

## Operating as an Australian Army Training Advisor – *Big 5*

These lessons were learnt during 1 RAR's recent mentoring efforts with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, yet are not are not constrained to nation/theatre. Rather, they are universal principles (like principles of War). Through numerous observations over months of training, 1 RAR was able to distill their experiences into a '**big five**'. We hope it serves to aid anyone deploying, or deployed to, an advisor mission with foreign forces.

### **Number 1: Invest early in developing Host Nation instructors.**

*"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."*

– Benjamin Franklin

It is very unlikely that Australian instructors will ever connect with the trainees as well as the Host Nation personnel. If the training involves Australian instructors delivering lessons, it is *extremely* beneficial to have a Host Nation instructor assisting. How can this happen? You need to identify the Host Nation instructor candidates before training begins when possible. This way, those identified to support instruction can be involved in rehearsing and preparing for the training. Doing so not only enables the Host Nation to support your lessons as assistants, but also has potential to fully develop them as instructors during your training.

Remember that developing instructors takes time. You must invest *every ounce* of your effort into their development, because they are where true success lies. Consolidate their skills routinely and provide them a 'safety net' to fall into if they fail. Even if you must be forcible about it, give the Host Nation instructors opportunity to instruct *as much as possible*; and watch them flourish with practice.

You should also keep a keen eye out for those with potential to become instructors during your training. Pull them aside and propose to their commanders that they be given additional teaching on being an instructor. If time permits, have them instruct on future courses.

Lastly, remember that working with Host Nation instructors is a partnership. Be conscious of not appearing to be 'over-powering' or intimidating. If the Host Nation is delivering lessons, be careful to not be perceived as 'assessing' their performance. Working with them during rehearsals, and doing so thoroughly, will alleviate this concern.



## **Number 2: It is all about story.**

*“After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world.”* — Philip Pullman

The Host Nation instructors will likely have extensive experience, sometimes operationally and in combat. Use this to support the training! The stories, examples and analogies they can provide are better, more relevant, and easier for the trainees to empathise with than anything Australian instructors could tell. However, the Host Nation instructors may be hesitant to tell their stories when Australians are ‘in-charge’ or delivering the lessons. Get them to do so during your rehearsals! Ask them about how the lessons apply to their experiences. Draw out these stories and then plan to include them in the lesson. This can be as simple as pausing and handing over the lesson to the Host Nation instructor for their anecdote or analogy.



## **Number 3: The Host Nation people can be polite... really polite...**

*“The boldness of his mind was sheathed in a scabbard of politeness.”* Dumas Malone, Jefferson the Virginian

The Host Nation people may be very polite, depending on their culture. You need to be cautious of this because they will let you ‘dominate’ a situation, despite your intentions not to. The result is the Host Nation instructors can be hesitant to do things ‘their way’, or in a method that would be relevant to their military, society, or culture. This means you can accidentally stymie their training. Always encourage them to take ownership of the lessons and the content they are delivering and encourage critical thinking. Always be careful of the suggestions you make, because they may just agree with you out of politeness. Lastly, always encourage them with praise when they use their initiative to modify the training to suit their audience or experience. You can foster incredibly strong relationships with the Host Nation instructors very quickly, and build an incredibly powerful environment of trust and respect, if you pay diligence to these points.

## **Number 4: You need to be vigilant**

*“Never neglect details. When everyone’s mind is dulled or distracted the leader must be doubly vigilant.”* – Colin Powell

The Host Nation military may operate with rigid adherence to its command structure. This is prohibitive to training for several reasons. The first is their leadership can undermine their training quality, if the leadership is not engaged and eager themselves. Should the leader be laissez-faire, uninterested, distant, or vague, then the instructor quality may suffer. The second is that mission command can be limited. Often the Host Nation instructors will have excellent ideas, but they remain quiet about them because of their junior/subordinate status. Rather, they defer to their immediate superior’s decision – often without communicating their ideas. And lastly, if there isn’t strong, motivating, engaged leadership then stuff just simply does not get done.



There will be numerous exceptional non-commissioned officers in the Host Nation military, and there will be some that are not so – just like the ADF. Sadly, institutional culture may mean their



senior leaders can hamstring the potential of those instructors that are subordinate to them. How do you solve this? With constant observation. Australian instructors should encourage any good ideas from junior Host Nation instructors by spending hands-on, quality

time with them during lesson preparation and rehearsals. Remember that the Host Nation military *will have* many exceptionally motivated and talented soldiers and non-commissioned officers. Find them and empower them.

### **Number 5: Accolades can be very important**

*“Being attached to many things, we are weighed down and dragged along with them.”* – Epictetus

You may find the Host Nation military enjoys accolades... a lot! It may also be their only way of recording and proving they have completed your training. The idea of a certificate, award or badge may be a powerful motivator. For example, if the Host Nation instructors know they will get a ‘Instructor Certificate’ at the end of training, they are likely to treat their role more seriously. Be careful though because the award itself can become the goal of the training, and not their skill development. Always keep in mind that, like most material rewards, this can be fickle.

Remember to emphasise that the journey is what is important, not the end. Nobody stands on top of Mt. Everest and enjoys it without knowing the accomplishment was really in the climb. Michael Jordan’s success story isn’t in his accolades, but his hours, and hours, and hours of practice. For 1 RAR, the Bruce Lee analogy – *“I don’t fear the man with one thousand kicks; I fear the man who has practiced the same kick one thousand times”* worked well to help understand this concept. Like most of us, they also enjoy competition in a safe and friendly environment.

