Dealing with global interactions:
How do you know the strength of your workforce?

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Conducting global operations

Organizations that work in international settings understand that cultural, regional, and linguistic knowledge and capabilities are important to operational success. This is called Regional Proficiency (RP).
Strategic RP questions

• How do you assess the RP strength of your workforce?
• What is RP as it relates to your situation?
• Can RP be determined without a test; can biographical information be used instead?
• How can biographical information be used to measure RP?
Designing a Regional Proficiency Assessment Tool (RPAT) for DoD

- Client: Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO)
- For the first time, DoD will be able to systematically assess
  - RP across workforce
  - Individual and combined contributions of cultural, regional, and linguistic knowledge and capabilities to RP
How will RPAT benefit DoD?

• Determine existing inventory of workforce RP
  – Meet surge requirements, assess operational readiness

• Highlight workforce RP training, development, staffing needs
  – Focus training, recruitment, resource allocation

• Provide mechanism to track and manage workforce RP
  – Facilitate career development, personnel planning
DoD-specific challenges for RPAT’s development

- What factors count?
- How do factors combine to determine RP?
- Can RP be ranked along a recognizable scale?
- Can individuals with different combinations of factors achieve the same RP level?
What is RPAT?

- Algorithm using relevant personnel data to generate ratings along an accepted scale that assess individual and workforce level RP strength related to a particular country or region.

- DoD: Associate factors derived from personnel data with 6 designated RP skill levels outlined in DoDI 5160.70, Management of DoD Language and RP Capabilities:
  - Pre-Novice (0+), Novice (1), Associate (2), Professional (3), Senior Professional (4), and Expert (5)
Building an RPAT

1. Develop list of mission-relevant RP dimensions, indicators
   - Subject matter expert (SMEs) interviews, guidance documents, personnel databases

2. Quantify algorithm components
   - Cultural models analyses of SME interviews/scientific literature determines initial algorithm component weights, relationships

3. Find population with known proficiency level to anchor algorithm, benchmark weights
   - Fit algorithm to Foreign Area Officer (FAO) data; believed to have level 3 RP
   - Reweight algorithm components until generated RP level matches FAO’s known proficiency level

4. Repeat with new set of data - individuals with range of RP levels, job descriptions
   - Evaluate whether generated distribution of RP ratings matches the expected distribution
Examples of DoD RP dimensions & indicators

• Language proficiency and operational utility
  – DLPT, self-assessment, operational utility ratings

• Civilian education
  – level, degree focus, country/region focus

• Military education and training
  – amount, duration

• Professional and personal experience
  – deployment, travel, residence, history

• Individual characteristics
  – openness to experience, tolerance for ambiguity
RPAT project status

- **Completed**: Preliminary algorithm development with SME/FAO datasets
- **Major task**: Refine preliminary algorithm with dataset from DMDC GPF RP survey
- **Final products** (March 2013):
  - GPF RPAT algorithm
  - Language operational utility database
  - RPAT user-interface program
Value added

• Reliable method/tool to assess the RP of real people doing real jobs of interest

• Can be used to
  – Assess workforce RP inventory and readiness
  – Guide training/education to build workforce with knowledge and capabilities critical to international engagements

• Method applicable to any organization that needs to operate successfully in a multicultural environment
Thank you

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