
PERSPECTIVES

Is Expanded International Military Education and Training Reaching the Right Audience?

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A key measure of success of any governmental program is in its reaching the target audience. This is no different for an international grant aid program such as Expanded International Military Education and Training (E-IMET) which, as a segment of a broader International Military Education and Training (IMET) program is managed by the Department of Defense (DoD) with coordination and guidance from the Department of State (DoS). The program is authorized by the *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961* (as amended) with annual appropriations requested by the President and approved by the Congress.

The ratification of the *Government Performance and Results Act in 1993* provided the impetus for many government agencies to document the effectiveness of their programs. Heretofore many were counted as successful based on their efficiency of getting the job done, longevity, or perceived (but quantitatively undocumented) success. While the impetus is there, the mechanism of establishing performance measures with which to quantify effectiveness is both tedious and time consuming, especially for programs which are regarded as difficult to quantify at the outset.

In the case of IMET, it was determined that the DoD would be able to best start documentation with an evaluation of the “Expanded” arm of the program as a smaller, and more easily handled facet, whose performance measures may be proven and then implemented in the context of the entire IMET design. The General Accounting Office (GAO) proposed “the implementation of a mechanism to evaluate the Expanded IMET program.”¹

It is within that context that this researcher attempted to provide solid data as to the success of E-IMET through review of various reports already compiled by U.S. governmental and non-governmental organizations, along with a survey of students who previously attended courses of study within the program. The area of concentration was Central America, more particularly the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. The following information is derived from that study.

What is IMET and E-IMET?

IMET has historically provided grant education and training to members of foreign militaries from the U.S. government. Although going through various forms, grant military training has been around since 1949, being termed IMET in 1976. The primary traditional goal of grant

¹ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Security Assistance: Observations on Post-Cold War Program Changes*, September 1992, p 27.

training has been to give “U.S. friends and allies knowledge and skills to improve their military forces and to promote self-sufficiency.”²

A sidelight is the importance of the personal and professional relationships that are established between individuals, U.S. and international, as they attend training together. It is easy to see, tougher to quantify, how such relationships can impact policy issues and ties between the international community and the U.S. as those students attain higher levels of responsibility within their governments in the succeeding years.

The traditional goal, intact but evolving with the post-Cold War period, has been supplemented with the E-IMET scheme. Subjects such as human rights and democratization have become more important over the years, actually stipulated as early as the *Mutual Security Act of 1954*. These areas received more attention during the Carter Administration, and have been even more prominent over recent years. The E-IMET program has provided the arm to emphasize human rights and improved military justice systems, effective defense resource management, and civilian control of the military, these being its three specific goals. E-IMET began in 1991, and has broadened and enlarged the audience for such courses. In addition to military personnel and civilian personnel assigned within Ministries of Defense, it now permits and actually desires attendance by government civilians from other ministries as well as those serving in non-governmental organizations within other countries. A major program thrust is establishing a greater dialogue and understanding between the military establishment and other agencies.

In terms of courses, literally hundreds open to international participation throughout the U.S. military, there are currently approximately 117 courses approved by the DoD as substantially furthering those three specific goals. These courses, some conducted in the United States, some conducted by mobile teams within requesting countries, have been specified as E-IMET. Stressing civilian attendance, approximately 42 of those 117 can be paid for by E-IMET funds only if it is a civilian attendee. In its application, the U.S. security assistance establishment generally seeks to use approximately 30 percent of a country’s IMET allocation for E-IMET courses. Some countries may use less; others may use considerably more.

It is important to note that the DoD and DoS may recommend and/or Congress may choose to legislate limitations for the usage of IMET funds, making them only available for the country to use on E-IMET courses, or not include a particular country within the IMET budget for a period of time (the ultimate sanction). Sometimes this period can extend over several years. This has been the case, at one time or another, over the last twelve years within El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. For example El Salvador had to exclusively commit its funds to E-IMET courses in fiscal years 1993-1995. This has been the case for Guatemala for a number of years, and is true at the present time. Nicaragua received no IMET funding at all between fiscal years 1990-1996.³ Keep in mind that all three of these countries concluded violent civil wars during the decade of the 1990s.

IMET has not been a substantial part of the U.S. national budget since 1990; it has been less than one-third of one percent of the budget. Between 1950 and 1989, it was .0169, not even two-tenths of one percent of the budget over time.⁴ However, even with such a small percentage and

² Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management, “Overview: Fiscal Year 1992 Security Assistance budget Request,” *The DISAM Journal* Volume 13, No 3 (Spring, 1991), p 18.

³ Information derived from U.S. Federal budget figures within annual *Congressional Budget Justification Foreign Operations*, documents from 1990-2002.

⁴ Information derived from United States Federal Budget for those years.

overall dollar figure over the years, since 1950 over 600,000 international students have received training through IMET.⁵

The Target Audience

As previously alluded, the guidelines of E-IMET specify the audience as civil service members not associated with Ministries of Defense, for example Justice, Budget/Finance, Interior, etc., civilians involved with non-governmental organizations, in addition to defense-related civilians and uniformed military. However, to pinpoint the real target, it is more specifically the civilian and military personnel from each of those components with upward mobility, those who will have the opportunity to impact civil-military, human rights, rule of law, resource management policies in the coming years.

During the defense of the dissertation study of this subject, a committee member asked this researcher if, in the context of Nicaragua, should the U.S. not exercise sanctions against a government or military establishment deemed detrimental to democratic principles, such as the Sandinista regime? Although, this brings up a separate issue, not discussed within this article, it does note that the personnel liable to be trained as junior members of the military or the government establishment may be the ones that will be in power after the current establishment is out of office. Thus, the major impact of such training may not be felt for a number of years down the road.

It has been generally accepted in the military community that the IMET program does reasonably well in gaining access to future military leaders based on tracking of which professional military education students subsequently become chiefs of staff or serve in higher governmental positions later in their careers. However, this could barely scratch the surface of other senior leadership positions, which are not as easily tracked, and says nothing regarding the upward mobility of civilian participants in E-IMET.

The Research

Although this researcher keyed in particularly on human rights issues, reviewing countless reports by the State Department and a variety of non-governmental organizations, much of that is inconsequential to the question initiating this report is it reaching the right folks? It is easy to see that the goals of E-IMET are very much related to the overall topic of democratization, and that it is hard to specifically target any one factor, negating the others, as this study attempted to do. Although the primary research question targeted human rights implications, the impact of upward mobility over the initial ten years of E-IMET is not very apparent compared to what the next ten years may be.

In fact, the real finding of the study was that amid positive indicators, the IMET/E-IMET was so small a portion of the overall U.S. aid package that its impact could not be successfully split out from that overall aid package to determine its role in the successes. A GAO study concluded in 1999 that there were “no instances of duplication of activities and efforts among U.S. agencies.”⁶ This would assist in indicating that IMET/E-IMET at least touches an audience not necessarily participating in other programs. While this indicates some level of viability, it is still not the quantifiable type of data that would be most beneficial in substantiating program effectiveness.

5 Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *DSCA Facts Book - Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction Sales and Military Assistance Facts*. Retrieved December 16, 2000, from the world wide web: <http://web.deskbook.osd.mil/reflib/DDOD/001EN/001Endoc.htm>.

6 United States General Accounting Office, *Foreign Assistance: U.S. Rule of Law Assistance to Five Latin American Countries*, August 1999.

A key element of the study was a survey of previous students from eight courses designated as E-IMET having a human rights emphasis. The survey was unscientific in the fact that the entire student population (of 1178) was sought, not just a random sample. This was due to the fact that this researcher did not have access to student identities. To protect confidentiality of the students and eliminate initial direct contact, the surveys were routed via U.S. training personnel to host government personnel to be answered by students and then brought through the same chain in their return. Although the survey response was not overwhelming, overall 9.8 percent, much was learned and each country contributed to the study's overall conclusions. Table 1 shows the survey response rate by country and overall.

| Country | E-IMET Course Student Response Rate | | Percentage of Response |
|----------------|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Total Student Pool | Total Respondents | |
| El Salvador | 801 | 66/68 | 8.5 |
| Guatemala | 231 | 9/12 | 5.2 |
| Nicaragua | <u>146</u> | <u>26/35</u> | <u>24.0</u> |
| Totals | 1178 | 101/115 | 9.8 |

Note: First number in Total Respondents Column reflects actual respondents; second number reflects the number of courses attended (allowing for some students attending multiple courses). Multiple attendees were not delineated within the Total Student Pool; therefore percentage of response is accurate for total number of students.

El Salvador's significance lies in the number of non-military (civilian) respondents; only 8 of the 66 persons were confirmed military. Of the 58 other respondents only 5 (7.6 percent) did not disclose their military/civilian status while an additional 30 (45 percent) disclosed that they were assigned within the Ministry of Defense. Regardless, almost a third of the respondents from El Salvador were either non-Defense Ministry civil servants (16.7 percent), affiliated with non-government organizations (9 percent) or elected officials in government (6 percent).

Although Guatemalan officials fared the worst, in terms of overall response rate, they did help "round out the field" in terms of locating students that had attended courses held in the United States, as opposed to mobile teams teaching in-country. Generally, because of imposed limitations over the years, the number of students attending resident courses was small (i.e., Nicaragua's first student to attend a course held in the U.S. since 1991 was attending during 2001.)

While a solid number of respondents from El Salvador were civilian, this was not the case for Nicaragua as 81 percent identified themselves as military members. Only one person identified him or herself as affiliated with a non-governmental organization, while two were civilians not associated with the Defense Ministry.

The most telling data from the student survey came from very few questions, while others provided additional support. The data will be displayed in Table 2, and elaborated upon in dialogue below. The table not only shows relevant survey questions by number and basic question content, but also provides the ability to compare the cumulative frequency of response regardless of home country of the respondent. This demonstrates that in a number of cases, the responses did not differ substantially between countries, making the results more comprehensive than this researcher envisioned at the outset of the conduct of the survey.

Note that 91 percent overall were still with the same organization (with only slight variation between countries); while in each of the three countries about one-third, or more, had already moved to a higher-level position since attending their course. Combined with the fact that virtually two-thirds from each country anticipated a future move to a higher-level position, a good number within the next five years, it would appear that the upwardly mobile are attending the courses.

Table 2
Survey Target Audience Survey Data Cumulative and Individual Country Variation

| <u>Survey Question and Description</u> | <u>Consolidated Survey Response (All Respondents)</u> | <u>Variation of Responses</u> |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Respondent still in same organization. | 91% still in same organization | El Salvador - 89% Guatemala - 88.9% Nicaragua - 96% |
| 2. Respondent moved to higher-level position since attending course. | 38% moved to a higher-level position since attending the course | El Salvador - 36.4% Guatemala - 66.7% Nicaragua - 30.8% |
| 3. Respondent anticipates a move to higher-level position. | 67% anticipate moving to a higher-level position; 38% within the next 5 years | El Salvador - 66.7/25.8% Guatemala - 66.7/55.6% Nicaragua - 65.4/61.5% |
| 4. Does the respondent currently have the opportunity to impact policy? | 75% currently can impact policy; 61% impact in the areas of human rights, general military or military justices | El Salvador - 72.7/56% Guatemala - 77.8/77.8% Nicaragua - 80.8/73.1% |
| 5. Respondent expects to be in a position to influence policy in the future. | 63% expected to be in a position to influence policy in the future 54% in areas noted in question 5 | El Salvador - 66.7/54% Guatemala - 55.6/44.4% Nicaragua - 57.7/57.7% |
| 6 and 7. Respondent recalls human rights discussions during the course. | 81% recall human rights discussions; 86% consider personal freedom and human rights more than previously. | El Salvador - 0.3/81.8% Guatemala - 100/88.9% Nicaragua - 76.9/92.3% |
| 8. Course discussions have been helpful for student's leadership abilities or duty performance? | 80% believed that their course had been helpful in providing leadership capabilities or enhanced duty performance | El Salvador - 71.2% Guatemala - 88.9% Nicaragua - 96.2% |
| 9. Rating course aspects using Likert Scale (0-5): | | |
| 9a. Knowledge of U.S. Systems | 77% rated helpful to very helpful | El Salvador - 71.7% Guatemala - 100% Nicaragua - 80.8% |
| 9b. Informational Program | 91% rated helpful to very helpful (Only rated by those attending CONUS courses.) | El Salvador - 87.5% Guatemala - 100% Nicaragua - N/A |
| 9c. Interaction with U.S. Personnel | 76% rated helpful to very helpful | El Salvador - 74.2% Guatemala - 100% Nicaragua - 73.1% |
| 9d. Interaction with Other personnel from home country | 77% rated helpful to very helpful | El Salvador - 74.2% Guatemala - 100% Nicaragua - 76.9% |
| 9e. Interaction with personnel from other countries | 64% rated helpful to very helpful | El Salvador - 59.1% Guatemala - 88.9% Nicaragua - 69.2% |
| 9f. Professional skills enhanced | 76% rated helpful to very helpful | El Salvador - 71.2% Guatemala - 100% Nicaragua - 80.7% |

In a related question, approximately three-fourths of the respondents across the board see themselves as having the ability to influence policy. Similarly, over half of them impact in the areas of general military, military justice or human rights issues. Over half from each country, and 63 percent overall, envision future positions that influence policy as well. Again, reaching the audience of those that can have an impact on future governmental decisions appears to be on target.

Other questions are important in relating the impact and quality of the training they received as they recall and use the topics of discussion in their daily activities. Over three out of four, regardless of country, stated that they recalled human rights discussions during their course. Even better than that, four of five, considered the concepts of human rights and personal freedom more than they had previously. A similar percentage concluded that the course they attended had brought a positive impact on their personal leadership abilities or duty performance.

In broad scope, the answers also relay that interaction with personnel from the U.S., their own country, as well as potentially other countries was extremely positive. If we perceive that these students will advance in their organizations over the years, they may indeed have the opportunity to deal with each other professionally. This dialogue, which could be very initial or preliminary, may provide an opportunity for policy-related dividends in the future.

Conclusion

In short, it does appear that E-IMET is making a conscious effort and doing an effective job of reaching the student that can make the most effective use of its education and training programs. Even with the small survey response, the positive indicators cannot be ignored, especially as they are overwhelmingly favorable.

A question could surface addressing the possibility that persons who were less than enthusiastic about the program did not respond to the survey, thereby skewing the response of those that did. That generalization could not be made on the surface of the data collected, even though it may have happened. We must take the response we get and attempt to draw the best conclusions. Even if that were the case, would or should the U.S. desire to scrap a program that potentially is favorably reaching a significant percent of the future leadership of countries around the world.

While this study was limited to three countries in a very narrow geographic region, the program is fundamentally run the same way universally. It is feasible to expect that similar results could be shown within the worldwide connotation of E-IMET, and other U.S. foreign aid programs. To generalize it further throughout the whole of IMET, with a broader range of courses could be considered a stretch, but it does indicate a bona fide opportunity for further research.

Author Notes

The content/context of this article comes from a doctoral dissertation entitled *E-IMET: Is It Accomplishing Its Human Rights Focus in Latin America?* completed in August, 2001 at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. For more details on military assistance, the IMET/E-IMET program, data collection methodology, or actual data collected, refer to the original dissertation. The views in this paper are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Defense.

About the Author

Dr. Ron Reynolds began service as the DISAM Commandant in September, 2001, after retiring from the U.S. Air Force with over 25 years of service. His international training background comes as a result of serving for two years (1996-98) as a Training Security Assistance Officer with the United States Military Training Mission, Saudi Arabia, followed by three years at the International Officer School, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base (1998-2001). His civilian education, which includes a bachelor of General Studies from the University of Nebraska-Omaha, an M.A. from Webster University and a Master of Public Administration from the

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