

The U.S. Army Western Command's Program of International Initiatives: Genesis, Goals, and Growth

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GENESIS OF THE EXPANDED RELATIONS PROGRAM

In the postwar period, the United States dismantled WWII coalition arrangements in Asia and the Pacific only to see communism and insurrections debilitate Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In response, the United States established a network of mutual defense alliances and military assistance programs that provided equipment and training to allies and friends. A significant by-product of these programs was the good will and mutual respect resulting from combined training, personnel exchanges, and other army-to-army contacts.

However, as a result of American disillusion with the Vietnam War and the subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces, beginning in the early 1970's our security assistance programs in PACOM were steadily reduced. At the same time that U.S. forces were withdrawn from Vietnam, the U.S. Army activities in Thailand, Korea, Taiwan and Japan were also significantly reduced. In 1974, HQ, U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) was disestablished, leaving no Army headquarters to manage army-to-army activities outside of Korea and Japan. The irony of the situation soon became apparent when U.S. policymakers realized that the PACOM area contained some 12 million men and women under arms, of which fully 75% were ground forces. Regrettably, though, there was no longer any U.S. Army Headquarters which could interact and form working friendships with those Asian and Pacific soldiers.

What could not be erased by America's reduced interactions with Pacific armies was an enduring web of professional bonds and friendships which had been formed during the post World War II years. By the late 1970's, it was clear that those bonds needed to be invigorated with a new program of activities which would afford foreign middle grade and junior leaders new opportunities for shared professional military experience with American soldiers, just as their more senior colleagues had enjoyed.

THE GROWING SCOPE OF WESTCOM'S EXPANDED RELATIONS PROGRAM

The U.S. Army Western Command (WESTCOM) Expanded Relations Program (ERP) was initiated in 1978 to provide just such an opportunity for increased interaction among Asia-Pacific armies. Several ongoing U.S. Army activities, together with a number of new initiatives, were merged into a coherent, multifaceted, progressively phased program designed to accommodate each nation's interests. The new program soon consisted of reciprocal visits, personnel exchanges, conferences and seminars, on-the-job training and combined command post and field training exercises. Army-to-army dialogue enabled the U.S. Army to gain background knowledge, increase professional understanding, and indirectly contribute to the the development and modernization of ground forces in Asia and the Pacific. This exchange of professional information also serves the interests of Asian and Pacific nations by enhancing indigenous army capabilities, promoting self-confidence and mutual trust, and improving the ability of national armies to work together.

Pacific Armies Management Seminar. PAMS is the centerpiece of the Expanded Relations Program. Conducted on a nonpolitical basis, its purposes are to provide a forum for the

discussion of common military management problems in a professional environment, and to stimulate ideas and promote mutual understanding. Attendees are mid-level army managers, usually in the grade of lieutenant colonel and colonel, who are the potential future leaders of their nations' armies. Presentations and subsequent panels are designed to expose common problems to the widest range of tested or potential solutions, emphasizing techniques and methods used by attendees to resolve management problems.

The first PAMS session was held in Honolulu in September 1978 and involved eight armies. Since that time, the seminar has been held ten times in four countries, the last time in Hawaii from 27 February through 8 March 1986, when 120 delegates from 22 nations attended. Senior U.S. and friendly army leaders play key roles in each seminar session. WESTCOM normally co-hosts the conference with another country's army. Thirty nations have been invited to attend PAMS XI which will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, 27 November-9 December 1986. The seminar's theme is "The Army of the Future - Improving Effectiveness."

Reciprocal Visits. Reciprocal visits often constitute the normal first step in developing a country-to-country program of activities. Reciprocal visits result in better mutual understanding of organizations, roles, capabilities, and missions. Visits to allied and friendly countries show the U.S. Army's interest, allow the face-to-face interchange of ideas, and encourage further interactions.

Commander/general officer visits are usually conducted on an annual basis and involve interaction with incumbent ground force decision-makers throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Discussions generally focus on bilateral Army policy issues and positions, and a review of ongoing activities; these discussions then result in guidance and approval for the conduct of specific combined activities.

Senior staff visits are generally semiannual and consist of interactions with foreign officers charged with responsibility for policy formulation and program management. Staff or technical officer visits are made as needed to interact with those who supervise and administer functional programs and which, by their positions, represent potential future leaders. Such trips are usually in conjunction with exercises, conferences, surveys, or security assistance reviews.

Foreign army self-initiated visits are an important facet of the ERP. These visits not only broaden U.S. Army contacts and enhance mutual understanding, but build a foundation upon which many other activities may grow. Self-initiated visits normally include visits to army activities and installations, historic military locations, and local cultural activities. Such an all-inclusive program seeks to provide a well-rounded view of the U.S. Army and its environment.

Staff Information Exchange. U.S. Army Western Command participates in and sponsors various conferences, seminars, and staff liaison or exchange meetings designed to foster mutual understanding, build rapport, and exchange useful information with and among armies in the Asia-Pacific region. Information staff exchanges in the fields of intelligence, operations, training, logistics, communications and electronics, automation, military engineering, and acquisition management are conducted with foreign armies. The U.S. Army gains increased knowledge of staff and command procedures of the friendly armies involved, plus insight into the major professional issues under consideration in those armies, and practical experience in working with foreign staffs.

Individual Training. WESTCOM also conducts a variety of individual training activities with foreign nations--all designed to increase technical and tactical expertise and foster a sense of professional comradery. Activities include security assistance-related observer training (OBT), on-the-job training (OJT), overseas in-country training, officer, NCO, and enlisted exchanges, foreign area officer (FAO) training, and formal training at selected service schools.

(1) Observer training in Hawaii is both cost-and time-effective for Asia-Pacific army personnel. Many trainees stop in Hawaii in route home after CONUS classroom training, minimizing the incremental costs. Training can be in any area of the wide spectrum of U.S. Army expertise, and might include training opportunities with other U.S. services as well. In FY 1986, soldiers from the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Korea, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Thailand have trained in Hawaii under this program.

(2) **The Pacific Armies Look Exercise (PALEX)** is a short-term junior officer/NCO/enlisted exchange program between U.S. army personnel and the ground forces of allied and friendly armies. The program, which began in 1979, is designed for a duration of up to 3 months, giving participants an opportunity to contribute to the unit being visited, improve individual professional expertise, and get an "in-depth" feel for the foreign army and country being visited. The interchange of ideas, both professional and cultural, produces immediate tangible benefits as well as long-term value as these junior leaders rise to positions of greater responsibility in their own defense establishments. WESTCOM currently conducts individual exchanges with eight Asia-Pacific armies.

(3) **Foreign Observer Training Program (FORTOP)** is a joint WESTCOM-Pacific Air Force effort to provide visiting Army and Air Force officers with practical experience in joint air-ground operations. Thus far, 12 countries have participated in this program, to include Malaysia, Australia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, and Brunei. The most recent FORTOP involved 6 Indian Army and Air Force officers participating in a vigorous two week exercise.

(4) **Personnel Exchange Program (PEP).** The Personnel Exchange Program is a HQ, Department of the Army program designed to establish relationships with personnel of other nations, foster understanding, encourage mutual confidence and respect, and provide interesting and challenging duty. PEP is a 2-year exchange, with foreign PEP officers assigned to various stations in CONUS and Hawaii, while U.S. officers are assigned for a like period to each of the participating foreign countries. There are 26 U.S. Army PEP positions in Australia, two in Singapore, and a new NCO position will be created in Papua New Guinea in early 1987.

(5) WESTCOM coordinates directly with U.S. attaches and foreign armies to arrange for attendance by U.S. Army personnel at foreign staff colleges. These efforts have resulted in expanded attendance at foreign army schools in approximately nine PACOM countries.

(6) WESTCOM also monitors and assists FAO trainees in the long-standing FAO programs in Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, and Thailand as well as the more recent programs in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Unit Training. WESTCOM's unit exchange programs, initiated in 1972 by USARPAC, continue to expand and are managed as an element of the ERP. Unit exchanges provide firsthand experience to U.S. soldiers in working with foreign soldiers, broaden professionalism through exposure to environmental variety, and increase understanding of operational procedures through actual interaction with friendly armies. WESTCOM also conducts numerous small unit exercises in foreign countries--from exchanging companies with the Australian Army, to sending mobile training and logistics improvement teams to Thailand and the Philippines, participating in topographic surveys, and sending the 25ID(L) Band to Guam, Thailand, and Brunei.

Joint and Combined Training. WESTCOM currently conducts forty-two joint, combined command post and field training exercises in nine Asia-Pacific countries. The objectives of these exercises are to train U.S. soldiers and units, establish interface with foreign armies, and to train on a variety of terrains. Participation may consist of providing observers, player cells, or the

deployment of entire units. Exercises are conducted throughout the Pacific from platoon to division level.

Reserve Component Contributions. United States Army Reserve and National Guard individuals and units stationed here in Hawaii, in Guam, and in CONUS participate in virtually the entire spectrum of our Expanded Relation Program to include the Pacific Armies Management Seminars, exchanges and individual training, and combined CPXs and FTXs. WESTCOM is investigating ways of increasing the already extensive Reserve Component contribution to the success of the Expanded Relations Program. It is clear that without their participation, the ERP would have accomplished considerably less than it has.

RECENT INITIATIVES

WESTCOM has generated or facilitated a number of initiatives that are important to longer term U.S. interests in the theater.

a. WESTCOM has conducted staff visits to and participated in a U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command visit to India. Indian Army schooling opportunities are now afforded to U.S. Army officers, and Indian Army officers are scheduled to be trained in high altitude parachute operations by U.S. Special Forces personnel, both the result of WESTCOM's efforts.

b. WESTCOM is also involved in a number of U.S. Army initiatives with the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army (PLA). WESTCOM is represented in TRADOC seminars with the PLA, the next to be conducted in China in October, and in May 1986, WESTCOM hosted the first visit to Hawaii by the PLA Chief of the General Staff, General Yang Dezhi.

c. Other WESTCOM initiatives include extending PAMS invitations to 7 new countries, creating individual exchanges with 6 additional countries, adding 15 command post and field training exercises, and conducting reserve affairs seminars in three additional Southeast Asian nations.

CONCLUSION

WESTCOM's expanded Relations Program is an evolving one--acknowledging regional developments, the changing needs of allied and friendly armies, and our own training imperatives. In scope, variety, and frequency, WESTCOM's interaction with foreign armies has grown exponentially from eight countries in 1978 to more than 25 today.

Activities conducted under the Expanded Relations Program continue to create a positive atmosphere of American commitment to regional and international peace, stability, and friendship throughout the Asia-Pacific basin.