marine is dependent upon the partner nation for logistical support and has few funds with which to travel on official business. Thus the Marine has little ability nor charter to influence anything but the immediate unit with which he works.³⁴

Table 2 shows where each corresponding Latin American officer or enlisted man goes as part of their exchange with the U.S. The program works superbly in countries where due to allied treaties those officers and enlisted can take full part of operations to include combat. The PEP program in 3rd world nations comes with some significant drawbacks unless properly framed. The first problem is that the officers and enlisted from the Latin American countries cannot be given allied access to classified material or participate in U.S. operations. Due to the lack of allied nation status, any exchange they conduct can only be in some form of supporting or

training command.³⁵ Further, the U.S. officers in Latin America can serve in operational units but cannot serve in any combat capacity, nor are these billets joint coded.³⁶

Country	Partner Nation PEP Billets	U.S. Unit
Argentina	Amphibious Staff Officer (O-4)	10th Marines
Brazil	Assistant Operations Officer (O-4)	2d MarDiv
Chile	Operations Staff Officer (O-4)	SOI East
Chile	Infantry Instructor (E-7)	SOI East
Colombia	Infantry Instructor Covenas	MRCD PI
Colombia	Instructor Naval Academy	TBD ⁵
Peru	Amphibious Staff Officer (O-4)	II MEF SOTG

Chart 2³⁷

The PEP officers and enlisted are very limited in scope and ability to affect anything beyond the immediate unit to which they belong. Their mandate is to work for the partner nation unit and their engagement is normally tactical. Some, via great personal initiative, have tried to expand their impact but find it a frustrating experience, as they are not trained nor have complete access to a country team’s synergy. PEP activities do not always tie into Southern Command’s Security Cooperation goals. Even if they are aware of Southern Command’s goals, the PEP’s have little access to the tools of the country team to affect change beyond their daily interaction at the local level with the particular unit to which they belong. The tactical level of interaction can be crucial but only if leveraged at the appropriate place and time.³⁸

One of the reasons that so many overall Security Cooperation goals fail in Latin America is that too much effort is upon tactical level units. The training provided does short term good but lacks staying power beyond a year. This is due to the realities of military organizations as

⁵ This billet is established and the U.S. Officer is in Colombia; however, the Colombian Navy has been stalling the Colombian Marine’s reciprocation of this exchange for internal political reasons. The USMC Representative in Colombia is working through this ongoing issue.(from telephone interview with Steve Berger, Riverine Plans Officer Colombia.)

people move on and the lessons learned in the training are lost. Instead, to achieve long lasting change in a foreign military, institutional change is necessary and it can be superbly accomplished by a PEP.

Colombia is where PEP utilization in Latin America can serve a force-multiplying role when properly harnessed to the security cooperation plan. The two PEP positions created in Colombia in 2006 was via the urging of the USMC Representative in the MILGP to SouthCom, MarForSouth and Headquarters Marine Corps. The two key institutions identified as the crux of realizing institutional change are the Colombian Naval Academy⁶ and Covenas, which is the enlisted training center. The hypothesis is that truly professionalizing and improving the sources of manpower in the service would over time result in a permanently improved organization. This would reduce the long-term requirement to constantly re-train tactical level units and create competent schoolhouses capable of sustaining their own-trained units. This is where the tactical level PEP's came into being.

Since these two schools have strategic long-term impact on the ability to realize the overall security cooperation goals for the Colombian Marine Corps then it made sense that two PEPs each placed at the respective schoolhouses could translate tactical success into strategic long-term gains. It was proposed and eventually accepted that an enlisted PEP program would be established at the Covenas enlisted training center and one at the Naval Academy in an attempt to alter future Colombian Officer training. Since both these PEP's would also have the direct support and involvement of the USMC representative in the MILGP they would get added help and benefit by being tied into an overall plan not just left to their own. Nowhere else in the

⁶ The Colombian Naval Academy, Almirante Padilla, is the only commissioning source for the Colombian Navy/Marine Corps.

hemisphere do Marine PEP's have this level of connectivity to the MILGP on security cooperation goals.

All other personnel sent to the South American AOR are temporary in nature and ultimately facilitated by MILGP personnel. There are numerous training teams, advisors, and trips to South America but they generate from either the MILGP and/or from SouthCom/MarForSouth "encouragement" and push for engagement. Some events are cyclical so that their execution has become routine but in the end the request for forces and the deployment orders almost invariably initiate with the MILGP. The number of engagements, exercises and exchanges is increasing exponentially but it requires MILGP SAO's to pull these efforts together as the connecting file between the two nations.³⁹

VISION

Reviewing what has been discussed shows that there is very limited permanent USMC manpower applied to achieve the phase zero goals for SouthCom focused upon the professionalization of Latin American Marine Corps. If the USMC is going to do its part as needed by the Combatant Command then a complete review of the application of these meager USMC personnel needs consideration. The previous section clearly shows that the most beneficial billet to accomplish security cooperation goals is to have a US Marine working as an SAO inside of the country team. PEPs that are isolated and that have no support from a Marine SAO are not as effective. PEP's are tactical level billets, which have far greater chance of

having strategic impact if placed correctly and enjoy direct support from a Marine SAO to assist them.

A restructuring needs to occur as outlined as follows. Table 3 shows the proposed changes in permanent billets in Latin America. The goal is to maximize the number of SAO's in Latin America to provide the greatest ability for those officers to achieve the goals set by the COCOM's. This proposal does not change the overall number of officers and enlisted serving in permanent positions in country, simply places them to weight the main effort of security cooperation.

Country	Marine Attaché	SAO	PEP	Enlisted PEP
Argentina		Maj		
Brazil	Maj	Maj		
Chile		Maj		SNCO x 2
Colombia	Maj	LtCol (USMC Rep)	Capt	SNCO
Ecuador		Maj (MILGP OPsO)		
Mexico	Maj	Maj		
Peru		LtCol (MAAG OpsO)		
Total = 14	3	7	1	3

Table 3

The ideal SAO billet is the Marine "Mission Chief" billet that directly support that country's Marine Corps. The name "Marine Mission Chief" is not the crux of this argument, as in Colombia where it is the "USMC Representative to the Colombian Marine Corps." Similar titles will serve in other countries as well; but what is important is that the function is the exact same as the other service mission chiefs in a MILGP. The Marine SAO billets should be Lieutenant Colonel billets, as is the one in Colombia, to provide the Marine SAO the "weight" needed to compete for resources and money with the other mission chiefs in the MILGP

structure. As always the “one up or down” rule will be apply thus resulting in Major’s filling the billets but it must be coded in that way to prevent a too inexperienced Captain from filling these billets. These officers need to have at least 2/2 language proficiency and while 3/3 is a great benefit, what is vastly more important is that they are credible infantry officers that have the capability of relating to the Latin American Marines and understand the tactical, operational, and strategic requirements of a force.⁴⁰

The other critical aspect of this recommendation is the matter of what to do with the foreign officers and enlisted that come to the United States in their part of the exchange. It is suggested to alter the PEP order to allow “one-way” PEPs or “visiting instructors” to maintain the current arrangement of placing these Latin American Marines in their current places of duty. This will meet the needs of the partner nation and add to the professionalization process for those officers and enlisted. The other change to the PEP order should be that all remaining Latin American PEP’s answer to the Marine SAO and their fitness reports written by the SAO. This will ensure that the PEP’s continue to support the Security Cooperation plan and will protect that PEP’s career by providing fitness reports that have value on promotion boards. This would be completely transparent to the host country.

Shifting permanent personnel in South America appears simple but it will be more complex to accomplish and the following section details a recommendation on how to accomplish it.⁷

⁷ The ideal would be to create SAO positions in each priority country and leave all existing PEP’s in place but the author is assuming that HQMC cannot afford additional manpower to the AO at this time and that it is a zero sum game. It also makes the proposal more attractive when staffed through manpower.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend that Marine Forces South and Marine Forces North be the lead agencies to conduct and review each position in their region in coordination with the COCOM, MILGP's, DSCA and PLU-4 Western Hemisphere Desk Officer.⁸ MarForNorth is included since they have Mexico. Some paradigms will have to be broken to better structure and place these positions and ultimately both COCOMs, individual country teams, and partner country would have to concur. A key assumption is that there can be no net increase to staffing levels already assigned as that is simply unrealistic at this time. The Western Hemisphere Desk Officer will have a key role as the connecting file to HQMC.⁴¹ The Defense Security Cooperation Agency will also have to be included as the lead agency responsible for training and supporting SAO's.

Making the choice of which nations in Latin America will be the "priority of effort" is critical. The recommended countries in Table 3 were derived with input from the Chief of Staff of MarForSouth.⁴² Mexico, Colombia, Brazil are, without question, the most critical in 2010. Panama is currently rising again in importance and deserves careful scrutiny as the Panama Canal is of vital national interest but Panama lacks a formal military. Since SAO billets are joint in nature it will also require addition of those billets to the authorized joint coded billets that the Marine Corps supports. It may require direct talks between CMC and COCOM commanders to push this "Marine Mission Chief" concept. These billets would be identified as key SAO billets in the Joint Manpower Program (JMP) via the Defense Security Cooperation Agency and allow for the required training cycle prior to each SAO's arrival in country.⁴³ During the course of a thorough review, the final list may not be as recommended but the basic argument remains to move as many PEP's as feasible into the SAO positions.

⁸ PLU-4 is part of Plans, Policy & Operations (PP&O) Headquarters Marine Corps.

Mexico has a Marine Defense Attaché and the billet should remain due to the criticality of sustaining robust military-to-military diplomacy between the two countries.⁴⁴ The increase in Mexican Marine efforts in the war on drugs and US Marine training teams to assist them directly reflects US major interests requiring a Marine as the Marine Mission Chief in the MILGP.⁴⁵ (ODC in this case) The manpower to fill this billet could come from the current Peru PEP position. Filling this Mexican Marine Mission Chief is the recommended top priority due to Mexico's unique geographic position and the Mexican Marines efforts spearheading the war against organized crime.

Peru's Marines Corps would not appreciate the loss of this PEP position; however, if allowed a "one-way" PEP that could mollify the situation. It would make sense to allow a "one-way" PEP that would still allow the Peruvian officer to come and gain from the experience of serving at a U.S. training institution (SOTG in this case.) That officer will still take those lessons and apply them in his country. The USMC simply would not reciprocate the US Marine Officer part of the swap to Peru. Even though it states that it should be an equal exchange, modification would allow more flexibility in what needs to occur to achieve security cooperation goals.⁴⁶ If MarForSouth, SouthCom or the Country team deem that Peru is of sufficient importance that a US Marine must remain in country then that position at minimum should shift into the MILGP to a Marine SAO position to work Security Cooperation goals for the entire Peruvian Marine Corps.

Peru is the country to shift the staffing source to create the Mexico SAO billet because the MAAG Operations Officer is a Marine Lieutenant Colonel. While this is not the ideal situation since that officer is busy with all services efforts, he still supports the Navy Mission Chief in efforts with the Peruvian Marines.⁴⁷ Additionally while engagement with Peru is

important, the level of engagement compared with Mexico simply cannot compete in 2010.⁴⁸

Indeed, the great efforts in the 1990's to build up the Peruvian's Riverine Force failed to create a self sustaining force due to numerous issues but a substantial amount of the donated equipment was moved from Iquitos Peru to Colombia in recognition of this failure.

The Marine SAO in Ecuador is filling a similar role as his compatriot in the MAAG in Peru. He is the Operations Officer for the MILGP and obviously vital for the day-to-day running of that MILGP. He does not have as much time to work Ecuadorian Marine specific issues but can still assist the Navy Mission Chief as in Peru. This position should remain status quo for the same reasons as mentioned for Peru.

The US Marine in Argentina normally serves in a PEP position after attending the Argentine Command and Staff School. This current arrangement could continue with the modification of transitioning into the SAO organization after school.⁴⁹ The Marine would be in an excellent position to work with the entire Argentine Marine Corps from the MILGP particularly after making the ties with the host nation after a year of professional military education. The current exchange for the Argentine officer would continue as another "one-way" PEP.

Staffing in Colombia is the model of proper placement of Marines in Latin America. A Marine SAO is the current "Marine Mission Chief" and directly supports the Colombian Marine Corps. The only current issue is that the officer PEP at the Colombian Naval Academy is finding it difficult to effect change at this institution (since the Colombian Navy runs it and is unwilling to improve.)⁵⁰ There are currently several recommendations but the forefront and most reasonable is to create a TBS (The Basic School) style institution at the Covenas enlisted training center. All Colombian Marine graduates would go there after graduation from the Academy or

during their summer training cycles. This would mean moving the officer PEP to this institution.⁵¹ Again, this is where the PEP paradigm needs to be broken and the policy changed for this hemisphere. The PEP's in Colombia should remain in place and on a daily basis would continue to work for the Colombian institutions. However, they would report to the USMC Representative (SAO) and that officer would write their Fitness Report as the reporting senior and the Naval Mission Chief as the Reviewing Officer.

This is contrary to the current order but it would serve two significant purposes.⁵² First, it would eliminate fitness reports that are less competitive to promotion and command screening boards. Fitness reports written on a Captain or SSgt by a Colombia Officer simply holds less relative weight due to lack of a historical profile. It is entirely different if that report has a Marine Officer as reporting senior. This will help alleviate the all too often occurrence of career damage after these Marines serve their PEP duties.⁵³ The second benefit is that then it is clear to both PEP's in Colombia that they are there to realize a piece of a larger Security Cooperation Campaign plan to professionalize a foreign military. They will receive direct marching orders from the SAO whose chief mission it is to realize that goal. This would ensure unity of effort and greater compliance to the plan. It would also force that SAO to better support his far-flung Marines and ensure to bring resources to bear to assist them in their tasks.

Brazil and Chile will both continue to emerge as critical players on the world stage as their economies continue to grow.⁵⁴ The Marine Attaché in Brazil should remain but again the Marine PEP officers in both countries should fleet up into the MILGP as SAO's as Marine Mission Chiefs. The enlisted PEPs can remain in place but as in Colombia, they should also ultimately report to the SAO officers. Again, to the partner nation these enlisted PEP's will function as they always have, the only change will be that the Marine SAO will write their

fitness reports and provide the behind the scenes guidance to achieving the security cooperation goals. This will create the same force multiplying effect as in Colombia. The Brazilian and Chilean SAO will now be able to tap into the many resources available in a country team and be infinitely more effective in their duties.

Panama while deemed highly important lacks a Panamanian Marine Corps (military for that matter.)⁵⁵ This makes placing a Marine into an SAO position in this country a stretch. While the engagements with this country are becoming more significant, it will have to remain a MarForSouth effort to provide direct assistance to the country team to realize Marine exchanges to improve the security forces there, especially those responsible for Canal security.⁵⁶ Without increasing personnel, beyond the 14 current permanent positions, it is unfeasible to stretch the assets any further without losing a critical asset elsewhere.

Venezuela is a country where all significant military-to-military contact has ended. The Marine SAO position that used to be in that country has been dissolved at least until relations normalize again; when that occurs the Marine Corps will have to determine if a manpower increase will be required or if another shift in theater will be required.⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

Phase zero operations in Latin America are critical to maintaining the desired end state of keeping stable nations and prosperous relations with Latin America. The United States is spread thin nor desires to get involved in higher phase operations in this theater. USMC support to this effort is also important but circumstances dictate that staffing in Latin America is an economy of force effort. Realizing that while the mission is important, but that personnel are at a premium, it

follows that the Corps make the best out of every asset committed. The Marine Corps plays a minor role in permanent manning to the Country Teams in this hemisphere but what assets it does contribute can serve the Security Cooperation Goals of the Combatant Command. The three principal types of permanent billets that USMC personnel fill in Latin America falls into one of three categories: Defense Attaché, Security Assistance (SAO), and the Personnel Exchange Program. The most effective at realizing the full gambit of security cooperation objectives are those that serve in the SAO positions especially when serving directly as a “Marine Mission Chief” such as in Colombia. A SAO fully dedicated to training, equipping and advising the leadership of a partner nation’s Marine Corps can have strategic impact. The SAO’s that serve in SAO headquarters group are vital to the operation of that SAO organization but the mission of professionalizing that particular partner nation’s Marine Corps is still largely neglected. There should be a redistribution of the current manpower assets assigned to the region to better achieve the security cooperation goals in Latin America and should ultimately move more of these already present PEP Marines into the SAO organizations.

This redistribution could be accomplished with zero net gain so that the Marine Corps does not have to sacrifice any further manpower assets but would simply better utilize the ones already employed. It would re-create or modify the current PEP order to allow for certain realities in Latin America. The order modification would allow for one-way exchanges so that the current foreign officers that come to serve in the United States could continue to do so since that works to achieve security cooperation goals by transferring best practices to those countries. Instead of the tactical employment of some officers as PEP’s in countries, they could vastly improve their assistance to their respective country by taking up the mantle of the “Marine Mission Chief” in the respective SAO organization. Further changes to the PEP order would

allow the remaining PEP's in country to "work" for the Marine SAO and have their fitness report written by that US Marine. The PEP's role with the host nation would remain unchanged and they would still take direction day to day from the partner nation commander, but the ultimate "behind the scenes" boss would still be the Marine SAO who is driving the security cooperation plan. This relationship would be nearly transparent to the partner service. This would assist in giving those officers and enlisted Marines a greater chance for fair competition on selection boards and drive stricter adherence by the PEPs to the security cooperation metrics.

Only countries deemed as priority should have these billets and then each country billet requirements needs crafting to suit the particular situation. Mexico is part of the recommendation since it is part of Latin America. Addressing it as part of the whole vice separate just because there is a different COCOM involved makes common sense. There will be a great deal of coordination required and approval would have to be gained from numerous different stakeholders as these changes while seemingly easy will prove difficult especially once MILGP and country teams get involved. Logistic, diplomatic and other considerations are complex and the foreign country certainly has a vote. Regardless of the challenges, the goal is achievable. It can lead to the maximum use of the personnel assets allocated to the hemisphere for the primary mission. The ability of a single Marine officer to make resounding changes is remarkable but only the "Marine Mission Chief" position places those individuals in that "maximized role" to get the security cooperation mission accomplished.

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