The Army’s New TRADOC Culture Center

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A N IMPORTANT PART of the ongoing transformation of the U.S. Army involves its cultural awareness (CA) campaign, which seeks to enhance Soldiers’ abilities to understand and leverage cultural factors. If the early conflicts of the War on Terrorism foreshadow the future, then the need to understand foreign cultures takes on an unprecedented level of significance. Contemporary analyses increasingly identify foreign populations as centers of gravity (COGs), a fact that underscores the necessity of the CA initiative.¹

One important development in the promotion of cultural awareness in the U.S. Army is the emergence of the new U.S. Army Training and Doctrine (TRADOC) Culture Center, located at the U.S. Army Intelligence Center (USAIC) at Fort Huachuca, Arizona.²

The Culture Center opened its doors on 1 February 2006, although it began providing significant CA training and support to the Army well before then. The Center’s main purpose is to support CA development and training and to disseminate relevant cultural training, knowledge, and products across the Army and, potentially, across the Department of Defense (DOD).³

The Center’s vision includes cross-cultural training, education, research, collaboration among military and civilian scholars, and physical and virtual organizational features. As the Center matures, it anticipates influencing the rise of new culture centers across the Army, military, and DOD. Its concept of how to leverage cultural knowledge to enhance military operations includes four levels of understanding a particular culture that range from instruction for baseline Soldiers at the lowest level to key military decisionmakers at the highest.⁴ The Center’s preliminary charter mandates—

- Developing Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian cultural products (with heavy emphasis on the Middle East).
- Developing, refining, and assessing training standards.
- Producing proficient trainers to teach culture.
- Expanding ongoing cyberspace initiatives, including building a digital library and a cultural website to support the “Military Intelligence (MI) University.”
- Building partnerships with military and civilian institutions that contribute to the Center.

The Center’s Structure

The Center has five sections: a front office or headquarters, a Cultural Training and Education Branch, a language lab, a Partnering Branch, and a Cross-Cultural Applied Research and Dissemination Branch.⁵ (See figure 1.)
The front office supervises all aspects of the Center’s missions and functions, to include overseeing critical training missions, developing and cultivating beneficial professional relationships, formulating grant proposals, and determining requirements and associated research assignments for relevant present and future country and area studies.

The Center falls under the 111th MI Brigade of the USAIC. TRADOC and the Combined Arms Center (CAC) at Fort Leavenworth are at the apex of the Center’s chain of command.

The Cultural Training and Education Branch (CTEB) develops and provides cultural products to all customers, including USAIC schools, other TRADOC schools, Army units, and DOD and national agencies, among others. Its main mission is to coordinate and conduct training with CA trainers and developers for its customers. CTEB also manages trainers, contractors, and instructors for classroom support; develops and exports distance-learning products; develops and helps construct lesson plans; and coordinates the exchange of cultural knowledge and training products with its partners, such as the Defense Language Institute (DLI), the University of Foreign Military and Culture Studies (also known as Red Team University), and other institutions.

The language laboratory, a part of USAIC before the Culture Center was developed, is one of the branches of the new Center. It is tasked with—

- Providing language sustainment training opportunities for cadre and students.
- Serving as a repository for foreign language literature.
- Administering relevant language exams (such as the Defense Language Proficiency Test).
- Sponsoring video-teleconferencing that supports language training.
- Maintaining close ties with DLI.
- Providing the rest of the Culture Center team with language-oriented insight.

The Partnering Branch develops collaborative relationships with various military, governmental, academic, and civilian agencies to formulate grants and further the Center’s purpose, mission, and vision. The branch seeks to build a synergistic team that simultaneously enhances the Center and benefits professional allies. For example, it aims to build alliances with foreign students attending USAIC schools in order to draw on their expertise and insight to better the Culture Center. Several organizations are Culture Center partners, among them TRADOC, CAC, DLI, the Army Research Lab, and other components of the U.S. Army; organizations from the other services; the America, Britain, Canada, and Australia (ABCA) program; and a handful of major universities such as New Mexico State, Columbia, and Brigham Young. The list goes on. Partnering Branch continues to expand its professional associations and relationships to provide the Center with cultural awareness products and opportunities based on cutting-edge research, knowledge, and ideas.

The Cross-Cultural Applied Research and Dissemination Branch coordinates and conducts applied research for current and anticipated future needs. Its mission is to help generate funding to support research and dissemination; to serve as a repository of cultural materials; to initiate publication of a refereed journal of applied cultural research; to coordinate and supervise the visiting scholars program; and to support the entire Center, particularly the training and education branches.

Center Membership and Accomplishments

A unique, talented team with ideal backgrounds and experiences propels the Culture Center forward in support of its purpose and vision. Team members include 18 CA experts and educational specialists, among them 12 linguists. Four members of the team hold doctorate degrees, most possess advanced degrees, and together the team has more than 100 years of combined military and civilian experience in the Middle East. Some members are former interpreters, others are retired military officers, and one is a former journalist. Many team
members speak Arabic and have lived in the Middle East. Anteon Corporation, a contractor, provides a number of the Culture Center’s members.7

The Center has made significant progress in support of the Army’s CA campaign. It arranged for an imam affiliated with Georgetown University to brief USAIC on moderate interpretations of Islam, which helped to bolster knowledge and cultural awareness; developed common core standards and topics for professional military education (PME); and produced numerous CA classes that enable units across the Army to train Soldiers in cultural issues vital to success in military operations.

The Center has also—

● Expanded the development of cultural products on the Middle East and Southeast Asia (especially the former).

● Made noteworthy progress on potential future CA needs, including development of products on Africa and other global areas of concern.8 (See figure 2.)

● Deployed training teams across the Army to assist CA trainers and Soldiers preparing to deploy.9 (See figure 3.)

● Experimented with innovative educational ideas, including CA practical exercises that cater to the younger Soldier’s penchant for playing video games.

Challenges

Preliminary insights from Army battalion commanders whose Soldiers received training from the Center reveal that some of the commanders thought the Center provided generally sufficient CA training for junior enlisted troops. This feedback indicates that the Center has done well in providing the Army with the basics (for example, tiers 1 and 2 of CA training), which will help Soldiers in contemporary missions. However, at least one commander wished the Center provided more sophisticated, detailed, and specific cultural knowledge for more senior Army professionals. So it seems that at least one Army leader eagerly anticipates the availability of higher level CA training (tiers 3 and 4) at his installation.10

Preliminary feedback also suggests that perhaps the U.S. Army is mildly resistant to CA training. One Army training evaluator received feedback that some units did not have the time to conduct CA training because of other, overwhelming, training requirements. However, such resistance is not necessarily directed at the specific type of training (CA training, for example); the resistance might stem from being overtasked in general, a condition that makes it difficult to add CA training to an already full training plate. This observation should remind Army commanders everywhere that leaders must set unit training priorities and seek sufficient, quality training on the tasks they deem most imperative (including CA). If TRADOC installations feel overtasked, this leads to a pertinent question: Are sufficient hours and attention being dedicated to CA training across the force? If foreign populations are COGs in current and projected military operations, then CA training is critical; it must receive adequate time and attention if it is to become a force multiplier today and into the future.

Islam
Cross Cultural Communications
Middle East Geography
Middle East History
Arab Culture
Afghanistan Overview and Culture
Tribalism in Afghanistan
History of Mujahadeen in Afghanistan
Mujahadeen Tactics in Afghanistan
National Security Strategy of the United States
Empire of Liberty
Globalization
Saudi Arabia / Wahhabism
Tribalism in Iraq
Iraq Overview and Culture
Tactical Application of Cultural Knowledge
Tactical Application of Cultural Knowledge Practical Exercise Class

Bahrain Overview and Culture
Egypt Overview and Culture
Jordan Overview and Culture
Kurdish Overview and Culture
Kuwait Overview and Culture
Lebanon Overview and Culture
Oman Overview and Culture
Syria Overview and Culture
U.A.E. Overview and Culture
Yemen Overview and Culture
Israel Overview and Culture
Pakistan Overview and Culture
Iran Overview and Culture
Turkey Overview and Culture
Qatar Overview and Culture
Shi’a Hierarchy (The Ayatollahs)
The Culture of Terrorism
Terrorism Overview
Palestine Overview

Figure 2. Developed training materials
The TRADOC Culture Center is a vital part of the U.S. Army’s transformational CA campaign. The Center has already added value to the force by creating solid CA classes on relevant cultures for Army schools and courses, deploying units, and the Army at large. Like any new organization, however, it faces some preliminary challenges, including securing long-term funding and additional resources to meet growing requests for CA support. The Center must also refine and expand its regional analysis and associated CA classes. Clearly, though, TRADOC’s Culture Center benefits the U.S. Army. All members of the profession should tap into this valuable new institution to bolster force-wide cultural awareness.

How to Request Training Support
The Center plans its training schedule out to 18 months, but its calendar fills up quickly. The deputy director hopes to expand the size of the Center as soon as possible to increase its ability to fulfill all of its missions and requests for support, including providing personnel to travel to Army installations worldwide. Art Vigil, the Center’s current scheduler, is the point of contact for arranging CA training. If your unit wants CA training support from the Center, contact Vigil at <art.vigil@us.army.mil>, giving him as much lead time as possible.

Figure 3. Examples of CA training conducted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11th ACR Fort Irwin TTT</td>
<td>40 hours 11 to 22 October 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deploying Reserve Officers</td>
<td>40 hours 25 to 29 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Shelby TTT</td>
<td>8 hours 7 to 9 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Bullis TTT</td>
<td>8 hours 13 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Huachuca TTT</td>
<td>16 hours 17 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Benning CRC TTT</td>
<td>40 hours 9 to 21 January 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Riley 3rd BCT TTT</td>
<td>40 hours 17 to 21 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Stewart 1st 76th FA TTT</td>
<td>40 hours 24 to 28 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lewis Deploying GTMO unit</td>
<td>8 hours 11 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fort Knox Train the Trainer</td>
<td>40 hours 14 to 18 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lewis Deploying GTMO unit</td>
<td>40 hours 28 Feb to 4 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Huachuca MICCC TTT</td>
<td>8 hours 4 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lewis Deploying GTMO unit</td>
<td>40 hours 28 Feb to 4 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Huachuca MICCC TTT</td>
<td>8 hours 4 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Wainwright Alaska TTT</td>
<td>8 hours 21 to 23 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fort Knox TTT</td>
<td>40 hours 14 to 18 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>351st CA Cmd TTT</td>
<td>40 hours 4 to 8 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fort Huachuca NGB TTT</td>
<td>30 hours 11 to 13 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camp Shelby TTT</td>
<td>8 hours 8 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fort Huachuca 111th MI BDE TTT</td>
<td>40 hours 18 to 22 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fort Drum 10th Mt. Div TTT</td>
<td>8 hours 18 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fort Hood 4th Bde 4th ID</td>
<td>40 hours 2 to 6 May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fort Lee Combined Arms Support Cmd</td>
<td>40 hours 19 to 24 June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fort Sill Field Artillery Center</td>
<td>40 hours 11 July to 15 July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick AFB Defense EO Management Inst</td>
<td>40 hours 25 July to 29 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen Proving Grounds</td>
<td>40 hours 8 to 12 August</td>
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NOTES
2. For more information, see U.S. Army Intelligence Center, USAIC Cultural Center Proposal (Fort Huachuca, AZ: May 2005).
3. Ibid., 3.
4. Ibid., 6.
5. Ibid., 9-14.
7. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 15. Figure 3 comes from this briefing.
10. Based on an interview with another Army commander, it seems this particular Army unit is on the cusp of incorporating tier 3 and 4 CA classes in its PME curriculum, which should ameliorate concern about the lack of senior-level CA training. In this case, it seems the issue boils down to a matter of actually applying the higher order CA training in PME classes as opposed to critiquing the CA material.