
International Military Education and Training Program The Slovenia Experience

By

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Introduction

The Republic of Slovenia, independent since June 25, 1991, is situated at the juncture of four major European regions: the Alps, Hungarian plain, Karst and Mediterranean. It occupies an area slightly larger than New Jersey, and borders Austria, Hungary, Croatia and Italy. Its capital is Ljubljana, which is also the largest city in the country of two million people.

The heart of
Ljubljana, the capital
of Slovenia.



Between the end of the World War I and 1991, Slovenia was one of the six republics of Yugoslavia. When it declared its independence, after a national referendum, the Serbian-dominated government ordered the Yugoslavian National Army (JNA) to keep Slovenia in line. The plan was for the JNA to take over the border crossings to cut Slovenia off from the rest of the world, disarm the territorial defense force (a predecessor of the Slovene Armed Forces) and force the Slovenian government to abandon all activities aimed at establishing an independent and sovereign state.

Some brief fighting took place in which the people of Slovenia showed that they stood by their decision firmly and were ready and willing to defend it. The territorial defense force (TDF) and police won the battle for the border crossings, stopped deployment of the JNA, and blocked their barracks to cut them off from supplies. After the “ten-day war” and subsequent peace declaration, the last JNA soldier left Slovenia in October of 1991. Unlike Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and recently Macedonia, Slovenia was able to maintain a peaceful status.

Slovenia is nowadays one of the most successful countries in transition from socialism to a market economy. It boasts a stable growth of gross domestic product per capita of \$10,078 in 1999, and ranks among the countries with the lowest degree of risk for international investment.

Slovenia is a parliamentary democracy, and its constitution dates to December 1991. The head of state is president of the republic, elected every five years, for a maximum of two five-year terms. The president is commander-in-chief of the Slovenian armed forces. The current president, Milan Kucan, was elected in November 1997 for the second time. The legislative authority is the national assembly (parliament) with ninety deputies. The executive branch is the government appointed by the national assembly. Slovenia had its third parliamentary elections since independence on October 15, 2000. A political party, Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, which has shared power much of the time since Slovenia’s independence, won again. The current government is a coalition of the aforementioned Liberal Democracy, United List of Social Democrats and two other small parties.

The main Slovenian foreign policy goal is integration into the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Although widely considered to be a first round candidate for NATO expansion, Slovenia was passed over for membership during the July 1997 Madrid Summit. It still has a reasonable chance of being invited to join NATO, however, if further expansion rounds occur at the planned NATO summit in 2002. If the membership in NATO is still somewhat uncertain, it is just a question of time until Slovenia becomes a member of the European Union. There are ongoing negotiations and a harmonizing of Slovenian legislative, political and economic systems with the European Union. The European Union will start accepting new members after 2002 and the intention of the Slovenian government is to be among the first to gain full membership.

Slovene Armed Forces

The beginning of the Slovene Armed Forces (SAF) coincides with the beginning of Slovenia as a sovereign state. The Slovenian military tradition, however, goes back to the 7th century, to Carinthia, the first Slovenian state. The roots of SAF lie in the territorial defense force established in 1968. The TDF was a constituent part of the Yugoslavian National Army. It was established after the aggression of Warsaw Treaty members against Czechoslovakia, which was a clear sign to the Yugoslav political and military leaders that Yugoslavia needed stronger and more efficient armed forces. In Slovenia the commanding language was Slovene, while in the Yugoslavian National Army it was Serbo-Croatian. Over the years however it became more and more obvious that Serbia’s ambition was to rule over all Yugoslavia and subsequently the distrust of the Slovenian TDF grew, culminating with the first democratic elections in 1990 in which the

opposition won. Shortly after the Yugoslav government issued an order to the Slovenian TDF to disarm, only a few commanders obeyed it. On the contrary, the development of the Slovenian TDF was accelerated and together with the police troops it played a crucial role in the ten-day war for independence.

The basic mission of the Slovene Armed Forces is primarily to deter a possible enemy from an armed intervention against Slovenia and, secondly, to defend the country. By taking an active role in peace support and other multinational activities, the SAF contributes to the security and stability of the region.

Command and control principles of the Slovene Armed Forces are determined by the constitution and the defense law. The president of the Republic of Slovenia is the commander-in-chief of the Slovene Armed Forces. The minister of defense, who is civilian, tasks the Chief of the General Staff and through him the unit commanders execute the orders.

The Slovene Armed Forces are not divided into separate military services but are unified. Service in the SAF is based upon conscription. The SAF is currently engaged in a far-reaching reorganization that includes a significant restructuring of the peacetime and wartime personnel composition of the force, which is in accordance with Slovenia's strategy of approaching NATO. The program is to be completed by 2010. The final goal is a small, yet well armed, trained and highly effective, mainly professional, armed force. As a part of the planned reorganization, the number of conscripts will gradually decrease from 9,000 conscripts per year to approximately 3,000. However, the personnel component consisting of professional soldiers will rise from the current level of 4,650 to 11,000. The wartime strength is programmed to drop from the current 57,000 to about 33,000.

United States Foreign Policy Objectives in Slovenia

From a regional perspective, bilateral relations between the United States and Slovenia are key. The Balkans has proven to be a contentious region for over a decade and as a peaceful middle-income democracy, Slovenia is a stabilizing factor in this crisis-ridden area. The United States seeks to encourage Slovenia's continued political and economic transition to a full-fledged Euro-Atlantic partner. As a partner, Slovenia serves as a bridge between East and West, and plays a central role in exporting peace and stability to southern Europe. Slovenia's major advantage in promoting peace in this area is that its military and civilian officials are familiar with the cultural, historical, social, political, and geographical foundations of all the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Undoubted evidence is the fact that Slovenia was chosen as the site of the first meeting between United States President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The primary objectives of U.S. military assistance in Slovenia are to promote stability, reduce the likelihood of further armed conflict, and promote democracy, civilian control of the military, and military professionalism, as well as further develop a strong bilateral military-to-military relationship and prepare the Slovenian military for integrating into NATO.

Mission of the Office of Defense Cooperation in Slovenia

The mission of the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) in Slovenia is to achieve the above listed United States foreign policy and national security objectives through various security assistance programs:

- International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program
- Foreign Military Sales

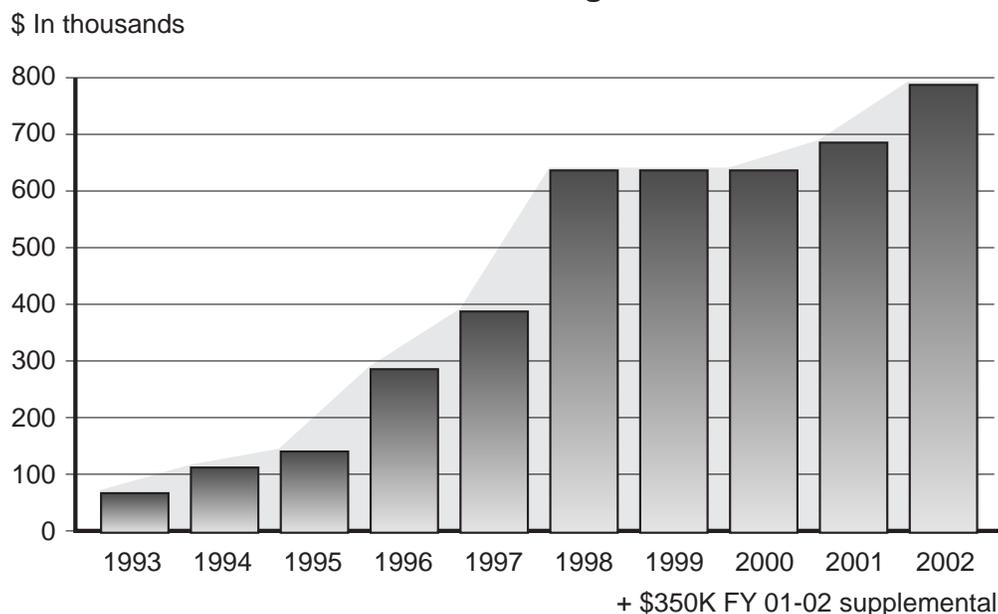
- Other training opportunities

Assisting the Slovenian Ministry of Defense in acquiring equipment and training through foreign military sales (FMS) and foreign military financing (FMF) programs, will help in creating greater interoperability and standardization with NATO partners. The ODC is in an excellent position to increase U.S. influence because the IMET program provides training opportunities that strengthen the professionalism and leadership skills of Slovenia's military personnel. The Expanded-IMET (E-IMET) program provides excellent training opportunities for mid-to-high level civilian personnel and further strengthens a productive civil-military relationship.

The Office of Defense Cooperation is located in the Ministry of Defense (MOD) in Ljubljana and is staffed with one active duty Army officer who is in charge of overall supervision and executing FMS and FMF programs, and two foreign service nationals, one responsible for coordinating training and managing the office budget and the second responsible for administration and managing the day-to-day budget. While the ODC opened in 1996, Slovenia has been eligible for IMET funds since 1993. For three years the program was managed from the ODC in Austria. Both IMET and the FMF programs have grown substantially in the past few years. The IMET, which started with a modest \$75,000 in 1993, has in nine years grown more than fifteen times (\$800,000 in "regular" IMET in fiscal year 2002 and \$350,000 in emergency supplemental funds). The FMF program has increased significantly as well, from \$400,000 in its initial fiscal year 1996 to \$2.5 million in fiscal year 2001.

Apart from the security assistance programs, the ODC is responsible for two programs, which belong to the Defense Attaché's office, but are managed similarly to IMET and therefore are run from the ODC. These are the nominations for the Marshall Center for Security Studies in Garmisch, Germany and the U.S. service academies. The service academies have been a true Slovene success story. Every year that Slovenia has nominated candidates at least one has been offered an appointment. This year two out of four nominated for West Point have been offered appointments.

IMET Funding



The Specifics of the IMET Program in Slovenia

Security assistance programs cannot be managed according to some generic formula, but must take into account specifics of the respective country.

One of the characteristics that governs implementation of the IMET program in Slovenia is tight civilian control over the military. All members of the armed forces are considered civil servants and subject to national civil service regulations and associated personnel policies. These policies establish personnel hiring levels, salaries, retirement conditions, and pensions. Several systemic issues have developed due to the inclusion of military personnel in the civil service and influence the execution of our programs.

The IMET students are typically chosen for U.S. training based on the training and educational requirements of their current positions. When the students return from the U.S, they usually return to their previous jobs. Most students return to Slovenia with high praise for the courses they attended and with the expressed intent to implement lessons learned. However, as mentioned, the personnel and legal system currently in place does not always allow the freedom for returning IMET students to carry through with this good intent to implement change.

The second characteristic that affects implementing of IMET in Slovenia is a small student pool. Only professional officers, noncommissioned officers and Ministry of Defense civilian employees can be trained through IMET. The program is not open to reservists.

Only one third of the 4650 officers and noncommissioned officers are eligible to participate in the IMET program. The second source of students is the Ministry of Defense. Their employees are mostly eligible for E-IMET courses. From its 1650 employees, half are eligible to attend training abroad.

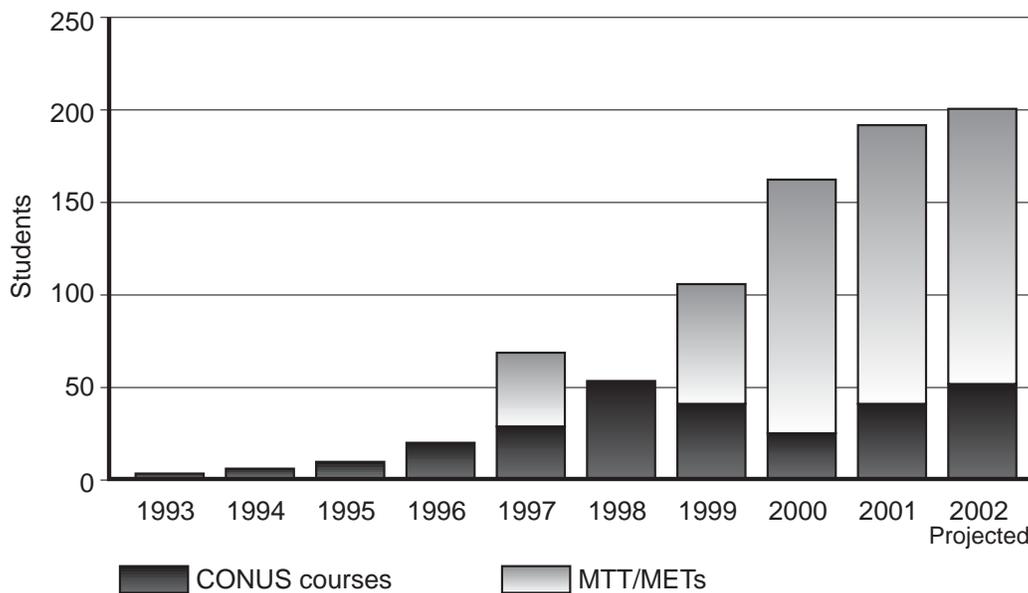
There are two main reasons for such a low percentage of eligible candidates on both the civilian and military sides. The first one is the English language requirement for training in the U.S. Even though English is taught in elementary and high schools, years later many candidates cannot function in English and their English Comprehension Level (ECL) is around 50. Since they are often tested only a few months before the training, there is no time to improve their English to the required level. On the other hand, many officers who received their professional military education in Yugoslavia did not learn English at all.

The second reason is the educational requirement. According to the internal regulations, every person who is supposed to go temporary duty (TDY) abroad for longer than one month has to be approved by the internal personnel board within the MOD's personnel department. They check if a candidate meets all the prerequisites, the U.S. course requirements and, even more important, internal MOD requirements. A few years ago, the then-Minister of Defense set a very strict rule, a person who wants to go TDY abroad has to first meet the educational requirements listed in the job description of the position for which they occupy. At first glance, the rule seems very reasonable, but the problem is that the same rule did not apply when the personnel presently occupying the affected positions were recruited. Slovenia has built its military from scratch. Many came from the territorial defense force, some from JNA; many new officers were recruited from the civilian sphere. In those days formal education was not the most important criteria for becoming an officer. Later on, however, the policy changed. One would expect that the officers recruited before a certain year would be granted exceptions, but this is not the case. The rule applies to all. Now many officers study part time to complete their undergraduate degrees in order to become eligible for promotion and training abroad.

Unlike the U.S., Slovenia has no separate military justice system, so young officers and noncommissioned officers trained under the U.S. system have limited powers of authority to act once they return home. This can cause frustration when these students return from IMET training and try to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills. That is the main reason why Slovenia nearly completely stopped sending their noncommissioned officers to IMET training even though the establishing of a professional noncommissioned officer corps is one of the Slovenian Armed Force's priorities.

One of the biggest challenges the program faced since the beginning of the program was the fact that there was no single Slovene office having oversight of all IMET activities in Slovenia. This caused many cancellations in the past since supervisors did not need to justify the cancellations to an overall manager of the program inside the ministry. The number of cancellations, especially those late enough to incur cancellation penalties, was increasing drastically until a single responsible office was designated – the MOD personnel department. That year therefore saw a tremendous improvement in the efficiency of the Slovene IMET process. Fortunately, the MOD personnel department is aggressive and holds other offices accountable for timely submission of training candidates' names and timely English language testing. We have also started to see several courses with alternate students named ahead of time. There have been limited course cancellations and only one cancellation penalty so far in fiscal year 2001.

IMET Students

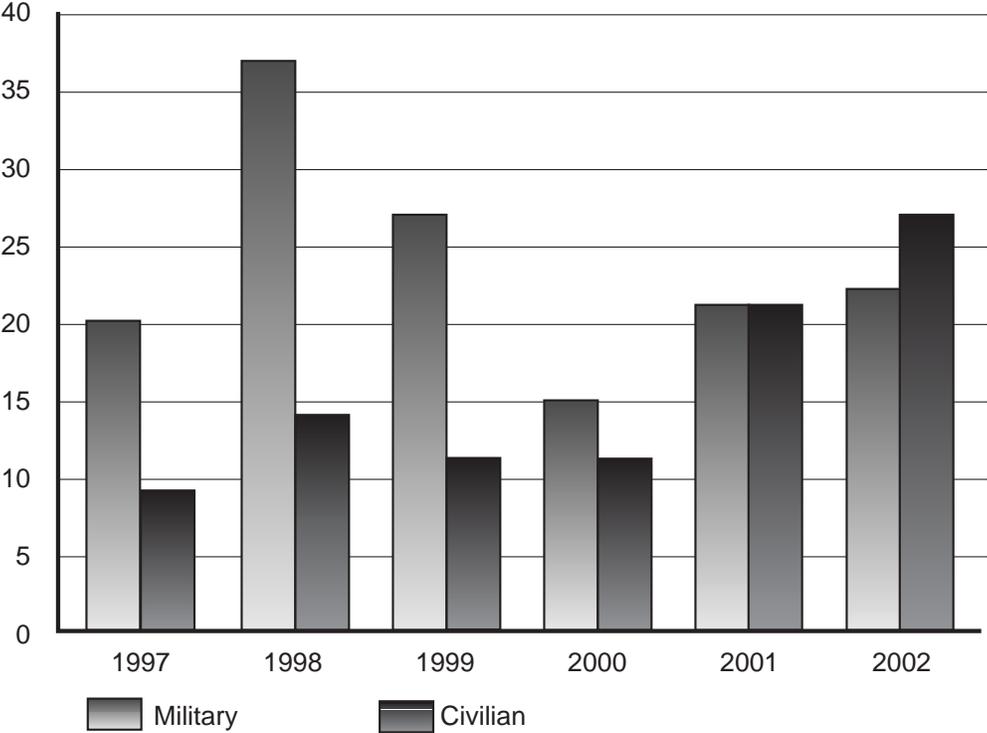


Information about IMET and the training opportunities it offers is not always disseminated down the chain of command to the units, but is kept in the general staff. This is not the case in the MOD. The ODC feels that many commanders outside the general have limited knowledge about the IMET program. This is one of the reasons why the ratio between civilians and military attending IMET is slowly but surely shifting in favor of the former. An important cause is probably also the simple fact that the MOD is at one central location, whereas the military is spread throughout the country.

The IMET program is often advertised as a full scholarship. In Slovenia, IMET covers the course cost as well as travel and living allowance. The only exceptions are non-E-IMET courses

shorter than eight weeks. For those, Slovenia pays the airfare. But there is a Slovene law that requires the Ministry of Defense to pay each student who travels abroad a Slovene-funded per diem, regardless of the per diem received from IMET. Per diem for the U.S. is in the most cases \$60.00 a day. When meals are provided, a student is entitled to 20 percent of the total per diem. The MOD interpreted the law so that they give for the weekdays “the meals provided rate” (\$12.00 a day) and on weekends full per diem. This means that one month of training through IMET costs the Slovenian government \$745. All IMET students are also entitled to one round trip ticket for the visit of immediate family members if the training is longer than four months. The students continue to receive their salary. IMET training therefore represents a certain financial burden for Slovenian government and has to be planned for in advance. This is one of the reasons why Slovenia cannot act rapidly and send students to IMET courses on short notice, such as when another country’s course cancellation results in a school quota being made available.

Civilian and Military IMET Students



Since the ODC opened in 1996, Slovenia has had six Ministers of Defense. Every such transition brings changes down to the operational level. New personnel are not educated about U.S. security assistance programs, which can hinder their implementation. In fact, at one point a new head of one of the departments within the MOD cancelled all the IMET training his predecessor requested. The ODC has to therefore continuously ask for appointments with the senior officials to brief them and ensure they become aware of the value and importance of the program. Luckily, it takes little more than a single briefing to convince most officials that IMET is a great opportunity.

Up to now, the focus has been on the specifics of the IMET program in Slovenia which hinder its implementation. For a complete picture, positive aspects must be considered as well. Since the opening of the ODC, the communication with the MOD has been very open and productive. In 1996 we started monthly meetings with key IMET managers in the MOD and the general staff,

a practice that has continued to the present. The ODC, located within the MOD, has enjoyed easy access to these individuals at any time. IMET has unquestionably enhanced the professionalism of the Slovenian military and the Ministry of Defense. It has taught students a common language, as well as the principles used within NATO. Many of IMET students occupy the most influential positions within the SAF and the MOD.

Positions of Prominence and Courses Attended

Deputy Chief of Staff	Army War College
Head of Personal Staff	International Defense Management Course
Head, J-5	Senior Defense Management Course
Commander, 1st Operational Command	Air War College
Deputy Commander, 1st Operational Command	Senior Defense Management Course
Commander, 2nd Operational Command	National Defense University
Deputy Commander, 3rd Operational Command	Air War College
Commander 1st Brigade of Slovenian Armed Forces	Army War College
Defense Attaché	Army War College
Defense Attaché	Civilian and Military Strategy for Internal Development
Defense Attaché	Senior International Defense Management Course
Chief, Ministry of Defense	Executive Program in Civilian and Military Affairs
Director, Partnership for Peace Foreign Language School	Materials Development Course
State Undersecretary - Advisor to the Minister for Defense Planning	National Defense University

Slovenian students generally adjust very well to the American way of training and life. In fact, the ODC is to some extent even spoiled, since in most cases the feedback from the schools is positive. Slovenians are diligent, hard working students usually among the top in their class. Problems that often plague international military students such as medical or family issues are rarities for the ODC. Slovenes are also very happy to return home and not one has decided to “disappear” while in the U.S. Basically, after the students are briefed and issued the ticket, little is heard about them until they return home.

One big advantage of Slovenian students is a good English language proficiency stemming from the Slovenian school system. In Slovenia, English is taught in schools from the fifth grade of elementary school all the way through high school and in some cases at the university. Theoretically every one should easily achieve an English Comprehensive Level score of 80, typically the minimum for professional military education. Of course the reality is different. Many who have been out of school longer and have not practiced the language have forgotten most of it, but the younger generation is fluent. The SAF and MOD put a big emphasis on English language training and have an excellent in-country English language training program largely funded from Warsaw Initiative money, as well as IMET. It was certified by NATO in fiscal year 2001 as a Partnership for Peace language center and is now training military students from other partner nations. The Warsaw Initiative funds language training detachment coordinator and a three-person instructional mobile training team from the Defense Language Institute, as well as four teacher-contractors. All this is very well reflected in Slovenia’s IMET program. In many cases, students do not need to attend specialized English language training, because of the

excellence of the in-country training program. Naturally, there are exceptions, such as courses for which specialized English language is mandatory.

How to Fully Utilize IMET Money in the Future?

For the past three years, Slovenia had difficulty spending its allocated budget, because of the specifics of the program mentioned in the above paragraphs. In fiscal year 2001 however, other ways of spending IMET money were developed, and therefore, Slovenia came very close to fully utilizing its fiscal year 2001 allocation. Mobile training and educational teams have proven to be a very successful tool and an excellent alternative to training in the U.S. for several reasons:

- Training is tailored to Slovenia's needs
- Cost effective training (more students for less money)
- Training is short (one or two weeks), so students stay with their families
- Formal education is not a prerequisite for attending
- No per diem is paid from the MOD budget
- Knowledge of English is not required (IMET pays for interpreting)

Conducted with great success so far in fiscal year 2001 have been

- Regular IMET: Psychological Operations and Staff Procedures
- E-IMET: Quality Force Management, Legal Aspects of Peace Operations (both by the Defense Institute for International Legal Studies) and Examination of the Basis of Legitimacy of the Slovene Armed Forces (by the Center for Civil-Military Relations).

Most recently IMET money has also been used for in-country English language training. The in-country English language training has, up to now, been funded from FMF. But in fiscal year 2001 for the first time the FMF money has been allocated for other projects such as upgrading of Bell-412 helicopters and frequency management system, and IMET money had to be spent on English language publications, instructional MTTs and English language equipment. But here the ODC has to take into account that English language materials and equipment ordered through IMET are not free of charge for the Ministry of Defense. When the materials and equipment are handed over to the host government, they become subject to the payment of value added tax that is usually 19 percent of the total value. There is no way around this short of changing the law for even if given as grant aid, they are still subject to the Slovene value added tax.

Slovenia continues to put a high priority on senior professional military education courses, i.e., senior service schools and command and staff colleges. It also continually requests slots at the combat arms basic and advanced officer courses, although the request for fiscal year 2002 shows a decrease in the level of professional military education.

The ODC expects that Slovenia will continue requesting management related courses, especially from the U.S. Army Logistics Management College at Ft. Lee, the Defense Resource Management Institute, and courses taught at other schools that offer E-IMET training.

Technical and special training will continue to play a less important role in our program, at least for a few more years. The ODC believes Slovenia will also request one or two Ranger courses and some training for medical personnel in the future.

In Conclusion

The program's success does not depend only on the host country. The Office of Defense Cooperation is very well aware of the fact that despite the challenges and obstacles that stem from Slovenia's legal and political system and set certain limits on the implementation of the program, there is still much we can do to improve cooperation. We are constantly trying to find new solutions, especially in the area of better promotion of what IMET offers. The ODC home page address is <http://www.usembassy.si/new/ODC/index.html> where one can find all information about IMET, the purpose of the program, points of contact, and most importantly links to various schools as well as links to the courses that Slovenes most often attend. A link to our home page will soon be included also on the Ministry of Defense home page. We are also considering preparing a disk that will contain all the training catalogs that are now offered on-line. This way the offices without internet access can still receive information about training opportunities.

The ODC has conducted two informational briefings on IMET so far in fiscal year 2001: one to MOD supervisors and one to all cadre at the Headquarters Military Schools. The two briefings, which were in Slovene, resulted in numerous visits and phone calls to the office for additional information and specific course data, and the fiscal year 2002 plan reflects the success of such briefings. Recently the ODC chief received permission from the Slovenia chief of staff to brief uniformed military personnel at the Operational Command level. We hope that this will increase military participation in IMET.

The direction in which the program will go depends a lot on Slovenia's invitation to NATO in 2002. It is possible that the interest for the program will decrease if Slovenia is left out. On the other hand, the training requirements will grow if Slovenia becomes a member of NATO and starts purchasing major military equipment. This will of course shift training funding from IMET to FMS.

It is difficult to predict how the increase of professional forces as Slovenia transitions from a conscription-based to a professional-based military will affect the program up and beyond the year 2010. It is very realistic to expect however, that at least part of newly recruited will be sent to training in the U.S., financed either through IMET or national funds.

The IMET program in Slovenia has grown tremendously since the office was opened in 1996 not only in terms of funding levels, but also in terms of the level of sophistication of the training requested. The ODC office itself has gone a long way in learning about the program, see the next article "I Wish I Had Kown" in this *Journal* and our understanding has helped us to assist the Slovene Armed Forces in achieving its goals. We do not want to send students at any cost just for the sake of numbers. It is better a course be cancelled if the right person cannot attend than to send an inappropriate student. What is even more important is that slowly but surely more and more people know about the office and our programs. We have learned that sharing information is a key to success and is the reason we insist on making information about the training opportunities available to all the employees and soldiers.

The issues that the MOD and SAF confront affect the implementation of IMET. In order to successfully manage the program, it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of the host country military and defense system, their challenges, and strengths. A good training manager should be able build a bridge between theory and application between the guidance and instructions that govern the IMET program and the real life situation in the host country. Flexibility, readiness to

cooperate, and an open dialogue with the host government representatives are the keys for successful implementation of the IMET program.

About the Author

Irena Cufar is the IMET Manager and Budget Analyst in the U.S. Office of Defense Cooperation, Ljubljana, Slovenia. She has held these positions since the office opened in 1996. Ms. Cufar received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1996 from the University of Ljubljana, majoring in geography and history. She is a graduate of the DISAM Foreign Purchaser (SAM-F) and Overseas (SAM-O) courses. Irena has lectured on international military student training program management at the U.S. European Command's annual Security Assistance Training Seminar and U.S. Army and Navy annual International Military Student Officer conferences. Irena is fluent in Slovene, English, German, and Croatian, and reads Spanish.



Many are surprised by the beauty of the Slovenian Adriatic coast.

Not widely known in the U.S. Slovenia produces some of Europe's finest wines.

