

LATIN AMERICA AREA STUDIES

General

The DISAM area studies program is an integral part of the Defense Security Assistance Management - Overseas Course (SAM-O). There are a total of five area seminars: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Middle East.

Our records indicate that more than 70 DISAM graduates have been assigned to the Latin American area following attendance in the DISAM SAM-O, SAM-C, and SAM-I courses. Furthermore, since the majority of these are graduates of SAM-O, they would also have participated in the Latin American area seminar.

Thrust and Scope

The thrust of the Latin American area seminar is directed toward an examination of the geo-political development, historical background, and strategic importance of the area and its environs. Students are given opportunities to examine the unique cultural aspects of the region and visualize how they will be able to adapt. On the technical side, current political trends and issues and specific security assistance programs are discussed.

The objectives of the seminar are to familiarize the students with the general characteristics of the country or region, its location, land, resources and people; provide a forum to discuss the political, economic, social and military institutions from a historical perspective; and offer a means to explore the inter and intra relationships of countries in the region and their interaction with U.S. foreign policy.



Major K. Dean Wilkins, USAF
Manager, Latin American Studies

A significant segment of the DISAM area studies program is the country specific study assignment. Students are required to examine U.S. and host country national interests, threat perceptions, and capabilities. The culmination of student participation is a 10-20 minute presentation in which they offer the results of their research in the form of a briefing for the other seminar participants.

Classroom Instruction

The seminar sessions are a careful blend of instruction given by DISAM faculty and guest lecturer from the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and colleges and universities. This wide base of regional expertise permits a dynamic discourse in which the students are encouraged to participate fully. Other sources of information are made readily available through films, TV tapes, and regional magazines and newspapers in both English and Spanish.

Our guest lecturers augment the resident faculty seminar instruction. In recent months we have had the honor of hosting discussions by: Mr. Robert Bruce, STATE/ARA; LTC John Child, Inter-American Defense College; LTC Rody Conway, USAIMA, Ft. Bragg, NC; Mr. Charles D. Corbett, Col, USA, Ret.; Dr. Robert J. Deger, Jr., Wright State University; Mr. Dan W. Figgins, Jr., STATE/ARA; Mr. Edward Long, STATE/ARA; Dr. Richard L. Millett, Southern Illinois University; Col Stuart M. Quigg, STATE/ARA; Maj Silvio J. Romero, Ft. Hood, TX; Mr. Joseph B. Schreiber, STATE/ARA; Dr. Caesar D. Sereseres, University of California, Irvine; Dr. Charles T. Vetter, STATE/FSI (Retired); Dr. Bynum E. Weathers, Jr., Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL.

Adding to our Latin American regional capability is the fact that five DISAM faculty members have served in the USSOUTHCOM region: Mr. Lee Bast, Colombia and Bolivia; LTC David L. Halse, USA, Guatemala; Mr. Michael L. Layton, Panama, Chile, and Bolivia; LCDR Larry E. Vaughan, USN, Panama; and Major Kermit D. Wilkins, USAF, Colombia.

Resource Materials

We are constantly seeking to improve our library resources in support of the area studies program. The emphasis is clearly on expanding our holdings of works produced in recent years on topics which are likely to interest DISAM students bound for overseas assignments in security assistance. To this end, we solicit your suggestions for materials we may have overlooked in scrutinizing available resources. Additionally, we are always happy to receive current country-specific brochures and publications, including Embassy post reports, MILGP/ODC/DAO sponsorship packets, etc. We are also happy to acknowledge that many of our graduates have already sent us much useful information of this type.

EPILOGUE

The presence of USSOUTHCOM on the Latin American scene emphasizes the continuing long-term interests of the United States in that region. Within this special feature, we have highlighted the role and mission of USSOUTHCOM with emphasis on its responsibility for security assistance program management. We also included some information and data which we felt were pertinent to an understanding of the scope of and issues associated with the Latin American security assistance program. Finally, our comments on the DISAM Latin American area studies seminar were designed to give the reader a better understanding of how we approach this aspect of our curriculum.

In closing, we offer our sincere appreciation to USSOUTHCOM Headquarters for sharing their story with our readers and also to Dr. Sereseres for allowing us to reproduce portions of his paper. We look forward to including similar special features on EUCOM and PACOM in future Newsletter issues.