
Security Assistance in Costa Rica

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[The following two-part article provides an overview of U.S. security assistance in Costa Rica. Part I, written by Captain Bolling, focuses on the Costa Rican Logistics Improvement Program. Part II, written by Captain Aradi, highlights the role of Extended Technical Services Specialist (ETSS) personnel and training assistance in Costa Rica.]

PART I

The nation of Costa Rica does not have a standing army or any military forces. It does, however, maintain a police security force to keep public order within its borders and surrounding territory. The operations of this security force are centered on day-to-day routine peacekeeping tasks. The country's role in Central America is a neutral one, and Costa Rica is often referred to as the Switzerland of Central America.

The present U.S. security assistance effort in Costa Rica was initiated in 1982 when the then administration of President Monge became concerned about the Marxist threat that the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua posed on Costa Rica's northern border. At that time the Costa Rica Public Security Force was ill-equipped and ill-trained, having been without an assistance program for over ten years and faced with a financial inability to purchase any equipment to improve the situation as the country had been suffering a serious economic crisis. Costa Rica thus had only a minimal self defense apparatus despite the fact that it was confronted by a variety of security challenges: a hostile neighbor on the north where several border clashes had occurred; Contra rebel camps inside her territory; an increasing number of refugees from both Nicaragua and El Salvador; terrorist incidents at home; and a skyrocketing crime rate. The ability to deploy the Public Security Force was virtually nonexistent; there was no quick reaction force, personnel were generally unfamiliar with jungle and counter terrorists operations, and many of the personnel (who also had police functions) were armed only with nightsticks.

In view of this host of potentially severe problems, Costa Rica asked for and received from the U.S. government a "push package" composed of a large number of quickly available assets for transportation, communication, and air functions. These items, provided on a grant basis, were all non-standard and non-military in appearance. Standard military equipment, such as small arms, mortars, and munitions, plus some clothing and personal equipment, PRC 77 radios, and Coast Guard vessels, was also provided on a grant-funded basis. Additionally, in accordance with the total package approach (TPA), concurrent spare parts (CSP) were provided with every equipment case. Over the next five years, Costa Rica received some 35 million dollars worth of equipment and training through U.S. security assistance channels. By early 1987, the bulk of the "push package" and initial repair parts (much of which had been identified and supplied in one or two year stockages for the non-standard items) had been delivered to Costa Rica, and the stage was set for conversion to a "pull system" whereby the Costa Ricans themselves would have to identify, requisition, receive, and issue repair parts. The problem was that although a few logistics type

mobile training teams (MTTs) had provided some training to Costa Rican support personnel, the Costa Rican support infrastructure was still basically geared to maintaining a limited level of equipment and was not trained and/or structured to be able to administer a "pull system." To make matters worse, Costa Rica never seemed to formulate any plans or ask any questions concerning long-term sustainment for their newly donated equipment. In short, in the mad scramble to bring in individual equipment, munitions, small arms, airplanes, helicopters, boats, jeeps, trucks, etc., Costa Rica had not prepared for sustainment under a "pull system" and needed to be prepared to do so before the U.S. investment would be lost.

The U.S. Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) in Costa Rica was confronted with the challenge of maintaining tight control of limited and costly assets, while still providing full involvement, complete support, and professional assistance to the Costa Rican government. In response to this challenge, the ODC developed an ambitious plan comprised of long range multiple improvement programs in the areas of logistics, training, and staffing. Initially, a number of logistics, training, and staff MTTs, each of three months duration, were deployed to Costa Rica to help map out lines of command and staff, and lines of communications as a means of establishing the groundwork for follow-on U.S. Extended Technical Services Specialist (ETSS) personnel. The ODC felt that the three key objective areas of logistics, training, and staffing would have to be addressed simultaneously in order to succeed in the campaign to improve and professionalize the 8,000 man Costa Rican Ministry of Public Security (MPS). These three areas are so interrelated that sufficient momentum could not be gained through dealing with only one area at a time; the resistance generated by areas which would not undergo improvement would undermine the other activities and preclude success.

For the purpose of this article, in my capacity as the National Logistics ETSS, I will focus primarily on the successful implementation of the Logistics Improvement Program in Costa Rica during my one year assignment there from October 1987 to October 1988. Upon my arrival in late October 1987, I was greeted by Captain William Battle, who comprised a one man logistics MTT. He had been on board for three weeks and was well on his way to mapping out the logistics lines of communication within the MPS. Together, we were placed in charge of training and assisting the members of the MPS in the establishment and maintenance of a National Logistics System.

My first tasks were to analyze and comprehend the existing Costa Rican Logistics System and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate. My initial impression of the logistics situation was that the MPS high command believed that their Logistics System was working well inasmuch as it had been able to respond to the needs of the field. However, I recognized the traditional unit level complaints that higher headquarters never gave them what they wanted or needed. The reality probably lay somewhere in between. I also observed that estimates of requirements were made by intuition, and were not based on prior demand data or experience. Receipt procedures at the unit level were somewhat satisfactory, but procedures varied from unit to unit. Two things quickly become very clear: first, there existed no standardization of logistics procedures at any level; second, the frequent turnover of personnel contributed greatly to inefficiency and loss of control, and this problem was further compounded by the lack of any formal logistics training at any level.

I also quickly realized that the Costa Rican Logistics System could only be improved through the implementation of Costa Rican or "Tico" solutions, and not through U.S. imposed ones. As I carried out my mission, I always adhered to this fundamental principle.

Following my analysis of the situation, I felt almost overwhelmed by the numerous ailments that afflicted the Costa Rican Logistics System. However, I was confident that with a concerted, well planned effort, improvement could be realized in a relatively short time. In coordination with Captain Battle and with Major Scrivner, the ODC Logistics Officer and the guru of the Improvement Program, and with very specific guidance from the ODC Commander, Lieutenant Colonel

Gutierrez, we embarked jointly on a crash program to deal with the problems of the Costa Rican Logistics System.

My principal counterpart at the MPS was a highly ambitious and hard working lady, Mrs. Rosa Chan. She was the head of the Department of Training and Administrative Efficiency. This department can best be compared to a Programs Analysis and Evaluation (PAE) Section within a U.S. Military Organization. Mrs. Chan worked directly for the "Official Mayor," who came closest to being the G4 within the MPS. He was primarily responsible for all logistics and administrative actions within the Ministry. He was quite powerful because he had control of the purse strings and was a close confidant of the Minister.

I worked in daily coordination with my MPS counterparts feeding in ideas and collaborating with the MPS staffers and decision makers as together we initiated USODC improvement ideas with Costa Rican solutions. The USODC team thus conceptualized improvement initiatives; they staffed these ideas within the U.S. system to arrange for adequate backup support, while I brought the concepts to the Costa Ricans for their internal coordination, approval, action, and implementation. All the improvement initiatives were, therefore, joint improvement initiatives in a true partnership effort.

I will now discuss several of the successes of the Costa Rican Logistics Program, to include the following: a) Interface Section; b) Contractor Supported International Parts System (COSIPS); c) Logistics Technical School; d) Logistics Communication System; and e) Readiness Reporting System.

INTERFACE SECTION

Prior to January 1987, FMS/MAP case management was handled almost exclusively by the USODC until the materials actually arrived in-country. While this process was barely manageable for the delivery of major end items, the method resulted in numerous problems when it came to the delivery of tools and repair parts. With Costa Rica transitioning from a "push package system," where they had to decide which parts were necessary for sustainment, and where thousands of parts had to be ordered, monitored for status tracked during shipment, received and inventoried, stored and issued to the correct customer, it quickly became apparent that Costa Rica had to develop its own case management system or its needs would be impossible to manage.

The ODC thus proposed in September 1986 that Costa Rica establish a Logistics Office comprised of bilingual personnel to serve as an interface between the Costa Rican and U.S. Logistics Systems. The Costa Ricans accepted the U.S. proposal and in January 1987, the Costa Rican Interface Office for Logistics, with three personnel assigned, officially began its duties. Since its establishment, the Interface Section has grown considerably in size and technical sophistication. It located and then recovered more than \$400,000 worth of lost material donated by the U.S. to the MPS that were scattered throughout 28 different bonded warehouses. The Interface Section has become quite competent in its ability to manage Foreign Military Sales Case materiel information. It is now able to request, manage, and move materiel with accountability and control through the Costa Rican system to the correct user. Further, the Interface Section is now responsive to customer needs and requests for assistance, and is the key to obtaining commercial equipment repair parts. It is also using computer programs to maintain records for the Civil Guard, Air Section, and Coast Guard. In short, the Interface Section is truly a dynamic office.

I was able to work closely with the Interface Section providing them with technical guidance in FMS Case/Document Management, preparation of receiving reports, use of the microfiche, etc. Although the Interface Section is an entity of the MPS, it still depends greatly on the ODC for Logistics and Technical support. Nevertheless, through daily contact with key MPS personnel, success was achieved in furthering their appreciation of the significant role that the Interface

Section plays within the MPS. This clearly contributed to a furthering of the institutionalization of the Interface Section which will ensure its survival into the future.

CONTRACTOR SUPPORTED INTERNATIONAL PARTS SYSTEM

COSIPS was created to transition Costa Rica to a "pull system" for obtaining repair parts for commercial type equipment of U.S. origin. The system and procedures are designed to provide fast, economical, properly identified repair parts through a centralized logistics support conduit. Costa Rican users submit their requests through the Interface Section which coordinates with the ODC for a review before those requests are consolidated and electronically transmitted to the COSIPS office in North Carolina. The North Carolina COSIPS office then further reviews the consolidated requests, and procures the needed commercial equipment repair parts from various vendors. The vendors are paid by the COSIPS Office in Kansas City, Missouri, and the vendor then ships the items to the COSIPS office in Miami. The Miami office consolidates the requests for the Defense Contract Administration System (DCAS) inspection in Miami. Following inspection of the items, the title transfers to Costa Rica and the items are shipped to the Interface Section to obtain exoneration from government customs charges. The transfer process then involves establishing a joint inventory with the Costa Rican COSIPS office, followed by a transfer to the COSIPS representative for inventory control, a demand for history documentation, and finally, the issue to the customer. DCAS in Atlanta, Georgia, verifies contractor pricing and this triggers U.S. Army finance to provide payment to COSIPS.

The COSIPS began operations in Costa Rica in late December 1987. Results thus far have been excellent. Of the \$228,000 initially placed into the account, Costa Rica spent most of it in the first few months of operations. To date, over 50 wheeled vehicles have been repaired under this program. Recently, an additional \$300,000 has been placed into the account giving the MPS flexibility to purchase repair parts for their wheeled vehicles, radios, aircraft, and patrol boats.

LOGISTICS TECHNICAL SCHOOL

An essential part of our Logistics Improvement Program concept has been the idea of the MPS Logistics infrastructure improvements taking place as an institutional process guided by a Logistics/Technical Services School which could routinely reach MPS personnel and teach them their own logistics system.

During January - March 1988, I coordinated the efforts of a nine man MTT working closely with the MPS to establish their first formalized logistics/technical services school. The MTT assisted the Costa Ricans in preparing Standard Operating Procedures, Job Descriptions, Programs of Instruction, and Lesson Plans covering the areas of unit supply, arms room operations, materiel storage/handling/accounting/warehousing, subsistence supply/sanitation, transportation management, wheeled vehicle maintenance management, and tactical communications system maintenance and management. This effort was extremely successful, and the MTT and its Costa Rican counterparts trained approximately 145 personnel during the first series of instruction. Since then, the MPS has trained an additional 300 personnel during three more series of instruction.

The MPS has now modularized the courses for a smoother flow which enables the training to be broken down into specific sections. This permits training to be taken over an extended period of time, thereby reducing unit disruption caused by the loss of logistics personnel for long periods of time.

The results of the training that has taken place at the Log/Tech School has greatly improved logistics operating procedures throughout the Ministry. U.S. assistance in this initiative has been concentrated on ensuring that the Ministry makes the Logistics School a permanent member and

component of the Academic Institutions of the Ministry. In this regard, the ODC is currently assisting the Ministry in purchasing construction materials for a new Logistics School.

LOGISTICS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (LCS)

The purpose of the LCS is to provide a network of personal computers (PCs) geared to supporting the flow of logistical data required to operate a logistics system in Costa Rica. The system is necessary because the present Costa Rican Logistics System often is ineffective since it lacks the means to process and track needed logistics data. This new system will thus fill a critical need for the Costa Rican Logistics system to become more effective. The LCS will facilitate a rapid and responsive means of moving logistics data (such as requisitioning, status, and records of issues from the Central Data Center in San Jose) to local users and to other remote users in the Regional Support centers to be established in Costa Rica. Additionally, the net will tie into the U.S. system through the ODC to facilitate the flow of FMS data concerning FMS case management. Finally, the net will tie into COSIPS to rapidly process the passing of requisitions and status and to process other logistics information such as record of demand history. Also, a COSIPS generated flag report is automatically prepared when a piece of equipment receives too many demands within a given period of time.

To implement the development of a computer net from national level organizations through intermediate Regional Support Centers to operational units, the ODC obtained 12 Zenith Computer Systems in November 1987. The Logistics Communications System will be comprised of National Offices in San Jose networking to five Regional Support Centers (RSCs). The Regional Support Centers will favorably improve the efforts of national level transportation assets, and improve control at the national level of all unit requests.

To date, computers have been delivered to Liberia (1st RSC), located 50 miles south of the Nicaraguan border, and to the interface section in San Jose. As computer operators are trained, the computers will be distributed to the other four RSC's. The remaining five computers will be distributed in San Jose at the national level.

Once in place, the communication system will also serve other functions geared to helping the Costa Ricans to improving the staffing of operational and administrative functions, building their training programs base, and speeding up their word processing capabilities. The primary function of the system will be to establish a Logistics Communication network for supply/maintenance requirements, and thus aid in the effort to build a workable logistics system to help overlay the existing Costa Rican Logistics System.

READINESS REPORTING SYSTEM

This initiative goes hand-in-hand with the establishment of the Logistics Communication System. The newly created Readiness Section of the MPS is an important means of informing the national level directorate of the status of equipment and possible problems in functional areas which they can solve before the problem grows into a major problem requiring the attention of the Minister or Vice-Minister. The Readiness Section will become a key player in concert with the automated Regional Support Centers in providing a complete logistics system for the Ministry. The Readiness Section will develop the Ministry Readiness Reports, teach the readiness reporting format to all units, educate the units in how to prepare for readiness evaluations, provide preventive maintenance training, develop proper records for equipment, personnel, and training, conduct readiness evaluations, provide their summations of the situation to the unit commander, brief key Ministry decision makers concerning needed corrective action, and perform follow-up with evaluated units to ensure that unit commanders and the Ministry support system both follow up to carry out corrective action. If the corrective action is limited by budget constraints that lie beyond the ability of the Ministry to redress, the Readiness Section will work within the Ministry

to prepare corrective action plans to be staffed through the government of Costa Rica to enable corrective action to at least be surfaced and corrected in future fiscal years.

The Readiness Reporting System will consist of a number of simple reports covering the areas of logistics, personnel, and training. As the system undergoes an evolutionary development, the reports will become more complex and sophisticated.

To assist Costa Rica in the establishment of the Readiness Reporting System, the ODC requested the deployment of a seven man MTT in three phases. The MTT was comprised of two officers and five NCOs specializing in wheeled vehicle maintenance, tactical communications, unit supply, personnel, and training. During the first phase, only the two officers deployed and conducted the necessary survey. During the second phase, the entire seven-man MTT deployed to Costa Rica for a period of four weeks. In coordination with the MPS Readiness Section, they developed a manual encompassing the procedures for the Readiness System. Additionally, the MTT also assisted in the preparation of lesson plans which will be used in the future by the Readiness Section to train personnel at the regional and unit levels to use the Readiness Reporting System. During the third phase, the MTT returned to Costa Rica in February 1989 to assess progress made by the Readiness Section in implanting the Readiness Reporting System throughout the five Regional Support Centers.

In conclusion, although a great deal of progress has been made in implementing the Costa Rican Logistics Improvement Program, much remains to be accomplished. For now, there are still sufficient residual funds available to continue for an additional year with the National Logistics ETSS Program. However, if Congress fails to appropriate additional security assistance funds for Costa Rica soon, the Logistics ETSS Program unfortunately will terminate by FY 1990. Nevertheless, if the momentum of the different logistics initiatives continues at its present pace under the control and influence of the follow-on ETSS, then I believe, as a minimum, some of these initiatives will be sufficiently institutionalized to ensure their long term survival without continuous U.S. technical assistance. In the final analysis, however, it will be up to the Costa Ricans to continue to improve their logistics infrastructure, with a little help from their American friends.

PART II

“STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND”

“Forget Saudi Arabia,” my esteemed Career Manager advised over the AUTOVON hookup, “you are going to Central America, instead. Of course, this means language school first—I think we can just fit you in to start in a couple of weeks. You must report to Costa Rica in September.”

Thus began what originally was to have been a two-year accompanied Middle East tour, which turned into a year long Central American solo posting. True to his word, my orders soon showed up, zapping me cross-country to the Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey, as an interim PCS preparatory to assumption of duties in San Jose, Costa Rica. My new job title of “Chief, Technical Assistance Field Team (TAFT)” was a bit misleading, as I soon learned I was to be the “Chief” of a one man team—Me.

ETSS missions vary—logistics, training, staff development, and a myriad of other areas may be addressed. As my responsibilities extended only to the training arena, I will confine my remarks to that subject. For someone who might be assigned to a mission similar to mine, the first observation I can make in this regard is that one should not expect to find planning, organization, leadership, or support on a level or even modeled after U.S. Army standards. Every country will

be somewhat different, varying in the degree to which they will fit "our" concept of what should or should not be taking place.

For example, in Costa Rica, the Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) of the Public Security Force is tasked with the dual mission of urban police law enforcement and rural security of the country's frontiers. Under present agreements between the two governments, State Department agencies work to assist in the law enforcement sector, while Defense Department (MAP-funded) activities are restricted to national security interests. This would not generally create problems, except that: 1) the same ministry and leadership oversees both functions; 2) training of Guardia personnel is accomplished through only one budgetary entity, regardless of the ultimate assignment of the individual being trained; 3) units from urban *Comisarias* (police precincts) may be transferred to the frontier at a moment's notice; and 4) "national security interests" may extend to preparing city police units for eventual urban terrorism scenarios.

As can be gathered, it is not always easy to sort out where we may or may not extend our assistance. If anything could be said to make this a little easier, it is that there is so much work to do in the high priority areas of frontier security that no time can be spent in the "fringe areas." In the case of preparing the Costa Ricans for self-sufficiency in the training milieu, the National Training Center itself is a good example.

Although the Center was over a year old when I arrived in country, as a branch of the Academy of the Public Forces, it had seen very limited use since its inception. Two patrolling courses and the demolition of some captured munitions were about all the activity seen at the Center in 1987. No long- or short-range training plans existed, no programs of instruction had been developed for resident courses, no instructors were being specifically prepared for rural security training, and the Center was at the absolute bottom of a very long logistics pipeline, making resources of any type extremely scarce.

Beginning in December 1987, planning was initiated for a comprehensive Basic Rural Security Course to be taught on the unit level (collective training) to all six northern frontier Commando groups (roughly company-size units).

Five of the six units are permanently based and would be trained as a whole, or, for those in excess of Center capacity, in two iterations, but always retaining unit integrity at the platoon level. Officers, *sub-oficiales* (NCOs), and troops would train together. Planning would become the responsibility of officers; supervision would be delegated to the NCOs; all necessary skills to execute each required action would be taught to the individual troops.

Following this training, the sixth unit, which serves as a "float" company filling in for Commandos pulled out of the line for training, would be similarly prepared. Next would be the units from the Southern border; and finally, training would be provided to the units tasked with reinforcing the borders from their urban bases. This schedule will be completed in mid-1989 (seven iterations in 1988, four in 1989).

Thereafter, each graduating class from the Academy (Basic Urban Security Course) will rotate to the Center for the Rural Security Course prior to the new recruits reporting to their assigned units. In addition, specialist courses are scheduled to begin, including leadership courses at the NCO and Officer levels, mortar qualification course, crew-served weapons (.50 cal M2HGMG, 90mm Recoilless Rifle, etc.) training, communications, Combat Medic, and others.

Another aspect of training which required attention (and probably would in any country or service) was the instruction presented in the individual units to maintain and retain skills learned in resident courses. Unit level training is so often given a low priority that the first order of business is to motivate the Commanders (or their bosses) sufficiently that a climate is established with real

command emphasis on continuing training. Given the organization of the Costa Rican Public Security Force, this entailed gaining the endorsement of the Vice-Minister, the Director of the Public Security Force, and the Guardia Civil.

The second objective was much more difficult. Since no standardization program had ever been developed to control or guide unit training, each unit was "free-lancing," that is, doing its own thing whenever there was any actual training conducted, which was very seldom. Therefore, devising a Mission Essential Task List (METL) for rural security units was a necessary initial step. Next, for each task in the METL, conditions and standards for its performance had to be established. Finally, actual lesson plans for the presentation of each class had to be prepared.

It might be appropriate to note here that the tendency for many ETSS personnel might be to jump right in and do the things described above. While it is true that this might be the fastest and easiest solution, I do not believe it is the right approach. If you are really going to help the country advance toward self-sufficiency, it is critical that they themselves accomplish the work. You can suggest, advise, assist, supervise, and monitor all you want, and you may even have to drive the implementation through some rough spots. However, if the host country personnel do not do the actual work, they only learn to rely on the U.S. representative more and more. The resulting dependency guarantees the failure of entire programs and systems once the ETSS is no longer on the scene.

Going back to unit level training, it should be obvious that one major ingredient is still lacking when all the METLs, lesson plans, etc., are completed—that is, qualified instructors. The Costa Rican system designates the *Tercer Comandante* (3rd Commander) of each unit as the responsible party for the conduct of instruction within that unit. Unfortunately, virtually none of these "Training Officers" in the Guardia have themselves been trained in any way, shape, or form to conduct meaningful training.

The solution apparently would be to train them in a Faculty Development (FADEP) setting such as at the United States Army School of the Americas (USARSA), in Fort Benning, Georgia. In the past, in fact, that was the only recourse available for Costa Rican personnel. Looking down the road, however, at the shrinking number of scholarships available for resident training at USARSA, an alternative had to be found.

That alternative was to conduct a onetime Instructor Trainers Course in Costa Rica. This not only yielded a large number of FADEP-qualified instructors, but the real payoff was the qualification of a small number of personnel to conduct future FADEP training directly in Costa Rica. Thus, the goal of self-sufficiency was again achieved.

The execution of this plan was not as hard as it may seem. Through our major command (in this case, SOCOM, in Panama), a Mobile Training Team (MTT) was requested to conduct a total of six weeks of training. Phase I, was a two-week FADEP course taught to a selected cadre of future Instructor Trainers. Phase II saw those same personnel working with the MTT in teaching another full FADEP iteration to a larger group (including all those unqualified Unit Training Officers). Finally, in Phase III the host country personnel took over full control and acted as the primary instructors of yet another FADEP cycle, with the MTT only monitoring and evaluating their performance. In this manner, a pool of eight Instructor Trainers was established along with nearly 60 additional qualified instructors.

Upon graduation from FADEP, Unit Training Officers receive a packet (or "library") of standardized lesson plans, certain training aids which will be needed to support those lesson plans, and the required record-keeping materials (individual qualification records and unit training records) needed to document their unit's continuing training program. In other words, everything

needed to employ their newly acquired capacity to conduct small unit training is provided, removing the temptation to “free-lance” as in the old manner.

Finally, in addition to programs and systems, every training strategy has to address facilities. In the case of Costa Rica, available facilities, while underutilized, were adequate in most respects for the expanded programs. One glaring deficiency had to be addressed, however.

Until October, 1988, the National Training Center, home of all rural security training, did not have a rifle range beyond a 25 meter zero range. Through lots of troop labor and active ETSS participation in the planning and building, ten 250 meter firing lanes slowly emerged from the jungle. Using fixed silhouette targets (to minimize maintenance problems later) at 50 meter intervals, a qualification course of fire was devised. This allowed, for the first time, realistic field firing of all rifles in the inventory (M-16, Galil, M-1, M-1 Carbine, G-3), as well as 90mm recoilless rifle sub-caliber (7.62 mm) practice.

While certainly a critical facility in any training plan, an adequate rifle range was something which no one had ever “pushed” before. In this respect, it serves as a perfect example of the type of action an ETSS may have to initiate against existing inertia. To overcome that inertia, some selling may be required, but more often, just good planning and some budgetary assistance will do the job. The total tab for this particular project, however, was only in the neighborhood of \$700, so it could be considered extremely cost effective.

In conclusion, it must be said that everything which happened on my watch would generally happen to anyone in an ETSS position. At the same time, many unique situations may have to be addressed, depending on the host country, armed forces structure, and a myriad of other variables. The only certainty is that nothing is certain; the only guarantee is that nothing is guaranteed—except a good feeling of having made a real and genuine contribution when you finally pull up your tent pegs and head home.

My experience brought to mind the importance of the words of the greatest one-man TAFT sent to the field:

“It is better that they do it imperfectly than you do it perfectly. For it is their war and their country and your time here is limited.”

Lawrence of Arabia