
Training and Educating for Complex Operations: What DISAM Can Do for You

By

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In September, I attended the 2008 Stability Operations Training and Education Workshop sponsored by the Consortium for Complex Operations (CCO) with support from a number of other prominent organizations and key USG agencies, including those from the DoD and Department of State (DoS), universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private contractors. The focus of this conference was how to overcome seven perceived gaps, defined by these groups in a recent survey, between all sources of training and education available and the learning or preparation requirements of USG personnel, contractors, and others supporting complex operations throughout the world, in particular, stability operations.

Just to be clear on this, stability operations are defined by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and DoD as “operations that are conducted (by the U.S. military) in coordination with other instruments of power to reestablish and maintain a safe and secure environment (in a location outside the U.S.) and provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief...”¹ These operations can be distinguished from both purely private or commercial efforts, outside of any partnership with the U.S. military, to provide security or relief abroad as well as any domestic efforts to respond to U.S. civil relief, civil defense, or natural disaster needs on the home front.

When I discovered this, as a member of the DISAM faculty, I was immediately overjoyed – not because I revel in the thought of poorly planned or executed stability operations, but because I instantly realized that of the seven specific educational/training gaps identified in the survey, DISAM could help in a significant way, to overcome at least six of these gaps. In the remainder of this article, I’ll show just how DISAM can help DoD and other USG personnel, as well as some contractors and even foreign organization or foreign nation representatives, to fill these gaps. Before I do this, for those of you who have never heard of DISAM, I offer the following brief description of our institution: DISAM is a DoD facility located on Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, that offers professional programs designed to provide practical training and education, as well as research and other support, for those involved in the implementation of U.S. security assistance (SA) and security cooperation (SC) activities.

The first gap listed in the executive summary of this survey, distributed at the conference, concerned creating a “whole government/whole community” approach for dealing with complex operations. In other words, how can the USG create good communications and cooperation among its own agencies, while simultaneously partnering with NGOs and others outside the government, to coordinate organizational training and doctrine, programs, qualification standards, etc., in order to promote effective preparation and teamwork? DISAM’s activities directly support this objective. We teach how U.S. embassies, military departments, DoS bureaus and offices, and commercial contractors function and work together, and what different government agencies are represented on country teams. To support our classroom instruction, we regularly invite foreign government representatives, university professors, and senior USG officials as guest speakers in several of our resident courses. The DISAM Journal, published quarterly, shares advice and information on education, training, and current developments related to SA and SC. Our website provides up-to-date, electronic copies of DISAM, DSCA, and other agency publications, direct links

1. Robert M. Perrito (ed) and others, *Guide for Participants in Peace, Stability, and Relief Operations*, United States Institute for Peace Press, Washington, DC, 2007

to other agencies, and an “Ask and Instructor” (AAI) feature, where students can submit questions on complex subjects which are usually answered by faculty subject matter experts within two working days.

The second gap identified in the survey concerned making leadership and management courses available to provide appropriate “skill sets” to personnel, both military and civilian, supporting complex operations. DISAM offers 17 resident courses, as well as on-line courses and outreach activities (training team visits, publications, etc.), which target DoD, DoS, and other USG personnel, U.S. defense contractors, and foreign national students. The school strives in all these efforts to create a common understanding of U.S. laws and policies governing security and foreign assistance programs, as well as the variety of authorities and funding sources used to support these programs. This understanding is critical for those trying to stabilize post-conflict countries or areas overcome by natural disasters using SC and SA programs, such as the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET), and the Economic Support Fund (ESF). In addition, we provide hands-on training on the use of the Security Assistance Network (SAN), Security Cooperation Information Portal (SCIP), and other automated information management systems used to carry out SA and SC programs.

The third gap was perceived to be the lack of situational and cultural awareness related to complex operations, and the fourth gap noted that operators need to recognize and respect local or host-country capacities. DISAM helps to fill these gaps through blocks of instruction on cross-cultural communications and, as a part of our Security Cooperation Management Overseas (SCM-O) course, through our five different regional seminar programs (respectively, on Africa, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Pacific Rim) which introduce students to the culture, societies, economics, security establishments, and political systems of these regions. Cross-cultural topics are also currently included in other courses offered by DISAM.

A further gap addressed the need to develop coordinated public diplomacy, standardized lexicons and doctrine, and common communication channels and operational language. DISAM can assist in this objective through many of our programs and services, which support lasting relationships between different communities involved in SA and SC activities, and educate or inform our students from all of these groups on common, significant, and recognized policies, practices, and processes. In addition, our publications often include extensive terms/definitions annexes and our faculty members conduct continuous liaison with other USG and non-USG organizations, and incorporate information derived from this contact into our curriculum. We also keep up a sort of informal ‘lessons learned’ section in the AAI database, which keeps a record of past answers to questions submitted by our students, thus retaining the benefits of the extensive research performed to answer certain questions.

The seventh gap identified concerned professional development: the lack of career incentives available to encourage people from different organizations to obtain training and education related to complex operations. DISAM also offers something here. Some of our courses, both resident and non-resident, award International Programs Security Requirements (IPSR) certification, which is currently required by the Secretary of Defense for all DoD personnel engaged in international programs. In addition, some of our courses award Continuous Learning Points (CLPs) required for biannual professional certification of DoD acquisition personnel, and may also award Continuing Professional Education (CPE) units required for members of the DoD financial management workforce. On a broader level, DISAM’s SCM-O and our Security Assistance Management CONUS (SAM-C) course are both certified by the American Council on Education (ACE), which means successful completion of either course may provide graduates with up to three undergraduate college credits in supply chain management. DISAM programs are accredited overall by the Council on Occupational Education.

DISAM also administers, on behalf of DSCA and in support of the Security Cooperation workforce, a 12-month graduate-level studies program in partnership with Tufts University in Massachusetts which

culminates in the award of a Global Master of Arts degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. The particular program, called GMAP II is designed to provide an international affairs focused degree opportunity to DoD civilians, with some availability to military personnel, working in international affairs positions. For those selected serving in FMS funded positions, tuition and other expenses are covered within funds provided by DSCA to execute the program. DISAM has been serving a growing number of students in recent years, and with the increasing emphasis on DoD “soft power” activities, involving ever more complex requirements beyond basic combat operations, the importance of our training and education is also likely to continue to increase for years to come. For more information on what DISAM can do for you, check us out on our website, at <http://www.disam.dscamil>.

About the Author

Lieutenant Colonel James Toomey is currently Deputy Director of International Studies at the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management, as well as Director of European Studies and a contributor to its African Studies program. He has worked as a Sub-Saharan African (48J) Foreign Area Officer (FAO) for the U.S. Army for approximately ten years, with tours of duty at three U.S. embassies abroad including service as a Defense Attaché in Haiti and Liberia, and an assignment as the Chief, Central Africa Branch at the U.S. European Command (EUCOM). He possesses four degrees related to international business/political affairs, including master’s degrees from Columbus State University and the University of Florida, where he also obtained a certificate in African studies.