The Rise and Decline of U.S. Military Culture Programs, 2004-20

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introduced the concept of formal and informal economies not realizing it would be interpreted as legitimate and illegitimate rather than the way those concepts are used in social science. We sometimes referred to the work of translating advanced concepts as *up-armoring* them.

As with many of the other lessons learned, working with experts from civilian academia was not a problem with an easy solution. However, had we been better able to communicate the problems up front to the leadership of culture programs, we could have smoothed the path for colleagues joining culture programs straight from academia and perhaps more easily countered the calls for outsourcing.

**Conclusion**

Despite all of the issues presented here and despite waning interest across the DOD, we did manage to get some things done. In retrospect, we accomplished more than I would have thought possible when I was first looking at the labyrinthine bureaucracy against which we would be pushing. Even those of us who worked on programs that have been greatly diminished or closed have left behind resources—books, curricula, and ideas in the minds of future military leaders—that will outlast us. I am not trying to paint too rosy a picture. There is no question that the cycle of interest and disinterest has played itself out again and that the DOD will have to relearn these lessons in the coming years, most likely at the expense of junior personnel and those with whom they interact. Still, I think there was enough about this cycle that was different, particularly the ability to leave artifacts and lessons learned behind in formats that will be discoverable, that we may have had a slightly more enduring impact than was possible in the past. Also, while the long-term impact is in question, the impact of the programs while they were running, at least those in the Marine Corps, is not. We have more than a decade of routine assessments and more comprehensive assessment
research providing evidence of positive effect and, of course, also evidence of areas where we could have improved.\textsuperscript{10}

As a final note, I want to highlight one lesson learned from this latest cycle often overlooked as we focus on what went wrong or right. The lesson is that collaboration works. I do not mean working with people you agree with or like or everyone coming together with some perfectly shared sense of common purpose. I mean finding points of intersection or mutual advantage and working together for as long as it makes sense. In my collaborations across the broad culture network over the years, there have been arguments, unresolvable differences of opinion, and many periods of mutual annoyance, but only a very few situations where we could not get past those things and find ways to help each other. Collaboration worked well to influence discourse, shape programs and policies, and build curricula. It worked well when people of different backgrounds—military or academic—worked together within a center, among counterparts across Services, and when people positioned differently in the landscape agreed on a goal and each worked it from their particular vantage point.\textsuperscript{11}

Our collaborations required a willingness to compromise and, at times, to share or not get credit for an accomplishment. Those behaviors are not common in academia and, de-

\textsuperscript{10} See for example, a few of the reports from CAOCL’s assessment efforts posted on a DOD public portal: Wendy Chambers and Basma Maki, \textit{Overall CAOCL Survey II Findings: The Value and Use of Culture by Type of Deployment} (Quantico, VA: Translational Research Group, Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, Marine Corps University, 2013); Erika Tarzi, \textit{Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization Program Messaging} (Quantico, VA: Translational Research Group, Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, Marine Corps University, 2017); and Erika Tarzi, \textit{Educating Marines: Reorienting Professional Military Education on the Target} (Quantico, VA: Translational Research Group, Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, Marine Corps University, 2018).

spite protestations to the contrary, are not all that common in military organizations either. The benefits bear remembering for the next time when everything seems new and, as was the case in this cycle, the temptation to pretend to be a unique explorer discovering new territory is dangled in front of the next group to tackle these challenges. We, for the most part, managed to move past that temptation toward collaboration, and it was worth the effort.
CHAPTER NINE

Alternative Perspectives
Launching and Running the Marine Corps’ Culture Center

interviews with Jeffery Bearor and George Dallas

Introduction

This chapter provides alternative perspectives in two ways. First, it includes the reflections of practitioners rather than scholars. Second, it presents one perspective from the beginning of a culture program, the Marine Corps’ center, and another from the standpoint of running the program for a decade and seeing it closed. The practitioner perspective is a vital part of understanding how culture programs developed and ran during this most recent phase of the Department of Defense’s (DOD) interest in culture. The scholars who have contributed to this volume did not do their work alone and, for the most part, the organizational spaces and processes they worked within and sometimes sought to challenge were created and led by military personnel or civilian practitioners. We also wanted to take advantage of an unusual opportunity to capture interviews with the first and last leaders of one culture center, representing almost the entire arc of the center’s existence.

The chapter is composed of two interviews. The first is with Jeffery Bearor who, at the time of the interview, was the assistant deputy commandant for Marine Corps Manpower
and Reserve Affairs. While on active duty, then-colonel Bearor was deeply involved in the Marine Corps and DOD’s early deliberations about culture-related capabilities. Immediately after his retirement in 2006, he became the first director of the Marine Corps’ Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL), which he ran for almost two years. The second interview is with George Dallas, who at the time of the interview was about to retire from his position as the director of the Center for Regional and Security Studies at Marine Corps University. While on active duty, then-colonel Dallas was the chief of staff for Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), a vantage point from which he saw the development of many capabilities, including CAOCL. After his retirement in 2008, he became CAOCL’s director and ran the organization until it was closed in 2020.

Launching and Running the Marine Corps’ Culture Center

There was about a year of lag between the two directors, during which CAOCL experienced significant organizational and personnel turmoil. It experimented with a series of leadership models, was briefly combined with the Center for Irregular Warfare, and endured the departure of many of its PhD subject matter experts and scholars who felt the environment had become either inhospitable or outright hostile. During this period, there were significant concerns across the DOD culture community that the organization would not survive. However, little documentation exists of this time so we must ask readers to make the leap between the leadership that launched CAOCL and its leadership for the remaining 12 years.

Readers may notice several areas where the interviews converge and diverge. For example, both directors transitioned from active duty service to the CAOCL director position within days. This provided both individuals with the kind of currency (in terms of relationships and working knowledge) needed to understand both Marine Corps requirements and the process-
es in place to meet them. Upon arriving at CAOCL, Bearor and Dallas both were confronted not only with the challenge of leading the Marine Corps’ approach to culture training and education (outward focused) but also with the cultural friction that existed within CAOCL. Their experience confronting the kinds of clashes that often emerged when contractors, civilian academics, and active duty personnel (who often had very different ideas of what “right” looked like) worked together on various projects proved to be as difficult as the task of creating culture products. As one might expect, the ways in which they have reflected on and reconstrued these challenges was quite different. As George A. Kelly once said,

A person can be witness to a tremendous parade of episodes and yet, if he fails to keep making something out of them . . . he gains little in the way of experience from having been around when they happened. It is not what happens around him that makes a man experienced; it is the successive construing and reconstruing of what happens, as it happens, that enriches the experiences of his life.¹

The pages to follow offer moments of reflecting on and, at times, reinterpreting salient experiences associated with launching and running CAOCL. It is our hope that they will be of some value to those seeking to better understand the complexities associated with leading culture-related capabilities in the DOD.

Interview with Jeffery Bearor, First Director of CAOCL
Conducted by Kerry Fosher on 1 September 2020
So, this would have been back in 2004, the march to Baghdad

had already occurred. We’d been in Afghanistan for a little bit at various levels. And the fight going on in Iraq was morphing from the march to Baghdad into no kidding insurgency and a counterinsurgency campaign. My billet then was chief of staff at [Training and Education Command] TECOM and we were looking at the predeployment training program and what needed to morph from the old combined arms exercise and what became the integrated training exercise that prepared units to deploy to both Iraq and Afghanistan. The focus now being mostly on Iraq.

General [James N.] Mattis came aboard to be the deputy commandant for [Combat Development and Integration] CD&I and [commanding general] CG MCCDC—brand new, promoted three star. And he was very engaged in this process. In fact, he came to visit us within the first week of being the three star here at Quantico, and he kind of gave the CG, then Major General [Thomas S.] Tom Jones, a list of tasks. I was brought in on the conversations, and one of the things that General Mattis talked about was this transition from the march to Baghdad, “big war” piece down to a counterinsurgency, “small wars” piece.

We talked a lot about previous Marine Corps experience, both in Vietnam and back in the ’20s and ’30s when the Marine Corps wrote the Small Wars Manual, and he talked about some of the deficits in the training program, both at the individual level and on the unit level that he wanted us to get

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2 TECOM is the Marine Corps’ organization that oversees all training and education efforts in the Service. Until 2020, it was run by a two-star general officer. It is now a three-star command.

3 The Marine Corps has eight deputy commandants, three-star general officers responsible for different functional areas. CD&I is responsible for concept and capability development and determining requirements. It is broadly considered to be the most influential of the deputy commandant positions. MCCDC is the organizational structure supporting CD&I. The deputy commandant for CD&I is dual hatted as the commanding general of MCCDC.
One of the things he talked about was this specific understanding of the people. He talked about, as we do in the *Small Wars Manual*, war among the people and the fact that the people are the focus. And of course, we’re not the only ones to have figured that out. Certainly, you look at some of the insurgent campaigns, some of the ones that in particular were successful, Mao [Zedong], and what was going on in China. He knew that it was all about the people. So, his point was: what do we know about the people and what can we train our Marines to understand about how you influence people from a pretty different viewpoint?

Their culture’s different. They had been living under Saddam Hussein for years and years and years. There were different factions. We didn’t understand the religious factions, the political factions, and everything else. Nor did we understand—at the lance corporal, corporal, captain, and lieutenant level—what were the people’s focus? What did we need to do in order to be successful, if you will, winning them over to our side and supporting them? Because that’s what this was about. The various insurgencies were building up. What was going on in western Iraq, whether it was Sunni insurgents or Shi’i insurgents and all of that? And he thought that we needed a capability to get at that.

So, in fact, we weren’t the only ones playing in the space. The other Services were as well. So, we stood up a series of working groups in order to pull in some experts and say: What do you need to do in order to provide the training and the expertise? Was there a language component? Is it just a cultural thing? What would the Marines need to know? And that’s

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4 *The Small Wars Manual* is an iconic manual within the Marine Corps. Written in 1940 (and based on a 1935 manual on small wars operations), it was still considered important reading for Marines deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s.

how it got started. So, this would have been sort of the fall of 2004. And that was really the impetus. General Mattis coming in from his experience in both Iraq and Afghanistan and saying this is a deficit in our training program and we need to fill it out, which is why he came to TECOM.

Fosher: So, with those groups that you brought together, what kinds of people did you pull into them?

Well, we looked at our own staff and what was our biggest gap? Our biggest gap was cultural anthropologists and social scientists who understood the people piece. We looked at colleges and universities. We went to Naval Postgraduate School and looked for any experts that could come in. We reached out to the other Services and we found a pretty eclectic group, I think, of folks that come in and—You know the names as well as I do. It was pretty interesting. And we tapped into our own intel assets. Our intelligence assets also have some capability there across the Services.

Who was working in this space? Who could help advise us? What does a training program like that look like? We also then went back into our own history. We pulled out the Small Wars Manual. We pulled out training programs from Vietnam, to include language and culture programs, that we used it to pretty good effect in Vietnam for our advisor cadre and for the [Combined Action Program] CAP program, where we would match up a U.S. Marine Corps unit at the squad or platoon level with a South Vietnamese unit and put them together and then send them into the hinterland to work with the people in the villages, because that’s what the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were doing.6 And so, we actually had some

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6 For more on the CAP program, see MSgt Ronald E. Hays, USMC (Ret), Combined Action: U.S. Marines Fighting A Different War, August 1965 to September 1970 (Quantico, VA: History Division, an imprint of Marine Corps University Press, 2019).
background there. We just needed to resurrect some of those lessons and see how we can apply them into the environment we were in, particularly in Iraq.

So that’s how we got that started. And there was quite a bit of push coming from [the Office of the Secretary of Defense] OSD in this same level, but I think actually the Services were ginning this up, particularly the Army and the Marine Corps, and [Special Operations Command] SOCOM to a certain extent as well. And it was being ginned up that way. And OSD kind of glommed onto those efforts and provided some level of oversight.

*Fosher: That tracks with my understanding of how that went—that the Services energized OSD.*

And the good news was that OSD was willing to support, in fact, provided some pretty good resource capability in order to help, particularly the Army and the Marine Corps, get started down this track. And I thought there was a lot of good cross-talk going on between the Services, you know, Air War College down there in Montgomery, Alabama. They were also looking at this—it was pretty interesting—and it was a pretty far-flung group. We basically didn’t turn away anybody nor their ideas because we knew we didn’t have a monopoly on what needed to be done. About that same time, I gave [Center for Naval Analyses] CNA a task and to look across the entire training continuum, all of TECOM focused mostly on training—both individual and unit training—to see if we could identify any gaps in our formal learning centers where we might need to

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7 OSD is used here to refer to the broad organization of the headquarters-level staff in the Department of Defense. SOCOM is one of 11 unified combatant commands in the U.S. military. Each command has geographic or functional areas of responsibilities. SOCOM is a functional combatant command responsible for overseeing the special operations commands of the Services and commanding Joint special operations.
plug some of this in.\textsuperscript{8} And they did a pretty good job, based on some guidance we’d given them, of looking across the curriculum of all the schools and coming back and saying, well, if this is your problem, these are your gaps.

About the same time, I think it might have been in early 2005, as we were getting through what the requirement was, we looked at what would be the broader requirement, particularly for individual Marine training and unit training through the [Integrated Training Exercise] ITX integrated training exercise.\textsuperscript{9} In addition to the “language and culture” pieces, we decided we needed to look at all facets and levels of training, to include entry-level training to figure out if we had gaps. How could we better prepare new Marines for the training they’d receive when they got to their units and entered the predeployment workups? I tapped CNA to do a quick study. They identified some potential gaps and we sent the study results to all. We called all the schoolhouse curriculum developers and operations officers to Quantico, gave them a week to “fix” their [program of instruction] POIs, reviewed the changes, and changed the training programs to better align [entry-level training] ELT/[military occupational specialty] MOS training to help fill the training gaps.\textsuperscript{10} That reduced the burden on units going through their [predeployment training program] PTP workups.\textsuperscript{11}

As you can imagine, the intel school’s curricula got quite

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\item \textsuperscript{8} CNA refers to the Center for Naval Analyses. The acronym is now used as the name for the broader nonprofit organization that houses the Center for Naval Analyses.
\item \textsuperscript{9} In the Marine Corps, an ITX is a live exercise typically run as part of pre-deployment preparation.
\item \textsuperscript{10} In the Marine Corps, ELT spans a broad range of time and settings from recruiting through recruit training (boot camp) or officer candidate training, several other stages depending on whether the Marine is enlisted or an officer, and typically concludes with MOS training where Marines learn their occupational specialty, such as infantry, intelligence, or artillery assigned during entry-level training.
\item \textsuperscript{11} PTP includes all training a unit conducts in preparation for deployment.
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a bit of an update. But even schools of infantry, we looked very hard there. We even looked at the recruit training for gaps in that. So, this was a pretty good-size effort and it actually worked out pretty well. We made some pretty substantive changes to the training programs so that we were starting to integrate.

Now, what do we need to do at the entry level? Training and MOS training schools? And then how was that going to bleed into unit training and what were the plus-ups there? It was only later that we kind of circled back to [professional military education] PME to see what other things should we be doing at places like Expeditionary Warfare School for captains, Command and Staff College, in particular, and even at the staff [noncommissioned officer] NCO academies— Was there a place there?12

And so, in the end state, what we got was based on those initial conversations with General Mattis. I think over a period of just about six months, we looked across the entire training and education continuum and we identified a gap. We had no capability inside TECOM in order to coordinate all that, nor to bring in the subject matter experts that we could then lend out, if you will, to the schools and to the training programs. And that’s basically how we came up with the idea of, “Okay, we need a center.”

_Fosher: I want to draw together two things that you just mentioned. One was the conversations across the Services and the other being the PME versus training aspect. I have a memory from very early on, just as I was beginning to get a sense of what the different Services were doing, of thinking there might be efficiencies to be found across_
the Services. That the Air Force had the greater luxury to focus on PME, whereas the Marine Corps and the Army had to be focused more on training. Was that accurate and is that something that you were thinking about or that other people were thinking about? How to draw on those differences?

So, it’s interesting. You probably have a copy—I certainly do—of the initial draft brief that talked about the sweep of the program.¹³ And in fact, that was the first time where we talked about how this cultural training and education program had several different pieces. A lot of it was focused on individual and unit training, predeployment. Okay, where are you going to go? What are you going to be doing? Again, we focused on Iraq. What part of Iraq? Where are you going to be? And what was the mission going to be of your unit? Because an infantry unit might have a different vision or different mission than a logistics unit, although everybody was going to be outside the wire in with the population. What did an infantry squad leader need to know that perhaps a logistics section chief didn’t need to know? And again, trying to figure all that out.

One of the other things though that General Mattis talked about and that we incorporated in the initial vision of this thing was what are we going to do forever? In other words, his vision of this was that these are capabilities that we should have never let go of, as we always do. Okay, so into the ’20s and ’30s, the Marine Corps had been in small wars all up and down Central America and into the Caribbean.

We learned a ton of lessons. We actually put them into a manual so that we would have that. And then, of course, we had big war. And now we’re an amphibious force—500,000 Marines, six divisions, fighting in the wars in the Pacific, the Western Pacific, South Pacific—and small wars got put on the

¹³ This brief was developed in 2004 and used in updated forms through 2006. A copy was not available from the interviewee at the time of publication.
sideline. Then, of course, our next war was another pretty big war in Korea and we didn’t need those capabilities.

But then our next war was not. It was small wars. It was war among the people. And so, we dusted off some of those ideas and tried to incorporate them into what we were doing in Vietnam. And of course, soon as we got to Vietnam or out of Vietnam—this is when I first came in the Marine Corps—nobody wanted to talk about small wars at all. We forgot the lessons. And now we’re focused on northern Europe, particularly north Norway, the Baltics. How was the Marine Corps going to play in the big war, the coming big war against the Russians? We knew we weren’t going to be in the Fulda Gap because we didn’t have the capability. So where were we going to play?

So, again, we forgot all those things. One of General Mattis’ views was that this is something that Marines should do forever. You should never lose that capability. So that’s how we came up with the [Regional Culture and Language Familiarization] RCLF program, where Marines would be assigned a focus so that we would always have some number of—I wouldn’t call them experts—I’ll call them literate Marines who would understand the general principles of how you operate in small wars among the people and would have some understanding of some region of the world. Not to a huge, great depth. But the theory was that if you had enough of these Marines populated throughout the Marine Corps, every unit would then have some understanding and some depth of

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14 *Fulda Gap* refers to the lowland corridor running southwest from the German state of Thuringia to Frankfurt am Main. After World War II, it was identified by Western strategists as a possible route for a Soviet invasion of the American occupation zone from the eastern sector occupied by the Soviet Union.

15 RCLF was the Marine Corps’ career-long, distance learning program for culture and language. It was run by the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning until 2020, when it transitioned to the Center for Regional and Security Studies. As of early 2021, the program has been defunded, but it is expected to continue running until the content becomes outdated.
knowledge. Not a great depth, but at least they’d know. Yes, I know where India is. I can show it on a map. I understand the religious complexities of the country and the demographic complexities of the country. I know that they’ve been at war with the Pakistanis for 65 years and this is why. And you can start to now explain that and then, even more, know where to go to get the answers.

So, this was the other part that, quite frankly, after some of the efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan started to wind down, I think we lost sight of, because even though I think it continued to be a program, it was nobody’s focus of interest anymore. Part of the reason is, you know, once again, because it’s difficult and we’ve been doing it for 14 or 15 years now. People want to forget that piece and now move on to something else.

So, we’re in a bit of an inflection point right now in that respect. Are we going to forget all the lessons that we’ve learned over the last 15 years—all of them hard won with blood—to get ready for the next big thing? Are we going to continue to incorporate those lessons as we go forward? Because if you’re in a Marine littoral regiment and you’re operating in the Philippines or Indonesia or with the Malays, you’re going to have to understand the people you’re operating with. I mean, even when we go to Australia, we find that there’s differences, much less operating with Koreans and Japanese and the folks in Southeast Asia who are sometimes our allies and sometimes not. If you’re going to operate with those folks in their country, you’ve got to understand them. So, we may be throwing out some baby and bathwater here.

Fosher: I think the way we started phrasing it after a while was “partners, populations and the adversary.” I want to step out of this history for a little bit and ask you to reflect on one or two things you found unexpectedly intellectually challenging or interesting during your time working on this.

Well, a couple of things. One of the things that struck me in a
good way was that Marines, once you started talking to them about this tool in the toolbox, they got it. Junior Marines understood that. I need to understand that if I see this scene on the street, what it means, you know, is this normal? Is this a normal street scene? Is this an abnormal street scene? And in fact, we bled that into a lot of the training. When you go to the infantry training lanes and the villages that we built, we tried to be able to paint that so that Marines would understand what looks normal and what looks abnormal so they can start to make some decisions.

And this was incorporated in a couple other things like Combat Hunter and some of the other things that we did on the training end. Once you started explaining how this cultural understanding could affect the mission and would be a tool that they could use to understand what they were seeing, particularly, walking patrols in Ramadi or Fallujah—or pick a place in Iraq—or even some of the places in Helmand in Afghanistan. They started to understand. They went, “Oh, okay, I understand why this is important to me. It’s important for me to understand the street scene with mom, dad, you know, the vendor, the store, open or not, as it is to be able to see if somebody’s carrying an AK-47 or not, because it’s going to give me information.”

Marines glommed on to that pretty fast. It didn’t take them long to understand that this was good information for them to have and helps them understand what they see once they got outside the [forward operating bases] FOBs. I was very, very encouraged by that. Even junior Marines understood that they needed to be able to see and understand the battlefield that they were on. And this included a hard look at local customs and village/town daily routines—what was

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16 Combat Hunter is a Marine Corps training program focused on developing advanced skills in observation, profiling, tracking, and questioning and also includes material on policing in a combat environment.
“normal” what was “abnormal”—the people and the scenes, because that would help them accomplish their mission. So that was a good thing.

The other side of that coin was that we were trying to jam more training into a very narrow space in time from the training programs to the deployment schedules that drove them. That meant that some things got short shrift. And a lot of times it was this piece, even though Marines understood that it was important to them. In a training schedule, it’s got 150 days of training crammed into 100. What gets cut? And sometimes I was a little bit taken aback by it. Got it. You know, you have to be able to move, shoot, and communicate, do all those things that Marine units do. But sometimes the thing that got cut was this very thing that would allow them to understand what they were seeing.

That’s one of the reasons why we wanted to incorporate some of this training into Combat Hunter, which was happening at the [School of Infantry] SOI. So, we controlled that at TECOM and those Marines coming out of that training would have at least some common baseline understanding. And again, that way those Marines utilizing the training programs and the training information that we would provide through CAOCL, a lot of them would do that training on their own. So, again, there’s always that balancing act. We know we need more and better, but we get constrained by time.

Fosher: There was, for what it’s worth, very good partnering between

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17 SOI has East and West Coast locations. The school provides classroom, hands-on, and live-fire training to develop combat skills. The school has programs for both infantry and noninfantry Marines that differ in content and duration.

18 From 2006 to 2020, CAOCL was the Marine Corps’ center for training, education, institutionalization, and other support related to the learning domains of language, regional knowledge, and cultural knowledge.
Combat Hunter and CAOCL on the culture-general front. We consulted on some of the material they created on observation skills. And later, we incorporated some of their material into the culture-general content. That’s the bulk of the content that we’re leaving behind that I think will have real staying power, because it won’t change as frequently as the culture specific material.

And again, this is that notion of why cultural understanding is important. There is never enough time during the predeployment training phase to accomplish everything the unit/Marines need to do. Could we determine what “culture 101” training could be “off-loaded” back to the schoolhouses so that the units could focus on that language/culture training particular to their mission and their deployment geolocation? Because whether you go into Iraq or Afghanistan or to the southern Pacific or Africa or South America—wherever you’re deploying. Having that basic understanding from prior education helps, even if it’s just that there’s a requirement to know the people and the culture you’re going to be embedded in, whether it’s with allies or adversaries. If that understanding is already there, then you can go get the specific information whether in predeployment training or during deployment.

So, making that part of preparation for battle, preparation for deployment sets us up to be more successful in future endeavors. Getting the specific information is relatively simple. There are plenty of experts out there that can help you with that.

Fosher: You covered some of this previously, but I want to get at it a little bit more specifically. What problems could the loss of the cultural capability present for the Marine Corps or DOD going forward,

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19 Culture-general refers to an element of culture learning focused on concepts and skills that can be employed in many different places. It complements culture-specific knowledge, which is focused on the details of one particular group or area.
particularly given the way that the security environment is being cast right now?

Well, it’s interesting. The current *Commandant’s Planning Guidance*—I’m a fan.20 I think we have needed to kind of change our approach for a while now. We do have a rising near peer competitor. Still, the chances of combat in the South China Sea are pretty small, particularly combat that would require hundreds, if not thousands, of Marines. Just like the chance for combat on the Korean Peninsula is likely pretty small, but still there. So obviously, you have to prepare for the most dangerous outcome. But the most likely outcome is small wars and it remains small wars. Whether those are our particular and peculiar to places where we still have Marines deployed like Iraq and Afghanistan and Syria and the Horn of Africa and other places—those things aren’t going away.

And this capability promotes success in those environments, which are still with us. And as I said, we’ve got Marines deployed in combat today all around the world. They’re not fighting the Chinese. They’re fighting small wars among the people where this sort of information and this training is going to be vitally important. And again, history tells us that we’d like to forget these lessons as soon as soon as we’re done with the fight. We saw that in Vietnam. We saw it after the ’30s. So, I think there’s risk. I think there’s risk that comes with not keeping this particular tool ready to employ.

*Fosher:* You mentioned that even junior Marines kind of could fairly easily wrap their heads around this early on. And that tracks with my experience, too, with teaching culture-general. I was frequently just giving people words for things that they already knew. They just didn’t have a basket to put it in. What are a couple of other things that went right?

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I talked about the relationships with the other Services and with OSD—the folks that were working in this particular part of the training fight, if you will. It was a pretty synergistic group, the ability to exchange ideas freely to talk about, “Hey, here’s my problem. What’s your problem? How did you solve it?” There was a lot of crosstalk.

We hosted conferences and meetings where everybody was invited and everybody got their say. I thought the synergy was really good. We were getting a lot of support, for instance, from [Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness] USD (P&R), particularly on the readiness front.\textsuperscript{21} We were getting a lot of support from some of the leading lights the General [Robert H.] Scales, General Matisse of the world on how important this piece was. And I thought the synergy was pretty good, particularly when we were getting this thing up and running over the first couple of years—the 2004 to 2006 time frame when this thing really took off. That was really good news—the ability to share the information and to take the best of the lessons learned and apply them. Then there was some pretty good resourcing being put against this. The combat villages that were being built, the FOBs and everything else that we did in places like Twentynine Palms [east of Los Angeles], Fort Irwin [northeast of Los Angeles], at the training base in Indiana, down at Fort Polk [Louisiana], there were some good resources being put into setting the physical space so that it would support the training programs.

And then we were providing some of the cognitive tools so that Marines and soldiers in particular would get that proper predeployment training to make them more successful when they went forward. So, there was a lot of good synergy there. And, of course, there were a lot of resources available to put against it. I think we all knew early on that that resourcing

\textsuperscript{21} In this context, USD (P&R) refers to the office in OSD rather than the individual. P&R covers a very large range of functions including education and training as well as readiness.
capability wouldn’t last forever, but we were able to get a lot of stuff done very quickly.

Of course, a lot of those training capabilities still exist. We still have the largest urban training space in the world out at Twentynine Palms.\(^{22}\) And we use it for a lot of stuff. We use it for high-end training. We use it for predeployment training still for the units going to Iraq and Afghanistan, maybe at a smaller level. And again, it’s provided us some pretty good capability. So, the willingness of everybody to play well together and then share ideas. I thought it was really pretty good.

Fosher: The last part of my chapter is about that same issue from the scientific side during that period of time when most people put aside their egos and just got on with it.

Well, so that’s another interesting piece. The people who have this information in many cases weren’t people who would normally associate their particular capability and their particular skill set with supporting the military, with being engaged in a military training program. In fact, it’s not what they did at all. We got quite a bit of support. Some people would say, “No, we don’t want to help you out.” But there were plenty of people who said, “Yes, we understand you have a deficit. We see how we can help. And we’re going to and we’re willing to do that.” So, there was enough support where subject matter experts from both inside and outside the government, to include from academia, said, “Yes, I’m willing to support. I see how my skill set can help.” And I think we were well served in that arena. There were unique and new “partnerships” that had to be developed between the military, academia, and certain segments of the U.S. population that were, in some cases, not “usual.” Social scientists working with the military and foreign-born U.S. citizens to support filling warfighting training gaps? Not

\(^{22}\) This reference is to the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command at Twentynine Palms rather than to the town.
the usual cast of characters, and pretty unique in many ways.

Regardless of what’s going on today or not, the fact of the matter is that America has somebody from everywhere and those folks from everywhere that we tapped into, particularly from the Middle East or Afghanistan, they showed up and they applied their expertise, having grown up in the environment, to help us get this training right.

And I found that to be pretty, pretty humbling that folks from all over the world, when we asked them, said, “Yes, you know, this is our adopted country. We understand we have a skill set that might help you.” And of course, concomitantly they were helping the folks that they left back in, in particular Iraq and Afghanistan. So that sort of support was very vital. And I thought it was pretty humbling that these folks would show up. Now, we had some turn us down, but we had enough folks step up that it made it, I thought, a pretty good training program.

Fosher: Okay, last question for me, although you’re welcome to go on with anything else you’re interested in. What recommendations would you make to the people who in 5 years or 10 years or 15 years have to build this capability again?

So, we’re probably better at this than we used to be. My assumption is, not having been part of this for years, is that we have created the record. That the training programs are stashed somewhere. That we have some sort of warm base to start from and that we’re not going to have to go search for training programs, supporting programs, constructs, if you will, from training like we did when we first started this. That we have created that record, that it exists somewhere, hopefully at the university and within TECOM, so that the next time we have to start something like this up, we don’t start from nothing.

We didn’t start from nothing. In 2004, we had the Small Wars Manual. We had a lot of things that we started dredging
them up from training programs in Vietnam. We had people we could go to and say, “Do you remember going through your language and cultural training program before you deployed as an advisor to the Vietnamese Marines?” We had those people around and we could tap them, say, oh yeah, this is how that training program looked.

We went and we found curriculum. The cultural and language part of the curriculum was going to be different. But the construct was useful. “You need to know this. You need to know this. You need to know this. These are some training opportunities and programs you should deploy.” And so, at least we had something, but it took quite a bit of time to pull that information together. So, going forward, we need to establish that warm base.

We need to know where the information is. We need to be able to pull that up and again, maybe take the curricular construct and then apply the new information against it and be able to roll out a training program much more quickly than we were able to do then. Although, we turned product pretty fast back then.

We know that requirements are going to shift over time as long as we take the lessons and put them somewhere that they’re available. Again, knowing that next time this happens, wherever it is we go, that we’re going to have to put together very similar training programs.

We have to know: How did we do it last time? And again, if we’re better at that than we were out of Vietnam or even out of the small wars of the ’20s and ’30s, then we’ll be able to ramp up much more quickly. The other thing is, we were very lucky that we had General Mattis to press us along. He kind of had already figured this out. He knew what the requirement was.

And he was very, very articulate in laying out his vision. He didn’t tell us how to do it, but he said, here’s what the state needs to be in. And he was very good at that. And he gave us quite a bit of time early on. “Okay, General, here’s
what we thought you said. Here’s what we’ve learned. What do you think?” And he would actually give us some broader guidance and kind of kept us on track. And the entire time he was at CD&I, when he was the deputy commandant there, he gave us a lot of his time and effort, which I very much appreciated. That helped keep us on track.

So hopefully next time this happens, we will be able to find the materials from this time and draw on Marines with relevant experiences. It’s interesting that 10 years ago, we were nearly 85 percent combat vets. Now, even today and in the year 2020, the number of combat vets is going down pretty fast. Almost every general officer over the last couple of years has combat experience. But it’s really instructive how few of the current battalion commanders have any combat experience other than as platoon commanders, perhaps as company commanders. And so that goes away very fast.

The senior leaders that have lived this dream and were company commanders and maybe even battalion commanders who are now general officers, they’re going to have to be the ones who, hopefully, recognize that this sort of capability that we’ve got to have, if nothing else, on the warm base, ready to heat back up if we need it.

You don’t find visionaries like General Mattis everywhere. But there should be enough around who have this experience, who can help drive this thing. Because it’s going to happen again. We all know that. It’s just what’s the cycle? What’s the time cycle?

It was an interesting time. You know, I only formally did that job for two years, although I spent almost the last probably near year I was on active duty doing it while I was chief of staff. Why me? I sat there with General Jones and heard General Mattis talk about this. And so once General Mattis left, the CG, Tom Jones turned to me and said, “Okay, who ought to be doing this?” And we talked about that for a bit. And I said, “I’m going to have to do it because I, as chief of staff, could put my hands on all the levers.” And so that became
my part-time job. And then it became a full-time job when I retired. That’s how it came to me.

It was interesting that at that point, as we looked across everything else that was going on in TECOM, you know, could the G3 [operations and plans] do it? Should we give it to the Marine Corps University? Where would it live? And because we needed to touch training—entry-level through PME all the way to unit training out of Twentynine Palms, predeployment training—he said, “Well, you’re the only one who can put his hands on all those levers.” So that’s how it got to me as chief of staff, not that it would normally have been the chief of staff’s role to do it. So, then I transitioned right into the job, which is interesting as well.

Fosher: When I was looking over that older transcript [from CAOCL’s Oral History Project], I didn’t realize that you didn’t have much of a pause at all between.23

No, I retired on Friday and I went to work on Monday. So how did that happen? We put together the initial construct of what the center should look like. We initially started with two GS15s—one to be the director, one to be the deputy director, sort of subject matter experts—because we saw you’re going to have to have somebody in charge and running the thing, running the business and somebody who really knows it.24 When we were having that particular conversation going back to General Mattis saying, “Okay, this is what we’re going to do, this was going to stand up, that’s how much it’s going

23 Kristin Post, “Interview with Jeffery Bearor,” Translational Research Group: Center for Advanced Operational Culture Oral History Project, 6 March 2013. Note: interview transcripts from this project, along with other Translational Research Group and CAOCL materials have been archived with the Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.
24 This refers to level 15 of the general schedule (GS) pay plan for federal civilian employees. GS15 is the highest level in the plan. The next highest level in civil service is within the Senior Executive Service.
to cost. This is the initial lay down. Do you think we missed anything?” And, I remember him saying, “Well, who’s going to be in charge?” We said, “Well, we’ll hire somebody.” And he said, “No, you’re going to be in charge.”

That was a pretty quick two years as well, because at the same time that we were getting CAOCL up and running, toward the end of the first year, we were talking about the Small Wars Center.25 How does that work and how are we going to take the other lessons learned, not just the cultural training lessons, and how are we going to roll those in? And so, I spent the second year putting together a small wars center as well, which then got transitioned over to MCCDC. So, it was a pretty quick two years and then I was out there out the door.

Interview with George Dallas,
Director of CAOCL from 2008
until Its Closure in 2020
Conducted by Lauren Mackenzie on 20 August 2020

Mackenzie: Can you begin by describing how you got involved in culture efforts in the DOD?

Well, I just think through positions and beliefs. You know, probably as an early field grade officer, you begin to realize the importance of relationships of people and, of course, understanding culture is the foundation of understanding people and understanding relationships and cultivating relationships. So, I think, as a field grade officer, you begin to get exposed to these things. You begin to observe and see how important it is to do in order to get things done.

The relationships that you establish now will pay dividends well into the future. And you see the requirement to establish those relationships, which is really an understanding of

25 Small Wars Center refers to the Small Wars Center and Irregular Warfare Integration Division that is part of CD&I under MCCDC.
the people. And so, I got to see that. I got to see that firsthand again through my assignments, the responsibilities of those assignments. So, it became very clear fairly early on, kind of midcareer level, the importance of it.

So, I’ve always had that interest. I’ve had many failures at it. And many times, you kick yourself in the pants. If you’d only known, if you’d only taken the time to understand, you would have been that much more effective as well as much more efficient. So, through my various assignments, through failures, disappointments, and I had some successes as well. I was able to learn and understand the importance of all this.

And then that, of course, generated my interest in it. The other thing is for me, at least, I got to play in many, many different cultures on every continent. So, I really had a good understanding of the variance between cultures and how somebody can look at something and see something completely different than I am. You talk to those general culture skills, but nobody ever called them that.

But you see it. So, that’s how I grew to understand the importance of culture. And then I had an opportunity, as I was getting ready to leave active duty, to look within the Marine Corps, within government. I had obviously many opportunities outside of government in the business world because I had a fairly good Rolodex, as they say. But none of the jobs that corporate America was offering... I mean, they all had challenges and they all had various points of interest, but none of them were involved with people as much as the CAOCL job was.

And I like people and I like dealing with people, despite the frustrations of it. It’s also incredibly rewarding. So, that’s what drove me to accept the CAOCL job when they offered it.

Mackenzie: Can you say a little bit about the beginning days of you taking on the position at CAOCL? Any particular challenges that stand out to you?
Frankly, when I got to CAOCL, it wasn’t really in great shape. There had been a lot of infighting. It had essentially been leaderless for more than a year. It was a relatively new organization, so it had all of the relatively new organization problems, organization-wide focus, mission priorities. And so, it was pretty, I’ll say, aimless in its direction, and the early challenges were just to get your hands around it—kind of established lanes, priorities and those kind of things, just basic organizational skills and less content and material solutions. So, I spent most of my time initially just building the box in which CAOCL would operate.

Mackenzie: So, what kind of knowledge do you feel you needed to develop as you progressed in your position as director of CAOCL?

Well, again, because of previous assignments, I had a pretty good grasp on the business side of things. I knew how to run an organization. I knew how to set priorities. I knew the budget.

Probably the weakest area that I had from a business perspective was the understanding of contracts and the dos and don’ts of contracting. There are legal ramifications to that, so where we may have tended to be a little more seat of the pants, as you did things in the military, we had to be more careful. And so that was probably a weaker spot that I had. And we were primarily a contractor-supported organization, probably at the time, 70 percent, maybe 80 percent of the people that worked at CAOCL were contractors. So, from a business perspective, it was understanding contracting from a substantive perspective.

I had a lot of practical experience. I had a fairly good understanding of the dos and don’ts of many, many different cultures because of my immersion throughout my career within those cultures. But that was primarily superficial stuff. So, from a substantive position, I needed to understand, I would say the academic side of it. You know, the Marines tend to be
very pragmatic and so understanding the academic underpinnings of the culture was important. Training and the concepts of training—I did that my whole career, not hard education and the knowledge of the differences between training and education was probably a little trickier to get your hands around.\textsuperscript{26}

But so, I would say the academic underpinnings—understanding in terms of the concepts and things like that—of what you’ve learned from a practical application side of the house, those I think were probably the biggest things for us to learn. And we didn’t have, I mean, we had a lot of great trainers and training is very natural for Marines. But the educational aspects were a lot harder for us to grasp.

\textit{Mackenzie: What are you most proud of in terms of what you were able to accomplish as director?}

Well, I’d say without trying to come across as too proud, I think our program, the Marine Corps program over the years became kind of the DOD flagship. We were the ones that were on the leading edge. We were the ones that were codifying the concepts, integrating them into actionable programs, whether they’re training or education. We were the ones that were pushing the envelope beyond your basic PowerPoint or your basic understanding. I think the thing is we were always trying to do better, always trying to grow, always reaching for higher standards. And I think we did that the best, even though all four Services had their own programs and all four Services developed their programs to meet their Service requirements and all four programs were different.

There were still a lot of areas that overlapped. And I’d like to think that we were kind of the go-to guys. I think we tended

\textsuperscript{26} For an explanation of how education and training were perceived in the DOD culture community, see Appendix: Common Culture Program Lines of Effort.
to be the ones that led. So, that was something I’m very proud of. You know, if there are any publications out there within the DOD community, we were the ones that published. So, with the exception, I think, of the Air Force—they had culture guides and we had culture guides—we had culture-general books and we had organizational underpinnings that people used, and people still reference today.

I think one of our early successes, to go back a little bit, one of the things we were doing when I took over was quickly realize that we were just kind of afloat. We were just out there, and we were responding and reacting to any kind of stimulus. And so right or wrong, we made a decision to go with Paula Holmes-Eber and Barak Salmoni’s book about the five dimensions.27 And what that did was it gave us an anchor point, a point from which we could shift from and maneuver from.

Instead of being all over the map and bouncing back and forth and not having any real direction, this framework put a spot on the ground and we could shift using our tools, and we would shift onto the target that we needed to fight. I think at the time, we were chasing the bullseye, and this gave us a point to shoot at so that I think that was an early success.

That may not have been 100 percent right, but it wasn’t 100 percent wrong. And so, it allowed us to develop more focused and better programs because we had a starting point. So that goes back to maybe a previous question about our successes. I think in the end, we had a very holistic program that covered training, covered education, covered research. It covered all that, covered the waterfront.

And it not just covered them, but it covered them in detail, and it covered them in reasonable, responsible, and relevant

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27 Barak A. Salmoni and Paula Holmes-Eber, *Operational Culture for the Warrior: Principles and Applications* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2008), 24–28. A revised edition of this title was published in 2011. This book contains the “five dimensions of operational culture” framework that was used to organize CAOCL’s training and education materials for most of the years it existed.
programs. If it was training programs, if it was educational programs, or if it was the research conducted by the [Translation- al Research Group] TRG team, it was a success. I would go as far as [saying] no other organization in the Marine Corps, probably even in DOD, had an organization like the Transla- tional Research Group, and that was the group of social and behavioral scientists that were able to look deeper at questions for us to really get to that rigorous academic depth, as well as provide research to broader questions for the Marine Corps. And that organization, you know, belonged to CAOCL.

I think it brought a very unique dimension to our culture center that the other centers weren’t able to replicate. So, I think we had a lot to be proud of. And of course, I’m probably most proud of the people. We had great and we have great people and it didn’t matter if they were government or con- tractor. They cared. And they wanted to do right by Marines, which is our purpose, our purpose is to serve Marines, serve Marines in this broader cultural area.

And they cared. The people that we had enjoyed work- ing with at CAOCL and even the guys in uniform who came grudgingly, saying “What the heck’s CAOCL?” “Why am I here?” At the end of the day, they saw the value and they enjoyed working in the cultural arena. And because they saw the value, they sold that understanding. We had people who understood culture was not just a necessity at the time, but it was a way for Marines to achieve their mission, whatever it is, if it was “bang, bang, shoot them up” or if it was more of a security cooperation thing, it helped Marines to more effec- tively, more efficiently accomplish their mission. And I would

28 TRG was part of CAOCL from 2010 to 2020. It was a group of social scien- tists who supported CAOCL’s concept and curriculum development, ran its assessment platform, and conducted research on problem sets relevant to oth- er Marine Corps organizations. See Kerry B. Fosher, “Implementing a Social Science Capability in a Marine Corps Organization,” Journal of Business An- thropology 7, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 133–52, https://doi.org/10.22439/jba.v7i1.5495.
say, though there’s no hard evidence, there’s no number out there, that we did save lives. I believe we saved Marine lives. And I believe we saved the lives of people in the battlespace. So yeah, I think there’s a lot to be proud of. A tremendous amount to be proud of.

_Mackenzie:_ Thank you for that story. Maybe now you could transition to something that you’re a little bit less proud of. Can you talk about any mistakes that you made?

Oh! Every day!

_Mackenzie:_ Well, maybe early on, they could serve as cautionary tales for others in the future?

Yeah, a ton of mistakes. Yeah, I mean, I think we can look at a lot of different things. So, from 2008 to about 2012, I would say the whole culture community, but we specifically at CAOCL, really enjoyed the support of the Services and of the Marines. It was visceral to them. They understood it, the importance of culture.

So as [Operation Enduring Freedom] OEF and [Operation Iraqi Freedom] OIF began to diminish, we had problems.29 Frankly, from 2012 on, a whole bunch of my life was about keeping culture alive within the Marine Corps. I mean, we were a target from 2012 on—cut us, eliminate us, whatever. So that was the environment that I was dealing in, principally a defensive fight. Because of that defensive fight, I think we missed some opportunities because I was trying to save us for next year instead of perhaps looking deeper and moving faster to deeper targets. But I was concerned that if we didn’t

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29 OEF and OIF were the two major combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq at the time being discussed.
attack the immediate target, we wouldn’t be there to attack the deeper targets as they came closer. So, as I look at it, the fact that we were put on the defensive very early on caused us to not be as quick as we should or could have been on some of the deeper targets.

RCLF would be an example. You know, we were kind of putzin’ with RCLF for a long, long time. And even with Service buy-in at about the same time. You know, it still took us a long time to get the program up. It took us a long time once it was up to make that program reasonable and rational to the students that were taking it. A lot of issues with regard to assessment and the validity and, of course, concerns about death by PowerPoint.

So, there was the RCLF program, which was and is a great concept and a great program, which is another thing we led the way on. I mean, if you think about that program; it’s incredible. But it took us a long time to really get it to a point to where it is: considered value added and not a pain. And, of course, the more pain you caused, the less likely it was that it would be accepted.

We finally got over that hurdle. But that’s probably an example where we could have moved faster, should have moved faster. I probably should have named the culture center after somebody important, you know, get that name associated to it. That brings a lot of weight. There is no doubt in my mind that if we had named this something like [the] Mattis Center, there’s no way that the Marine Corps would have walked away from it. No chance. They just would not have done that. It would have been worth the few millions of dollars that we get to just keep the name there. So that was a mistake, not so formative in the sense of culture, but a business mistake.

Marines, especially Marines that are on the line units, they just want the answer. Just tell me what I need to know. I’ll focus on my warfighting and I’ll incorporate this. But don’t make me
work for it. That’s the culture-specific information. Here’s your facts. Do it. Execute and so that’s pretty much what they want. So, concepts and the skills, the culture, general concepts and skills, they always kind of ran in the background. And we probably should have moved faster and bringing them to the forefront, especially as OIF and OEF drew down.

I think a lot of that stuff is fairly intuitive, but once you put a name to it, you kind of remember it better. And so, the idea of calling out the culture-general skills and knowledge and those kinds of concepts, I think that was an important opportunity that came out eventually, but probably should have come out sooner than later. So, I think that’s an opportunity missed.

If we could have made RCLF a little easier to use, a little more robust, a little more relevant in terms of technology and the user interfaces and things like that, it would have been better. I think, generally speaking, the content of RCLF is solid, was solid, and it’s only gotten better. Culture-general ran in the background and, while it was there, unless you call it out, it’s harder to see and people don’t necessarily relate it to things.

And so, we probably could have moved forward a little bit in a much more aggressive way on culture-general. The problem with that was Marines on the line. They don’t like concepts. They just want the answer. So, it’s kind of a balancing act. I think we did pretty well in broadening the aperture to include more conceptual material and skills as the environment changed, as direct contact with local populations decreased.

I think we did a good job of trying to capture and integrate the broader applicability of understanding culture. So, I think

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30 CAOCL made a distinction between culture-general concepts and skills, which can be used anywhere, and culture-specific information, the details of the cultural patterns in a particular area or group.
we did a pretty good job there, understanding that my big focus at the time was trying to keep something out there.

I think moving us to [Education Command] EDCOM was an absolute mistake. And I say that for a couple of reasons. We already were somewhat of a bastard child. We were put into EDCOM and we were the absolute bastard child. Without a doubt. Nobody cared at all. I think that was a major mistake when they reorganized the TECOM headquarters. People struggle to value education within the Marine Corps and then you bury us inside education and our capability got lost completely. So, I think that was a mistake that was made by TECOM with very little input from us.

Let’s see what other mistakes that we made. I guess the probably the biggest thing, again, I would go back to is this idea that from 2012 on, everything was a fight. That forced, well, maybe didn’t force me, but I naturally looked closer, brought my horizons in, looked closer than I perhaps should have and didn’t have that longer term vision. But with that said, I still think we were pushing the envelope more than many of the other culture centers.

And I would say that we were not unique in the fact of being undervalued. Everybody was feeling pressure. And as a result, today, there really aren’t many true culture programs left.

Mackenzie: Along those lines, why do you think there’s been a decline in interest in resources, culture programs?

Well, I think we don’t go bang. We don’t explode. Something doesn’t break. And those kinds of programs don’t do well in the military and particularly in places like the Marine Corps. So, we don’t go bang. Our effects are silent. Our effects are

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31 EDCOM and Marine Corps University are, for all intents and purposes, the same thing. CAOCL was part of the headquarters of Training and Education Command until 2012. When the headquarters was reorganized, CAOCL became part of the Marine Corps University.
hidden from view, but believe me, they’re there. We were also kind of a niche thing in the sense that Congress really doesn’t care because we’re not big employers. We’re not running assembly lines. We’re not doing anything on a major scale. We’re decimal dust, not even decimal dust, in the big picture of things. So, we had no real advocate to carry the weight forward. And again, it’s not just the Marine Corps. It was all the Services. And so, frankly, DOD had absolutely no clue.

I would say the fact that the DOD culture community—or not community—but that organization had really had no idea what it was doing and because it had no idea what it was doing, went immediately to the lowest tactical level, which was to create things. You had four cultural centers working at the tactical level, trying to create things. So, from a community perspective, the fact is that we had no headlights out there. DOD, the Joint staff, those higher headquarters elements were all focused down instead of out, and they were giving us no direction, no guidance, no top cover.

And so, each of the four Services just ran their own little programs. We just lacked advocacy. Again, if we had named it the Mattis Center, we may not have had a substance advocate, but we would have had a name advocate. And no one would walk away from that. The name matters. So, the fact was that we just had zero advocacy.

And when the grassroots advocacy went away because Marines weren’t using it every day, didn’t see its impact because they were no longer engaged, it just kind of died. And I think it died a slow death, just like the Army’s program.

Mackenzie: Just two more questions. What problems could the loss of DOD culture programs cause for military personnel, in your opinion?

32 The reference here is to the DOD-level culture organization—the Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO)—rather than to the broad community of people involved in culture programs across DOD.
Well, this is what we found after every war—we just recreate it again one more time. We pulled the lessons learned from Vietnam and, whammo, they’re all the same ones and we’ll do that again next time because we don’t have the foresight, because it doesn’t go bang. Because it’s hard to make a direct connection from understanding culture to impact. And so, people say, “Oh, we can accept risk here.”

Well, you can to a degree. But what happened in ’03, in ’04, in ’05, we were so focused on the kinetic and we opened a can of whoop ’em, but then we started to lose because all of a sudden impact in Baghdad didn’t matter. It was the people that mattered, and we were not prepared. And so, then we scrambled, and we came up with all these great ideas and they were good ideas, but they’re good ideas in extreme situations are very ineffective, very inefficient, and in many cases just bad. And so, we’ll run that risk again. And we’ll try to muscle through it. The shame will be the loss of people, the loss of equipment, the loss of ground that occurs from when the next war starts to the point we realize that we’re losing because the people play an important role. It isn’t like World War II, where the people didn’t matter so much. The people will always matter now. Civilians will have a large say in what goes on in the battlespace. And so, while this cycle seems to be the routine, the consequences are just going to be worse.

Mackenzie: And then finally, thank you for that, what recommendations would you make to the people who have to start up culture programs next time?

Name it after somebody famous!

You know, this is really hard to do. And if you’re like America,

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33 Here, the term take risk refers to supporting establishment and headquarters decisions to accept risk of capability loss by cutting programs, personnel, or other resources.
when you’re under pressure, we just throw money at it. And frankly, we threw a lot of money at it. We had budgets early on up until about 2014, maybe ’15, that were in $20 millions of dollars. But that was because we were doing a lot of hip pocket stuff. For example, somebody wanted a language program, so we’d go spend $3 million on Rosetta Stone in a year only to find out that, less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the people that signed up for Rosetta Stone ever completed it. But we had a language program. And so, someone can stand in front of Congress or in front of somebody with lots of stars and say, “Look, we got a language program,” without ever noting that it was completely ineffective and a complete waste of time and money. But we had it, and that’s all it seems to matter.34

So, one of the things I would say—and this will be hard to do—is to have a deliberate approach to think through what’s possible. We had so many Monday morning quarterbacks coming from higher headquarters that gave you a solution in search of a problem.35 We were the tail that was always wagging the dog early on.

Now, again, those kinds of activities are a natural occurrence in crisis environments. And so, it would be nice if our senior leaders could see this stuff coming. They get indications and warnings of attack when those indications and warnings are starting to appear. That’s when we should be taking the

35 Here, “solution in search of a problem” refers to the fact that, in the early years of the culture program, many individuals and companies were seeking to align themselves with culture efforts, or more specifically, the money that was flowing to those efforts. During that period, CAOCL often was asked to consider adopting a “solution” that did not seem to help solve any of its problems.
programs out of the archives and making them happen.\textsuperscript{36} Actually, we should never archive them. But if they’re going to be there, we need to not wait to dust them off until people are dying or we’re getting mission loss because we are failing in understanding the people in the environment.

And so, a more thoughtful and deliberate approach and one that is less reactive, one that is perhaps designed by the experts and not by the generals sitting around the table with a bunch of good ideas or Congress or something like that. So, I guess what I would encourage people to do is to act early. If you see something coming, start designing it. And one of the favorite comments from some people was, “Oh, we’ll just break glass and pull the [subject matter experts] SMEs out.”\textsuperscript{37} That isn’t going to work. It hasn’t worked yet. And there are quite a few problems with that approach. But if you are able to begin actions when the indications and warnings start to appear and you have a deliberate approach to things, then I think you can get an effective program that has direction, that is relevant from both an operator’s perspective and from an information perspective, and avoid the hip pocket knee-jerk reactions. I think that would be very helpful.

I think people have to understand that language is really, really hard. And if you want people to understand languages, that has to happen starting in kindergarten. You know,

\textsuperscript{36} The term \textit{archives} as used here refers to the process, common in military organizations, of storing lessons learned about past conflicts. As Jeffery Bearor mentioned in his interview, in the early 2000s, the Marine Corps managed to find some lessons learned and curricula from the Vietnam era to use as it thought about building culture and language programs. In 2020, as CAOCL was closing, George Dallas ensured that CAOCL placed examples of material and lessons learned in COLL/5918 Center for Advanced Operation Cultural Learning, 2005–20, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

\textsuperscript{37} It was common across the Services to refer to all topical and scientific experts as SMEs.
from a more strategic perspective, the programs that support language development and those that have language requirements, those processes have to be more flexible and able to respond to the indications of warnings. This will be not an inaccurate factual statement, but it’s the theme that I’m trying to illustrate. When we went into Afghanistan in 2001, there was like one Pashto speaker and, eight years later, there was one Pashto speaker in the Marine Corps. Again, it’s not the number. It’s the fact that we couldn’t adjust to the demands. And, you know, we need to be able to do that.

At the higher levels, we need to be able to do that. Not an easy thing to do when you think about [Defense Language Institute] DLI and the programming that they need in order to bring on a bunch of Pashto speakers at the last minute.\(^{38}\) But there have to be mechanisms that allow that to occur. And we’ve got to stop the silliness. Because we’re not multilingual like many other cultures are.

And so, languages are really, really hard. I think we’ve got to get past the idea that the answer is a technological solution. The answer is people. And so, I think we need to be bigger than that. But that doesn’t necessarily sell well, because the big companies prefer to offer you a technological solution and they convince their congressmen and senators or some general that it’s the right answer.

But, you know, often these decision makers are just not going to know, and they trust. Understanding people, understanding culture is a very, very difficult subject, and it takes time and it isn’t just about not using your left hands or not showing your soles of your feet. It goes much deeper than that. It’s about how they think. If we understand how they think,
then we’re inside their heads. If we’re inside their [observe–orient–decide–act] OODA loop, we win. 39

And so that’s the value of culture.

You also asked about culture clash . . .

I would tell you that one of the biggest things that you have to deal with, if you’re starting a program or if you’re just, you know, maintaining a program is the culture clash that occurs within the organization itself. Our organization had active duty military. It had retired military. It had academics, government, operators, contractors, and subject matter experts that were government civilians or military or contractors. There are a lot of things that go on within that mix that you have to deal with every day. Academics do not see the world the same way the operators see the world. The things that are important to the operator are less important to the academics and vice versa. And so, you have this stew that’s going on every day trying to understand and balance and bring out the best flavors in each one without curbing their motivation and initiative and drive.

This internal culture clash is a real issue to contend with. It is real. Certainly, I found that the issue between an Arab and a Jew less problematic. We never had issues that way. Where we had issues was the mix within. The academics would see it one way or the SMEs would see it one way. The active duty guys would see it one way and none of those three ways were the same. And there’s added value into all of that. It’s just finding the right balance in the right mixture.

Conclusion

The quality and longevity of CAOCL’s contributions to the

Marine Corps (and well beyond) can be attributed to a number of factors, but both directors’ commitment to learning and openness to new ideas set the tone for their staff to experiment with novel approaches to culture training, education, and research. Examples of this kind of growth mindset can be found in several of the themes that emerged from the interviews. Both directors emphasized how people and relationships were at the heart of and the impetus for their culture center’s efforts. Although both knew full well the potential for cultural differences to lead to conflict and misunderstanding, they chose to focus on the benefits of culture training, research, and education for those producing, delivering, and receiving the content. Further, rather than frame the challenges—particularly those associated with the friction from civilian academics, active duty Marines, and contractors working together—as an either/or, win/lose proposition, they viewed the cultural differences as both problems and opportunities to learn from those problems. They both sought to bring their staff together to use what was happening internally at CAOCL to think through the kind of resistance that culture training and education inevitably faced. The effort to continuously balance training and education, distance and in-residence instruction, and academic content with military relevance required sustained attention to professional growth. This was something both directors not only demanded of their staff but also of themselves. They adapted during the years on a number of levels in response to internal assessments and a variety of external forces. Their goal always was to ensure the quality of the culture content their staff provided to Marines was something to be proud of. The sheer quantity and quality of artifacts that can be found in the CAOCL Archive at Marine Corps University is evidence of that.

Like many good stories, talk about ending CAOCL often brought its directors back to memories of its beginning, with the words of General Mattis’s wisdom echoing in their ears. George Dallas contemplated the possibilities for CAOCL if it
had originally been named the Mattis Culture Center. “The name matters,” he said. Although there have been many names that have mattered to CAOCL over the years, none did more to get it off the ground and keep it alive than Jeffery Bearor and George Dallas. This book, in general, and this chapter, in particular, is an attempt to remind us of the importance of dedicated individuals, working in coordination from a range of different vantage points, to achieving complex goals like building and sustaining cultural capabilities.
The chapters in this volume cover more than 15 years of insights from individuals in a variety of roles and different organizations across the U.S. military Services. Chapters ranged across a wide spectrum of the work and perspectives necessary to implement and sustain culture programs. The book began with Ben Connable’s observations of the need for cultural capabilities in wartime Iraq and his subsequent work in the supporting establishment. It then moved into chapters by Lauren Mackenzie, Susan Steen, and Angelle Khachadoorian, which focused on the challenges and opportunities associated with teaching culture courses in the professional military education context. The chapters by Anna Simons and Brian Selmeski formed a bridge between teaching and programmatic concerns, showing how both of those considerations played out in the development of culture-related programs. Allison Abbe and Kerry Fosher’s chapters completed the transition by focusing on the programmatic aspects of the work necessary to launch efforts and keep them running. The book closed with reflections from leaders of one culture center, Jeffery Bearor, who launched the Marine Corps’ center, and George Dallas, who ran it for most of its existence until it was shut down.
Despite the scope covered in the book, some themes do emerge. Several chapters highlight the difficulty of balancing traditional academic work, teaching, research, and maintaining one’s expertise, with the weight of administrative work necessary to set the conditions for programs to succeed. In conversations, many of the authors expressed concern that they had not struck this balance appropriately. They felt they had either focused so much on academic work that they did not fully understand the bureaucratic gears and levers that controlled their context or, conversely, that they had spent so much time focused on programmatic issues that their time with students was minimal and their own scholarly expertise grew stale.

Several chapters also highlight the importance of balancing short-term wins with progress toward long-term goals. The Department of Defense (DOD) as a whole tends to be an impatient institution, often seeking tangible signs of success long before projects or programs are truly mature enough to be assessed. Reflecting back on the last 15 years, this was an area of weakness for many culture programs, especially given DOD’s preference for quantified measures of progress and success.

Whether explicitly or not, all chapters speak to the importance of those newly arrived in the DOD taking time to build awareness of their context. For some of the authors, that meant taking time to learn about military students and translating material to be more accessible and relevant for them. As several authors noted throughout the book, this often takes more time than anticipated and there is no easy checklist to follow. For others, it meant learning about the existing discourses and processes of an organization and working with them or around them to get things done. All of the authors, at some point in their careers, also had to adjust to a context in which preexisting notions of culture as the “squishy stuff” conflicted with the martial orientation of students and leaders, where attitudes toward expertise vacillated unpredictably between blind acceptance and dismissiveness, and where there
were strong preferences toward certain kinds of solutions that rarely included long-term institutional change.

Despite a sometimes-challenging context, the fact that all the authors in this book have persisted in their efforts to work with the military in some form also suggests that the work is worthwhile. Each of the authors has their own reasons for staying. Some hoped to create lasting change in organizations, others were captivated by the interactions with students and colleagues. Some even combined these two by, as a colleague once said of Anna Simons’s work, changing the military one major at a time.

Throughout this volume, we hope readers also noted the importance of collegial relationships. The personal and professional connections between the authors were developed over many years, across different roles and organizations, and through many debates and arguments. They have been one of the more rewarding aspects of working within DOD culture programs and were instrumental to how we got things done. Building consensus allowed us to present a united front across Services, build on, rather than reinvent approaches and content, and work on issues from our different standpoints. The ability of people to build effective working relationships despite differences, competition for increasingly scarce resources, and the constant deluge of work to be done is one of the greatest strengths of culture programs in this cycle and a lesson we hope can be of use to those who come after us. It is worth the time it takes to build and maintain these connections.

The book was developed during a period when culture programs were in decline. The boom-and-bust cycle of the U.S. military’s interest in culture had played itself out again. Yet, the writing in these chapters suggests there is some reason to be optimistic that the capability will not disappear quite so completely this time. For example, the Air Force Culture and Language Center is still in operation, if with a somewhat altered scope and mission, and the Naval Postgraduate School and Marine Corps University still employ faculty focused on
culture and intercultural communication. Even as the Marine Corps’ culture center was being shut down, the 2020 Naval Education for Seapower Strategy called for attention to adversary culture—a much reduced scope for the value of culture but still a nod to its continuing salience.¹ Also, as several authors noted, cultural capabilities have been tucked away under other names or in reduced form.

It is possible that the remaining culture programs and capabilities will fall prey to the tendency of the DOD to gradually shift uncomfortable ideas back into business as usual. In this case, that would mean a slow slide back toward the concept of culture being subsumed under the regional expertise and language programs that existed prior to 2004. Even if that happens, this most recent cycle is more heavily and publicly documented than was the case after World War II and the Vietnam War, which should make it easier for people to find places to start rebuilding capability. Nine years ago, in her article devoted to culture-related lessons learned during the Vietnam era, Abbe noted: “By incorporating culture into doctrine and into strategic guidance, the Department of Defense has greatly improved the odds that the cultural training programs implemented in recent years will survive beyond the conflicts that prompted them.”² The chapters throughout this volume have illustrated that “survival” can take on different forms in the DOD, and the best we can do at this critical junction is to build on what we have learned. We encourage other centers and initiatives to follow the example of the Marine Corps’ culture center and create archives of their programs, policies,

and courses.3 Between enduring programs and records, we are hopeful that there will be a sufficiency of pilot lights left on to prevent a cold start the next time the DOD recognizes that it needs a more robust set of cultural capabilities to execute its missions.

3 Shortly before it was closed in 2020, the Marine Corps’ Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning archived many of its guiding policies, reference materials, program descriptions, and some course materials, along with lessons learned in COLL/5918 Center for Advanced Operation Cultural Learning, 2005–20, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.
This appendix provides brief descriptions of types of lines of effort or functions that were commonly found in military culture programs. Some programs may have used different categories. For example, the Marine Corps’ center sometimes used the term deployment support to encompass several of the categories listed below, such as deployed support, reachback, support materials, and training.

**Analysis**: most commonly found in intelligence organizations or units, analysis involves gathering open source and classified information, evaluating sources, synthesizing relevant information, and reporting it in a format appropriate for a particular audience or mission. During the early years of the period covered in this book, several intelligence organizations had branches or offices focused on some form of cultural analysis.

**Cultural advisors** (see deployed support).

**Databases**: in the early years of the most recent upswing in military interest in culture, there was great interest in building databases of cultural knowledge and many initiatives were
funded. These efforts failed to yield useful outcomes as they were based on an outdated concept of culture as a type of static system that could be broken into discrete parts and cataloged.

**Deployed support:** deployed support efforts typically involve sending one or more subject matter experts along with a unit or headquarters to provide in-depth advising to military leaders. In most programs, the subject matter experts were chosen based on a combination of having lived in or had deep experience in the area of interest and familiarity with military missions. In some cases, the expert would embed with a unit or headquarters staff during their predeployment process to become more familiar with the expected mission and the individuals being supported.

**Education:** educational functions are carried out in-person and through distance learning programs, usually, although not always, aligned with military schools and universities. Educational efforts often are contrasted with training efforts. Education focuses on deeper knowledge and/or how to think and training emphasizes the knowledge and skills needed for an upcoming mission or assignment.

**Mapping:** as with databases, military organizations have a great interest in developing maps of different aspects of culture, often seeking to understand the patterns and movements of kinship/political groupings, such as tribes, or patterns associated with religion, resource use, etc. Although visually appealing to military audiences and of some use early in conflicts, mapping approaches struggled to capture salient aspects of culture in operationally useful ways due to the changing nature of culture and variations in individual behavior.

**Modeling and simulation:** many military organizations invest heavily in modeling and simulation. There was an early
expectation that these technologies could help predict human behavior in conflict or disaster zones and potentially reduce the cost of training by creating simulated environments. Models do hold promise in anticipating the range of human behavior, although not for prediction at the current time. Efforts to develop simulations for training typically did not yield usable results because the design emphasized the computational and visual aspects and too little attention was paid to underlying scientific realities of culture and the culture-specific details of the group being simulated.

**Predeployment training** (see training).

**Reachback:** reachback capabilities provide deployed military personnel with the ability to contact subject matter experts and others with specific questions. The reachback staff then conduct any research necessary to answer the question and provide a response in a format and timeframe appropriate to the situation. Culture programs differed in how they approached reachback, with some creating dedicated staffs and others relying on their education and training personnel to create responses.

**Research:** in most cases, the research conducted within culture centers was focused on supporting some other effort, such as curriculum or material development. Therefore, it emphasized either the scientific underpinnings of culture-related content or the culture-specific details of a particular group. The research often was done by the regular staff of the center rather than by a dedicated staff. Some programs also used research to assess the quality and impact of their efforts.

**Simulation** (see modeling and simulation).

**Support materials:** almost all culture centers spent a significant amount of effort producing materials to support learning.
Examples include smart cards, guidebooks, maps, textbooks, videos, and podcasts. Initially, most centers focused on developing products that could be used during deployments as reminders of (or substitutes for) predeployment training. Later, development expanded to include products that supported educational efforts.

**Training:** culture centers had training programs to provide personnel with specific information they would need for an upcoming deployment or assignment. Training was typically delivered in person, although the duration and content varied a great deal. In some cases, a unit would request a one-hour training session as their only preparation for navigating culture. In other cases, a commander might request several days of training, including specialized training for certain segments of the staff. In terms of content, training varied from short, basic regional overviews to in-depth classes on language, culture-specific details, and cross-cultural skills.
# SELECT ACRONYMS AND TERMS

All terms refer to U.S. entities.

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>American Anthropological Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFCLC</td>
<td>Air Force Culture and Language Center</td>
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<td>ARG</td>
<td>Amphibious Ready Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARI</td>
<td>Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARO</td>
<td>Army Research Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIA/BIE</td>
<td>Bureau of Indian Affairs/Education</td>
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<td>CAL</td>
<td>Center for Army Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAOCL</td>
<td>Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Combined Action Program. This was a Vietnam War-era program that combined U.S. Marine Corps and South Vietnamese units for counterinsurgency operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCAF</td>
<td>Community College of the Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD&amp;I</td>
<td>Marine Corps Combat Development and Integration</td>
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CG commanding general
CEAUSSIC AAA’s Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the U.S. Security and Intelligence Communities
CJSOTF Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
Combat Hunter A Marine Corps training program that focuses on developing advanced skills in observation, profiling, tracking, and questioning and also includes material on policing in a combat environment
CNA Refers to the Center for Naval Analyses. The acronym is now used as the name for the broader nonprofit organization that houses the Center for Naval Analyses
COIN counterinsurgency
CRSS Center for Regional and Security Studies at Marine Corps University
culture-general An element of culture learning focused on concepts and skills that can be employed in many different places. It complements culture-specific knowledge, which is focused on the details of one particular group or area
culture-specific An element of culture learning focused on the details of the cultural patterns in a particular area or group. It complements culture-general learning, which focuses on concepts and skills that can be employed in many different places
DLIFLC Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center
DLNSEO Defense Language and National Security Education Office
DOD Department of Defense
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>DODI</td>
<td>Department of Defense Instruction</td>
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<td>EDCOM</td>
<td>Marine Corps Education Command</td>
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<td>ELT</td>
<td>entry-level training</td>
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<td>GWOT</td>
<td>Global War on Terrorism</td>
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<td>HSCB</td>
<td>Human, Social, Cultural, and Behavioral. HSCB was a modeling program in the DOD’s Directorate of Defense Research and Engineering</td>
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<td>HTS</td>
<td>Army Human Terrain System</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTT</td>
<td>Army Human Terrain Team. HTTs were a deployed component of HTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITX</td>
<td>Integrated Training Exercise. In the Marine Corps, an ITX is a live exercise typically run as part of predeployment preparation</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIC</td>
<td>low-intensity conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>LREC</td>
<td>Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture. Despite the “expertise” part of the acronym, LREC was used to refer to the full range of education and training related to language, regional knowledge, culture-specific knowledge, and culture-general concepts and skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCC</td>
<td>military culture center</td>
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<td>MCCDC</td>
<td>Marine Corps Combat Development Command</td>
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<td>MCU</td>
<td>Marine Corps University</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTT</td>
<td>Mobile Training Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOS</td>
<td>military occupational specialty</td>
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<tr>
<td>MURI</td>
<td>Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative. The MURI Program is a multi-Service DOD program that provides funds for science, technology, and engineering research and development within consortia of universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>noncommissioned officer</td>
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NPS  Naval Postgraduate School
OEF/OIF  Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. These were the two major combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq at the time being discussed.
ONA  Office of Net Assessment
OODA Loop  The cycle of “observe–orient–decide–act” developed by U.S. Air Force Colonel John R. Boyd. The term OODA loop is now commonly used in the military and other sectors to refer to the decision cycle.
OSD  Office of the Secretary of Defense
RCLF  Regional Culture and Language Familiarization program. RCLF was the Marine Corps’ career-long, distance learning program for culture and language. It was run by CAOCL until 2020, when it transitioned to the CRSS. As of early 2021, the program has been defunded, but it is expected to continue running until the content becomes outdated.
ReARMM  Army Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model
PME  professional military education
PTP  Predeployment Training Program
PTSD  post-traumatic stress disorder
QEP  Quality Enhancement Plan. A QEP is a component of university accreditation under the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, a regional accrediting body.
RSEP  Regional Security Education Program. RSEP is an NPS program that provides focused seminars on regional and security topics both ashore and onboard ships.
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<tr>
<th>ACRONYM</th>
<th>FULL FORM</th>
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<tr>
<td>SACSCOC</td>
<td>Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. SACSCOC is a civilian body that accredits schools, including PME institutions within its region, to award degrees</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEAL</td>
<td>Navy Sea, Air, and Land team</td>
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<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Special Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>subject matter expert</td>
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<td>SOCOM</td>
<td>Special Operations Command</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOF</td>
<td>Special Operations Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOI</td>
<td>Marine Corps School of Infantry</td>
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<tr>
<td>SO/LIC</td>
<td>Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict. This term can refer to a general category of operations or to the office within OSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOTF</td>
<td>Special Operations Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>TECOM</td>
<td>Marine Corps Training and Education Command</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRADOC</td>
<td>Army Training and Doctrine Command</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRG</td>
<td>Translational Research Group. TRG was part of CAOCL from 2010 to 2020. It was a group of social scientists who supported CAOCL’s concept and curriculum development, ran its assessment platform, and conducted research on problem sets relevant to other Marine Corps organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAF</td>
<td>U.S. Air Force</td>
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<td>USAFA</td>
<td>U.S. Air Force Academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>USD (P&amp;R)</td>
<td>Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness</td>
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<td>USMC</td>
<td>U.S. Marine Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAJFKSWCS</td>
<td>U.S. Army’s John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School</td>
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