
Education and Training

The Creation of Expanded International Military Education and Training (E-IMET)

By

Elisa Moskowitz

[This is an article developed from an original paper written at the National War College in 2008.]

The advent of the Cold War's demise and changes to the international security structure in the late 1980s-early 1990s sparked an initiative to make available new professional military education opportunities under the auspices of Security Assistance, a group of foreign aid programs that support U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives. One of the most successful of these programs, International Military Education and Training (IMET), was seen as an ideal medium from which to generate a new curriculum designed to advance democratic principles and reach a broader pool of international participants.

The new initiative, Expanded International Military Education and Training (E-IMET), was established by Congress in 1990 and provided for specific non-combat related military education and training "based upon the premise that active promotion of democratic values is one of the most effective means available for achieving U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives and fostering peaceful relationships among the nations of the world."¹ In addition, E-IMET opened up these courses to civilian officials involved in security matters in their countries, including representatives from non-governmental organizations and legislators.

Background: Why the Need for a New Program?

IMET was created as a grant program by Congress, under the International Security Assistance Act of 1976, which was an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Its purpose was:

to help countries unable to purchase U.S. military training under the Foreign Military Sales Act (the existing program at the time) to meet their needs. Congress wished to help allies and friendly countries pursue their interests with an initiative that was practical, economical, and focused on the future. It saw military training as the most effective vehicle within the former grant military assistance program and wanted to sustain it without losing legislative control. Senior Defense officials at the time endorsed the new program as a better way to identify budgetary costs and program objectives, while still providing a means of maintaining military ties and strengthening the military potential of our friends and allies.²

1. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "E-IMET Home Page," http://www.dsca.mil/programs/eimet/eimet_default.htm.

2. John A. Cope, *International Military Education and Training: An Assessment*, McNair Paper 44 (Washington: Institute for National Strategic Studies, October 1995), 5.

IMET enabled recipient countries to send applicable military personnel to a variety of courses provided by the U.S. military departments (2,000 courses offered annually at 150 U.S. military schools across the country).

Funding for IMET (and other Security Assistance programs) is appropriated from the International Affairs budget of the Department of State (DoS). DoS maintains overall responsibility of IMET, and the DoD administers it. The objectives of IMET-funded training are to develop rapport, understanding, and communication links; to develop participant nations' training self-sufficiency and improve their ability to manage their own defense establishments; and to develop skills to operate and maintain U.S.-origin equipment.³

In 1990, staff members from the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee (SAC) came up with the idea to build on IMET's successes and pursue a "higher calling" to force an agenda promoting democratic values.⁴ The countries that could benefit the most fell into two categories: existing IMET recipients that needed to strengthen their human rights records and fight corruption (e.g., Guatemala and Indonesia) and nations that had no real experience with such democratic principles as transparent defense budgets, military justice, and civil-military relations (e.g., Honduras and South Africa).⁵ Thus, the idea for a revised IMET program was born, one that would focus on the pillars of a democracy and offer only non-combat-related education and training – Expanded IMET.

In one way "Expanded" IMET was a misnomer, as the initiative actually limited what IMET was already offering. E-IMET was to focus on teaching professional level management skills, improving the efficacy of military and judicial systems, and strengthening military codes of conduct.⁶ Specifically, E-IMET's mandate was to educate "U.S. friends and allies in the proper management of their defense resources; improving their systems of military justice in accordance with internationally recognized principles of human rights; and fostering a greater respect for, and understanding of, the principle of civilian control of the military."⁷ The logic was that the successes achieved under IMET could be replicated through E-IMET and help promote military professionalism and good governance.

In another way, though, "Expanded" was an apt title for this program because more nations could participate and "because the target audience of IMET was 'expanded' or broadened to include civilians not specifically within a foreign country's defense establishment (but who hold security-related positions). This was an important step in that it also expanded the role of the U.S. military."⁸ E-IMET was a new arena for U.S. military education, as the "kinds of training mandated through Expanded IMET legislation (did) not conform to the traditional combat role and conventional orientation of the U.S. military. Systematic U.S. military training of foreign civilian officials (was) an even greater departure."⁹

3. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Security Assistance Management Manual, 425, <http://www.dsca.mil/samm/Chapter%2010%20-%20International%20Training.pdf>.

4. Personal interview with Keith Webster, former program officer, Defense Security Assistance Agency, January 23, 2008.

5. Personal interview with Kay Judkins, IMET program manager, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, February 12, 2008.

6. General Accounting Office, Observation on Post-Cold War Program Changes, Washington, D.C.: GAO, September 1992, Report NSAID-92-248, 19.

7. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "E-IMET Home Page."

8. Ronald H. Reynolds, *E-IMET: Is It Accomplishing Its Human Rights Focus in Latin America?* Doctoral dissertation (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Graduate School, 2001), 18.

9. Jennifer Morrison Taw and William H. McCoy, Jr., *International Military Student Training: Beyond Tactics* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1993), viii, quoted in Ronald H. Reynolds, *E-IMET: Is It Accomplishing Its Human Rights Focus in Latin America?*

Timing is a key element; and the promotion of E-IMET benefited from events of the day, which helped it gain even more support in the Legislative and Executive branches of the U.S. Government. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, E-IMET was also seen as a means to advance democratic values to countries that had been behind the Iron Curtain for decades. Courses that stressed good governance and democratic principles, which were available not only to military personnel but also to applicable civilian officials, were seen as a way of strengthening these new and emerging democracies and sustaining their growth and progress. Furthermore, this idea supported larger U.S. national security goals (make former enemies into friends), value projection (promote democratic ideals), and cooperation (strengthen capabilities in partner nations).

The Players

The Congress

The catalyst for the initiative was the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the SAC. (It is not unusual for an initiative to start in an appropriations committee, especially if there is an existing law that can accommodate it.)¹⁰ The proposal was welcomed by the SAC Chairman at the time, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT); and there was general bipartisan support within Congress (the SAC staffers on the majority side who came up with the idea cultivated support among their Republican counterparts). First of all, E-IMET was not perceived as controversial; it was seen as way for the U.S. to work with governments who needed help to reform their militaries, which, it was hoped, could cascade to other types of reform. Secondly, no additional funding was being requested; the SAC proposed allocating a portion of the existing IMET budget for specific E-IMET programs.¹¹ Thirdly, the proposed legislative language clearly spelled out the parameters of the program; there was no ambiguity about what the program could provide and to whom. Finally, the Congressional report language stated that DoD (specifically the Defense Security Assistance Agency) had to report to the Senate on E-IMET's implementation; close Congressional oversight was an element of the program during its first few years to ensure that it met the intent of Congress.¹²

The Administration implemented E-IMET during FY 91. A management system and structure was established to ensure that program guidelines were followed. DoD was asked to review existing courses to determine which ones were relevant for E-IMET or could be amended to meet E-IMET's requirements and to recommend the creation of new ones. One million dollars of the FY 91 IMET budget was set aside for E-IMET programs with plans for an estimated \$2 million to be set aside from the FY 92 IMET budget.¹³

The Department of State

The Bureau of Political-Military Affairs at the Department of State (State PM) had oversight responsibility for Security Assistance programs, which fall under the purview of the Foreign Assistance Act. State PM was responsible for drafting the annual IMET budget requests to Congress and for determining final country allocations of the funds, which extended to E-IMET. The initiative took State PM somewhat by surprise, since it began with the appropriators. However, there were no real objections, as the initiative did not encroach on State's oversight role. It helped that one of the SAC staffers who proposed E-IMET was a former State Department Foreign Service Officer and knew what types of programs were needed and would fit into the foreign assistance sphere. Finally, State PM also saw the initiative as a way to

10. Personal interview with Carl Raether, former Senior Legislative Manager for Appropriations, U.S. Department of State, January 31, 2008.

11. Personal interview with Tim Rieser, former staff member, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, January 23, 2008.

12. Defense Security Assistance Agency, "Report to the United States Congress on Development of the Expanded IMET Initiative," reprinted in *The DISAM Journal* (Fall 1991): 94.

13. *Ibid.*

further U.S. engagement with nations that had not been eligible previously for foreign military assistance within parameters that did not undermine U.S. foreign policy norms.

The Department of Defense

The Department of Defense played a key role in E-IMET's creation. DoD was not enthusiastic about the initiative at first because it imposed limits on the already existing IMET program; but the SAC staffers allayed concerns by assuring DoD that the new initiative would bring in new countries with which DoD could engage, albeit under specific auspices. Furthermore, funding would not be cut from other programs to pay for the new program; E-IMET would simply be folded into the IMET budget.¹⁴ (Over time, the IMET budget was increased; by the late 1990s, approximately 30 percent of the IMET budget was spent by recipient nations on E-IMET courses.)

The Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA),¹⁵ which reports to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, became the E-IMET administrator (a function it already played for other Security Assistance programs). DSAA was given responsibility for identifying courses that would fit in with E-IMET; for working with the military departments to create new courses; for advising the Security Assistance Offices at U.S. embassies around the world as they recruited suitable E-IMET students; for reporting to Congress on the program's implementation; and for putting out policy guidance to all relevant departments, agencies, schools, and the Combatant Commands. DSAA's role in the first months of E-IMET was critical; for had the agency not succeeded in meeting the congressionally mandated obligations, the program's future could have been jeopardized.¹⁶

The Military Departments

The military departments, responsible for providing the courses, can be considered the "face of E-IMET." In another stroke of good luck for E-IMET, it happened that the Department of the Navy was serving as the executive agent for a successful existing program that taught defense resources management to international students. DSAA saw this as the perfect jump-off point for E-IMET, and the Navy complied. Part of the Navy's enthusiasm was related to the fact that the coming end of the Cold War would likely lead to defense budget cuts and military base closings, and E-IMET provided a justification for keeping relevant schools open. The Navy then created new courses that met the other two requirements under E-IMET's legislation: civil-military relations and military justice and human rights. Thus, three of E-IMET's flagship programs came from Navy schools. As E-IMET gained stature in the Security Assistance realm, the Departments of the Air Force and the Army followed with course offerings. Ultimately, the War Colleges and the Command and General Staff Colleges would be included in E-IMET's approved course list.¹⁷

The Non-Governmental Sector

Several public interest groups were initially skeptical of the E-IMET initiative because of well-publicized cases in the 1980s of School of the Americas (SOA) graduates who committed human rights abuses in their home countries, including a number of IMET-funded military students. Beginning in the early 1990s, SOA overhauled its image and incorporated human rights modules in its courses and added

14. Personal interview with Tim Rieser.

15. The Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA) was re-designated the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) in October 1998, to reflect its enhanced role of overseeing all aspects of international military cooperative development efforts.

16. Personal interview with Warren Olsen, former IMET program manager, Defense Security Assistance Agency, February 11, 2008.

17. Personal interview with Rita Verry, former program manager, Defense Security Assistance Agency and Navy International Programs Office, January 31, 2008.

new courses that addressed the abuses committed by alumni.¹⁸ Several years later, vetting of all potential Security Assistance student candidates became mandatory to prevent violators from receiving this type of aid. (SOA was legally closed in 2001 and was succeeded by the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at the same location, which is now DoD's principal Spanish-language training facility for Latin American military and security-related personnel.)¹⁹

In particular, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) was one non-governmental organization that had reservations about E-IMET early on. DSAA took the initiative to meet with WOLA representatives regularly and invited them to observe E-IMET courses offered at military schools in the United States. This type of active outreach helped enhance the public's understanding about E-IMET and alleviated concerns of human rights advocacy organizations. The non-combat nature of E-IMET ultimately was perceived as having a greater potential for promoting positive values than non-engagement was.²⁰

Conclusion

On November 5, 1990, PL 101-513 was passed, which allocated \$1,000,000 of the existing IMET budget for "developing, initiating, conducting, and evaluating courses and other programs for training foreign civilian and military officials in managing and administering military establishments and budgets and for training foreign military and civilian officials in creating and maintaining effective military judicial systems and military codes of conduct, including observance of internationally recognized human rights."²¹ From a listing of nine courses in 1992, E-IMET grew to 35 over three years.²²

The story of E-IMET is a very rewarding one, but the account of the processes behind its creation is not terribly exciting. There were so many favorable conditions related to the initiative that the path to its realization was rather smooth and uneventful. An idealist could say the stars were in alignment; but a realist would say that "everyone's self-interest was served,"²³ which almost guaranteed E-IMET's implementation and also helped ensure its success.

Each of the main players had a motivation for seeing E-IMET come about: Congress wanted to engage certain countries by exposing them to educational programs that promoted good governance; the State Department was given a new tool for accomplishing U.S. foreign policy objectives by spreading democratic ideals and developing closer bilateral ties; the Defense Department could expand its military contacts with new nations that were eligible for E-IMET funding and help enhance defense capabilities in partner nations; the military departments benefited by providing new courses and bringing in new students during a time of defense budget cuts and base closures; and the public gained through enhanced U.S. security that resulted in the expansion of U.S. military allies and partners, many of whom first came into the fold under E-IMET auspices.

There was also an element of serendipity involved while E-IMET was being born. The SAC staffer who came up with the idea came from the State Department and knew how programs worked there.

18. Federation of American Scientists, "International Military Education and Training," Arms Sales Monitoring Project, http://www.fas.org/asmp/campaigns/training/IMET2.html#_ftn49.

19. Center for International Policy, "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation," Just the Facts: A Civilian's Guide to Defense and Security Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean, <http://www.ciponline.org/facts/soa.htm>.

20. Personal interview with Warren Olsen.

21. Public Law 101-513.

22. Cope, 15.

23. Personal interview with Warren Olsen.

The right people happened to be in the right places within DoD at the time the proposal came up, including senior leadership within DoD and experienced program officers at DSAA who took a strong interest in E-IMET and made sure that it would fulfill its goals and gain continued support from Congress. And the Department of the Navy had a course ready to go that fit E-IMET's mandate.

Expanded IMET is now a key element in Security Assistance and helps enhance the ability of friends and allies to deter and defend against possible aggression, promotes the sharing of common defense burdens, and helps foster regional stability. E-IMET's focus on three major democratic principles — civilian control over the military, responsible defense resource management, and military justice and human rights — may make it even more important today than it was at the time of its creation as the U.S. Government increasingly looks for non-kinetic ways to promote foreign and security policy goals. In the 16 years since E-IMET was implemented, nearly 140 nations have participated in more than 100 courses. E-IMET has yielded many successes and has been used as a model for other foreign assistance programs.

About the Author

Elisa Moskowitz works in the Policy Planning Office, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. She is a 2008 graduate of the National War College.