

## Culture, Access, Influence: The FAO Advantage in Irregular Warfare

### Description

Episode 120 explores the critical role of Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) in irregular warfare and strategic competition with [Mike Burgoyne](#) and [Jim Marckwardt](#).

Our guests examine the foundational aspects of the FAO program and its evolution, highlighting how FAOs serve as “Pentagon diplomats” maintaining critical defense relationships worldwide. They then discuss how FAOs excel in the gray zone between peace and war, exploring case studies from Plan Colombia to Afghanistan. Finally, our guests offer insights into how senior leaders can better utilize FAO expertise in developing and implementing irregular warfare strategies.

[Michael Burgoyne](#) is a retired U.S. Army Colonel, Assistant Professor of Practice at the [University of Arizona](#), and a PhD candidate at King’s College London. His extensive experience includes serving as Senior Defense Official in Guatemala, Defense Attaché in Afghanistan, and Army Attaché in Mexico. As a Foreign Area Officer, he developed advanced language capabilities and regional expertise across Latin America. He holds master’s degrees in Security Studies from Georgetown University and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College, and is the coauthor of “The Defense of Jisr al-Doreaa,” a tactical primer on modern counterinsurgency.

[Albert “Jim” Marckwardt](#) is a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, Administrator and Adjunct Associate Professor at [Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies \(SAIS\)](#), and Associate Professor & Faculty Lead at [Defense Security Cooperation University](#). His extensive experience includes serving as Country Director at the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy, where he formulated defense policy for Colombia and Venezuela, and as Political Military Advisor at Joint Task Force Bravo in Honduras. He holds a Doctor of International Affairs from Johns Hopkins SAIS and brings over 30 years of leadership experience spanning combat operations, security cooperation, international diplomacy, and policy development.

[Don Edwards](#) and [Frank Struzinski](#) are the hosts for Episode 120. Please reach out to them with any questions about this episode or the [Irregular Warfare Podcast](#).

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