

## Summary Sovereign Challenge Forum – 8 May 2020

**Dr. Louise Rasmussen, Human-Factors Psychologist, Founder and Principle Scientist at Global Cognition**

**BLUF: Virtual collaboration with Allies and Partners emerged as a result of the global COVID 19 pandemic and exposed a new dimension for cultural understanding towards successful senior leader engagements.**

Dr. Rasmussen presented her decade-long research studies focused on understanding and developing cross-cultural strategies for the Department of Defense. These studies assisted in the update of DoD Instruction 5160.70 (Dec 30, 2016) Management of the Defense Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) Program and foundation towards cultural competencies and associated learning guidelines for DoD Components.

Senior level engagements with foreign partners and allies are crucial for USSOCOM and the Sovereign Challenge Team to discuss global issues on emergent technologies, the Great Power Competition, and topics which lead to U.S. and partner threats. Bicultural experiences and exposure to transregional foreign defense leaders presents opportunities to understand global perspectives and communicate strategies among a unique community of potential senior foreign leaders a.k.a the USSOCOM Sovereign Challenge Alumni.

Dr. Rasmussen explained how she and her team interviewed and developed the Adaptive Readiness for Culture (ARC) model which tested the culture-general competence of U.S. service members across the DoD. The ARC includes twelve competencies across the following four domains: (1) diplomatic mindset, (2) cultural learning, (3) cultural reasoning, and (4) intercultural interaction used to build and sustain professional relationships and global partnerships.

The Sovereign Challenge Program is executed through these already skillsets described in the study provided by Dr. Rasmussen, which follow on discussions and dialog exposed the team to new methods to utilize in future engagements. Additionally, Dr. Rasmussen reviewed pieces from her new book "Save your Ammo: Working Across cultures for National Security," to highlight key competencies beneficial to the team on cultural challenges faced by seasoned military professionals. What were those competencies?

COVID 19 brought on challenges and stemmed new thinking into how engagements are conducted. Virtual presence is currently the new norm, which also examines our approach to engaging with partners and allies. When asked if the team should reconsider conducting engagements with our foreign leaders due to lack of personable face-face discussion, Dr. Rasmussen exclaimed virtual events are actually more personable due to the partner inviting the team member(s) into their home (their personable space) which is unlike a typical office visit. That's interesting!

The experience and knowledge gained in the past few months as a result of COVID 19 has disrupted how engagements, conferences, and seminars are executed. Future Sovereign Challenge Program activities benefit from integration of virtual events, travel cost reduction and expansion of more intimate engagements with additional foreign defense leaders, while simultaneously supporting USSOCOM equities with U.S. partners and allies.

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