



## Army Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs)

### What Is Security Force Assistance (SFA)?

Security Force Assistance (SFA) is defined as “unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority.” By definition “security forces include not only military forces, but also police, border forces, and other paramilitary organizations, as well as other local and regional forces.” SFA involves organizing, training, equipping, rebuilding, and advising foreign security forces (FSF).

Title 10, U.S. Code (USC), Chapter 16, *Security Cooperation*, governs the Department of Defense’s (DOD’s) SFA activities. Each year, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) modifies, eliminates, or creates new SFA authorities and authorizes funding for Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs) to conduct SFA activities.

### Background

In the past, Special Forces units handled the majority of SFA missions, but the growing requirement for SFA over time resulted in conventional forces assuming a more active role in conducting SFA missions. Conventional forces SFA missions were normally assigned to a Brigade Combat Team (BCT), the Army’s principal warfighting organization. Because of the nature of SFA missions, BCT leadership—officers and senior and mid-grade noncommissioned officers (NCOs)—were typically deployed to conduct SFA missions while most junior NCOs and soldiers remained at their home station. This situation, while practical from a resource perspective, created a number of readiness concerns for the nondeployed BCT soldiers remaining at home station, as well as the home station units who were responsible for these junior soldiers while their leadership was deployed on SFA missions. One such concern was with leadership stripped out of the BCTs for SFAB mission, the remaining soldiers were limited to training at individual and squad level only, resulting in a lower level of unit readiness. In addition, non-deploying units who were temporarily assigned the nondeployed soldiers were required to make accommodations for these soldiers, which had residual readiness impacts on hosting units.

### Establishment of SFABs

As originally designed, SFABs are to be capable of conducting SFA from the strategic (such as Ministry of Defense) to tactical (brigade and below) level. In May 2018, the Army announced it would establish six SFABs—five in the Active Component and one in the Army National Guard (ARNG). SFABs were originally intended to consist of about 500 soldiers (*BCTs consist of between 4,400 to 4,700 soldiers depending on type*), primarily in senior grades and encompassing a range of Military Operational

Specialties (MOSs). The Army also planned to establish a Military Advisor Training Academy (MATA) at Fort Moore (formerly Fort Benning), GA, to conduct a six-week course on relevant topics and skills.

The 3-353<sup>rd</sup> Regiment stationed at Fort Johnson (formerly Fort Polk), LA provides customized advisor and advisor team training for regionally aligned forces tasked to conduct or support Security Cooperation and Security Force Assistance operations.

The Army also established a command element—the Security Force Assistance Command (SFAC)—within U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) at Fort Liberty (formerly Ft. Bragg), NC, to conduct training and readiness oversight of the SFABs. The SFAC is commanded by a Major General.

### SFAB Organization

According to the *SFAC Information Book, Volume Seven, 2021*, provided to CRS by the SFAC, SFAC Headquarters consists of 82 soldiers and Department of the Army Civilians. Each SFAB is commanded by either a Colonel or Brigadier General (some Colonels are promoted to Brigadier Generals while serving as SFAB Commanders and remain in command) and is composed of approximately 816 soldiers. SFABs are broken down into 60 multifunctional teams consisting of four to eight soldiers each, with teams categorized as either

- Maneuver Advising Teams;
- Field Artillery Advising Teams;
- Engineer Advising Teams; and
- Logistics Advising Teams.

The SFAC noted that SFAB soldiers are volunteers recruited from other Army units, much in the manner Army Special Forces recruits personnel. Individuals designated for key SFAB leadership and staff positions must have previously successfully commanded or served at the level they are being recruited for. Those recruited for SFAB leadership positions are also subject to a Selection and Assessment evaluation to determine if they are suitable for SFAB service.

### Equipping SFABs

Soldiers in SFABs are issued standard personal equipment (weapons, protective masks, etc.) and a variety of tactical wheeled vehicles armed with crew-served weapons (.50 caliber and 7.62 mm machine guns) for force protection. In addition, SFABs are to have command, control, communications, computer, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities. The SFAC noted the SFAC and the SFABs are incorporated into the Army’s

Modernization program and are modernized in the same manner as BCTs and other Army combat formations.

## SFAB Stationing

According to the Army, SFABs are based at

- 1<sup>st</sup> SFAB—Fort Moore, GA;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> SFAB—Fort Liberty, NC;
- 3<sup>rd</sup> SFAB—Fort Cavazos, (formerly Fort Hood), TX;
- 4<sup>th</sup> SFAB—Fort Carson, CO;
- 5<sup>th</sup> SFAB—Joint Base Lewis–McChord, WA; and
- 54<sup>th</sup> SFAB (Army National Guard)—battalions in Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Texas.

## Current SFAB Mission and Role in Operations

According to the Army and discussions with the SFAC

SFABs are uniquely capable of advancing America’s relationships across the globe. During competition, SFABs build trust, interoperability, and partner capacity. In crisis, SFABs enable the Joint Force and interagency team to quickly respond by enhancing coordination efforts. In conflict, SFABs enhance coordination with partners and can expand to full mission capable brigades.

Presently, SFABs are operating across all Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs). SFABs serve to professionalize security assistance and cooperation missions. As permanent organizations with a standing mission, SFABs focus on the advise, support, liaise, and assess aspects of SFA, which frees up Army Special Forces, BCTs and other conventional units from conducting these operations on an ad-hoc basis.

## SFAB Regional Alignment

According to the Army, SFABs are regionally aligned to GCCs as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> SFAB—U.S. Southern Command;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> SFAB—U.S. Africa Command;
- 3<sup>rd</sup> SFAB—U.S. Central Command;
- 4<sup>th</sup> SFAB—U.S. European Command;
- 5<sup>th</sup> SFAB—U.S. Indo-Pacific Command; and
- 54<sup>th</sup> SFAB (Army National Guard)—globally focused.

## Selected SFAB Activities

According to the 2023 SFAC Factbook, selected activities for 2023 include:

### 1<sup>st</sup> SFAB

1<sup>ST</sup> SFAB teams deployed to Colombia, Honduras, and Panama in 2022. In 2023, 1<sup>st</sup> SFAB plans to maintain a persistent presence in Colombia, Honduras and Panama, while also expanding episodically to Peru, Ecuador, and Uruguay.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> SFAB

The 2<sup>nd</sup> SFAB maintained a periodic presence in up to 15

countries and provided U.S. Africa Command with access and influence to key strategic partners throughout Africa. 2<sup>nd</sup> SFAB teams provided theater security cooperation and support to major exercises like Justified Accord and African Lion, the largest land forces exercise on the African continent. In 2022, the 2<sup>nd</sup> SFAB conducted episodic engagements in Ghana, Zambia, and Botswana.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> SFAB

The 3<sup>rd</sup> SFAB expanded advisor operations in U.S. Central Command from one (Kuwait) to five persistent-partner nations (Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iraq). 3<sup>rd</sup> SFAB advisors also deployed in support of exercises and expert exchanges with additional countries, including Egypt, Oman, Tajikistan, Bahrain, and Israel.

### 4<sup>th</sup> SFAB

Since 2021, the 4<sup>th</sup> SFAB has deployed advisor teams in 19 European nations including Poland, Romania, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Hungary, Georgia, Moldova, Bulgaria, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Albania through a combination of persistent and episodic missions. The 4<sup>th</sup> SFAB also provided support during multinational exercises, including Defender Europe, Allied Spirit, Dynamic Front, and Combined Resolve. Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, advisor teams have enhanced deterrence across Eastern Europe by working with allied forces and NATO Battle Groups.

### 5<sup>th</sup> SFAB

In 2022, the 5<sup>th</sup> SFAB deployed advisors into 12 countries in support of 38 operations and activities. The 5<sup>th</sup> SFAB participated in combined interoperability training with numerous strategic allies and partners in the region to include, Japan, Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Maldives, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea.

### 54<sup>th</sup> SFAB

In 2023, 54<sup>th</sup> SFAB advisors operated in five GCs, with forces in Honduras, Columbia, Kenya, Tunisia, Latvia, Indonesia, and UAE.

## Potential Considerations for Congress

- Are SFABs able to meet current and predicted GCC SFA-related operational demands and are GCCs sufficiently funded to conduct SFA operations?
- Based on previous SFAB deployments and associated lessons learned, what types of modifications have been made to the SFAB’s organization, equipment, and training?

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Andrew Feickert, Specialist in Military Ground Forces

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