
DISAM SAM-CR Development Effort Awarded

By

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The American Society of Military Comptrollers, Aviation Chapter, has recognized the “FMS Case Reconciliation and Closure Course Development Team” for “outstanding contributions to the financial management community during FY2000.” The citation, which accompanied the “Team Achievement Award,” is summarized below and speaks highly of this cooperative effort and all those involved. Sadly, only twenty team members could be cited by name, but the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) wishes to offer congratulations to the dozens of MILDEP, and DoD Agency personnel who worked tirelessly to make this effort a success. DISAM also wishes to acknowledge the efforts of Lieutenant Colonel Tim Edem, Air Force Institute of Technology, for his assistance in developing and processing the nomination documents.

In an extraordinary effort, the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) put together a cross-service, interagency team of financial professionals to develop a course that addresses the need for financial reconciliation of foreign military sales (FMS) cases in record time. This effort is worthy of recognition because of the involvement of not only all military services (USAF, USN, USA, USMC), but also several other government agencies.

Over the years, increasing attention from the military departments and DFAS, not to mention the State Department and the foreign purchasers, has been focused on the impact of untimely FMS case financial reconciliation and case closure. Each military service has unique computer databases that must be reconciled internally. Information that is passed to DFAS then must be reconciled with the DFAS-managed FMS trust fund. Since FMS cases involve not only procurement items, but also logistics support and personnel services, there are many reporting requirements from several different offices. In addition, careful attention must also be paid to the unique control processes and surcharges involved when dealing with non-appropriated security assistance funds. The costs in terms of personnel resources, unnecessary cash commitments, and unmatched disbursements have been significant. Case closure inhibitors are well documented, and a key one was the lack of training for financial personnel.

DISAM convened an initial planning meeting in July 1999 to develop strategy, methodology, schedule, and the roles and responsibilities of all participants. A training effort of this magnitude was significant in that it required a cooperative team from the military departments, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service Denver Center and field sites at Wright-Patterson AFB and St. Louis, Defense Security Cooperation Agency comptroller, a DoD contractor in support of the USAF, as well as several members of the DISAM faculty and management. Due to the unique nature of each department’s data systems used to track and monitor FMS case performance from development through closure, it was determined that the majority of course hours be conducted in service unique seminars utilizing a hands-on instructional methodology.

DISAM provided overall course objectives, developmental direction and assistance to the service seminar leaders, and completely developed the introductory blocks of the course (i.e. introduction, FMS process and financial overviews, data automation overview/update). DFAS-AW/DE developed a block of instruction on case closure from their perspective. The services and implementing agencies developed objectives and training materials for each seminar, with DISAM assistance as desired. The result of this intense, multi-agency effort was the creation of

a four and one-half day course in the requirements, methodologies, and tools for successful financial reconciliation and closure of FMS cases.

Foreign military sales administrative account funds were used for course development, primarily for the meetings and conferences. DISAM provides the funds for student travel/per diem for attendance at two annual SAM-CR courses in residence at WPAFB. DISAM also provides the funds for instructors and guest speakers only for one SAM-CR on-site course for each service per year. SAF/IA provides the funds for their contractor's effort.

To date, three resident course offerings have been completed (April 2000, July 2000, April 2001), and eight on-site classes have been conducted. A total of 432 students attended the classes in 2000 and 2001. A copy of the current SAM-CR course description is available on the DISAM web site (disam.osd.mil).

Feedback is solicited to improve or modify the curriculum in two fashions: end of course student surveys/critiques, and subjective evaluation by the DISAM instructors, service seminar leaders, and DSCA and DFAS personnel. Students overwhelmingly note significant improvement in their own skills, abilities, and knowledge of tools for reconciliation and closure. This was even more pronounced in later offerings where students were less experienced. Perceptions of 200-300 percent improvement were not uncommon. On average, student evaluations of all blocks of instruction are exceptionally high.

Informal feedback from affected DoD agencies has been exceptionally positive in terms of productivity of course graduates. Statistically, FMS cases continue to be closed at an accelerated rate, but at this time, there is no quantifiable evidence of a correlation with attendance at this course. An indication of the effectiveness of the class is that the requests for additional classes have exceeded the instructor availability, and a waiting list has been created.

This course is an excellent example of across agency teamwork to meet an educational objective in the furtherance of military financial management and comptrollership.