



# DEEPENING PARTNERSHIPS

The U.S. Air Force and Marshall Center focus on building military skills

By **MAJ. DEAR BELOVED**, U.S. Air Force/Marshall Center Fellow

**In December 2013, for the first time, three U.S. Air Force (USAF) Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS) officers completed the Program for Applied Security Studies-Capacity Building (PASS) course at the Marshall Center (GCMC). This landmark development came at a time when the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force/International Affairs (SAF/IA) chose exceptionally qualified officers to complete a shorter six- to 12-month regional certification program, in lieu of the traditional three-year process of Naval Postgraduate School, Defense Language Institute training and in-country immersions. The unique combination of professors, curriculum and students at GCMC provided an advanced environment for RAS officers to build international relationships along with diplomatic and cultural skills that transfer worldwide.**

The time is ripe for deeper cooperation and partnership between the SAF/IA and the GCMC. This partnership will be a force multiplier that expands the engagement capacity of the United States in the global arena. The GCMC can provide the USAF with an effective and cost-efficient alternative to RAS training. Key aspects of the GCMC and SAF/IA programs, as well as specific regions of shared interest in Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) and Sub-Saharan Africa, provide ample justification for this approach.

The GCMC plays an important role in implementing U.S. strategy in Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia. Through a German-American partnership, it helps build expert security policy capacity, creates and sustains networks of policy practitioners and brings decision-makers together when needed. The GCMC receives its policy guidance from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, whose memorandums from 2013 and 2015 outline the mission focus:

1. Address regional security issues in Europe, Eurasia, Central Asia and Israel;
2. Conduct transnational efforts with partners to address counterterrorism-related transnational threat activities;
3. Conduct a counternarcotics and illicit trafficking program in consultation with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs;
4. Engage with the U.S. European Command priority countries of Russia, Turkey, Poland and Israel;
5. Engage Central Asia on regional security and defense cooperation;
6. Select high quality participants with significant potential for success;
7. Address threats and challenges to stable governance, such as border security, man-made and natural disasters, regional conflict, border security and cyber security.

The GCMC College of International Security Studies (CISS) directs a number of programs and hosts approximately 750 students or participants annually. The CISS strives to build a common baseline for global challenges and opportunities, capacity building, governance strategies and approaches, and cultural understanding with an emphasis on Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia. The expertise of the CISS staff transcends its traditional European focus and extends to all global challenges and conflict areas. Discussion flows freely on subjects ranging from global warming and piracy to frozen conflicts in the Caucasus.

Of the 10 resident programs that CISS currently offers, those most applicable to AF RAS officers include PASS, the German-American Master of Arts Program International Security Studies (MISS) and the Program on Security Sector Capacity Building (SSCB).

The GCMC also integrates the Partner Language Training Center Europe, which offers intermediate, advanced and specialized language instruction. Languages include, but are not limited to, Russian, German, Arabic, French and Farsi. The mix of U.S., German and international faculty allows for a great deal of flexibility to meet specialized needs. The language center can be integrated with other GCMC programs and can assist in refreshing or completing RAS language proficiency requirements.

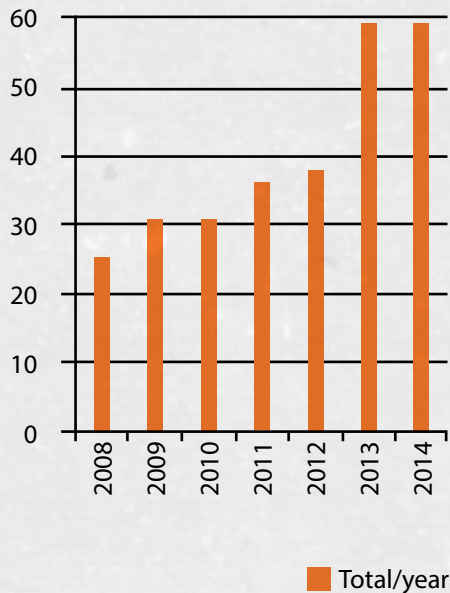
PASS, the GCMC's flagship program, is a broad and comprehensive program supported by a corps of experienced professors. PASS brings civilian government officials, members of security and military services, and government academics together in a rigorous and intellectual environment for seven weeks. PASS consists of four segments that include two fixed segments of challenges and opportunities, as well as approaches and strategies. During the other two segments, students select focused national security topics in areas such as cyber warfare, terrorism, counternarcotics or illicit trafficking. Finally, PASS ends with a three-day exercise in intensive crisis management.

**The partnership and combined efforts of these two well-established organizations will enhance national security gains into the foreseeable future. Deeper cooperation between SAF/IA and the GCMC means shared costs and greater effectiveness in security cooperation and international engagement.**

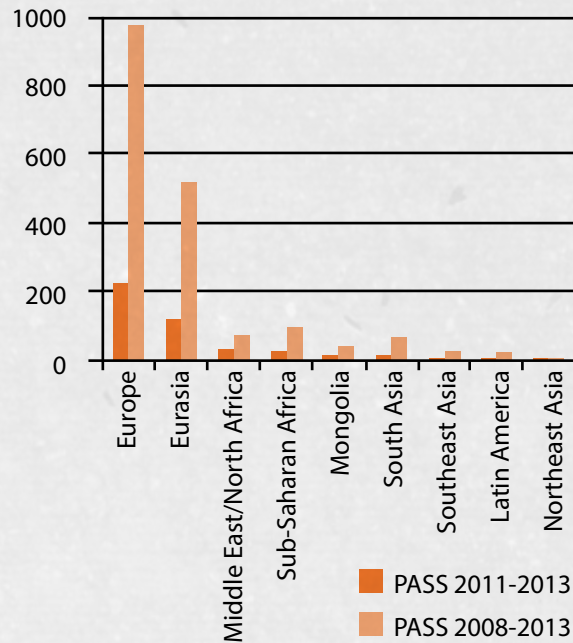
U.S. participation in the PASS course remains limited to a few students each year to maintain an effective balance of international participation. PASS is service-independent and any service may apply for slots. However, U.S. Army foreign area officers (FAOs) have attended the PASS course in higher numbers than any other service. A small number of USAF RAS officers could be nominated to attend, and the establishment of an equitable formula for U.S. participation could be developed. In a short period and at minimal cost, SAF/IA could leverage the international network and aggressive PASS curriculum to enhance the skills of international affairs officers.

In addition to PASS, the GCMC hosts the MISS postgraduate program. MISS focuses on the development of international security policy professionals and

## ANNUAL RAS ACCESSIONS



## GCMC PASS ATTENDANCE (2008-2013)



capitalizes on GCMC policy-oriented programs and seminars. With a focus on regional security in Europe and Eurasia, this program would directly enhance the development of USAF regional affairs strategists in these regions. As of now, only U.S. Army officers partake in MISS, particularly 48C and 48E FAOs, and there are no funded slots for AF officers. Nonetheless, MISS remains open to AF officers who fulfill the entry requirements and have requisite funding. Ultimately, MISS can provide SAF/IA with a focused alternative to Naval Postgraduate School that purposefully develops select international affairs officers who might later serve in key policy offices such as the SAF/IA Pentagon Directorate.

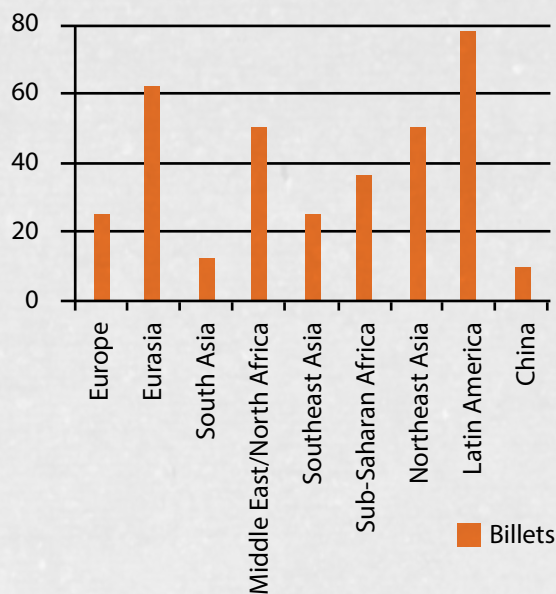
For those at more senior ranks, the CISS leads the SSCB. While less robust than PASS, SSCB provides a forum for partner and allied countries to come together and share ideas on security sector institutional capacity building. This program holds the potential to serve as a midlevel upgrade for RAS officers who have completed at least one RAS assignment. The network gained through attendance at SSCB serves as a force multiplier for RAS officers and provides an opportunity for them to share security cooperation insights in an international setting. In addition, focused events on organized crime and terrorism, as well as cyber conferences hosted in partner nation countries, provide a good forum for connecting with international counterparts.

The SAF/IA directorate seeks to enhance international cooperation, capability and capacity while maintaining and building trust with existing and new partners for mutual security interests. SAF/IA enables conflict prevention and joint and coalition operational success through sustained security cooperation in air, space and cyberspace domains. As such, SAF/IA holds special responsibility for selecting, training and assigning the service's international airmen to include U.S. attachés. Key SAF/IA themes for security cooperation in Europe are: access and influence, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, and centers of excellence, which overlap with GCMC priorities.

SAF/IA maintains close relationships with USAF component commands, U.S. combatant commands, U.S. Embassy country teams, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Commerce and commercial industry. SAF/IA also maintains enduring relationships and global partnerships with nearly every country around the world. SAF/IA directorates manage over 2,600 active foreign military sales cases worth \$134 billion in 90 different countries, along with 75 exercises, 173 military personnel exchanges and 393 international agreements.

RAS officers comprise a key enabling part of SAF/IA. According to 2014 data, the USAF had over 300 positions for RAS officers, mostly for

## USAF BILLETS (BY REGION)



officers of the rank of major and lieutenant colonel. Many of these positions are in-country assignments in the air attaché and security cooperation arenas.

RAS officers are actively engaged in equipping partners, sharing information, building cooperative relationships (air, space and cyber), overseeing technology transfer and disclosure, security cooperation, exercises, humanitarian initiatives and partner Air Force engagements. Additionally, the RAS career field is growing. The number of annual accessions has doubled in recent years, which, in turn, increased training needs.

All new RAS accessions must achieve a standard initial level of qualification. The majority follow a traditional path to qualification through attendance at the Defense Language Institute and Naval Postgraduate School for two to three years, followed by a regional immersion. The remaining officers, who already meet a portion of the qualification requirements, forego certain aspects of the traditional path and follow a shorter timeline based on individual circumstances. This could include attendance at an accredited university program and enrollment in an advanced language course.

RAS officers who are already partially qualified upon selection are best positioned to take advantage of what the GCMC offers. It will provide RAS officers with a top-level view of national decision-making, global governance and international law, while

growing new relationships with current and future leaders in countries across several continents. The seeds of cooperation are planted at the junior level and cannot be reproduced later with ease. For the three USAF officers who attended the PASS course in fall 2013, the SAF/IA and GCMC will benefit from them for the remainder of their careers. RAS officers who graduated from GCMC programs will be in a position to provide the GCMC with high-quality nominations, and the RAS officers will produce force-multiplying results earlier in their assignments.

A focus on the global and strategic nature of the GCMC means that regardless of the region where the RAS officer is assigned, the training received will be both applicable and relevant to the SAF/IA. The higher payoff will come from sending officers who best fit into the overlapped functional and regional interests of the GCMC and SAF/IA.

The GCMC's priorities are all-inclusive of Eurasia, with stated emphasis on Europe, Central Asia, Russia and Turkey. SAF/IA adheres to nine regions: Eurasia, Latin America, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and North Africa region, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and China, which means that overlaps exist with the GCMC-defined regions of Eurasia, Europe and MENA. A quick glance at the number of PASS attendees by region since 2008 shows the greater areas of overlap.

A close partnership between the GCMC and SAF/IA will capitalize on areas of shared interest and enable a number of options. A process with established formulas should be established to make PASS and SSCB selections more equitable between the joint services, and concurrently the quantity of SAF/IA nominations for PASS and SSCB should increase for Europe, Eurasia, MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa RAS officers and trainees. For MISS, one or two RAS candidates should be competitively selected for annual acceptance, and SAF/IA should explore making this program an integral part of the officer's intermediate development education if selected. If personnel and costs allow, GCMC and SAF/IA should consult on tailored language certification courses to support the USAF RAS language training and refresher requirements.

The partnership and combined efforts of these two well-established organizations will enhance national security gains into the foreseeable future. Deeper cooperation between SAF/IA and the GCMC means shared costs and greater effectiveness in security cooperation and international engagement. In light of increased RAS training requirements, as well as the shared regional overlaps in Europe, Eurasia, MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa, the GCMC program presents the perfect addition to the SAF/IA portfolio of training partners. □