
IMET: A Cornerstone of Cooperative Engagement

By

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In the post-Cold War strategic environment, the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) remains committed to fulfilling both leadership and partnership roles in shaping a secure and stable future in the dynamic Asia-Pacific-Indian Ocean region. To meet this goal, we have developed and implemented an adaptive, forward-thinking, future-shaping strategy that we call "Cooperative Engagement." This strategy is aimed at assuring our regional allies, friends, and neighbors that America's commitments to regional alliances, to promoting prosperity, and to maintaining military stability, remain firm.

Cooperative Engagement is built upon the three pillars of America's foreign policy as outlined by Secretary of State Warren Christopher: economic growth, military strength, and support for democracy. It capitalizes on existing strong alliances and regional friendships, and on a modest, yet significant, U.S. forward presence. Our strategy is based on a vision of a future where:

- Regional and global military power and aggression remain in check.
- Proliferation is contained.
- Nations are engaged by diplomacy and integrated by economics.
- Alliances and military relations promote a conducive environment for trade.
- Multilateral arrangements are in place to deal with regional crises and natural disasters.
- Political freedom and fundamental human rights increase for all with democracy continuing to flourish globally.

One vital cornerstone of Cooperative Engagement, and one in which the dividends far exceed the cost, is the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program. IMET supports Cooperative Engagement by creating enduring friendships and strengthening alliances. It promotes good will, mutual trust and confidence, and provides interoperability with foreign militaries. Experience has shown that when we remain engaged with these nations—fostering friendly relationships, providing access to democratic ideals—democracy will begin to flourish.

The success of IMET in the Asia-Pacific region demonstrates its importance in support of U.S. policy objectives. In these days of reduced budgets, we must be prudent in our expenditure of government funds. In getting the most "bang for our buck," I consider IMET one of the most cost-effective means of implementing our Cooperative Engagement Strategy.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program is a State Department program administered by the Department of Defense. A component of the United States Security Assistance Program, IMET provides foreign countries military education and training on a grant basis. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 identified three purposes of the IMET program:

(1) Encourage effective mutually beneficial relations and increased understanding between the United States and foreign countries in furtherance of the goals of international peace and security.

(2) Improve the ability of participating foreign countries to use their resources with maximum effectiveness, thereby contributing to greater self-reliance by such countries.

(3) Increase the awareness of nationals of foreign countries participating in such activities of basic issues involving internationally recognized human rights.

These objectives are achieved through a variety of military education and training activities conducted by the U.S. armed forces for foreign officers, enlisted personnel, and selected defense civilians. IMET emphasizes Professional Military Education (PME) at senior and intermediate U.S. service schools such as the war colleges and command and staff colleges. Additional activities such as on-the-job training (OJT), observer training for foreign medical personnel, orientation courses for senior military personnel, and exported training in foreign nations are all part of the IMET program. English language training is also available for those foreign students who lack the necessary language qualifications.

IMET annual funding is appropriated by Congress. The U.S. military security assistance organizations (SAO) closely manage these funds within their respective countries. The Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), in coordination with the Department of State, ensures that the IMET program is properly constituted and carried out. DSAA continually monitors the actual funding of individual country IMET programs and ensures that these programs remain within policy guidelines and allocated IMET dollar levels.

While IMET as a formal grant aid program only started in 1976, military education and training of international military students has been an integral part of U.S. military assistance for over 40 years, with training provided to more than 500,000 students. Total IMET funding proposed for FY 1994 is unchanged from the \$42.5 million FY 1993 appropriations level.

IMET WITHIN USPACOM

Over the past decade 11,875 international students from 23 USPACOM countries have received training under the IMET program at a cost of \$96.9M. In FY 1993, USPACOM has 19 active IMET programs, with a total allocation of \$6.73 M. The FY 1994 proposal calls for 20 active IMET programs with a total proposed allocation of \$6.815M. This long-running military-to-military relationship has paid dividends both for the host country and the United States.

Within USPACOM we can point to two indicators which highlight the importance of IMET: the success of former IMET students within their own country, and the wide-spread acceptance of the Expanded IMET program. Asia-Pacific nations traditionally send their best and brightest (and best-connected) to U.S. military schools. Numerous IMET graduates have attained prominent positions in their respective governments.

In Thailand, IMET graduate Major General Chamlong Srimuang played a key role last year in rallying the pro-democracy protesters and championing the cause of human rights and democratization in Thai politics. Similarly, General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, a 1965 graduate from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, has been instrumental in Thai democratization as leader of the Aspiration Party (one of four major parties of the 1992 coalition) and as former Commander in Chief, Royal Thai Army. In the latter, he established the model used by several countries to defeat communist insurgencies.

India, a long-time recipient of Soviet military assistance, now views U.S. professional military education second to none. IMET graduates include Vice Admiral Kohli, Chief of the Indian Coast Guard and a 1983 graduate of the Naval War College, who was instrumental in establishing India's drug interdiction policy, and General Brar, recently retired commander of the Eastern Command, where he was credited with effectively and responsibly conducting counterinsurgency operations in Assam.

In Singapore, more than a dozen IMET graduates hold important government and private sector positions including Reserve Brigadier General Lee Hsien Loong, Deputy Prime Minister; Brigadier General Chin Siat Yoon, Ambassador to Thailand, Lieutenant General (Ret) Winston Choo Wee Leong, Chairman of Chartered Industries of Singapore, and Brigadier General Bey Soo Kaing, Chief of the Air Force.

Philippine IMET graduates include: President Ramos (also a U.S. Military Academy graduate), General De Villa, Secretary of Defense, General Abadia, Armed Forces Chief of Staff; General Ermita, Congressman, Admiral Jardiniano, Chairman, Export Processing Zone Authority; and General Espino, Chairman of the Philippines Red Cross.

Similar examples abound throughout the region. For example, in Korea alone, more than 110 active duty flag rank officers are IMET graduates, and hundreds more are retired with equally impressive positions in government and business.

Our biggest impact may be in smaller, less visible countries. In Nepal, more than 20 former IMET students have influential positions in the Royal Nepal Army ranging from Brigadier General Rana, Director of Military Operations to Brigadier General Thapa, Aide-de-camp to His Majesty the King of Nepal. In Sri Lanka, eight IMET graduates are in key military and civilian positions. Air Vice Marshall Ranasinge, a graduate of both the FY 1983 Air Command and Staff College and the FY 1992 Air War College, is scheduled this year to be appointed Commander, Sri Lanka Air Force. In Comoros, Major Chieck, a graduate of both the U.S. Army Ordnance Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, is military advisor to the president's cabinet.

EXPANDED IMET

A new and increasingly important component of IMET in USPACOM is the Expanded IMET (E-IMET) Program mandated by Congress in 1991. Prior to this time, the only civilians who could participate in IMET were those serving in defense ministries. Now, officials serving in ministries of justice, interior, finance, planning, and foreign relations, and in presidential offices, can attend IMET training if it: (1) contributes to responsible defense management, (2) fosters greater respect for and understanding of the principle of civilian control of the military, or (3) improves military justice systems and procedures in accordance with internationally recognized human rights.

While only certain IMET courses qualify for inclusion in the E-IMET program, the response to E-IMET has been extremely positive. In FY 1992, 151 students from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka attended E-IMET-eligible course[s]. Just over 10 percent of

the attendees were civilians. FY 1993 portends to be equally successful with a total of 236 students enrolled in E-IMET-eligible courses. We project the civilian participation in FY 1993 will expand to at least 12 percent.

The success of the E-IMET program has been marred only by the scarcity of course quotas as a result of limited course offerings and increased world-wide demand. Historically, prior to the E-IMET program, USPACOM filled approximately 30 percent of annual Senior Defense Resources Management Course and International Defense Resources Management Course quotas. Today, with the advent of E-IMET and increased competition for quotas, our normal portion has dropped to 25 percent, while host-country demand has increased. The Defense Resources Management Institute (DRMI) plans to expand its course offerings in FY 1996, which should alleviate problems in obtaining additional quotas for USPACOM nations.

E-IMET offers three types of courses: core courses, preferred courses, and Mobile Education Team (MET) courses. Core courses, which are the heart of the initiative, emphasize civilian control of the military, military justice systems, and human rights protection. Preferred courses support and supplement education opportunities in specialized areas. Designed for upper-level military and civilian officials who manage specific program areas such as personnel, training, acquisition, logistics, or budgets, preferred courses may enhance or may be prerequisites to the core area.

The third option are those courses tailored to meet specific needs and taught in the host country by Mobile Education Teams. METs are one of the major successes of E-IMET in USPACOM. Two primary sources for METs are the Defense Resource Management Education Institute (DRMI) and the Naval Justice School. DRMI is primarily responsible for the development of the MET program of instruction and translation of the course into the host nation's language. A country's Security Assistance Officer may request a team with the approval of the Ambassador and coordination with USPACOM and the State Department. A team will then travel to the country and provide instruction in English or in the host-nation language, either through translators or by language-qualified instructors. METs recently conducted training in Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea.

A U.S. Navy Justice School (USNJS) team conducted the first Military Justice System course in Colombo in September 1992. USNJS and Sri Lankan officials designed the course together after an in-country survey. An exceptional mix of students, including six civilians, attended; and several high-ranking Sri Lankan military officials participated as speakers. One key to the success of this class was the ability of the team to relate hypothetical problems directly to the context of Sri Lanka's present counterinsurgency concerns. Of particular significance, was the involvement of the Security Police, who do not normally train with the military, and who were both delighted to be invited and determined to make an impact. Since civilian criminal law enforcement is a key factor in an insurgency, their input was especially valuable.

A USNJS MET also provided tailored military justice training in Papua New Guinea in September 1992. The course emphasized the proper role of the military within a representative democracy, the development of rules of engagement within the political, legal, and military constraints faced by the PNGDF, and the role of their military judicial system in ensuring compliance with internationally-recognized standards of human rights. The instructors used "real life" scenarios taken from events which occurred in Papua New Guinea during the team's stay in the country. A new course proposed for August 1993 will also address a combined civilian and military audience.

A key aspect of METs is the "train the trainers" program. The Naval Justice School Military Justice Mobile Education Team Phase IV Follow-Up course provides exactly this type of training.

Currently, this course is scheduled to be taught in August 1993 in Sri Lanka. The course objective is to work with the Sri Lankan student trainers in development of a human rights training program for the Sri Lankan military. These students will then train other Sri Lankan military personnel. This program can provide an indigenous and traditional military means to deliver basic human rights training to personnel at all levels of the Sri Lankan military.

Increasing world-wide competition for Mobile Education Team offerings is forcing USCINCPAC to seek creative methods to ensure USPACOM countries are afforded an equal opportunity to participate. One technique we are exploring is to use regional METs hosted by the larger IMET-eligible countries in the region. The Philippines has agreed to host the first regional DRMI MET in May 1994. We envision rotating host nation responsibilities among Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand with country-specific METs provided on an as-required basis.

CURRENT CONCERNS

The success of the IMET program in general has been hampered recently by budget cuts of nearly \$5 million and several program suspensions, thereby decreasing IMET's impact worldwide. The number of foreign students is down to nearly 800 in 1993 from the previous yearly average of 1200 in the late 1980s.

Program suspensions are a particular problem since they deny us the opportunity to promote American values and demonstrate the proper role of the military in a democracy in those nations, and among those current and future leaders we would most like to influence.

Within USPACOM over the past seven years, Congress has suspended IMET programs in Fiji (1987), Burma (1988), Malaysia (1991), Thailand (1991), and Indonesia (1993).

- Fiji. Fiji's IMET was suspended following the 1987 coup and has not been reinstated since, even though elections occurred in 1992, and other nations like Australia and New Zealand have resumed full military-to-military relations. The United States has been reluctant to restore any form of security assistance to Fiji because their constitution currently dictates that the Prime Minister and majority in parliament be ethnic Fijians.
- Burma. Burma is a special case, since suspension of IMET is part of a broader breach in U.S.-Burma relations.
- Malaysia. Malaysia's denial of first asylum to Vietnamese boat people led to Congressional suspension of IMET for Malaysia in FY 1991. It appears that Malaysia's program may be restored in October 1993, and USPACOM strongly supports this reinstatement.
- Thailand. Since reinstatement of the Thailand IMET program last fall, we have been seeking additional Professional Military Education (PME) quotas as an opportunity to bring the Thais back to the level prior to their suspension.
- Indonesia. We continue to support restoration of IMET for Indonesia. Eliminating Indonesia's FY 1993 IMET directly impacts our ability to pursue strategic goals throughout Southeast Asia. Indonesia's IMET program was proscribed by Congress because of the November, 1991 East Timor incident. While Indonesia has not met the United States' human rights expectations, they are moving in the right direction. If reinstated, IMET could provide positive influence on the Indonesian Armed Forces, supporting them in being more professional and subordinate to the civilian government, as well as providing them first hand experience regarding the role of the military in a democracy.

SUPPORTING COOPERATIVE ENGAGEMENT

IMET is a vital part of USPACOM's Cooperative Engagement Strategy. When used to its fullest potential, IMET is a powerful tool for shaping the strategic environment which this strategy is designed to attain. IMET supports achievement of these specific elements of our future vision in many ways.

IMET fosters important military linkages throughout the world that are essential to preserving the security of our friends and allies, as well as advancing the global security interests of the United States. IMET works to improve foreign militaries' knowledge of U.S. military doctrine and tactics, thereby strengthening cooperation, creating opportunities for expanded military-to-military relations, and reducing the potential of armed aggression. Joint planning, information sharing, and combined force exercises provide USPACOM forces with access to regional military bases and facilities, thus creating the confidence and familiarity that are the mainstay of collective security. The more prepared we are to react to crisis, the more likely it becomes that regional and global military power and aggression will remain in check.

The principal value of IMET courses is to raise professional military competence, efficiency, and effectiveness of participating nations, thereby enhancing the ability of friendly foreign forces to provide for their own security, promoting self-sufficiency, and furnishing many of the skills essential to nation building. IMET imparts new ideas on security and regional cooperation suggesting that international crises can be solved and regional security maintained in ways other than the stockpiling of weapons. This helps reduce the incentive for arms proliferation. The benefits to the United States in terms of collective security, stability, and peace are enormous.

The prominent positions many IMET graduates reach within their societies afford them opportunities for major influence upon public policy and foreign relations. Their generally favorable impressions can then translate into advocacy for policies, programs, and positions on the issues which are usually in our common interest. The E-IMET program expands its influence to important civilian government officials. These leaders help to provide openings for advancing important U.S. interests, not only in the security arena but in areas such as trade and investment as well. This supports our future vision of a region in which nations are engaged by diplomacy and integrated by economics.

Through the IMET program, foreign militaries of the region acquire an increased understanding of the United States, and thus, develop highly favorable attitudes toward and admiration for the American people and its culture, values and institutions. Enduring personal military-to-military friendships are forged in the training environment, as U.S. and foreign military teams work and study together. These friendships often last for years throughout their military and subsequent careers. International participants visiting the United States also get a taste of the U.S. lifestyle. This often creates an interest in, and demand for American products and services, as well as an awareness of how free market economies work. In short, it helps promote an environment conducive to trade.

Training imparted by the IMET program emphasizes cooperation and provides improved skills in operating and sustaining U.S. equipment. The international flavor of the program promotes coalition planning and decision-making. Working closely in a training environment, international teams investigate methods for solving potential problems. During times of actual regional crises and natural disasters, this cooperative training will encourage and facilitate multilateral approaches to solving regional problems.

IMET, and in particular the new E-IMET program, provides increased awareness about fundamental human rights through an exposure to U.S. values, contemporary human rights practices, and the fundamental democratic principle of civilian authority over a nation's military forces. While there is no assurance that participation will affect fundamental changes in an individual's basic orientations, the IMET program has enabled the United States to reach and influence thousands of military personnel who subsequently have achieved prominent positions in their societies. Many have been among their nation's strongest adherents of democratic practices and have remained favorably disposed toward U.S. policies. While the challenge of instilling attitudinal change is enormous, exposure to a wide array of diverse nations participating in IMET programs, many with long traditions of democratic governments, helps to emphasize the importance of understanding internationally-recognized human rights.

CONCLUSION

The IMET program has become one of the most cost-effective means for promoting U.S. interests and advancing security in the Asia-Pacific-Indian Ocean region and throughout the world. In February 1990, the Defense Security Assistance Agency, in a report to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, addressed the questions of cost effectiveness, value and impact, and specific accomplishments of IMET. DSAA confirmed that IMET is an effective, low-cost component of the global U.S. security assistance effort. The relatively small cost of IMET provides a return for U.S. objectives on a global scale; over the years, this return is far greater than the original investment.

In short, IMET currently provides the United States with inroads and influence throughout in the Asia-Pacific region. IMET students often rise to important civilian and military leadership positions in their governments, which further emphasizes the potential influence of IMET programs. IMET courses also train foreign military (and civilians through the expanded program) in "the ways" of the United States, in particular, and the Western world, in general, to include such things as economic stability and greater respect for human rights.

Finally, IMET underwrites USCINCPAC's Cooperative Engagement strategy in the region. It provides the United States with an opportunity to remain engaged, which enhances our friendships and alliances. It promotes interoperability, through combined and coalition training, which is necessary for decisive action during natural disaster or crisis. It creates a reservoir of good will, and provides invaluable personal contacts that promote mutual trust and understanding.