

# CLOSING THE LOOP: FOREIGN MILITARY TRAINEE (FMT)\* ADMINISTRATION

by

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The following is extracted from the most recent DISAM text, The Foreign Training Officer's Guide, developed for use in the FTO course, SAM-T. The text is scheduled to be available for issue to class T-5-82, 16-20 Aug 82. Initial distribution of one copy of the text will be made in July to the security assistance training community. Additional copies will be available from DISAM/DR at a cost of \$12.00 per copy.

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The objectives of the Security Assistance Training Program (SATP) and the administrative requirements associated with receiving and training foreign military and civilian personnel impose a set of duties common to all Foreign Training Officers (FTOs), and a core of accommodations which must be provided and actions which must be accomplished at all training installations. This is true regardless of the number of foreign trainees received annually or the number or duration of the courses they attend. However, when we add to these common factors the great diversity in the foreign trainee population in terms of age, technical background, rank or grade, education, religion, race, etc., it becomes obvious that establishing and conducting successful programs for administering and training foreign personnel at the installation level deserves detailed consideration, advance planning and preparation.

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## ACADEMICS

Liasion with the "schoolhouse" is an area which deserves much attention and which could benefit from increased emphasis at most installations. The initial contact should be on the basis of "we're in this together," and that is literally true. Regulations and instructions which apply to the FTO also apply to the academic side of the house, including the responsibility for the Informational Program.

The decision to accept FMTs into a particular course will have been made at the MILDEP or Major Command/Major Claimant level. Once the decision is made, there is no "we" and "they;" it is all "we". This relationship is not necessarily understood by everyone involved, and it will usually fall to the FTO to educate the educators as to their responsibilities--what they can and must do to make the program successful, and to establish liaison communications channels to be followed when students are present.

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\*Although there is some objection to the word foreign in Foreign Military Trainee (FMT), this is the most descriptive and widely-accepted term. Local usage may reflect Allied Student, or Allied Student Office instead of FMT or FTO.

Since the FTO is not usually part of the faculty or training staff, he will not normally be involved with curriculum content. He will, however, be responsible for monitoring student progress, and he can expect to field questions and comments about course content, pace, and method of instruction. The FTO should therefore become familiar with the range of courses FMTs will attend at his installation, the classrooms and facilities, instructional methodology and philosophy, to include OJT procedures.

The FTO should be prepared to brief the installation commander, and/or the school commandant and their staffs and faculty on the U.S. security assistance program, including IMET and FMS training, and the requirements of the DoD Informational Program. Additional information should be provided on the individual countries to be represented, including official language(s), religion, national and religious holidays (especially those for which students may expect to be excused from classes), and other relevant cultural aspects. The Background Notes published by the U.S. Department of State are an excellent source for such information. Among other information sources are the Culturgrams published by Brigham Young University.

It is better to risk insulting the intelligence of the already informed than to assume that all instructors and staff members already know or will take the initiative to research country and culture information on their own. A classic documented incident at one U.S. military training installation involved an instructor asking a Portuguese student what language he spoke and whether Portugal wasn't just a part of Spain, anyway! Needless to say the FMT was appalled and offended by the lack of knowledge demonstrated by the instructor.

Instructors must be convinced that teaching FMTs is as much a part of their job as teaching U.S. students. The instructors must also be made to realize that they can and do set the tone for the reception and integration of FMTs into classroom activities, and influence the attitude of the U.S. students. FMTs should be identified by name and country of origin on the first day of class; the instructor might also want to provide some brief background information. Every effort should be made to create an atmosphere of cooperation and concern, even when the FMT requires more attention or appears to demand more of the instructor's time in or out of class. Acknowledging important U.S. and foreign religious, military, and national holidays in class can accomplish the dual purpose of making the FMTs feel accepted and enhancing the other students' knowledge and awareness of other cultures. These informal "show-and-tell" activities can go a long way toward meeting the objectives of the Informational Program without leaving the classroom.

Security assistance training is conducted, for the most part, using courses designed to teach U.S. military personnel how to operate and maintain U.S. equipment according to U.S. procedures and standards or how to employ and deploy forces according to U.S. doctrine or strategy. With this background and the existing differences in military technology, skill requirements, and defense doctrines between the U.S. and the countries that furnish students, it is not surprising that the FMTs bring along different expectancy patterns and standards of achievement.

This leads us to examine some of the assumptions made about the FMTs. These assumptions may lead to dissatisfaction or disillusionment on the part of

instructors and U.S. students if they fail to realize that our objectives for providing training transcends learning objectives of a particular course.

The first such assumption is that the FMT is in the right course. Usually the FMT will be the first to claim that he is misplaced or that material being presented is over his head or beneath his dignity. In short, he may claim that the course is not what he thought it would be and not what his country is paying for. Such protestations should be listened to courteously and seriously; however, action should be deferred until the real cause of his anger or frustration is determined. Usually the course content is not the primary cause after all; dissatisfaction may result from his inability to compete favorably with others in the class, his lack of comprehension, or his unwillingness to put forth the required effort for whatever reason--cultural, personal, or political. Of course, he may be correct in his claim that he is in the wrong course. It is entirely possible that the wrong course was programmed. If this proves to be the case, then an attempt should be made to schedule another course through the MILDEP training agency in coordination with the overseas Security Assistance Organization (SAO). A secondary option is to leave him in the course to get whatever good he can out of it and hope the same mistake is not repeated next year. A third option (with the concurrence of the SAO and the student's country) is to disenroll him and send him home.

How did the wrong course get programmed? Easy. Remember that we are usually providing existing courses in one system (ours) to meet a similar but rarely identical requirement in another system. Basically, the trouble of incorrect course programming begins with incorrect information sources and inadequate pre-planning. To reduce or eliminate the potential problems, the SAO and/or the MILDEP should work with the foreign country to more precisely determine training requirements and then identify the course which appears to come the closest to meeting the requirements, based on course descriptions in the MILDEP formal schools catalogs. If this process is short-circuited at any point, i.e., programming without an adequate course description, or using the Military Articles and Services List (MASL) instead of the schools catalogs, then there is a greater chance of choosing the wrong course.

A second route to trouble is to assume that all FMTs are language qualified and meet all of the course prerequisites upon arrival at the training installation. Again, the SAO is charged with the responsibility of providing fully qualified FMTs for all programmed training courses. The following countries are exempt from in-country testing by the SAO: Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Denmark, Dominica, Ghana, Guyana, India, Israel, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Malaysia, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Netherlands. Only five countries--the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Canada --are exempt from English language testing. All students from countries other than these five must be tested or retested for English Comprehension Level (ECL) at their first CONUS training installation. The testing materials and procedures are provided by the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC) at Lackland AFB, Texas. In most cases, the FTO has been given this testing/retesting responsibility. There are four options to deal with FMTs who fail to achieve the required ECL when tested on site:

(1) Waive the requirement for individual FMTs and allow them to enter training as scheduled.

(2) Allow the FMT to start training but require and provide supplementary English language instruction.

(3) Disenroll the FMT and schedule English language training at DLIELC and subsequently reschedule training.

(4) Disenroll the FMT and return him to his country.

The choice of options cannot be made without coordination between the training installation and the appropriate MILDEP training organization; options (3) and (4) require coordination with the SAO to amend or rescind the Invitational Travel Order (ITO) to accommodate the difference in cost to be charged against the FMS case or the country IMET program. Option (1) is not authorized for countries exempted from in-country testing.

Concerning other specific prerequisites, the documents made available to the overseas SAOs must include a statement and/or explanation of the qualifications required so that these can be applied in the student selection process. If there are specific requirements which are not adequately explained in the formal schools catalogs, the MILDEP training organization should be informed so that they can make them known to SAOs, either through the annual training workshops conducted by the unified commands, or by message. This is an especially important corrective measure if the training installation has received unqualified FMTs in the past. As a preventive measure, the more information the SAO and the country have about a particular course, the more likely they are to select fully qualified FMTs.

Once the school or training installation receives notification that training has been scheduled for FMTs from a particular country, direct communication with the SAO is authorized. Specific course information and welcome packets or brochures on the installation and the surrounding community should be forwarded. Such communications also provide an opportunity to reinforce the course-unique prerequisites and to highlight areas which have caused problems in the past. As an example of problems which could have been avoided, on more than one occasion the U.S. Navy has received FMTs scheduled for underwater demolition training who could not swim. The premise behind the flow of specific information is that once the SAO is aware of all the prerequisites, there is a greater likelihood that fully qualified FMTs will be selected.

In the preceding paragraph the absolute need for direct and timely communication between the training installation and the SAO was established. The paragraphs which follow examine the role the SAO plays and its associated responsibilities.

There is a widespread myth that the SAO has little or no say in the student selection process. The myth continues to the effect that the students were selected not so much on need but rather as recognition of position or high governmental influence. Another part of that myth claims that selection for training in the U.S. is a reward for past performance. The bottom line to this myth is that no matter how well these trainees are educated, little or no knowledge will be transferred for the good of their country. We do not

deny that some political influence exists; however, it is a very limited practice, and if it does occur, such political choices are more likely to occur with candidates for the professional military education (PME) courses--the war colleges, command and staff level courses, and advanced career courses. In some countries the person selected to attend one of the PME courses is traditionally the outstanding graduate of the equivalent school in country. These FMTs are usually highly motivated and very competitive by nature; it is not unusual for them to finish at or near the top of their PME class in the CONUS.

In some instances the trainee selected is the most qualified candidate a country has to offer in a given career field or specialty, even though the individual may be lacking in terms of the course prerequisites. Where this is unavoidable, it appears prudent to accept marginally qualified FMTs in an attempt to meet demonstrated training requirements and begin building a cadre of technically proficient personnel. FMTs who are known to be academically or technically deficient, but who must be trained anyway, should be identified as such by the SAO to allow for waivers or special attention, or both.

The selection process, although never easy, is beset by still other problems. Assuming that the right course was programmed to meet a valid training requirement and a qualified student was selected, it may still be that the wrong person is receiving the training when viewed from the U.S. point of view. Some countries are inclined to send officers only for training, especially if it means a trip to the United States. This means that some fairly senior officers (in terms of length of service, if not rank) may end up attending courses designed for U.S. NCOs or enlisted personnel. If the SAO cannot influence the selection process in favor of the appropriate rank/grade, then the officer FMT selected will have to be informed that he will be attending classes with NCOs, and that he is expected to perform all assigned tasks associated with training, without deference to his rank. Further, the school should be advised of the rank and background of that FMT. It should be noted that a waiver will have been granted by the cognizant MILDEP to allow officers to attend enlisted classes. Requests for waivers in the opposite direction are not granted if U.S. NCOs would not be allowed in the course. Too great a spread in rank and the question of U.S. equivalent rank can cause problems which, in terms of protocol, can interfere with normal academic procedures, classroom relationships, etc.

The military departments encourage strict adherence to rank/grade prerequisites for military and civilian FMTs, but some waivers are granted, and sometimes the problem does not surface until the FMT arrives at the training installation. FMTs who just cannot or will not conform may be disenrolled and returned to their country at the discretion of the installation commander and/or the MILDEP training organization.

The third assumption is that all FMTs will meet "the same high standards of achievement demanded of U.S. students" in the same or similar classes. As noted above, there may be good and valid reasons why this will occasionally be not only a bad assumption but also an unrealistic expectation. Our security assistance objectives lead us to provide military articles and services, including training, to countries of varying degrees of technical sophistication and availability of resources, including personnel. On the whole, FMTs perform very well in competition with U.S. trainees when educational systems and

procedures are relatively familiar. However, if the educational methods differ radically from local practices followed by schools of lesser developed countries, some difficulties may arise. This is especially true among the lower ranking trainees who have had little exposure to modern methods. In these instances, considerable personal adjustment and adaptation must be made by the FMT. As an example, self-paced instruction may be confusing for the uninitiated student; further, our passion for following sequential steps and checklists may appear to be over simplistic. In any respect, these are the conditions that exist and must be accepted by the student if progress is to be made and some education derived from the course. If problems are identified early in the course, remedial work or assistance is called for.

In spite of the FMT's inability to perform, the country or cognizant MILDEP may make a strong case to retain him in the program. If so, a new set of circumstances confronts the school commandant or training installation commander. Possible results of these circumstances are the assumptions that the FMT and in turn his country would realize some benefit, however small, if he remains in the program; that the FTO will be required to do some reinforcement on the non-academic portion of the training; and that the instructors and other students in the course would be unhappy with the slowed pace of instruction or the additional instruction required.

The last assumption is twofold in nature and both aspects have already surfaced in the preceding pages. The assumptions are that attending the course in which he is currently enrolled is the student's only purpose for wanting to come to the U.S., and secondly that he is motivated to learn and anxious to be able to apply what he has learned when he returns to duty in his country.

Depending on age, marital status, experience, and degree of maturity, FMTs may exhibit a wide range of interest in the subject matter or training tasks to which they are exposed. If students are inattentive or restless, or if they appear to be unmotivated to perform up to the standards expected, consideration should be made of the possible causes for their indifference. Personal problems, loneliness or homesickness, financial hardships, difficulties associated with lack of comprehension due to language, terminology, or methodology are but a few of these possibilities. If the instructor or the FTO cannot motivate the FMT to participate and perform adequately, the matter may have to be referred to the senior FMT from his country, the Country Liaison Officer (CLO), if one is assigned, or through the MILDEP training command to the country attache or embassy officials. A conversation between the FMT and his country representative is usually followed by a marked improvement in motivation and performance. Second offenders may not be around to receive a diploma on graduation day.

Many training installations issue a certificate of attendance in lieu of the certificate of completion, or diploma, to indicate that the FMT did not, in fact, meet the U.S. standards of performance for a particular course of instruction. This option should be discussed with the school commandant and/or director of instruction, or dean. Being informed of this option may serve as additional motivation for FMTs, since they know that their supervisor or personnel officer back home will know the difference and anything less than a diploma may be unacceptable.

In analyzing some common assumptions and misconceptions, an examination has been made of some important points of contention between the FTO (and "his" FMTs) and the training side of the house. The FTO should take the initiative to establish and maintain liaison with trainees, making sure that the communications channels are open so that he can be informed at the first indication that an FMT is in trouble academically. Together, then, the FTO and the instructor or supervisor can work out a plan to head off the problem while the student can still overcome his difficulties.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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