

Contrasting Aims and Objectives of the International Military Education and Training (IMET) and the Foreign Military Sales Training (FMST) Programs

By

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From a purely military standpoint, no more is gained by providing training under IMET than could be gained if the same training were purchased under FMST. While the courses selected under IMET are military in nature, the justification for IMET and the long-range benefits of the program are to bring about effective and mutual beneficial relations and increased understanding between the United States and foreign countries and to increase the awareness of nationals of foreign countries participating in such IMET activities in the basic issues involving internationally recognized human rights. There is no question that the training also helps countries to improve their ability to utilize their resources, including defense articles and defense services obtained by them from the United States.

Except for the more developed countries, most countries use FMS training cases to support defense materiel purchases or other technically-oriented training. The benefits of such training are immediately and demonstrably evident to the country in the utilization of the material.

Most of the training accomplished under IMET might not be accomplished under an FMS-only training program. From a U.S. perspective, IMET is designed to foster non-systems related training. This is particularly so in the case of training in leadership skills which may be of value in higher positions in countries. Even in countries where economic hardship is not a critical factor, the higher cost of FMS training often causes foreign governments to look elsewhere for less costly training regardless of the level or type of training.

The IMET program can effectively accomplish its objectives only if it satisfies two criteria. First, like training obtained under FMS, the training must be perceived by the recipient country to be of utility to its armed forces. Second, unlike training obtained under FMS, IMET emphasizes War College and Staff College training and other professional leadership training.

From time to time, these criteria may result in conflict between the desires of the U.S. and the aims of IMET recipients. However, close planning with the country can lead to the resolution of any conflicting aims, resulting in a balanced program fulfilling both U.S. and country objectives.

Since its inception in FY 1976, IMET has emphasized professional development. In the pre-1976 period, grant training was primarily related to the hardware supplied under the former grant materiel program. While the training received by and the ultimate benefits accruing to today's grant training recipients are still military in nature, the program has broader benefits.

Improving and sustaining military-to-military relations between the U.S. and the country remain the key considerations in determining a country's eligibility for IMET; and those relations remain a consideration in determining a country's IMET dollar level.

In the final analysis, however, both IMET and FMST enhance military professionalism and effectiveness and contribute to increased understanding and mutual beneficial relations between the United States and its friends and allies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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