

SOUTHCOM Commander's Virtual Town Hall
Questions and Answers
May 15, 2015

Video available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/webcast/19876>

Question:

There is a challenge within the command to get the right folks (at the AO level) in the right conference/meetings. After a process is complete and a deliverable is submitted, we learn about a new group or new person who could have participated in the process to provide the needed expertise to strengthen our argument to the Joint Staff or OSD on SC's requirements. Our SharePoint lacks a directory on expertise for specific topic areas. We also lack in communicating when certain processes are starting. This issue is not about the battle rhythm, but rather situational awareness of all the activities and processes occurring at SC.

BLUF: How do we get the right people participating in internal SC processes & how do we communicate when processes/conferences are happening?

Recommendations:

1. Post all conferences for the week on the SharePoint main page. (They can be extracted from the HQ Conference Scheduler).
2. Create a directory by person and specialty. I.e.: If I am looking for someone with expertise in JEONS/JUONS, this directory would find them.
3. Create a CCDR's Advisory Group consisting of only GS12-GS14s. This group would meet with the CCDR on a monthly basis to discuss issues at the AO level.

Answer:

*Exercises: Joint Exercise Life Cycle calendar on J7/9-3 Portal Command Calendar Submissions
Command Calendar reviews, AMHS messages*

Conferences: tasker system, command calendar & reviews, briefed at CoS huddle

The Army uses what are called Additional Skills Indicators (ASI) that are in personnel records that can be used to identify additional skill sets that people may have. Civilian personnel records also have similar datasets that may be used to identify the right people. Director level XO's also maintain a list of functional experts that are working current issues that's used in the assignment of taskers. A command-wide version of this may help identify the right individuals. While AO to CCDR discussion would be beneficial to ensuring the CCDR has a good feel for what is going on, it does not negate the need for mid-level managers to facilitate the flow of information both up and down the chain of command. Every attempt should be made to ensure good notes and after actions are disseminated throughout the staff.

Question:

I was very encouraged to hear your support for "work-life balance," which enables families to stay strong. As you know, the USG - and individual agencies like DIA which advertise it as a "benefit" - recognize the importance of flexible and compressed work schedules in creating work-life balance. As the workforce ages, becomes more culturally diverse, and women make up a greater percentage, management officials have found that the use of flexible and compressed work schedules can help resolve a number of personnel problems. While some offices at SOUTHCOM permit their employees to use alternative schedules to meet family obligations, others do not and do not provide a mission-related reason for the denial. I hope more specific

guidance from you emphasizing support for work-life balance and taking care of SOUTHCOM families will encourage all managers to permit alternative schedules (as policy/mission permits).

Answer:

SOUTHCOM currently has an Alternate Work Schedule program (SC-0239). The program is available to all federal civilian employee's assigned to the command. Alternate work schedule approval is based on mission requirements and organizational goals and objectives of the directorate as well as the established performance objectives of individual employees must continue to be met when an office utilizes AWS. Alternate approval is determined based on management's discretion (mission, critical requirements, and contingency operations). If you still have concerns, please bring you and your supervisor to J1 to review the request.

Question:

There seems to be little if any Telecommuting at the USSOUTHCOM HQs. Apparently when left to the discretion of the leadership the answer is no, maybe a top down direction could be a better method of implementation.

Answer:

SOUTHCOM currently has a Telework program (SC Reg 0244). The purpose of this regulation is to implement a Telework policy for regular, ad hoc, situational, medical, and continuity of operations (COOP) in emergency situations. This regulation applies to all military service members and Army civilian employees assigned to SOUTHCOM. Telework approval is based on management's discretion (mission, critical requirements, and contingency operations). If you still have concerns, please bring your supervisor to J1 to review the request.

Question:

Would you consider a CDR's suggestion box for comments/questions/suggestions so that when there are trends you can include clarification in your emails or ALL Hands. For suggestions that are implemented, maybe you can award the person with a lunch meeting with you.

Answer:

Great suggestion. We do have a command suggestion box. It's called the Sounding Board and it's on the SOUTHCOM home page. Send in your questions and good ideas! SgtMaj Zickefoose and I will be glad to highlight ideas that are implemented at the next all hands.

Question:

What steps are you taking to ensure that your vision/lines of effort/message are being carried out at the directorate level? As with all subcultures/chiefdoms not all chiefs are willing to follow suit if it doesn't satisfy their own agenda. Time and time again, I see individuals ignoring orders and not following directives.

Answer:

We wrote our new strategy to align the enterprise. Strategy is a bridge. Our three lines of effort -- strengthen partnerships, counter threats, and build our team -- are the lanes on the bridge that get us from where we are to where we want to be. The strategy drives our campaign plan, which every Directorate and component in the SOUTHCOM enterprise is actively involved in writing now. We wrote the strategy to align, inform, and inspire our team. Every member of our team

should understand the strategy and be able to give an elevator speech to explain how their work supports the strategy. If you haven't already read the strategy, this is your homework!

Question:

Coming from the private sector as a program manager & organizational effectiveness consultant, emphasis is placed on a strong human resources/talent management unit for changes in culture, setting intentions, prevention as opposed to reactionary environments that increase liability. I notice the HR arm functions more as a paper processing unit in military environments. Would you be willing to explore a stronger human resources division to shift SOUTHCOM culture?

Answer:

Our J1 plays an important role in talent management and building our team, which is one of the lines of effort in in our new strategy. But we all share the responsibility for building a trained, educated, and ready work force. I don't anticipate increasing the size of our personnel team, but I expect the team to continue to learn and identify ways to strengthen our talent management. If you have specific recommendations on training or services that can be provided, we'd welcome those thoughts and will try our best to improve in these areas. We're than happy to look at best practices from other organizations on this.

Question:

I have been promoting the Gala and get the same feedback from all the military I ask, "If I didn't have to wear my military dress uniform, I would go." Since this is a gala and not a military ball or awards ceremony, can we allow military to come in whatever attire they choose?

Answer:

Service members will wear the most senior dress or service uniform he or she has. If a service member has a particular issue like being pregnant and doesn't have a proper fitted uniform, I am willing to make exception, on case by case basis. Any questions or concerns please come see me, I am all ears! (From SgtMaj. Zickefoose)

Question:

For service members who commute to SC via bike is there a way to get overnight storage?

Answer:

There are bicycle racks located at the main entrance of the Garrison building and at the entrance of the gym. Personnel can park their bikes in those locations with their own locking devices. If needed, bicycles can remain in those locations overnight. For security, the installation provides a 24/7 Guard Force as well as security cameras. During inclement weather, Service Members can coordinate with the Headquarters Commandants Office for overnight storage.

Question:

How can an Active Duty service member extend their time at SOUTHCOM? Would there have to be special circumstances? (i.e.; family member health, etc.)

Answer:

Yes, there are certain circumstances that an Active Duty service member must fall into in order to request an extension. Some of those circumstances are:

- *High School Senior Assignment Deferment that allows a service member to request a 1 year extension to their tour to allow for their dependent to complete their senior year of high school*
- *Humanitarian/Compassionate assignment that allows a service member to request an extension based on medical/behavioral needs of their dependent.*
- *Stabilized Tour Extension or an extension based upon mission requirements.*
Requests are initiated by the service member and supported by their directorate prior to being processed by the J1 through each respective service. If you still have concerns, please bring your supervisor to J1 to review the request.

Question:

Is there anything in the works for possibly expanding paternity leave? A 14 day leave period is not enough time off for a father to help the mother and a new baby.

Answer:

Leave entitlements are set by law and DoD Policy. The leave entitlement is set by each service and not by the COCOM. Specifically, Navy & USMC, Secondary Caregiver Leave (paternity leave), are authorized up to 14 days of non-chargeable leave. For Army & Air Force, Secondary Caregiver Leave was recently changed to allow up to 21 days of non-chargeable leave that is retroactive to Dec. 23, 2016. If you have concerns, please bring your supervisor to J1 to review.

Question:

We are seeing the services are having trouble filling the upper echelon billets. Which leads to some of the positions going vacant. I am a Traditional Air Force Reservist who lives in Broward county and commutes to Texas for a week every month to complete my reserve commitment. Recently I was able to secure long orders for 4 month period filling in as a augmentee at SC. Then I noticed there are departments that are undermanned here. I know of many reservist that live in the local area that commute all around the country to fulfill their reservist commitments. Could SC open up more Reservist positions (IMA and AGR) to help the directorates with their vacant billets while at the same time utilizing the experience of the local reservists?

Answer:

There are Reserve volunteer Active Duty for Operational Support for Reservist assigned and not assigned to SOUTHCOM. Each Service has a mechanism to advertise these opportunities. For the Air Force Reserve specifically, these opportunities are announced in the Volunteer Reserve System. This normally occurs if there is an active duty vacancy or an emerging requirement which SOUTHCOM, for whatever reason, cannot fill with any other active duty asset. Manpower billets are controlled by the Services and adding new manpower billets is part of a larger process, whereby manpower studies and insertion into the Services Program Objective Memorandum (POM) is required. There over 400 authorized Reserve billets with about 355 assigned Reserve personnel from all Services. Permanent positions at SOUTHCOM are also advertised on a continuous basis via each Service specific system. The J1 Service Desk is the best place to inquire about any possible permanent billet vacancies. Funding Reserve personnel above the allocated Reserve days for each assigned member is determined by validation and prioritization mechanisms used at SOUTHCOM as well as the specific Services POM.

Question:

My family and I are stationed at GTMO and are concerned about what current or future action SOUTHCOM plans to take in regards to the flight situation. With IBC Airways leaving at the end of June 2019, is there an alternative airline coming in to take its place? Being able to depend on Space A is getting more and more difficult, and one can rarely make it onto an AMC flight without being on orders. For the service members, DOD employees, civilian contractors, and their families, coming to GTMO will become being literally “trapped on an island”—without the ability to take leave, make it home for special occasions, or have family down to visit, morale is significantly affected. Can you please address how this situation will be addressed?

Answer:

At present, our SC J3 and TRANSCOM LNO at SC HQ are reviewing options for a no-cost contract that would allow IBC or another commercial provider to continue support to NSGB. Our SC team is working closely with Navy Region Southeast to find the best solution. We are also considering options through USTRANSCOM for SHARK Flights - which include C-130 transport to designated sites in the US.

Question:

Any thought to SOUTHCOM providing a commuter bus service with pickups in South Dade, Broward, & Miami Beach in lieu of vanpools? CENTCOM runs a commuter bus and everyone is pretty happy with this. Alternatively, any thought to SOUTHCOM providing a shuttle bus from the Miami-Dade Metro station? There may be a number of SOUTHCOM personnel willing to ride the metro if they could get the last mile or so to work via a shuttle.

Answer:

To determine if a commuter bus service is viable, recommend the following:

- 1. Survey on NIPR net to garner interest, locations, & purpose (note: purpose of mission vs. family member/contractor commuting). If interest is strong then...*
- 2. Contact CENTCOM/installation on what authority they are using.*
- 3. Analyze authorities/tools for use.*
- 4. Develop COAs, POAM.*
- 5. Execute...anticipate ~4 months.*

Question:

COLA - can we request and prepare military personnel to fill it out? The cost of living in Miami is expensive, and we need COLA to cover basic living expenses.

Answer:

In support of the Command, COLA and BAH assessments are executed, but the results have not garnered increases. As to why, the problem statement includes what and how elements are used in their algorithms, knowing this will enable the COCOM's influence to guide data collection. Further, while South Florida is expensive, it does not cross the Per Diem Committee's threshold to earn COLA. In the next round of surveys, please be sure to fill yours out.

Question:

Is there opportunity for Spanish language courses for spouses/family members through SOUTHCOM? I feel this would be a beneficial service to make military families more connected to the Miami community especially those living in Doral

Answer:

Yes, Spanish classes were offered in the past through a contract with Miami-Dade County and use of Rosetta Stone instructions. In both cases, the attendance/use started strong and then waned, e.g., 25 students to 2. In the near future the MWR will conduct their annual survey that guides them in what the programs the community desires. I strongly recommend everyone participate in the survey and express the desire to reinstate Spanish language lessons.

Question:

Are there volunteer opportunities at Southcom? And if so, how do we get connected with them?

Answer:

Absolutely -- please contact Garrison Manager, 305-437-1700 and express your interest.

Question:

Having watched for years as a formerly professional military (in Venezuela) with close ties to the U.S. military was transformed step by step by a corrupt, criminal, increasingly authoritarian government into a politicized and seemingly thorough corrupt organization, I am wondering what thoughts you may have about how a military can resist this type of corruption. (Particularly since subordination of the military to civilian governments is dogma). What methods can an apolitical, professional military employ to effectively resist the corruption of its values, norms & ethics when it is serving a corrupt civilian government? Is there good academic research on this?

Answer:

- *Importance of training, education- foundation*
- *Values, professionalism- Legitimacy*
- *Hope to see Venezuelan Military do the right thing.*

Question:

Is there funding for a motorcycle training course and how can we receive funding for the required DoD training?

Answer:

Yes, there is training through USAG-Miami, sponsored by the installation safety manager. Information on the next course can be obtained by calling 305-437-2631. Other commands should get in touch with your command safety manager.

Question:

With the Army changing the PT test to 6 events, is there a way to expand the outside recreation area by the gym to accommodate the new 6 event APFT?

Answer:

The CMDT is working to buy equipment and identify an area to set up/practice for the new test.

Question:

Perhaps a mentoring program for spouses would be helpful.

Answer:

We're interested in doing more events like our Spouse Workshops, but don't underestimate the value of informal mentoring. Anyone can be a mentor, and we encourage sharing throughout the SOUTHCOM family. Mrs. Faller and the FRG are always available for spouses in need.

Question:

Child care outside CDC is expensive and hard to find. A solution is to start a child care program like some installations have where spouses are certified to keep other children in their homes.

Answer:

We will review this option. Thanks for the suggestion.

Question:

Can SOUTHCOM expand the base for all families living in the Miami area? I see the need to have a post exchange for all and commissary. Cost of living in Miami is very high.

Answer:

We are working with Army, local politicians, and federal legislatures to evaluate housing across the HQ at SOUTHCOM. We will also be sending around a survey to get a feel for the level of interest in living across the street from the HQ in Army Housing, understanding that a commissary and/or exchange will not likely be part of that community.

Question:

Where are the SUNPASS vouchers? This has been discussed for some time.

Answer:

The Florida State legislators did not approve toll relief for military members during May 2019 vote. The Command will continue to negotiate through State, Federal and DoD stakeholders on behalf of our military members.

Question:

Where is the support for the BOSS program? Will we see funding for events/trips?

Answer:

Yes, USAG-Miami is reconstituting the BOSS (Better Opportunities for Single Service members) program, so there will be more funding for the program, but support from leadership is necessary for the success of the program as well as participation from single Service members.

Question:

I am curious on the progress made regarding state law and requiring 3 months' rent in advance (1st and last month's rent + Deposit), and talks with the FL Governor and Legislators to get this requirement changed to only 2 months' rent (1st month's rent + Deposit) for military members?

Answer:

Unfortunately as of a decision made 2 weeks ago, Florida legislature did not pass the relief law. It does not look like this law will be passed in the near future but we'll keep trying.

There are apartment complexes currently available to service members of U.S. Southern Command. We have negotiated apartment complexes to only a security deposit and the first month's rent to move in. Reach out to Garrison Housing Office for more information on which organizations have this option.

Question:

What does the Garrison offer to help spouses with job searches?

Answer:

The Garrison organizes kiosk shops with local leaders to refresh job skills as well as work with the local municipal government and better business bureau to link employees and employment opportunities.