

## **Regional Knowledge Certification Program (RKCP)**

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### **The Combined Foreign Knowledge Capability (CFKC)**

Within the wide spectrum of The Global War on Terror our forces must be able to project not only a supreme military power, but also the ability to work and collaborate with military forces and civilian communities from different countries without culture and regional misunderstanding. We must create a force continuum to enable our operators to adapt to the dynamic environment of our new battle ground by learning and appreciating the idiosyncrasies of tribal communities and societal complexities of other cultures. We must develop the necessary knowledge and experience to build on the success of our past in dealing with other cultures by learning not only their military tactics, but also how to adapt and immerse ourselves into the foreign environment in which we are operating without disturbing the progressive knowledge of human-to-human relations.

Our national security and the future success of our military forces depends upon our ability to operate with socio-cultural agility and tolerance to analyze, assess and decide how to effectively succeed in different regions, on different missions and with different coalition partners. We must also grow a unique and experienced cadre of military professionals in foreign affairs (Foreign/Regional Affairs Officers - FAO/RAO), who can provide stability, security, transition, and reconstruction efforts to local tribes and communities with an emphasis on self-sufficiency and inter-cultural exchange. To do this we must combine the skills and abilities inherent in our nation's diverse military and civilian population, and form a select and experienced Corps of foreign service professionals, with specific Knowledge, Skills Abilities and Attitudes (KSAs) in civil/military affairs, into one team capable of deploying to any region and corner of the world to augment, supplement or engage with our military forces to ensure success in all aspects of military operations. The result will be a Combined Foreign Knowledge Capability (CFKC) that will include four core set of skills.



These four skill sets are: Foreign Language, Culture Immersion, Regional Knowledge and a new dimension called Social Imitation Patterns (SIP). Each skill set builds on the other to

create a true strategic capability within a cadre of foreign affairs professionals that will comprise the Civilian FAO/RAO Corps or CFRC. This article focuses on the RKCP and how a standardized certification will create a program that is robust and continuous to a lever of mastery only seen in true FAO/RAO specialists. Before we discuss the RKCP, it is important to note that there is no standardized testing method for assessing and certifying Regional Knowledge Skills.

Today, only Foreign Language has a widely accepted, standardized certification test. The Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) is the only recognized means to certify personnel in DOD and other agencies with having a foreign language proficiency skill. There is even a test to measure the propensity and aptitude ability to learn languages. The Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) is the test of record for this aptitude measurement. This certification process has created the perception that language proficiency by itself is a core capability. It is reasonable to assume that foreign language skills could be considered a capability primarily because language is by far the most important aspect of communication when dealing with other foreign communities. Yet, It is also reasonable to argue that language in and of itself is simply not a strategic capability that a commander can leverage when dealing with high-level officials or influential local network leaders in a foreign environment. Without a comprehensive program that includes the means to certify the other two dimensions of foreign knowledge (Culture immersion and Regional knowledge), it is difficult to know how much more effective our forces can be while maneuvering in foreign human terrains. After all, language is the most effective form of communication. Or is it?

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Regardless of where we find ourselves on the issue, we can agree that while many Americans may speak a second language, their lack of regional knowledge along with culture immersion experience in their foreign language claim is a critical gap in the makings of a true Combined Foreign Knowledge Capability (CFKC).

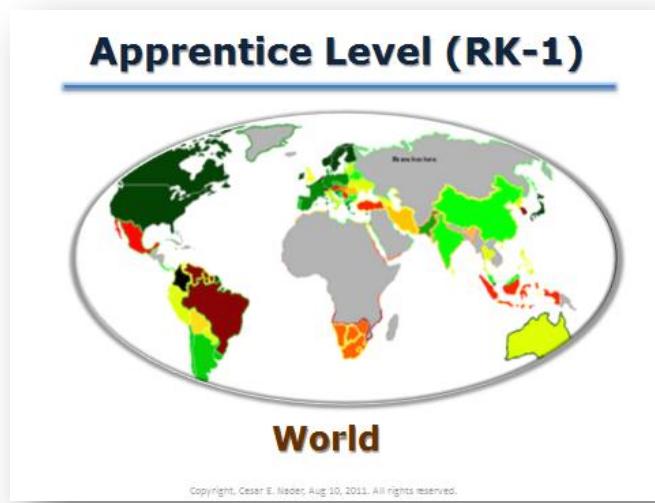


To reiterate, a foreign language skill in and of itself is not a strategic capability. A language skill alone does not constitute a strategic advantage in a foreign environment, especially when dealing with influential and high-level foreign leaders. At best, it allows the verbal exchange or purpose to occur, and depending on the level of language proficiency, it could be argued that it may act as a tactical and maybe even operational advantage. There is no denying that a foreign language skill is a core competency and surely the most difficult skill set to acquire among the three skills sets discussed here (not including the SIP). While there is a standardized method to measure language proficiency through the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale we do not have a measure of proficiency for Regional Knowledge (RK) or for Cultural Adaptation/Immersion (CAI).

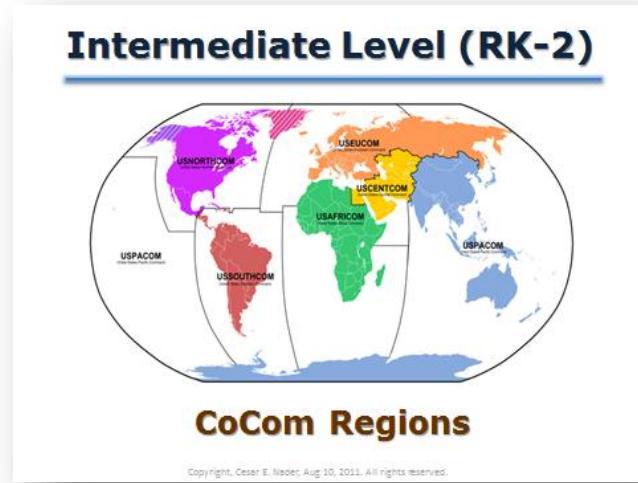
Consequently, we must create a building block approach of five RK certification levels to grow a robust and consequential CFKC. These blocks are: World (RK-1), Region (RK-2), Micro-Region (RK-3), Country (RK-4) and Area (RK-5). Certification beyond Country Level will be the most difficult and will require a comparable native-level understanding of a specific area within a country. As we begin to discuss how to grow the RKCP model, we need to discuss the foundations of the program and how it should build on that foundation for subsequent certification levels. This capability must be built through competence and proficiency. Therefore, the requirement for a professional staff of linguist experts, FAO/RAO professionals and SC Scientists is key to delivering this CRKC to our forces.

### ***Regional Knowledge Certification Program (RKCP) Levels***

The initial level of RK certification is RK-1 or RK Apprentice level. This is an entry level certification that lays out a standardized foundation from which all members who are certified can begin. In time, the building-block approach will also require that services and agencies incorporate this process into their formal training and education plans and schools so that it is part of their initial training process and becomes embedded into the programs for future training development.



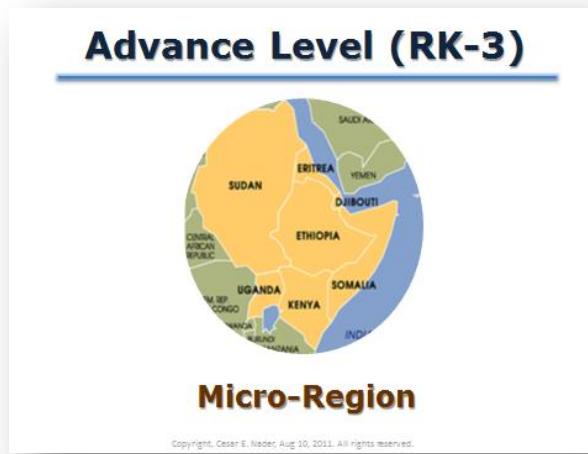
As the baseline, the RK Apprentice will learn the basics of RK from a world view. This will establish a foundational understanding of RK at a macro level and can be supplemented with the RK understanding of how culture is relevant to the RK regions that will be taught later. The flexibility and broad spectrum with which this level is established will allow for a true standardization of the meaning and concepts of RK across cultures and human models. The key to this level is to create a general understanding of how important it is to know RK in order to influence the actions of others who see the world different than us. There is only one category of RK-1 certification. Everyone must begin at this level and there's one curriculum for this level.



The second level of certification is the RK-2 or RK Intermediate level and it is aligned with the seven regional Combatant Commanders (CoCom). The specific requirements of RK certification will be a combination of CoCom requirements that will be identified by these commanders and imbedded into the certification process as well as other critical subjects of interest that will enhance the RK comprehension of how the countries in these regions share a common culture and bond. The goal is to grow a skill that, when combined with a foreign language skill and experience in the culture, will yield the beginning of a combined capability at the lowest level of the experience ladder. This educated professional will now have the right foundation to begin a higher level of education in the RKCP and will require more dedicated experience and not just academic knowledge to grow this skill. Unlike RK-1, this level of certification will have seven different RK-2 categories according to the region of preference each applicant chooses. For example, some RK-1 Apprentices will become RK-2 in USCENTCOM. Others may become certified on USSOUTHCOM or USEUCOM. The goal is to begin a level of intermediate experiences that will create a regional specialist. There's an optional requirement in this level of certification that members must deploy to one of these regions as part of their course curriculum. Certification can remain pending until such deployment is completed.

Starting at RK-3 or RK Advanced level, this certification focuses on the micro-regions identified by DOD as areas of strategic interest to the United States. These seventeen micro-

regions are inter-related and will have added requirements in order to achieve certification. There may be an adapted version of these micro-regions for the public and private sector, but, for the purposes of this article, we will focus on the development of RKC as a military skill. This means a more strategic development of those RK skills to focus on the combination of the foreign language skills already inherent in each member, the deployment experience achieved throughout one's career and the interest to become more specialize in a micro-region.



The added level of effort here is the specific requirement to be deployed or serve in one of the countries within a micro-region. This will be a mandatory requirement in order to receive full certification credit at the RK-3 level. As expected, this level of certification will have seventeen categories coded appropriately to be identifiable in reporting systems within DOD. As seen in the illustration below, the two letter code can be used to sub-categorize the specialty of the RK-3 certification.

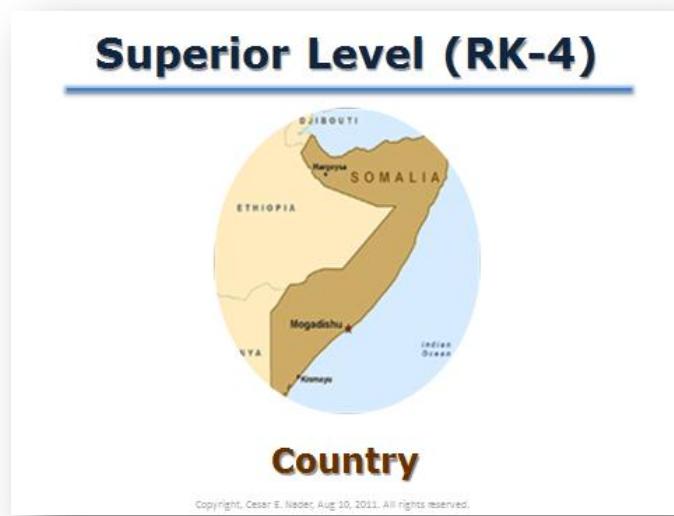
<b>17 Micro Regions</b>			
1 TRANSCAUCAUS	TC	9 WEST AFRICA	WF
2 CENTRAL ASIA	CS	10 SAHEL	SH
3 BALKANS	BK	11 EASTERN AFRICA	EF
4 NORTH AFRICA	NF	12 CENTRAL AFRICA	CF
5 THE LEVANT	LV	13 SOUTHERN AFRICA	SF
6 ARABIAN GULF	AG	14 NORTHEAST ASIA	NS
7 WEST SOUTH ASIA	WS	15 SOUTHEAST ASIA	SE
8 SOUTH ASIA	SS	16 MEX/CAR/CENTAM	CM
		17 SOUTH AMERICA	SM

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The next level of certification is the RK-4 or RK Superior level, where members become certified in a specific country of assignment or interest. This level of certification will not only

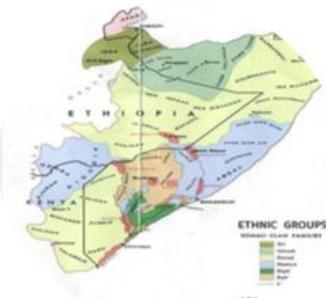
require the previous mandate to have specific deployment or in-country experience, but also a minimum level of language proficiency. The culture immersion should also be evident in the testing process to ensure the member is aligning his/her skills to create a strategic capability. This level of certification requires time, experience and a true assimilation of the foreign environment in which the skills are developed. Certification will be difficult and demanding to ensure that only those who master the program will be credited with a true skill certification. The added benefit of making this level of certification so demanding is that it can be applicable to formal career level schools where we expect officers and enlisted to master the course material, and to provide proficiency in the execution of those learned skills with practical application.

Given the vast number of countries associated with this level of certification, it is expected that it will grow as the demand for different RK-4 specialists grows. It will also be highly unlikely that one individual will focus on more than one level of RK-4 certification. Consequently, this channeling of RK efforts will force members to become more specialized in one area versus becoming generalists in every area where they deploy.



The final and highest level of RK certification is the RK-5 or RK Master Level. This is where active duty FAOs/RAOs will benefit from their combined experience and ability to become certified at a level that is unique and extremely hard to acquire. To achieve certification at this level it is not only required to be an RK-4 within a country, but a certified FAO/RAO or other similar foreign affairs professional. It is extremely important that this certification is only offered to those who have made it a life goal to understand the human models of an area within a region of a country. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that many will ever achieve this level of expertise. The qualifications obtained from this level of certification should allow any professional to be the strategic advisor of an executive agent at the CoCom level or higher.

## Masters Level (RK-5)



### Area Specific

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### **RKCP Accreditation and Reporting**

In order for this program to be an effective tool for commanders and executive leaders for the assessment of their agency's foreign regional knowledge proficiency it must be validated by an organization with American Council of Education (ACE) accreditation. The development and programming of these certification courses will be done in partnership with a certified organization or through a common and independent body that will be accountable and responsible for the proper development, implementation, review and evaluation of this program as a whole. Consequently, the FAOA and FAOWeb as well as representatives from each of the agencies and services who have FAOs and RAOs on active duty or personnel with similar credentials in their work force, will be invited to participate in the creation of the American Council on Regional Knowledge Accreditation (ACRKA).

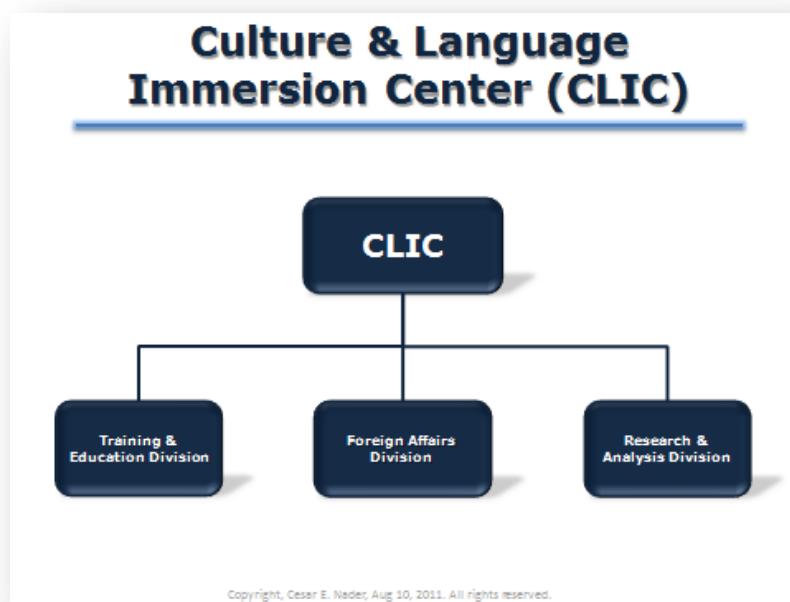
In time, the combination of the RKC program with the DLPT score will be coupled with the culture immersion experience of practical, hands-on deployments and overseas assignments. This will later translate into a comprehensive program of capability development with multi-dimensional layers of professionals in Foreign Language, Regional Knowledge and Culture immersion. The resulting outcome will be a comprehensive program that captures the Combined Foreign Knowledge Capability (CFKC)

For the first time, commanders will have a new decision support tool for their foreign area professionals. Language alone will not be the deciding factor for selecting mission-essential personnel. Additionally, as these members gain culture immersion experience, through a different set of certification processes not discussed here, they will add another layer of foreign knowledge skill. As a practical example, an individual with a 2/2/1+ in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) will now have an additional certification in Regional Knowledge (level RK 1-5) to give the leader a new dimension of understanding into that individual's foreign knowledge

capability. Previously, the same individual could only provide a limited (certifiable) level of support to his commander. The RK scale will be used as a complement to the ILR scale, providing a more rounded capability that will be used in other manpower models for accession, selection, assignment and promotion within certain job specialties. For example, when selecting future candidates for linguistics fields such as FAO/RAO programs or SOF teams, then selection boards will be able to assess how and where those individuals may be more effective as a strategic capability given that they possess an RK certification.

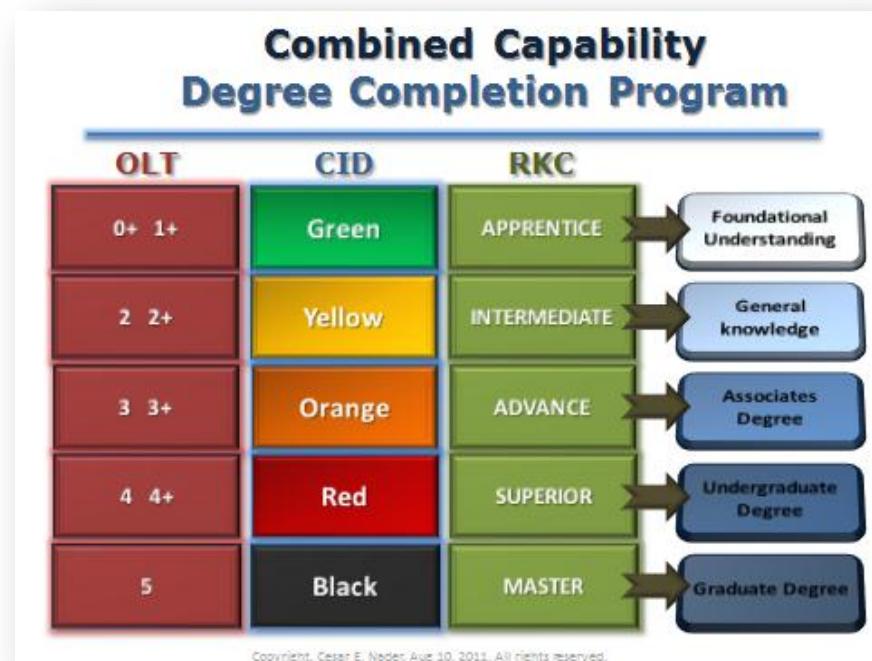
### ***From Concept to Reality***

To establish the Regional Knowledge Certification Program (RKCP), we must create an environment that is fully oriented to support the systems required for the development of this and the other two skills. As stated, these combined skills will be a catalyst for the creation of the first Cultural and Language Immersion Center (CLIC).



The specific details of how the Cultural and Language Immersion Center will operate are the subject of a forthcoming article that explains the functions, staffing and objectives of the CLIC as a development and support structure that will serve the needs of our National Security Strategy in foreign affairs matters. Once these skills are combined to create the strategic capability that combines Language Culture and Regional knowledge, we will develop a program that will provide degree completion credits in the first ever Military Foreign Affairs Master's program. One last, albeit important, point about developing the RKCP is, as these courses become the official certification of all agencies, they may be used for accreditation in other academic development in careers in nearly every field. It will support the motivations of younger Americans to develop these skills at an earlier stage in their lives. It is realistic to expect this to

become the benchmark for all regional knowledge development programs in the nation and around the world.



### **Summary**

Growing a regionally-certified, culturally-adapted and language-proficient operational force is a requirement that must be developed in a comprehensive way. The more critical skills of RK and CA are a complement to the operational language skills we are developing today through language proficiency. The product will be result of a true understanding of the marriage between a strong Foreign Language Program, experience through culture immersion and adaptation during deployments and assignments and the ability to use the training acquired through the RKC program. Together, these skills will create a true strategic capability that will grow to enhance our national security.

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