
THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING (IMET) PROGRAM

By

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INTRODUCTION

The International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program is a grant aid, low-cost, low-risk foreign policy instrument that serves U.S. interest by providing a valuable channel of communication and influence with a significant elite, especially in the Third World.

SUMMARY

Since 1950, the IMET Program has reached some 500,000 officers and enlisted personnel from approximately 100 allied and friendly countries. [Approximately 100,000 additional personnel have been trained under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) training program.] Never before in history have so many governments entrusted so many personnel in such sensitive positions to the training of another government.

TYPE OF TRAINING

Most of these personnel have been trained in the U.S. in more than 2,000 different specialties -- from basic technical skills to professional military education -- calculated to advance the efficiency, professional performance, and readiness of the recipient armed forces.

SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES OF TRAINING

When the U.S. offers training to foreign military personnel on a grant basis, it demonstrates a continuing real and active interest on the part of the U.S. in the national security of the foreign country. At the same time, the foreign country may perceive the training as serving its political as well as military interest.

When a foreign country agrees to send its military personnel to be trained by the U.S., it casts a vote of confidence in the U.S. and its military institutions.

By attendance at U.S. military training institutions, foreign military personnel acquire the information and insight into U.S. military institutions and forces by which to base a decision as to the practicality of cooperation with the U.S. on military matters.

There are many ways to establish such relationships, but it is in the training environment that military-to-military relationships of enduring value

are made. When U.S. and foreign military personnel sit down to plan and undergo training together, the resulting mutual insight and rapport are of a different and higher order than relationships based on most other types of contact.

Training provides the necessary practical basis for that commonality of tactics, techniques, weaponry, and equipment which serves general world stability, and, if necessary, military cooperation in an emergency.

The IMET training and living experiences invariably have a positive effect on trainees. The currents of a pro-American attitude within the armed forces of trainees generally appear to be based on a successful training experience. The exposure to our society, the quality of instruction, and acknowledged U.S. leadership in certain fields play a big part in the formation of these pro-American ideas and orientation toward the U.S.

CRITERIA FOR DECIDING WHICH TRAINING SHOULD BE IMET AND WHICH FMS

The criteria for deciding which training should be IMET and which should be FMS is a joint decision between the United States and the foreign government recipient.

Given that training has the purpose of satisfying a recipient's need while promoting U.S. foreign policy, the selection of courses for either IMET or FMS funding is not arbitrary. In an IMET program, every attempt is made to select those courses that best meet the perceived needs of the recipient country, based upon a candid discussion of that country's need, the United States' perception of those needs, available resources, and U.S. objectives. In an FMS training program, the recipient country selects the preferred training based, for the most part, on its perception of need and objectives.

While the majority of U.S. training of foreign military personnel is now acquired under FMS, IMET continues to make contributions which only a grant program can make. For example: a country of importance to the U.S. may not have the money to pay for the training; a country with little or no previous contact with U.S. military institutions, not considering purchase, might be inclined to accept grant training; or a country with limited means might be persuaded, on the basis of experience with IMET, to seek additional training under FMS.

ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF "PROFESSIONAL MILITARY" TRAINING AND ITS SUITABILITY FOR PRIMARY EMPHASIS IN IMET

U.S. perception of what constitutes professional military training may not be in agreement with the recipient country. It is not in the U.S. interest to complicate the achievement of a desirable IMET objective by arbitrarily categorizing professional military training for all countries.

The recipient country may feel a more pressing need for a particular skill as compared to training which the U.S. Military Departments include under "professional military education" (PME). This includes advanced

courses, resources management and logistics training, and the command and general staff and war colleges.

For most new IMET developing countries, PME may include leadership or force development training commensurate with the level of sophistication appropriate to the countries' development. Other countries, however, may necessarily be confined to "professional military" courses only. For example, a country may have no other involvement with the U.S. security assistance program other than IMET. Therefore, at best, it would be of marginal utility to send personnel from such a country to a "skill" course involving equipment.

Therefore, for working purposes, "professional training" can be defined in terms of the types of capabilities provided to, or improved on, in the recipient's armed forces. Thus, a definition might be: "That training designed to provide or enhance leadership and the recipient force's capability to conduct military planning, programming, management, budgeting, force development, and operations to the level of sophistication appropriate to that force."

NATION-BUILDING AS AN IMET OBJECTIVE

The concept of "nation-building" is an important security assistance objective but is generally not a primary IMET objective. Nevertheless, it is an important by-product of the program.

Nation-building is a proper consideration in selecting specific courses for training under IMET as long as nation-building is not the primary goal or purpose of the training.

As in the U.S. during the early development of the West, and with the education and training of personnel who have served in the armed services, IMET provides a cadre of professionals and technicians in different occupations.

EFFECTS ON SECURITY, STABILITY, AND INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

There is no evidence that U.S. training ever induced a participating government to undertake a military adventure against a neighbor.

There is no evidence to support the assertion that IMET trains military officers to overthrow constituted civilian authority.

There is no evidence that IMET favors "dictatorial" over "democratic" regimes.

These extraordinary events are determined almost wholly by internal forces which are deeply rooted in the history and culture of a country.

The impact of training is usually in the direction of a more professional and less political military establishment. The training itself is essentially

professional and nonpolitical, reflecting the U.S. tradition of civilian supremacy, and instrumental rather than policy role of the military.

In addition, each foreign military trainee attending courses in the United States is given the opportunity to participate in the DoD Informational Program.

-- This program takes advantage of the foreign military trainees' presence in this country to give them a better appreciation of American values.

-- It does not compete with other U.S. cultural programs.

-- Its objective is to assist trainees in acquiring a balanced understanding of U.S. society, institutions, and goals in addition to their military experience while in the U.S.

-- It helps trainees to adjust to the United States and their training environment.

-- It includes visits to private homes, local industries, industrial and cultural exhibits, farms, educational institutions, historical points of interest, sports events, and civic activities.

-- Similarly, visits are arranged with municipal, state, and federal officials, political party leaders, the Courts, labor unions, chambers of commerce, newspaper and other media personnel, etc.

-- The program, coupled with the trainees' daily exposure to the free media and the American people, constitutes a most effective means of furthering a better understanding of the U.S. commitment to the basic principles of internationally recognized human rights.

EFFECT ON INTERNAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The associated technology, management and technical skills, and the increased trained manpower flowing from the IMETP has had a positive effect on the economies of IMET recipients. In addition, this has also stimulated "nation-building" which, in turn, has encouraged economic development.

WHY CONTINUE IMET?

There is a continuing U.S. need -- with each generation -- for the special benefits which come from training selected foreign military personnel in U.S. military facilities.

In addition to transmitting military skills and instruction in U.S. military doctrine, IMET also assists in the pursuit of U.S. policy objectives by providing significant opportunities for communication with the civilian and military leadership of other countries.

As a grant program, IMET gives the U.S. an important role in influencing the selection of individuals to receive the training.

The benefits to the U.S. justify a policy of providing training on a grant basis in cases where FMS purchase is not expected.

The program provides an alternative to USSR military training or reduces indigenous country dependence on the USSR.

The program favors U.S. interests by exposing a significant sector of present and future military leaders -- especially among developing nations -- to U.S. values. As in the past, these students will most likely hold positions of influence or prominence in their countries.

CONCLUSION

The success of IMET is indicated in: the large numbers of students committed voluntarily to the U.S. armed forces for training; the sensitive positions to which many of these students are destined; and the number of countries adopting the tactics, techniques, and principles of the U.S. military.

There is perhaps no better way to convey the success of IMET than by noting the large number of IMET graduates who have gone on to occupy positions of influence and importance. In 1978, 47 U.S. diplomatic missions identified over 1,000 personnel holding prominent positions and almost 1,200 holding flag rank in the five-year period FY 1974-78.

The success of IMET can also be seen in the number of countries which, after experiencing U.S. military institutions through IMET, are willing to purchase training. Moreover, as already noted, never before in history have so many governments entrusted so many influential and potentially influential people to the training of another government.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Spiro C. Manolas is Staff Assistant, Plans Directorate, Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA). Dr. Manolas has 29 years service with the US Government, including five years with the US Army. More recently he served 18 years with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA) and DSAA. Among the DSAA positions held was Chief, Foreign Military Training. Assignments outside ISA/DSAA were in the Immediate Office of the Secretary of Defense, Air Force Systems Command, and the Joint US Military Advisory Group in Greece. In addition, he's a 1973 graduate of the National War College. His civilian education includes a BA from Norwich University (1949) an MA (1951) and PhD (1960) from Boston University.
