
PERSPECTIVES

Laying the Foundation For European Peace: The U.S. Military Education and Training Program

By

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Security assistance is often associated with the foreign military sales (FMS) program that transfers defense goods and services to U.S. friends and allies around the world. With sales of \$8.8 billion in 1997, FMS is the largest component of the U.S. security assistance program from an economic perspective, and it is a major tool used to achieve foreign policy goals. For officials in many countries, however, the first thing that security assistance brings to mind is the international military education and training (IMET) program. In Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries particularly, the relationship established by IMET is probably the strongest tie they have with the U.S. military and one of the major vehicles in the drive toward NATO enlargement.

As part of the overall U.S. security assistance program, the U.S. government provides training to students from other nations through cash sales (foreign military sales) and on a grant basis through the IMET program. The origins of this program go back to the 1950s, when it was established as a low-cost policy program to provide training in U.S. Department of Defense schools to predominantly military students from allied and friendly nations. It is authorized in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and funded in the International Affairs budget. By statute, the State Department is responsible for policy while DoD administers the program.

IMET has long been recognized as one of the most effective components of U.S. security assistance and as an important instrument of national security and foreign policy. It is consistently identified by regional commanders in chief as key to their engagement strategies and is consistently one of their top priorities. In addition, the IMET program enjoys a high level of support from the administration and Congress because of its success in teaching American values and military professionalism to officials from other nations. For a relatively modest investment (\$43.5 million in fiscal year [FY] 1997, \$50 million in fiscal years 1998 and 1999), IMET presents democratic alternatives to many key foreign military and civilian leaders. Since 1991, the IMET program has broadened to include about 30 new countries, primarily from Central Europe and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. In FY 1997, the United States trained more than 8,000 students from approximately 120 countries. Approximately 22 percent of the students came from the PfP nations.

In the broadest sense, the goal of IMET is to develop the host country's self-sufficiency—by *training the trainers*, the program helps a country develop its own training program. As a result, the program's effectiveness goes far beyond those individuals directly trained by U.S. personnel. There is special consideration given to training individuals who are likely to hold key positions of responsibility within their governments.

The emphasis in PfP nations is on middle and senior service-level military education, with the aim of improving professionalism and enhancing interoperability. The United States supports NCO and leadership development programs with these countries, particularly in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Partnership for Peace nations also are encouraged to learn how to manage their defense establishments by training individuals in effective defense resource management.

The IMET program exposes students to the professional U.S. military establishment and the American way of life, including respect for democratic values, human rights, and understanding the rule of law. Students also observe standard U.S. military procedures and the manner in which the military functions under civilian control. A less formal but significant part of the program exposes students to the civilian community and its own important set of democratic institutions. In addition, English language training, essential to attending nearly every course in the United States, increases rapport between students and their U.S. counterparts. It also promotes relationships that provide for future U.S. access to sectors of societies that often are influential in the transition to democracy. English training has been critical to interoperability with U.S. and other NATO forces.

IMET objectives are achieved through a variety of military education and training activities conducted by the Department of Defense for foreign military and civilian officials. These include formal instruction, with more than 2,000 courses taught at approximately 150 military schools and installations; on-the-job training; observer training; orientation tours for key senior military and civilian officials; and limited training conducted by U.S. military and civilian teams in foreign countries. Furthermore, all students attending an IMET-sponsored course are exposed to a DoD-managed informational program—a specialized, outside-the-classroom activity to assist international students in acquiring an understanding of American society, institutions, ideals and values. The increased number of trained personnel and their associated skills have had a positive effect on the infrastructure of IMET recipient countries, stimulating nation-building that, in turn, encourages economic development.

In 1990, Congress directed the Department of Defense to establish a program within IMET focused on training foreign civilian and military officials in three key areas; managing and administering military establishments and budgets; creating and maintaining effective military judicial systems and military codes of conduct, including observance of internationally recognized human rights; and fostering greater respect for the principle of civilian control of the military. This initiative, the expanded IMET (E-IMET), is part of the overall IMET program but does not solely emphasize military-to-military ties. In an effort to reach more foreign officials, Congress broadened E-IMET in 1994 to include participation by members of national legislatures responsible for oversight and management of the military. Each year the Defense Security Assistance Agency has enlarged the E-IMET program and obligated a larger portion of the IMET appropriation for this effort. After Congress earmarked \$1 million for the program in FY 1991, report language was provided each year through FY 1995 to increase funding for E-IMET by \$1 million annually. In FY 1997, \$10.9 million was expended on E-IMET courses, approximately 25 percent of the total IMET appropriation. The current E-IMET budget is 30 percent of the total FY 1998 IMET account of \$50 million. While increased funding for E-IMET is expected to continue, all of IMET is increasingly constrained by limited spaces available in the downsizing DoD schoolhouses.

Beginning with the initial refinement of some existing programs in 1991, DoD began to invest in new courses, establishing three new education programs to address the topics of defense resource management, civil-military relations, military justice and human rights. The first E-IMET courses were offered at the Defense Resource Management Institute (DRMI) at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., where an already mature program in defense resource management was used as the cornerstone to build up the E-IMET program. Usually, new DRMI programs begin with a two-week introduction in which a mobile education team travels to the students' country, followed by a midlevel international defense management course, and a four week senior international defense management course established for flag-rang military and civilian equivalents.

To specifically address the issue of civil-military relations in a democratic society, the Center for Civil-Military Relations, also located at the Naval Postgraduate School, was established to provide a broad range of innovative graduate-level educational and research programs. Typically, the center offers a one-week seminar, held in-country and attended by government ministers, key parliamentarians, civilian officials, journalists, nongovernmental organization personnel, ranking military representatives and the U.S. Ambassador. Each program is tailored to meet the specific needs of the country in which it is held. This initial seminar is often followed up with resident programs at the Monterey campus, including a one-year accelerated graduate degree program.

Concepts emphasized in the program and taken back home with the students are evident in the topics they have chosen for their theses. Two examples reflecting values taught at the school are: "The Level and Structure of Power Delegated to High-Ranking Military Officials in a Democracy: A Case Study of the United States," written by a Hungarian army major; and "NATO Enlargement and Democratic Control of the Armed Forces: The Experience of Poland and Implications for Neighboring Partnership for Peace Countries," written by a Ukrainian national guard colonel. Since many of the students are destined for leadership positions in their respective countries, the values grasped in these courses today will bear fruit far into the future.

The Defense Institute for International Legal Studies, formerly the Naval Justice School International Training Detachment, in Newport, R.I., was founded to address the needs of developing nations in more effective military justice systems, respect for human rights and democratic control of the military. Using mobile education teams, the institute has reached 64 countries, including 18 PfP countries, presenting seminars on timely topics such as status of forces agreements, peace operations and maritime law. Recent efforts have expanded into the presentation of a five week resident peace operations course attended by leaders from 26 nations.

The creation and expansion of E-IMET has realigned IMET program objectives with major U.S. foreign policy interests in the post-Cold War environment and has been a major tool for building PfP. The E-IMET program in conjunction with other international military education and training courses, has introduced military and civilian participants to the U.S. judicial system, the two-party political system, the role of the free press, the U.S. economic system and U.S. education institutions. The E-IMET program demonstrates how these elements of American democracy reflect the U.S. commitment to the basic principles of internationally recognized human rights. It also effectively supports democratization by training civilians performing defense-related functions, military personnel, parliamentarians, and representatives from nongovernmental organizations. The long-term goal of this training is to effect institutional change, culminating in a professional, apolitical military under true civilian control.

In testimony on NATO enlargement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 24, Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen stated, "The price of admission to NATO is high. We talk about NATO being an open door, but that open door stands at the top of a steep set of stairs . . . these countries have to climb a set of stairs in terms of modernizing their societies, having an open and democratic society, subordinating their militaries to civilian control, promoting market economies—all of the ideals that we treasure." The IMET program helps both NATO-selects and other Partnership for Peace nations to climb those stairs and constitutes an important component of the broader U.S. effort to expand democratic principles throughout the world.