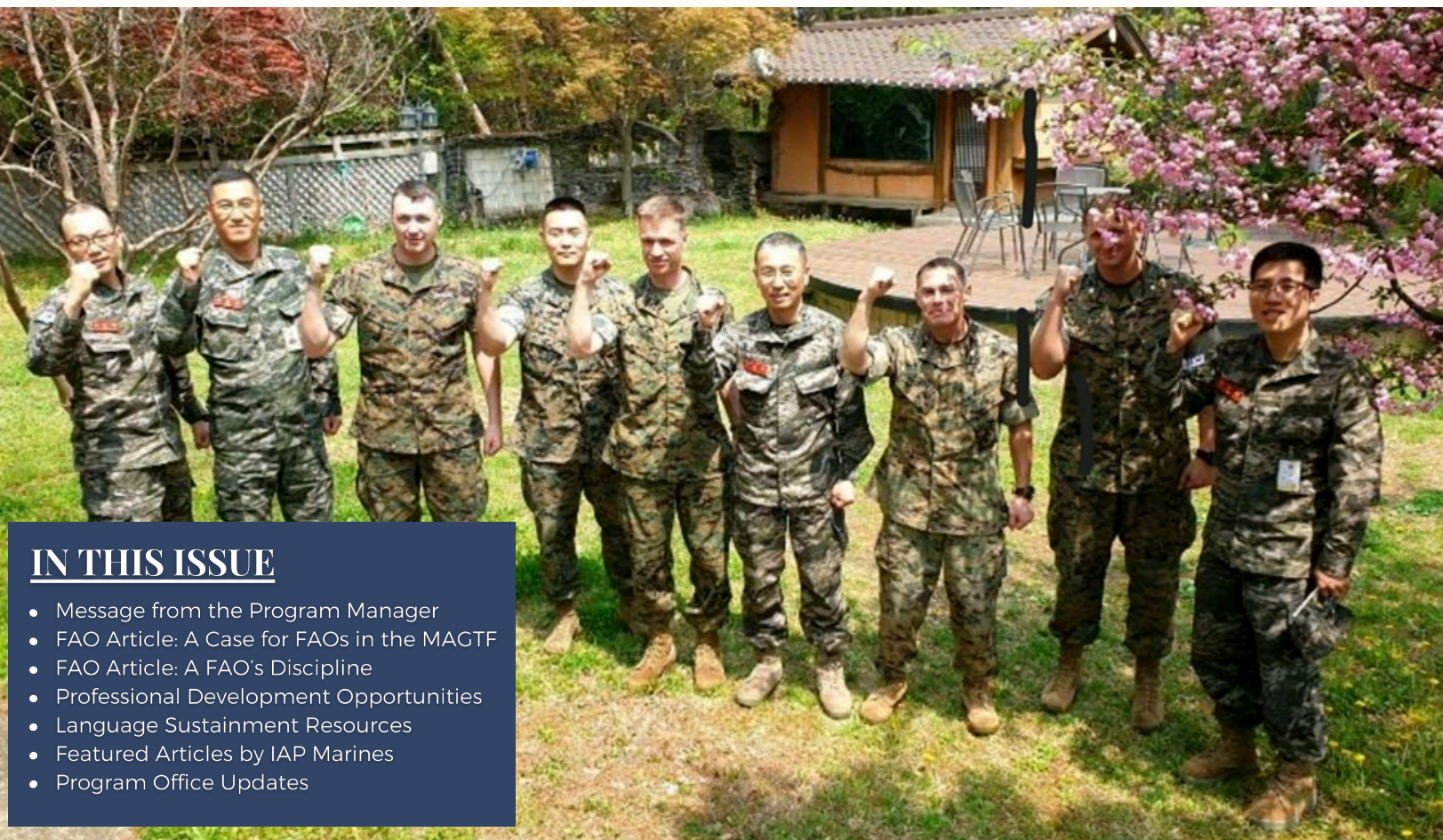




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(Baran, S. KOREA) Maj Ryu, then a member of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Korea, and staff members of ROKMC Headquarters Education and Training Division, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, pose for a picture to commemorate the milestone discussions over off-the-peninsula training opportunities for the ROKMC.

Message from the Program Manager

By: **LtCol Brett McCormick**

IAP Community,

I hope you are well and getting settled after any PCS/A movements this summer. Alongside the members of the International Affairs Branch, MGySgt Moffett and I are focused on progressing the hard work from LtCol Chris Dellow and MSgt Jorge Rivero, building upon their years of service as the International Affairs Program Manager and Foreign Area SNCO Program Manager. During our time in these roles, we will focus on the long-term requirements, implications for the community, and sustainment of the program.

For those of you I have not met, I want to provide a brief background about who I am and my experience since joining the program. I am a Logistician and 8244 MENA FAO who conducted IRT from US Embassy Muscat with tours at MARSOC, MARCENT, NAVCENT, and most recently served at CENTCOM working Multinational Logistics in the J4 and as an analyst within

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Message from the Program Manager, Continued

the Commander's Action Group working for and traveling with GEN Kurilla during his engagements. My time in the Pentagon will be filled with learning about the numerous aspects and timelines pertaining to the funding, creation, coordination, and implementation of actions to successfully inform decisionmakers and enable the IAP community.

I am grateful for the time spent with some of you at the Joint Foreign Area Officer Course, the Secretary of the Navy FAO Summit aboard the Naval Academy, and engagements with staff from Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa and stakeholders at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. These events serve as great venues to meet new people and learn about personal and professional areas of focus and improvement.

Regarding the decade-long FAO Single Track discussion, I can offer the following insight. Marines continue to be promoted in their respective PMOS and you need to ensure observed time in your PMOS is a priority for promotion and command aspirations. The Talent Management 2030 Update, published in March 2023 under General Berger, specified the following directed action: "Develop a technical career path pilot for the international affairs community (Foreign Area Officers and Regional Area Officers) and present it for decision no later than Q3 of CY 2023. (DC, M&RA with the support of DC, PP&O)." In 2024, stakeholders are still working towards this decision and the details will be provided once known. In the meantime, continue requesting utilization tours as they align with your family and career intentions.

For the upcoming FY25 82XX utilization slate, we are in coordination with MMOA to prioritize the Marines who need to fulfill their first utilization tour. Additionally, we seek to maximize the return on investment in your skillset and fill available FAOs billets with second and third tour utilization requests. We look forward to seeing your requests and continuing the discussion this fall.

God willing our paths will cross in the coming months. I wish you all continued safety and success in your assignments.



Marine in-region training participants attending ES3 2024: Maj Holmes, Maj Lessig, Capt Murkins, Capt Shivnen, and Capt Chew. Courtesy photo by the George C. Marshall Center.

Render Safe Solomon Islands: A Case for FAO's in the MAGTF

By: Major Joe Phippen, USMC, Northeast Asia FAO



Collection of WWII artifacts at the Peter Joseph Museum at Munda, New Georgia of the Solomon Islands (Courtesy photo by Maj Phippen)

The Republic of the Solomon Islands is a small country in Oceania that boasts having recently hosted the Pacific Games. Composed of six major islands and over 990 others both with and without names, the country is a beautiful collection of humble villages, breathtaking views, and thick jungles with a storied past of Marine Corps combat action.

As a result of the bitter fighting between the American and allied forces against the Japanese during World War II, there remains a great deal of artifacts about the islands; many are collected by local islanders, some placed into museums, and many heavier objects such as the Japanese Type 88 Anti-Aircraft guns simply remain in the jungle as silent monuments to the war. Sadly, other artifacts are not so silent and can claim lives of the unwitting. This year, the Australian Defence Force is embarking upon the largest explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) activity in the littorals on record. Given such unique terrain, the ADF requested USMC support through Marine Rotational Force-Darwin's (MRF-D) participation in

Operation Render Safe; the Australian military operation that conducts continuous removal of explosive remnants of war (ERW) throughout the Pacific.

As part of the Australian-led effort, Marine planners from MRF-D visited potential logistics support sites, conducted key leader engagements with locals, coordinated with U.S. and partner nation diplomatic missions, and set conditions for execution of a multilateral operation involving nine countries from around the world. While the Op Render Safe is conducted in many places throughout the Pacific, the undertaking in the Solomons is a highly complex and the first which blends four landward sites and two entirely maritime collection sites. The remoteness of the islands and difficulty of terrain requires deployment of a multinational force that includes underwater explosive divers, land-based EOD reduction, and inter-island movement of live ordnance both modern and legacy. As a precaution for force protection, specially equipped medical teams will deploy with onsite capabilities such as surgical intervention, intubation, and medical evacuation teams with care that reaches all the way back to Australia. Considerations for the contracting of local food, accommodations, and multinational cost sharing must all be addressed.



Maj. Joe Phippen, NE Asia FAO and Future Operations Officer, MRF-D 24.3, and a NZL Navy EOD Diver conduct a site visit with the Solomon Port authority regarding port capabilities, small boat support, and the bulk fuel supply chain between Guadalcanal and New Georgia Islands. (Courtesy photo by Maj Phippen)

Render Safe Solomon Islands: A Case for FAO's in the MAGTF, Continued

Today's Marine Corps continues to boast the development of Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) officers that are capable of planning for and executing such complicated tasks. Nearly all of these tactical actions and tasks could be accomplished by a single MAGTF; and appropriately led by a qualified MAGTF officers of any military occupational specialty (MOS). However, the strategic considerations of how the multi-national effort is brought together, and integration with local governance is especially suited to the Foreign Area Officer (FAO). FAO's have specific training that address integration of foreign partners, and they have developed above average emotional intelligence through academic and in-region training that make them especially attuned for such duty. While the 24.3 rotation of the MRF-D MAGTF has a FAO in an appropriate billet for planning, this was owing more to happenstance than any concerted effort by manpower structures to align the non-primary MOS skill-to-task match.

In a historically appropriate happenstance, the 1st and 5th Marine Regiments currently alternate as the command element for the annual MRF-D deployments. Back in 1942, the blood of Marines from both 1st and 5th Marine Regiments, among other American units, paid for the future of the island of Guadalcanal that now is home to the Solomon Islands' capital city of Honiara. Now, eight decades later, Honiara is again part of a contested space. This time in the battle of strategic competition against malign Chinese influence. In the 6.5 mile distance betwixt Henderson airfield, the international airport terminal named after a U.S. Marine, and the U.S War



Chief Jay Allen, Role II Medical, MRF-D 24.3, discusses "banana boat CASEVAC" with Australian logistics and medical planners to connect EOD sites between islands where no suitable helicopter landing zones exist. (Courtesy photo by Maj Phippen)

Memorial, which overlooks the Matanikau river and back across all the allied landing sites, stands a large stadium built by the Chinese "aid" of debt-trap diplomacy. The Solomon Islanders were no doubt happy to have a state-of-the-art facility, and rightly proud of their July 2023 hosting of the Pacific Games; enabled by the very sports park built by the People's Republic of China. But at what cost? And what are we doing to ensure the U.S. and our allies remain the partner of choice for the Solomon Islands and other nations like it around the world? As we become more fiscally judicious, we must select military operations, activities, and investments (OAI's) that keep our partners away from the attractive temptations of Chinese influence.

FAO's in particular must be aware of the strategic competition in which they conduct MAGTF operations. Moreover, they must ensure that the regional expertise and training invested in them does not go to waste in only the theoretical realm. Duty behind a desk writing position papers and developing policy is indeed important, but these actions are empty if FAO's then fail to get out and engage with partners, or fail to advocate for selecting the right OAI's from within our own Fleet Marine Force units. FAO's must be competent, relevant MAGTF officers and inject their unique capabilities into the FMF when serving in their original MOS billets. Regardless of whether in region or out; in a FAO billet or a primary MOS billet, the FAO can and must be a force multiplier.



Capt Sean Flickinger, MV-22 pilot for MRF-D 24.3, talks with a U.S. Army personnel exchange officer to 1(AS)Div and a local tribal Chief near a pair of Type 88's in the jungle near Munda. The chief explains that his nephew was killed by explosive remnants of war. (Courtesy photo by Maj Phippen)

自學自習 (자학자습): A FAO's Discipline

By: Major Jason Ryu, USMC, Northeast Asia FAO



(DAEGU, S. KOREA) Maj Ryu provides interpreter support to Major General Patrick J. Hermesmann, then-Commander U.S. Marine Corps Forces Korea, while serving as his Aide-de-Camp, during his engagement with the Commander ROK 2nd Operations Command in Daegu on 21 September 2018.

My journey as a FAO underscores a fundamental truth: without a deep understanding of a nation's history, language, and culture, one cannot fully appreciate its strategies or military doctrines. The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the National Military Strategy represented a significant acknowledgment of the joint Foreign Area Officer (FAO) community, whose mission is to sustain relationships with allies and partners. But are we truly answering the call? As a naturalized American commissioned officer born in South Korea, I have purposefully cultivated, developed, and maintained professional relationships with the Republic of Korea (ROK) military professionals I have worked alongside for the past 13 years. Each encounter left me with a subtle yet profound sense of walking a delicate line—serving as a uniformed ambassador of my nation and service while also embracing my Korean heritage. In this article, I share my journey as an unconventional experience-track FAO within the United States Marine Corps. I argue that an FAO's success hinges on the ability to "flip the map around," which demands a personal commitment to mastering language, developing cultural competence, and exercising strategic discipline in all interactions.¹

Experience-Track FAO Development

To be frank, the Marine Corps never officially assigned me to a Northeast Asia FAO billet. My Marine Corps journey began in 2004 as an enlisted Marine in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve. From the outset, my drill instructors encouraged me to take the Defense Language Proficiency Test, which I have continued to do since boot camp. My operational history, however, remained primarily in the Middle East in non-FAO specialties until 2017. It wasn't until I reached the rank of Captain, mid-tour, that Headquarters Marine Corps actively leveraged my bilingual skills during engagements between the 37th Commandant (CMC) and the 38th ROKMC Commandant (ROK CMC) and his delegation. Following selection as an experience-track FAO, I fulfilled FAO responsibilities at the 4th Marine Logistics Group and U.S. Marine Corps Forces Korea in non-FAO BICs, supporting various ROK-U.S. theater security cooperation initiatives and combined joint exercises.

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I never allowed the absence of a FAO-coded BIC assignment to deter or discourage me from contributing meaningfully to the institution as a FAO. I never took my language and cultural proficiency for granted. Instead, I continuously sharpened and honed these skills, awaiting the day the Marine Corps would fully utilize them. Initially, I delved deeply into self-directed study to combat the potential stigma of being an FAO because of my foreign heritage. However, over time, my motive evolved. Each relationship I built with the ROK Marines deepened my appreciation for the significance of the ROK-U.S. alliance. By grounding myself in Korea's history and cultural context, I realized that effective bilateral cooperation hinges on far more than tactical coordination; it requires an appreciation of the historical narratives and societal forces that shape military institutions.

I immersed myself in extensive reading and research, particularly through books written in Hangul (한글), to better understand the ROK's perspectives on key social, economic, political, and security issues. I used every meeting and deliberate engagement with ROK military professionals as an opportunity for self-development. My eight-year commitment to this self-imposed discipline resulted in a strong ROKMC-centric professional network. Among those I connected with is the current ROKMC Foreign Liaison Officer (FLO) to DC CD&I, with whom I've worked multiple times since 2017. I hope to collaborate with these professionals again in the future, contributing to the security of the Korean peninsula and broader regional stability.

The ROK Marine Corps

Through countless collaborations with ROK armed forces professionals, I discovered that while we share many similarities, distinct differences may be difficult to grasp for a FAO or U.S. Marine who is not culturally initiated. The differences are more pronounced at the strategic level and beyond – the “whys.” While the extent of similarities increases at the tactical and individual levels – the “whats” and “hows.” The key to decoding these differences is deep diving into Korean culture and history through their language.

If I were to ask a fellow Marine with operational experience on the peninsula, most list key differences they observed during their tour. Most of these observations are extrinsic and do not go beyond the physical manifestations of their engagements with the ROK military. These range from sampling ROK Meals-Ready-to-Eats to U.S.-centric evaluations of ROK infantry squad capabilities and limitations, and even perceived levels of openness during combined staff talks. Through basic academic exposure, many are aware that the ROK's immediate existential threat north of the Demilitarized Zone dominates its national security strategy. A few might even progress to a deeper analysis, recognizing how the ROK's highly politicized conscription system impacts force management and readiness today.



(DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, WASHINGTON) Major Ryu (left) poses for a picture with LtCol Lee, Kang-Wook, ROKMC (center) with whom he worked since 2017. They crossed paths again in South Korea, when LtCol Lee was the commander of 3rd Battalion 6th Marines in Baek Ryung-do or “PY-do.” Maj Ryu supported BGen Byun, Yo-Han, the ROKMC Director of Force Planning (right), and his staff, to the National Capital Region, during which BGen Byun was a panelist at Modern Day Marine 2024.



(QUANTICO, VA) Maj Ryu provided bidirectional interpreter support to BGen Kim, Heon, the Commanding General of Education and Training Group, and LtGen Iiams, the then-Commanding General Training and Education Command, and his staff during briefings and discussions over Training and Education 2023.

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However, the most significant differences are nuanced and not clear-cut. Despite the familiar appearance of the ROK armed forces, subtle details can easily elude even the most seasoned U.S. military professionals—details that require an understanding of the ROK armed forces' service cultures and attitudes and the nation they serve. Like the U.S., South Korea faces similar socio-political challenges, such as population decline, polarized party lines, and security threats from China and Russia. Also, like any advanced sovereign state in the modern 21st century, South Korea strives for autonomy in national defense, pursuing advancements in generative Artificial Intelligence, space, bio, and quantum technologies.

In this regard, the ROK's 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy and 2023 Defense Innovation 4.0 aligns closely with our NDS.² However, as Colonel Charles S. Oliviero astutely observes in his book *Strategia*, “[w]ar is a human enterprise, a social activity. Consequently, nations shape their military theories through the lenses of their histories and their culture.”³ Understanding Korea's history, particularly its journey from the 1945 liberation from Imperial Japan to its current status as a “Top 5” global democratic military power (as per the 2024 Global Firepower Index), is essential.⁴ Although a detailed exploration of this history is beyond the scope of this article, I contend that one cannot fully grasp the military cultures and doctrines of either North or South Korea without it. An example of how important nuance is and how it illustrates the gravity of understanding culture is the socio-political consequences of the great powers' post-World War II partition of the peninsula that would forever divide the Korean people. Coupled with the nation's Confucian roots, these consequences continue to resonate in the governance and daily political landscape of South Korea. These factors influence how Korea has formed its strategy and adopted Western ideals of democratic governance, as well as military theories, doctrines, and tactics.

The ROK's national security apparatus is a prime example of a Western concept that has been adapted and uniquely manifested in a South Korean context. The ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) determine the capability development requirements, and only those that pass their scrutiny receive budgetary funding.⁵ This means that the individual services cannot plan, program, or budget to research, develop, or acquire critical weapons capabilities, except for sustainment.

In fact, the Chairman of the ROK JCS assumes a dual persona like that of the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and a Combatant Commander, while the Service Chiefs function much like our Service Component Commanders. The “Title 10” authorities are centralized under the Minister of National Defense, who the CJCS advises. Unlike the U.S., South Korea does not have Military Department Secretaries.⁶ Interestingly, 45 of their 50 Ministers have been General/Flag Officers in Reserve status, with 36 from the Army, one from the Marine Corps, four from the Navy, and four from the Air Force.⁷

Without a permanent Service Chief representing the ROKMC at the JCS, their force design initiatives are vulnerable to subordination. Both presidential candidates' platforms have promised to elevate the ROKMC Commandant to a four-star rank, equal to that of the other Service Chiefs, and to designate the ROKMC as the fourth military service.⁸ Until then, the ROK Marines will continue to rely on their relationship with the USMC to gain advocacy for issues within their bureaucracy.

Even if the ROK CMC eventually secures full-time membership at the JCS, the ROKMC will likely continue to defer to the USMC for advocacy in their struggle against interservice rivalry and parochialism—particularly as long as the U.S. maintains extended deterrence and retains wartime Operational Control on the peninsula. This understanding helps explain the ROKMC's consistent requests for official agreements or the often-obligatory fist-pumping photo-ops, which may elude most U.S. Marines.

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This is just one example of the many nuanced differences between the ROK and the U.S. and how understanding these dynamics is crucial for successful bilateral engagements. Detailed analyses through cultural competence can help prevent the risk of strategic narcissism—a pitfall both Henry Morgenthau and General McMaster have warned against.⁹

Recently, the ROK military, including its Marine Corps, has faced several politically and culturally sensitive challenges. These range from military reform and civil-military relations to the integration of conscripts from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For example, the ongoing debate over the role and identity of the ROK Marine Corps within South Korea's broader defense strategy is a politically charged issue that requires careful navigation. While avoiding a deep dive into specifics, it's important to note that the ROKMC's ambition to build strategic depth is closely tied to its desired separation from the Navy and the elevation of the ROK CMC to four-star status. Additionally, shifting dynamics within the ROK armed forces—such as the push for greater gender integration and societal demands for more transparent and accountable military leadership—present both challenges and opportunities for the U.S.-ROK relationship.

FAOs must be highly attuned to these sensitivities and skilled in navigating them. To steer through these complex dynamics, I encourage my fellow Korea-focused FAOs to identify common concerns shared by both the ROK and the U.S. This will help uncover opportunities for collaboration that align with U.S. strategic objectives. For instance, both nations share concerns over low fertility rates, which, as aging democracies, directly impact the readiness of their armed forces. This shared issue increases the attractiveness of investing in unmanned and automated systems and modernizing their total force integration policy.

If you are in one of the few commands with a Foreign Liaison Officer, I recommend advocating for their integration into wargaming exercises, testing, and evaluations to gain valuable insights. Within appropriate disclosure limits, U.S. FAOs must advocate for maximum integration of FLOs to support strategic deterrence in campaigning. FAOs should also seek opportunities to strengthen the alliance through joint initiatives that address shared concerns, such as collaborative training programs or exchanges centered on leadership and military ethics. The key is to identify mutually beneficial cases for the ROK-U.S. alliance and actively facilitate them.



(QUANTICO, VA) Maj Ryu supported the ROKMC Force Planning Director's engagements with BGen Walsh, then-Commanding General Marine Corps Systems Command, to discuss the pending Memorandum of Understanding for future collaborative dialogues and exchanges of subject matter expertise.

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The Importance of Language and Lifelong Learning

Sometimes, I half-jokingly claim that I am still learning English, especially when I struggle to correctly staff packages at Headquarters Marine Corps on the first attempt. It may seem absurd for a naturalized immigrant with 28 years of assimilation to feel as though he hasn't fully mastered the "ordinary language" of his nationality.¹⁰ But in my defense, I spent most of my early years assimilating into different micro-cultures—from California to New York, from civilian life to the Marine Corps, and from enlisted ranks to the officer corps. In all honesty, I hummed along to most cadences during boot camp and Officer Candidate School. I know many service members of foreign heritage have traveled similar paths.

If I've learned anything, it's that linguistic and, by extension, cultural proficiency are lifelong pursuits. FAOs, who are frequently strategic and operational Field Grade Officers, often find themselves at the forefront of bilateral dialogues, representing their nation, the Department of Defense, and their Service. They cannot afford to get lost in these discussions, as doing so risks missing crucial opportunities for cooperation—or worse, misrepresenting strategic guidance from either country. Proficiency in language and culture is critical for operational effectiveness and for building and maintaining the strong interpersonal relationships that underpin military alliances.

Language proficiency is more than just a tool for communication; it serves as a gateway to understanding a foreign nation's culture, history, and social dynamics. Language is also a living construct, evolving alongside societal norms. As James D. Fearon and David S. Laitin note, "understanding the 'ordinary language' of a nation provides insight into its social and political fabric."¹¹ The challenge is even greater in the military profession, where the "ordinary language" can take on new meanings, often through conflation or imprecise applications. For instance, the terms "기획" (plan) and "계획" (plan) are used differently in military Korean. While this is just one simple Hangul example, military English has many similar nuances.¹² It is impossible to fully decode a culture without a lifelong commitment to self-directed language study and immersion in the culture. My self-driven regimen has allowed me to navigate these linguistic and cultural landscapes more effectively, facilitating meaningful diplomacy and strengthening the strategic relationship with my ROK armed forces counterparts.

However, language mastery alone is not the sole determinant of an FAO's success. Louise J. Rasmussen et al. outline a typology of "culture-general competence" encompassing 12 competencies across four domains: diplomatic mindset, cultural learning, cultural reasoning, and intercultural interaction.¹³ I believe linguistic competence forms the foundation for all these domains. The ability to learn, reason, and engage across cultures is inherently tied to one's command of spoken and written language.

FAOs must contribute meaningfully to complex professional dialogues that rely on spoken words and body language, which often carry layers of national caveats and cultural nuances. A lifelong dedication to learning—both in language and in broader cultural studies—allows FAOs to remain sensitive to the evolving perspectives of their allies in a shifting strategic environment.

Like Rasmussen and her colleagues, I agree that "the time spent learning a foreign language comes at the expense of potentially letting their [primary MOS] skills decline."¹⁴ I am hopeful that the Marine Corps will continue investing in its Foreign Area professionals, allowing them to lead formations focused on creating synergy with our allies and partners, as outlined in Mission Essential Tasks such as those for Civil Affairs Groups and Advisory Companies.¹⁵ Until then, FAOs must individually strive to exceed the basic language proficiency standards set by the Defense Foreign Language Institute Center, hoping the institution will fully leverage their expertise during their careers.

Equally important is a FAO's ability to cultivate individual strategic discipline, or what I refer to as a diplomatic mindset. As mentioned, FAOs must learn to set aside personal biases and guard against strategic narcissism when engaging with allies

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and partners. No one is born with a diplomatic mindset; it is a skill that can fade over time and must be actively maintained. This is as challenging for experience-track FAOs as it is for those on the study-track.

I have found two methods particularly effective in building this capacity:

- Engage in open, casual dialogues with counterparts with whom you share mutual respect and have established trust—preferably in their native language.
- Read books and professional articles written in the Ally's or partner's ordinary language. At the end of this article, I will suggest a few English and Hangul texts for Korea-focused FAOs.

Conclusion

The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) emphasizes the importance of alliances and partnerships in deterring aggression and maintaining global stability. Partnerships rooted in overlapping security interests require ongoing cultivation to flourish, as shared interests alone are not enough to create a unified grand strategy. Colonel Charles S. Oliviero, a multilingual Canadian cavalry officer fluent in French, German, and Italian, shares an insightful but often overlooked observation about interoperability with allies and partners: “[...] owning a dictionary does not ensure literacy, and simply establishing common procedures does not guarantee common understanding.”¹⁶ FAOs are vital to cultivating and nurturing theater security cooperation, acting as a bridge between two military forces and their respective nations. Their linguistic proficiency, cultural understanding, and strategic diplomatic discipline allow them to navigate the complexities of bilateral relationships, ensuring these partnerships remain resilient in the face of rapidly changing regional dynamics. Are you ready?

Recommended Books

1. Don Oberdorfer and Robert Carlin, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).
2. H.R. McMaster, *Battlegrounds: The Fight to Defend the Free World* (New York: Harper, 2020).
3. Uk Heo and Terence Roehrig, *South Korea Since 1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
4. Sonia Ryang, *Language and Truth in North Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2021).
5. 김동현, 우리는 미국을 모른다: 펜타곤 출입기자가 파헤친 미국의 본심 (서울: 부키, 2023).
6. 군사학연구회, *국가안전보장론* (성남: 북코리아, 2016).
7. 백선엽, *군과 나: 6.25 한국전쟁 회고록* (서울: 도서출판 시대정신, 2010).
8. 이춘근, *미중 패권 경쟁과 한국의 전략* (서울: 김연김복스, 2016).
9. 최성락, *한국이 중국을 선택한다면* (서울: 페이퍼로드, 2021).
10. 최중경, *워싱턴에서는 한국이 보이지 않는다* (서울: 한국경제신문, 2016).

Notes

1. U.S. Department of the Navy. Foreign Area Officer Program (SECNAVINST 1301.7A). Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, March 30, 2006. SECNAVINST defines a FAO as an officer who serves as a regional expert and advisor on political-military matters in specific geographic areas. FAOs are responsible for fostering relationships between the U.S. Navy and foreign military forces, providing cultural, language, and geopolitical expertise, and supporting strategic planning and operations in diplomacy, defense cooperation, and international security. FAOs are highly trained in foreign languages, regional studies, and specific operational environments, allowing them to liaise between the Navy and international partners while advising senior military leaders on regional political-military dynamics.

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2. Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea. 국방혁신 4.0 브로셔. Accessed September 22, 2024. <https://mnd-hs.or.kr/home/filedownload?path=/files/upload/infocenter/bfdcea93-0230-43ed-b7ed-9c053903165d.pdf&name=%EA%B5%AD%EB%B0%A9%ED%98%81%EC%8B%A0%204.0%20%EB%B8%8C%EB%A1%9C%EC%8A%88%EC%96%B4.pdf>; U.S. Department of Defense. 2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2022. Accessed September 22, 2024. <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>.
3. Charles S. Oliviero. *Strategia* (Columbia, S.C.: Double Dagger), 50.
4. Global Firepower. "Countries Ranked by Military Strength (2023)." Accessed September 22, 2024. <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php>.
5. 김종하. "국방획득체계 현황 및 문제점, 그리고 개선방향." 과학기술정책 통권 232호, 47-48. Accessed September 22, 2024. https://www.steppi.re.kr/common/reportContent/Download.do?sessionId=EBA1E5B253F3D985FC00E0A2887D56BF?reIdx=235&origlFileNm=232_08.pdf&contentIdx=8&cateCont=A0504&fileStreCours=%2Fattach%2Fpublish%2F&streFileNm=A0504_235_8. See also 방위사업법(법률 제14182호)
6. 대한민국. 국군조직법 제9조. Accessed September 22, 2024. <https://law.go.kr/법령/국군조직법>; 대한민국. 방위사업법 제15조. Accessed September 22, 2024. <https://www.law.go.kr/법령/방위사업법>. There are three "Title 10" responsibilities for ROK CJCS under their Title 9: Armed Forces Organization Laws. Primarily, the ROK CJCS supports the ROK MINDEF in matters that pertain to 군령권(軍令權) or armed forces operations. He is the highest-ranking general officer who wields Combatant Command authority over each service's operational forces. ROK's National Defense Business Law Title 15 provides the ROK CJCS the capability requirement approval authority; the centralized authority is shared with the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (방위사업청) over the PPB&E process. U.S.C Title X "Man, Train, Equip" authorities or 군정권 (軍政權) that fall under our Service Secretaries lie with the Service Chiefs; ROK CMC is not a full-time member of the ROK JCS.
7. Namu Wiki. "대한민국 국방부장관." Accessed September 22, 2024. <https://namu.wiki/w/%EB%8C%80%ED%95%9C%EB%AF%BC%EA%B5%AD%20%EA%B5%AD%EB%B0%A9%EB%B6%80%EC%9E%A5%EA%B4%80>.
8. 뉴시스. "윤석열 "해병대 독립 4군체제로 전환...4성 장군 진출 약속." 뉴시스, February 9, 2022. <https://www.donga.com/news/Politics/article/all/20220209/111679149/1>; 이병록 (palankum). "해병대 공약, 이재명 '준4군' - 윤석열 '4군'의 차이점." Ohmynews, February 13, 2022. https://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002809269
9. Henry Morgenthau... H. R. McMaster. *Battlegrounds*.
10. James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, *Ordinary Language and External Validity: Specifying Concepts in the Study of Ethnicity* (Stanford University, September 28, 2000), 3-4. James D. Fearon and David S. Laitin define "ordinary language" as the common, everyday use of language by a speech community, especially concerning how people use and understand terms in their daily lives. They argue that concepts in social science, such as "ethnic group" or "cultural differences," are deeply rooted in this everyday language. Instead of simply stipulating definitions for these terms, they believe social scientists should first analyze how these concepts are understood in ordinary language. By doing so, they can better grasp the full range of meanings relevant to the social phenomena they are studying. This is how FAOs should strive for mastery of cultural-general competence.
11. *Ibid.*, 16.
12. Oliviero. *Strategia* (Columbia, S.C.: Double Dagger), 27; "The use and abuse of military English is elegantly described by Colonel Antulio J. Echevarria II in his essay "Towards an American Way of War". Echevarria is critical of [...] incorrect labelling of various strategies, conflating attrition, exhaustion, and erosion, for example. Whatever the reasons, such mixing, borrowing, and intermixture can have serious implications regarding the understanding that leaders, both uniformed and civilian, have of the nature of war."
13. Louise J. Rasmussen, Winston R. Sieck, and Jasmine L. Duran. "A Model of Culture-General Competence for Education and Training: Validation Across Services and Key Specialists," *Global Cognition*, 66-85.
14. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
15. Deputy Commandant, Capability Development and Integration. United States Marine Corps. Total Force Structure Management System. Unit TO&E Report: 3rd Civil Affairs Group (CAG). Note that there is not one 82XX billet coded into their structure. This oversight, deliberate or not, is common for all CAGs, which is not an issue if Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture education were a part of the curriculum content for Civil-Military Operations Planners
16. Oliviero. *Strategia* (Columbia, S.C.: Double Dagger), 9.

Professional Development Opportunities



George Washington University conducts the JFAO Sustainment Courses in coordination with Defense Language National Security Education Office requirements for FAO sustainment training. Registration opens 30 days before the course start date: Please send your BIO along with the registration form to the IAPMarine@usmc.mil at least 3 weeks prior to course start dates. Registrations form can be found [HERE](#):

2025 Course Schedule

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Sustainment Course

Dates/Location: December 9-12, 2024/Virtual

U.S. Central Command Sustainment Course

Dates/Location: March 3-6, 2025/Tampa, FL (*Subject to change)

U.S. European Command Sustainment Course

Dates/Location: April 7-10, 2025/Stuttgart, Germany (*Subject to change)

U.S. Southern Command Sustainment Course

Dates/Location: May 19-23, 2025/Washington, DC

Selection Boards

FISCAL YEAR 2026 ACTIVE AND RESERVE MARINE ATTACHÉ SELECTION BOARD

Board complete, awaiting results. [MARADMIN 171/24 HERE](#).

FISCAL YEAR 2025 AVIATION TRANSITION CONVERSION, FIELD ACCESSION, PERSONNEL EXCHANGE PROGRAM AND INTERSERVICE EXCHANGE PROGRAM BOARD RESULTS

See results at [MARADMIN 248/24 HERE](#).

FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND FISCAL YEAR 2026 SECURITY COOPERATION OFFICER SELECTION BOARD RESULTS

See results at [MARADMIN 461/24 HERE](#).

FISCAL YEAR 2026 GROUND AND INTELLIGENCE PERSONNEL EXCHANGE PROGRAM SELECTION PANEL RESULTS

See results at [MARADMIN 462/24 HERE](#).

FY25 FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (FAS) PROGRAM STUDY TRACK SOLICITATION MESSAGE

See results at [MARADMIN 520/24 HERE](#).

Language Sustainment Resources

DLNSEO - Language Training Centers

The Language Training Center (LTC) Program provides language and culture training for Department of Defense (DoD) personnel. LTCs leverage existing university and college language and culture programs to meet the needs of DoD organizations and units. The Institute of International Education administers the Language Training Centers program on behalf of the Defense Language and National Security Education Office. Additional information can be found [HERE](#).

DLIFLC - Continuing Education

DLIFLC Continuing Education Directorate provides superior post-basic foreign language instruction via resident and non-resident programs. Online instruction is conducted using the Broadband Language Training System (BLTS) platform and allows for more flexible scheduling and instruction tailored to individual student needs. Students receive both synchronous (same time, anyplace) and asynchronous (any time, any place) lessons and self-study assignments. Distance Learning also provides professional military linguists with access to a myriad of online foreign language materials to enhance cultural knowledge. Submit your BLTS Request Form, found [HERE](#) to Madison Hughes at madison.hughes@dliflc.edu.

DLIFLC - Foreign Area Officer Language Program

FLP Background

In 2009 the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC), School of Distance Learning created what is now known as the FAO Language Program, and in coordination with Defense Language and Security Education Office (DLNSEO), 24 MOS-specific domains were adopted for our online Advanced Language Enhancement Courses (ALEC) which also serve as the core topics for our **online facilitated FAO courses**.

Since then, ALEC courses have continued to evolve and engage learners with cutting-edge online lesson content ranging from Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) levels 2 to 3+. We are driven to provide authentic materials and training to meet the needs of the greater FAO community.

Our facilitated courses are tailored to the FAO's MOS, reported DLPT scores and working ILR levels. We are here to help you prepare for your next field assignment, upgrade your DLPT record, and meet your annual language training requirements – all which support FLTP pay and professional development gains.

Scheduling

For facilitated courses we need a minimum 2-week lead time to arrange faculty assets. These courses are provided free-of-charge and scheduling is based upon faculty availability. Course request forms are available online at the FAO milSuite page and can be provided directly from us via email: FAO.language.program@dliflc.edu



Foreign Area Officer Language Program



Foreign Area Officer Language Program

For all inquiries, please contact us at FAO.language.program@dliflc.edu

Directorate of Continuing Education
School of Distance Learning
Defense Language Institute
Foreign Language Center

Advanced Language Enhancement Courses

Providing DoD Military Branches and Agencies with advanced online language courses designed to meet mission goals at the point of need.

COURSE I

- Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Response
- Border Security/ National Sovereignty
- Peacekeeping Operations
- Energy Issues
- Privacy and Maritime Security Issues
- Health Issues

COURSE II

- Security Assistance Issues
- Multilateral Organizations
- Aviation Issues
- Environmental Issues
- Foreign Aid and Investment
- Popular Culture

COURSE III

- Trafficking in Persons
- WMD Proliferation Issues
- Crime, Narcotics, & the Black Market
- Combating Terrorism
- Corruption & Ethics
- Strategy & Policy Engagement

COURSE IV

- Military Modernization
- Mass Media & Communications
- Space Issues
- Non-Traditional Comms (SMS/Web 2.0, etc.)
- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Formal Presentations

SELF-STUDY & e-MENTORED

All FAOs & related DoD/U.S.G. Agency personnel are encouraged to utilize our Advanced Language Enhancement Courses (ALEC) which support target language sustainment and expansion.

ALEC self-study and e-Mentored online courses are designed to drive language proficiency and cultural competency with regionally targeted content highlighting MOS-specific terminology.

Self-study courses incorporate authentic scenario-based practical exercises that emphasize analytical language use grounded in the host country or region target language and culture.

Our **online facilitated courses** are flexible and offer tailored content and length. DL's highly trained faculty have the expertise to drive results via online, non-resident courses that range from 2-week refreshers to 7-week skill enhancers.



*Courses published as part of other publications, the Army Distributed Learning Program (ADLP) or Combined Arms Center (CAC).


Not all DL courses are available online. Some courses are available on ILIAS and/or in-class. All courses are available on DLIS and/or in-class. All course topics available via online facilitation.

For all inquiries, please contact us at FAO.language.program@dliflc.edu

Special Operations Forces Teletraining System

[SOFTS Online - Register](#)

[SOFTS Online - FAQ](#)



Special Operations Forces Teletraining System

LANGUAGE & CULTURE TRAINING

Joint Knowledge Online

FAO Language Sustainment Packs:

Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Persian Farsi, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian

[JKO LCMS \(jten.mil\)](http://JKO LCMS (jten.mil))



Program Updates

- **LREC Sustainment Program (LSP):** We are currently operating on limited FY25 funds. The amount of free, accessible sustainment opportunities for DoD servicemembers is impressive (See page 13). Prior to submitting LSP requests, applicants will provide registration of resources used prior to requesting funding. Please review the LSP Request Procedures on the IAP website prior to submitting your request. You must have a FAO or FAS AMOS and a current DLPT to request funds for language sustainment. Priority goes to your principal assigned language. You must show a proficiency (3/3) in your principal language or an immediate validated requirement if you wish to be considered for an additional same-region 2nd or 3rd language. Additionally, priority for funding will go to FAOs below 2/2 and FASs below 1/1 preparing for FAO/FAS assignment and DLPT. All TAD LSP requests must be command-endorsed. LSP requests requirements, instructions, and templates can be found [HERE](#).
- **FAO/RAO/FAS/PEP's In-Action Photos and Articles:** IAP & DLNSEO are looking for high-definition photos capturing FAO/RAO/FAS/PEPs in action and articles highlighting your contributions to the service and the joint force to be displayed at the Pentagon's FAO wall. Please send your articles and photos with a brief caption to IAPMarine@usmc.mil.
- **IAP Outreach:** Reaching the entire IAP Community using NIPR emails is challenging. We ask that you increase your visits to our Marines.mil website. We will continue to post community updates and future newsletters on the [IAP website](#).
- **FY25 FAO/RAO Utilization Slate:** The IAP office in coordination with MMOA has started the FY25 FAO/RAO utilization slate. FY25 FAO/RAO billet vacancies can be found on the [IAP website](#).

Featured Books, Articles, and Podcasts By IAP Marines

- LtCol Michael E. Clark, "[A More Comprehensive Plan to Push Back Against China's Fishing Practices](#)," War on the Rocks, April 25, 2024.
- Maj Robert Holmes, "[The Numbered Fleet: The New Main Supported Force](#)," Center for International Maritime Security, June 25, 2024.
- MSgt Jorge Rivero, "[Decoy Warfare: Lessons and Implication from the War in Ukraine](#)," US Naval Institute, Proceedings, April 2024, Vol. 150/4/1,454.
- LtCol Evan Z. Ota, Contributor to "[Forging the Force: A Joint Task Force in the Indo-Pacific](#)," War on the Rocks, April 26, 2024.
- LtCol Gary J. Sampson, "[Pursuing Geopolitical Advantage? China's Search for Military Allies](#)," National Intelligence University, November 14, 2023.
- MSgt Jorge Rivero, "[Unleashing Fire and Fury: The TOS-1A's Impact in the Russo-Ukrainian War](#)," US Army Infantry Magazine, Winter 2023-2024, p. 30.

Other Related Reading Material

- Secretary of the Navy Del Toro releases "One Navy-Marine Corps Team: Advancing Department of the Navy Priorities." Download copy [HERE](#).
- Defense Security Cooperation Agency released the 2023 Security Cooperation Conference Report. Download copy [HERE](#).
- DoD Launches Defense Security Cooperation Service. Read the Media Release [HERE](#).

If you publish an article or participate in a podcast discussion, contact us to include your material in the next IAP Newsletter.

International Affairs Program
E-Mail: IAPMarine@usmc.mil



If you have questions about future selection panels and IAP opportunities, contact us!
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