

# Military Strategy Dept. introduces Building Partner Capacity elective

*Carol Kerr, Public Affairs Officer*

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*Retired Col. Mike Marra and Air Force Lt. Col. Mike Thode talk about force management after a recent class. Marra brings his experience to the seminar for the Foundations of Building Partner Capacity elective.*

Throughout his Air Force career, retired **Col. Mike Marra** deployed to multiple developing countries and, in turn, developed insights about the nature of those nations planning for a stable future. A new elective, Foundations of Building Partner Capacity, was conceived

with department chair **Col. Tom Reilly** so USAWC students can exercise and execute strategy immediately upon graduation in the regional theaters.

As our Army and military come back from war, BPC is a way to help units remain politically astute and aware around the world, he said. The Army's rotational brigade concept will give our Soldiers knowledge and familiarity within a region.

"BPC allows us to be better partners with other nations. It may start with a military relationship and grow to economic ones. Militaries will learn from each other, e.g., doctrine, methods for training and organizing and equipping a military, and institutional leadership and management processes like budgeting," said Marra.

The course builds on the concept of security force assistance as part of a bigger picture – challenging students to ask key questions: How do we do this in theater? How do we assess whether taxpayers are getting value? How do we anticipate future challenges and second-order effects?

“This is big -- exactly why it should be taught at the war college,” said Marra. “Building Partner Capacity is a good example of something that’s easy to recognize and hard to define. Everything involved in the program makes it more of a Unity of Effort than a Unity of Command across various activities and programs that are seemingly unrelated.

Building Partner Capacity can only work as a whole-of-government effort led by civilians. Security cooperation and security assistance must be done in close cooperation with the State Department and USAID, he said. “Part of the class is to develop the ability to see seams and gaps and how to work with them,” he noted.

In a previous assignment, Marra worked for USEUCOM to prepare to open airfields in nations throughout Europe and Africa. “The mission was either helped or hindered by what went on in the years preceding that operation,” said Marra about deployments to six major combat operations in the Persian Gulf, Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan and Iraq.

“Many of the nations had resources and capacities to do anything, and yet were struggling. Beyond building security capacity – a means to an end – there’s a need to build human capacity so that country can get beyond constantly dealing with regional security and attain the time and space to reach its potential.

“With a small investment we may be able to preclude war. But if we cannot, we are inexorably better prepared for a better outcome.”