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Over 100 Nations Benefit From U.S. Military Training, Education

IMET program budget has nearly doubled over four years

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A COMMON FOUNDATION FOR SECURITY

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Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs.

The International Military Education and Training program is more important now than ever before, given the security challenges countries around the world face together. IMET training has helped defense establishments improve their national defense capabilities, plan and implement defense reforms, and develop capacities to better address national security threats.

The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, established in 1976, has become a key component of U.S. national security and foreign policy. The program, which is implemented by the Defense Department at the direction of the Department of State, provides training to students from approximately 120 allied and friendly countries, primarily at military schools and other facilities in the United States. More than 11,000 students were trained in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 alone. Secretary of State Colin Powell believes so strongly in the IMET program that he has nearly doubled its budget over the past four years — from \$50 million in FY 2000 to \$92 million in FY 2004.

IMET has three objectives: a) to enhance the capabilities of allied and friendly militaries to participate effectively in peacekeeping and stability operations under U.N. or other multinational auspices; b) to promote interoperability with U.S. forces by exposing IMET students to U.S. military doctrine, strategic planning processes, and operational and logistical procedures; and c) to build positive defense relationships as civilian and

military officials from the United States and other countries exchange views and values, developing mutual respect and understanding at both a professional and a personal level. In our experience, this last objective is most important. There are countless examples of how friendships forged through IMET training have contributed significantly to the resolution of crises and important foreign policy concerns throughout the years.

The IMET program is more important now than ever before, given the security challenges countries around the world face together. IMET training has helped defense establishments improve their national defense capabilities, plan and implement defense reforms, and develop capacities to better address national security threats. In addition, IMET training and education have enhanced capabilities of countries to carry out vital roles in multinational operations. For armed forces to operate together efficiently, military operations must be coordinated from the ground up. This is best accomplished when there is common understanding on skills and procedures among participants at all levels.

Through IMET, both technical training and Professional Military Education (PME) courses help build a shared understanding of military techniques, tactics, and doctrine. The success of this approach is reflected in Afghanistan and Iraq, where 29 of the 50 countries with troops on the ground have had IMET training. In FY 2004, the U.S. provided approximately \$67 million in IMET funds, nearly three-fourths of the IMET program, to partners joined with us in the global war on terrorism. Many others pay for the cost of their participation in U.S. military schools from their own defense budgets. Taken together, this has strengthened everyone's capabilities to pursue peace and stability in a world confronted with terrorism.

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

IMET's success is reflected in international leadership as well. Since 1985, the National Defense University Fellows Program has trained 471 international officers, of whom 25 have gone on to become heads of state, ambassadors, ministers of defense, chiefs of their services, or senior participants in U.N. peacekeeping efforts. We are encouraged that nations around the world value and respect U.S. military training and education courses, and that they select their best and brightest soldiers and officers to benefit from U.S. training opportunities. We are proud of what IMET has accomplished by promoting a healthy exchange of views on defense matters, and by giving IMET students the opportunity to experience American values first-hand as students in the United States.

One particular strength of the IMET program is its flexibility. Curriculum for a single student or a group of students can be tailored to meet unique needs. There are occasions when it makes more sense to be trained at a location outside the United States. Through IMET, mobile training teams, or MTTs, can be dispatched around the world to train friendly military units or to educate a broad spectrum of civilian and uniformed defense personnel in their own countries. MTTs allow U.S. trainers to teach specific military skills and techniques to a large number of students in the same environment and under the same conditions that they will ultimately use those skills and techniques -- and at a lesser cost.

More conventional IMET courses, including professional military education at schools such as the service war colleges, account for approximately 75

percent of the program. Technical proficiency training for officers, enlisted technicians, and supervisors make up the remainder of the IMET program. This training covers a wide range of courses, including developing specific skills required to operate and maintain weapons systems, or to perform required functions within a military occupational specialty, such as program management or logistics. Other interesting courses include Cold Weather Survival, which teaches techniques necessary to operate successfully in harsh climates. The Government Contract Law course provides information on the impact of government contract law on daily decision-making in contract management.

While we are honing technical skills and providing military education, we also take precautions to ensure that we are training the right people. Under U.S. law and as a matter of policy, human rights concerns are a key consideration when using IMET funds to provide military training to foreign forces. The Department of State ensures that each individual receiving IMET training has been vetted to ensure that he or she has never committed a gross violation of human rights.

Language difficulties encountered by some students can hinder the effectiveness of training. IMET's mandatory English language proficiency requirement establishes a baseline of communication skills necessary for students to attend and perform well in courses. This helps build rapport and establish a common basis for communication between students from many different countries. In Afghanistan and elsewhere, mobile education training teams have conducted English language training programs to prepare those countries' students for studies in the United States. As English is the basic language of international peacekeeping, these language skills further enhance the ability of countries to participate in United Nations and other multinational operations.

CIVIL-MILITARY VALUES

The IMET program encourages participation from the broad range of people necessary to create a healthy military culture within a country, and has adapted curricula to meet the requirements of a changing security environment. Each year, IMET participation has become more diverse, expanding beyond the traditional base of military officers. Indeed, the number of civilian participants has expanded to include legislators, judiciary officials, representatives from nongovernmental organizations, and civilians working in defense establishments. Expanded IMET (E-IMET) courses focus on topics such as military justice, civil-military relations, human rights, rule of law, and defense resource management, and seek to inculcate constructive civil-military values, which are the cornerstone of stable and law-abiding armed forces. In offering E-IMET courses, we recognize that enlightened civilian officials are essential to building an environment that is conducive to a professional role for the military in democratic society.

In that sense, IMET can help transform the perspectives of influential people in other societies. In addition to enhancing institutional capabilities, the program touches individual officers and soldiers, influencing their views about the United States and the core values we hold deeply. Winning hearts and minds worldwide will play a significant role in successfully prosecuting the global war on terrorism. The IMET program will help the United States work toward this goal, one heart at a time. As the world continues to change, IMET will adjust accordingly, finding the best and most relevant way to advance our national interests, and giving others the

opportunity to experience the core American values of democracy, human rights, and civilian rule of the military.

In addition to his duties as assistant secretary, the author was designated by President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell to be the special representative of the president and secretary of state for Mine Action. Further, he is chair of the International Affairs Committee reporting to the president's Critical Infrastructure Protection Board.

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