

COMMANDERS

MAJOR GENERAL ABOU ISSA

Chief of Staff of the Land Forces
Armed Forces of the Republic of Benin

Prior to serving as the Chief of Staff of the Land Forces, he served as the first Chief of Staff of the National Guard of Benin. Major General Issa also served as the deputy Chief of Staff of the Land Forces from 2016 to 2021 and then Director of Military Material in 2016. He spent four years consecutively as Land Division Chief of the Military Cabinet, Deputy Director of the Military Cabinet, and Director of Military cabinet of the President of the Republic from 2012 to 2016.



Prior to his nomination at the presidential Palace, Major General Issa served as the Commander of the Prytanea Military School in Bembereke from 2007 to 2011, Commander of the Presidential Guard (2006) and Commander of the 1st Material Battalion. He got incorporated in the army on 1st October 1986 and was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General on April 1, 2022. Major General Issa became the Chief of Staff of the Land Forces on April 12, 2022.

He received his Baccalaureate from Prytanea Military School of Saint-Louis in Senegal (1986). Major General Issa has also received significant military education abroad, War College (2012) in Beijing-China, Chief of Section Diploma (1990) in Antsirabe-Madagascar and staff Diploma (2007) at the Porto Novo Senior Officers school.

Major General Issa has received several decorations in Benin, France and in China.

COLONEL PIERRE-CÉLESTIN NJONKOU NJANJO

Inspector General, Army Chief of Staff
Armed Forces of the Republic of Cameroon

Colonel NJONKOU NJANJO Pierre-Célestin is a Cameroonian Infantry Officer. Currently, he holds the position of Technical Inspector at the Army General Staff.

He joined the Joint Military School in Yaoundé on 29 May 1998. After his training, he was appointed Head of Section at the same school, where he trained three classes of officer cadets from 2002 to 2005. Subsequently, he was assigned to various positions: Flag Bearer of the Comptroller General of the Armed Forces (2005-2009), Commander of the First Protection Company within the Protection Battalion of the Headquarters Brigade (2009-2010), and Head of the Instruction-Operation Office and the Intelligence Office of the Protection Battalion (2010-2011).



From 2011 to 2014, he was Director of Instruction at the DJOUM Training Center. Then, he assumed the duties of Chief of Staff of the 13th Motorized Infantry Battalion from March to May 2014, before being seconded to the Directorate of Presidential Security as head of Training until April 2024. Since April 2024, he has been a Technical Inspector at the Army General Staff.

Colonel Njonkou is a graduate of several military training courses, including the Unit Commanders' Course, the Staff Certificate, and the Staff Diploma. He is also a Fellow of the Army War College Nigeria. He has received several distinctions, including the Cameroonian Order of Merit (Officer), the Order of Valor (Knight), the Order of Sports Merit (Knight), and the Medal of the Public Force. He holds an A4 Spanish Baccalaureate, is married to Fanny Kalla and has three children: two girls and a boy.

GENERAL SABOUR H. IRIGUE

Commander, Special Anti Terrorism Group
Chadian Armed Forces, Republic of Chad

Bio unavailable

BRIGADIER GENERAL CHERIF OUSMANE

Army Chief of Staff

Armed Forces of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire

Diplomas and Certificates:

- Certificate, National First Aid
- Certification, Ivorian
- Certification , French
- Specialist in Commando Techniques

Positions:

- Commandant—16/11/2009
- Lieutenant Colonel—01/01/2014
- Colonel—01/01/2018
- Colonel-major - 01/01/2020
- Général de Brigade—30/12/2021

Previous Tours:

- Second in Command of the Presidential Security Group
- Deputy Chief of Staff

Decorations:

- Medal of the National order
- Medal of the Ivorian Order of Merit
- Medal of the Armed Forces
- Officer of the National Order



COLONEL PIERRE-PHILLIPPE ANDRE

Deputy to the Commanding General, Army Special Forces
French Armed Forces, Republic of France

Enlisted in December 1991
Combined armed school 1995
Command and staff college (2010)
Colonel (OF5) since November 2016

Currently second in command for the CAST (Army special forces).
He served mainly among the mountain troops where he was battalion commander from 2015 to 2017 and had various assignments through special forces and headquarters.
His last deployment was during summer 2023 as commander for the Task Force Hydra in Erbil, Iraq.



BRIGADIER GENERAL SAMUEL ASARE

Commander, Southern Command
Ghana Armed Forces, Republic of Ghana

Brigadier General Samuel Asare is a regular infantry officer who has served in the Ghana Army for 33 years. He has held several appointments including instructor Jungle Warfare School (1993-1996), and Ghana Military Academy (1996-2000), Military Assistant to the Minister of Defence (2004-2007), GSOI Operations and Training at the Military Academy and Training Schools Headquarters (2009-2011), Military Assistant to two different Chiefs of the Defence Staff of the Ghana Armed Forces (2016-2017, 2018-2019), and the Deputy Commander of the Ghana Military Academy (2019-2020). He served as the Military Adviser at Ghana’s Permanent mission to the United Nations in New York from (2020-2023). He is currently the General Officer commanding the southern Command of the Ghana Army.



Brigadier General Asare has relevant peacekeeping experience, having served four tours with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) as an Assistant Operations Officer (1994), twice as a Company Commander (1996, 2000) and as a Deputy Commanding Officer of the Battalion (2003). He served as a military observer in the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia-Eritrea (UNMEE) in 2003/4. In 2009, He commanded the Ghanaian battalion with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Brigadier General Asare was recruited as a consultant for the Integrated Training Service (ITS) of the then DPKO in 2010/11 to design the mission specific Specialized Training Material (STM) for Infantry battalions being deployed to UNMISS, MONUSCO and UNAMID. Subsequently, he was seconded to ITS in 2012 as a P4 Training Officer for 3 years from 2012 to 2015.

BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERTO BANCI

Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Operational Land Force Command
Italian Army, Republic of Italy

Brigadier General Roberto Banci has attended the 171st course of the Modena Military Academy from 1989 to 1991. He has held the positions of:

- Platoon Commander at the 2nd and 3rd Bersaglieri Regiment,
- Platoon Commander at the Modena Academy for the students of the 177th course,
- Company Commander at the 6th Bersaglieri Regiment in Bologna,
- Commander of the 3rd Bersaglieri Battalion “CERNAIA” in Caserta,
- Commander of the 1st Bersaglieri Regiment in Cosenza,
- 61st Commander of the 132nd Armored Brigade “Ariete.”



He held staff and staff service positions in the areas of operations, plans and training.

He attended the General Staff Course, the Interagency Staff Advanced Course and the National War College at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

As of Oct. 3, 2022, he has held the post of Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations at the Operational Land Force Command.

MAJOR GENERAL MOHAMED EL MOCTAR MENNY

Army Chief of Staff

Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Brigadier General Menny voluntarily joined the Mauritanian Military as part of the 3rd class of active cadets of the Atar Joint Military Academy (EMIA).

After his graduation, he was rewarded with the Infantry Officer Basic Course scholarship in Montpellier, France. When he completed this course, he served in the Human Resources office before joining the operational units where he reached the position of Deputy Zone Commander of the 2nd Military Region in Zouerate.

Prior to being appointed Chief of Staff of the Army, General Menny was Commandant of the Atar Joint Military Academy (EMIA).



MAJOR GENERAL IBRAHIM S. ALI

Force Commander

Multinational Joint Task Force

Major General Sallau Ali is a member of the 39th Regular Course of the Nigerian Defence Academy. He was also a member of the Standard Military Course 922 at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, United Kingdom. He was commissioned second lieutenant into the Nigerian Army Armored Corps in April 1993.

During the course of his career, he held various command, instructional and staff appointments. Notably, he was the General Officer Commanding 3 Division Nigerian Army and Theatre Commander, Operation HADIN KAI, North East Nigeria.

General Ali attended several military courses, some of which include Defence Management Course at Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College Teshie, Accra and National Defence Course.

He is decorated with many honors and awards among which are Passed Staff Course (Double Dagger), Fellow National Defence College and Nigerian Army Innovation and Invention Medal. The senior officer had participated in Operation LIBERTY in Liberia, Operation SAND STORM/TIGER TAIL in Sierra Leone where he was wounded in action, Operation ZAMAN LAFIYA, Operation LAFIYA DOLE and recently Operation HADIN KAI in Northeast Nigeria.

Maj Gen IS Ali is married to Mrs Hauwa Sa'id Muhammad and blessed with children. In his leisure, he enjoys reading, watching films, playing golf and reflecting about life.



BRIGADIER GENERAL MAGATTE NDIAYE

Chief of Staff of the Army

Armed Forces of the Republic of Senegal

Brigadier General Ndiaye assumed duties as the Chief of Staff of the Senegalese Army in June 2024. General Ndiaye was commissioned in July 1990 following graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. General has served in Senegal’s most elite units and commanded at all levels from platoon to International task force.

Brigadier General Ndiaye’s operational experiences include campaigns in Guinea Bissau, Burundi, Mali, Sudan, The Gambia, and the Central African Republic, many of which were international missions with the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States.

Brigadier General Ndiaye is a graduate of the United States Army Ranger School and Pathfinder School. He is a recipient of Senegal’s highest military honors including Officer in the Order of the Lion, Commander of the Order of Merit, the Army Medal of Honor, and the Military Medal for wounds received in combat.

Brigadier General Ndiaye is married and is the proud father of seven children.



COLONEL MANZAMA-ESSO KILIMOU

Chief of Army Staff

Togolese Armed Forces, Togolese Republic

ACADEMIC EDUCATION:

Bachelor in Science at the University of Benin, current University of Lomé

MILITARY EDUCATION :

- War College, Hurth-Hamburg, Germany
- Senior course, Libreville, Gabon
- Young Officer's course, Thies, Senegal
- Basic Officer's course, Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire

APPOINTMENTS HELD:

- 2023 to till date: Chief of Army Staff, Togolese Armed Forces.
- 2021-2023: Commander Togolese Armed Forces Cadet officers' Training School.
- 2019-2020: Commander Togolese Battalion deployed in UN mission in Mali.
- 2018-2019: Commander 3rd Infantry Regiment and acting commander 2nd Military Sector.
- 2017-2018: Second in Command Togolese Armed Forces Cadet officers' Training School.
- 2013-2015: Second in Command Togolese Armed Forces National Training Centre.
- 2012-2013: Acting commander Togolese Armed Forces National Training Centre

MEDALS AWARDED:

- Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) medal (Centrafrique)
- UNOCI medal (Cote d'Ivoire)
- MINUSMA medal (Mali)
- MINURCAT medal (Tchad)
- National merit medal of Togo and Central African Republic.

HOBBIES

Volleyball, jogging, swimming and farming.

Colonel Manzama-Esso Kilimou is happily married with children



LIEUTENANT COLONEL JONTY AMBROSE

Chief of Staff, International Peace Support Training Center
British Army, United Kingdom

Lieutenant Colonel Jonty Ambrose attended the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1997 and commissioned into the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. He spent his early career on Challenger 2 Main Battle Tanks as a Troop Leader, Squadron Second-in-Command and Regimental Gunnery Officer based in Fallingbommel, Germany. In 1999 and 2001, he completed operational tours of Kosovo, the latter working alongside UN and Kosovo Police Service in Podujevo.

In 2003 he deployed with 7 Armoured Brigade on Operation TELIC in Iraq working as SO3 Intelligence Surveillance Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR), double-hatting as SO3 Targets. He returned to the UK as SO3 Organisation & Commitments for 52 Infantry Brigade headquartered in Edinburgh Castle. Following staff training and an in-service Master's degree in Information Management and Technology, he was appointed the UK Head of Delegation to the Multilateral Interoperability Programme (MIP), which develops data interoperability standards designed to support multilateral, combined and joint operations. He returned to regimental duty as a Squadron Leader in 2009 and was subsequently selected for the Higher Defence Studies Programme completing an MPhil in International Relations at St John's College Cambridge. After a further tour of Whitehall overseeing MOD Future Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Systems, he deployed on Operation HERRICK in Afghanistan running the then Afghan National Army (ANA) Mobile Strike Force (MSF) Programme. Following return from Afghanistan, he completed two staff appointments in Joint Forces Command, which involved working with several British Defence Sections in Africa. In 2019, Lieutenant Colonel Ambrose was appointed Chief of Staff at the International Peace Support Training Centre in Nairobi, Kenya. He returned to the Field Army in 2023 as SO1 Operate based in Nairobi with a remit to develop partnered training opportunities between the British Army and armies in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Lieutenant Colonel Ambrose played squash for the Royal Armoured Corps and also enjoys a game of social tennis. He is an occasional and erratic cricketer and follows the fortunes of England and Scotland in international rugby. Married to Joy, they have two young children both of whom attend school in Nairobi.



COLONEL JASON A. CLARKE

Commander

2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade

Colonel Jason A. Clarke was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in 1998. He served as a Platoon Leader and Battalion Assistant Operations Officer (A/S-3) in the 95th Military Police Battalion before changing his Military Occupation Specialty to Special Forces.

Colonel Clarke has held multiple Special Operations Forces Assignments. He was assigned to 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Boeblingen, Germany where he served as Detachment Commander, Battalion A/S-3, and Headquarters & Headquarters Support Company Commander. Colonel Clarke later served in 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Joint Base Lewis McChord as a Group Planner, Executive Officer, and Company Commander.

After Company Command, Colonel Clarke was assigned to the United States Army Human Resource Command as an Assignment Officer for Special Forces Field Grade Officers and Executive Assistant to the OPMD Director before returning back to 1st Special Forces Group to Command the 3rd Battalion. After successful Battalion Command, Colonel Clarke served at Special Operations Command – Pacific as the Director, Special Programs and Deputy Director of Operations. Most recently, Colonel Clarke served as the Garrison Commander of Fort Irwin, California and now commands the 2D Security Force Assistance Brigade at Fort Liberty, NC.

Colonel Clarke is a graduate of the US Army War College where he served as the Senior Army Fellow at the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. His civilian education includes a Bachelor's of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Capital University, Columbus, Ohio and a Master's Degree in Defense Analysis from the Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey, California.

Colonel Clarke's Military Education includes Military Police Officer Basic Course, Airborne School, Static Line Jumpmaster Course, Infantry Captains Career Course, Combined Arms Staff Service School, Special Forces Qualification Course, Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (High Risk) Course, Ranger School, Command and General Staff College, and the U.S Army War College.

Colonel Clarke has deployed and conducted multiple operations throughout the AFRICOM, CENTCOM, EUCOM, and PACOM areas of responsibility to include four combat rotations to Afghanistan, and one combat rotation to Operation Inherent Resolve.

Colonel Clarke's senior Awards and Decorations include The Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal w/2OLC, Purple Heart, Defense Meritorious Service Medal w/1OLC, Meritorious Service Medal w/3OLC, Combat Infantry Badge, Senior Parachutist Badge, Ranger Tab, and Special Forces Tab.



BRIGADIER GENERAL DANIEL L. CEDERMAN

Deputy Commanding General

United States Army Southern European Task Force, Africa

Brigadier General Daniel Cederman serves as the Deputy Commanding General - Reserve, U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa. Prior to his current assignment, he served as the Division Chief for Eastern and Southern Africa Strategic Plans and Policy J5, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Brigadier General Cederman graduated from the Rochester Institute of Technology in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Computer Engineering and later from Chapman University with a Master of Arts Degree in Organizational Leadership.



Brigadier General Cederman's military education includes the National War College with a Master's degree in National Security Strategy, Combined Arms and Services Staff School, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Civil Affairs Course, Army Sapper Course, Airborne, Air Assault, and the Engineer Officer Basic and Advanced Courses. Prior to his Army Reserve assignments, Brigadier General Cederman spent 8 years in the Active Army in a variety of command and staff assignments. His deployments include operational efforts with the 14th Engineer Battalion in 2003 and the 402d Civil Affairs Battalion from 2006-2007, both in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

As an Active Army Officer, Brigadier General Cederman served as an Engineer Platoon Leader and Company Executive Officer with 642d Combat Support Equipment Company, 41st Engineer Battalion while stationed at Fort Drum, New York. He then served in Korea with 2d Combat Engineer Battalion, 2d Infantry Division, Camp Castle, as the Battalion Maintenance Officer. Lastly, he held the Plans Officer position with the 14th Engineer Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade before taking Company Command at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.

Following his transition from the Active Army, Brigadier General Cederman served as a Civil Affairs Team Bravo Lead with the 402d Civil Affairs Battalion; Operations and Plans Officer with the 8th Brigade, 104th Training Division; Operations and Plans Officer with the 104th Training Division; Chief, Emergency Operations Center, Readiness and Mobilization with 416th Engineer Command; Professor of Military Science, United States Army Cadet Command; Chief of Plans and Stationing, United States Army Reserve Command; Director, Army Reserve Installation Management, Office of the Chief, Army Reserve.

Brigadier General Cederman's awards and decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal (2nd award), Meritorious Service Medal (4th award), Army Commendation Medal (with Valor Device), Army Commendation Medal (3rd award), Army Achievement Medal (2nd award), Combat Action Badge, Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, Sapper Tab, Army Staff Identification Badge, and the Joint Staff Identification Badge.

MAJOR GENERAL ANDREW C. GAINNEY

Commanding General

United States Army Southern European Task Force, Africa

Major General Andrew C. Gainney serves as the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa (SETAF-AF) in Vicenza, Italy, and he also serves as the Deputy Commanding General for Africa of the U.S. Army Europe and Africa (USAREUR-AF).

Major General Gainney most recently served as the Commanding General of the 56th Artillery Command, United States Army Europe and Africa, preceded by serving as Deputy Commanding General for Operations of the 3rd (French) Division in Marseille since July 2022.

Upon graduation from the University of South Carolina, he was commissioned as a Field Artillery Officer and has since served in a variety of key leadership positions throughout the United States, Europe, and the Middle East.

During his career, he has had the distinct privilege to lead Soldiers in combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Major General Gainney commanded troops at the Brigade and Battalion level, most notably as the Commander of the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, Fort Riley, Kansas, and later as the Commander of the 17th Field Artillery Brigade (HIMARS) at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington.

While serving as the Deputy Commanding General (Maneuver) of the 1st Infantry Division, he commanded the 1st Infantry Division Headquarters (Forward) in Poland.

Major General Gainney’s staff experience included Executive Officer to the Vice Chief of Staff, Army Senior Military Assistant to the Undersecretary of Defense and Military Assistant in the Office of the Secretary Defense.

He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of South Carolina, a master’s degree from Kansas State University, and a master’s degree from the United States Marine War College.

His awards include the Combat Action Badge, Parachutist Badge, Office of the Secretary Defense Identification Badge and the Army Staff Identification Badge.



BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN A. LEBLANC

Deputy Commanding General, National Guard

United States Army Southern European Task Force, Africa

Assistant Adjutant General, New Hampshire National Guard

Brigadier General John A. LeBlanc serves as the Deputy Commanding General-National Guard, U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa; and serves as the Assistant Adjutant General, New Hampshire Army National Guard.

Brigadier General John LeBlanc enlisted into the United States Marine Corps following his high school graduation in 1983. From 1983 to 1987 he served at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; Okinawa, Japan and Pohang, Korea. In 1988 he joined 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts Army National Guard and in 1990 transferred to the 197th Field Artillery Brigade, New Hampshire Army National Guard. He received his commission through Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia in August of 1995.



Brigadier General LeBlanc has held numerous field artillery command and staff assignments throughout his career and has extensive experience working with all three Army components, joint, and multinational forces in command and key leader positions.

Brigadier General LeBlanc’s operational experience include three deployments to the Middle East; Operation Enduring Freedom as a senior advisor to an Afghanistan Battalion; Operation New Dawn as the 197th Fires Brigade S3, and Operation Spartan Shield and Operation Inherent Resolve as the United States Army Central Force Field Artillery Headquarters Brigade Commander.

Brigadier General LeBlanc earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice from the University System of New Hampshire, a Master’s Degree in Military Studies from American Military University and a Master’s Degree in Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College.

Brigadier General LeBlanc’s awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medals, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medals, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and German Armed Forces Proficiency and Marksmanship Badges. He is also a recipient of the United States Army Field Artillery Ancient and Honorable Orders of Saint Barbara.

AMBASSADOR ROBERT SCOTT

Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Engagement
United States Department of State
United States Africa Command

Ambassador Robert Scott assumed duties as the Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Engagement, United States Africa Command, in July 2023. Ambassador Scott, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister Counselor, previously served as the Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi from 2019-2021. Other assignments include acting Deputy Assistant Secretary covering West Africa and Economic and Regional Affairs from 2017-2019. Deputy Chief of Mission in Zimbabwe and Tanzania, and Deputy Office Director for West African Affairs. Ambassador Scott’s other overseas tours include Ukraine, Germany, France, Ghana, as well as domestic assignments focusing on climate change and European security issues.



Ambassador Scott joined the Foreign Service in 1994. He received a B.A. from Lawrence University, and has an M.A. in International Relations from American University.

MAJOR GENERAL ROBERT SOFGE JR.

Commander

United States Marine Corps Forces, Europe and Africa

Major General Sofge Jr. became the seventh Commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Europe and Africa in 2023.

Headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, he commands designated Marine Corps forces assigned or attached to U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command; advises both joint-service geographic combatant commanders, and other component commanders, on the capabilities and proper employment of U.S. Marine Corps forces; conducts planning in support of operations, exercises, and theater engagements; validates and facilitates the deployment, sustainment, and redeployment of all designated forces; and sets conditions through naval integration to rapidly establish the Joint Force Maritime Component Command during crisis or contingency in order to accomplish assigned missions and tasks.



As a General Officer, he most recently served as the Director for Strategy, Plans, and Policy (UCJ5), United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command/U.S. Forces Korea. Major General Sofge has also served as the Deputy Commander for Marine Corps Forces, Pacific in Hawaii; Deputy Commanding General for Operations, Combined/Joint Forces Land Component Command during Operation INHERENT RESOLVE; Director of the Combined Joint Operations Center in Baghdad, Iraq; and as the Assistant Wing Commander, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing in Miramar, CA.

Enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1982, Major General Sofge served with the 3rd Force Service Support Group in Okinawa, Japan, and subsequently deployed to Korea and the Philippines with the 33rd Marine Amphibious Unit before commissioning and designation as a Naval Aviator. In the AV-8B Harrier, he has flown combat missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Kuwait, and Iraq from both shipboard and land bases, deploying with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) in support of Operations DECISIVE ENDEAVOR, DELIBERATE FORCE, and ALLIED FORCE. Major General Sofge has also deployed in support of Operations SOUTHERN WATCH and IRAQI FREEDOM, and with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit. He has served as Commander of Marine Attack Squadron 311 and Marine Aircraft Group 14.

He has also filled multiple staff assignments at Headquarters Marine Corps including: Head of Aviation Plans, Policy and Budget, Department of Aviation; Strategic Assessments Branch, Programs and Resources; Weapons Systems Requirements Branch, Department of Aviation. He also served on the Joint Staff as a Defense Resource Analyst; as a Senior Watch Officer in the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD) Tactical Air Command Center in Al Asad, Iraq; and as a Weapons and Tactics Instructor at Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1.

Major General Sofge holds a Political Science degree from the U.S. Naval Academy, a Master of Business Administration from Touro University, and a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. He has also completed Harvard Business School's Advanced Management Program. His personal decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, two Legion of Merit Medals, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, five Meritorious Service Medals, seven Air Medals, two Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, and two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals.

MR. RICHARD C. NICHOLSON

Director of Policy, Office of Regional Peace and Security
Bureau of African Affairs
United States Department of State

Richard Nicholson currently is the Director of Policy in the Bureau of African Affairs’ Office of Regional Peace and Security. Before returning to Washington, Richard served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy Bamako, Mali.

Previously, he has held the Management Counselor position supporting Consulate General Erbil, the Yemen Affairs Unit in Riyadh and at the U.S. Embassy in Liberia. Previous assignments include management positions at U.S. Embassies in Abuja, Nigeria and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Richard has also served at the U.S. missions in Jerusalem and Nairobi.



Richard has been recognized with numerous Meritorious and Superior Honor Awards for his contributions to policy and embassy management. He was nominated for the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Year award for his leadership at Embassy Bamako.

Mr. Nicholson is from Wauchula, Florida. He graduated from Clemson University with a Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Systems and has a Master of Business Administration from the Fuqua School at Duke University.

His wife is an Office Management Specialist with the Department of State. They have two adult children.

MR. CURTIS THOMAS

Director, Partner Relationship Management

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Defense Exports & Cooperation (DASA DE&C)

Mr. Curtis Thomas is a career federal civilian employee with over 15 years of security cooperation experience and currently serves as the Director of the Partner Relationship Management (PRM) Directorate at DASA DE&C. In this capacity, Mr. Thomas leads a multi-disciplined workforce that is DASA DE&C’s primary entry point for external interface, outreach, and bilateral coordination. PRM is responsible for the management of security assistance, armaments cooperation, and strategic engagement opportunities to enhance bilateral and global relationships. He joined DASA DE&C in March 2024 after over four years at the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), where he last served as the dual-hatted Acting Chief, Africa & the Americas Division.



CAREER CHRONOLOGY:

- Acting Chief, Africa & the Americas Division, DSCA (March 2022 – March 2024)
- Deputy Chief, CENTCOM Division, DSCA (October 2020 – March 2022)
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Country Portfolio Director, DSCA (Dec 2019 – Oct 2020)
- Project Manager, Case Lifecycle Management Suite, U.S. Army Security Assistance Command (USASAC) (July 2018 – Dec 2019)
- Country Program Manager - Forward, Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (USASAC) (Dec 2017 – July 2018)
- Country Program Manager, (USASAC) (July 2012 – Dec 2017)
- International Program Manager, Aviation and Missile Command's Security Assistance Management Directorate (AMCOM SAMD) (July 2009 – July 2012)

SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- By name requested to a DoD delegation to Angola as a follow-on to the SecDef’s visit.
- Led a delegation to evaluate root causes of Migration in Panama and Colombia.
- Led the restructure of the \$24B KSA Ministry of National Guard Umbrella Document Program.
- Led the USASAC Ministry of Defense Program Team through the 2017 \$100B Threat Based Security Cooperation Initiative.
- Restructured the Security Assistance Review coordination process for Egypt and KSA, resulting in Navy and USAF adopting the same methodology.

Mr. Thomas is a native of Birmingham, Alabama, and holds an MBA in Management of Technology with a custom focus in federal acquisition, logistics, and finance from the University of Alabama in Huntsville.