

**Research Note 2004-03**

**International Military Education  
and  
Multinational Military Cooperation**

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## FOREWORD

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In recent years, the United States Army has been participating in an increasing number of multinational efforts, including peacekeeping, humanitarian, and intelligence missions as well as actual combat situations. As such, the Army and its personnel, specifically its officer corps, is being relied upon to communicate and cooperate with the militaries of other nations. Concurrent with this growing level of international military contact and cooperation, however, is the apparent increase in anti-American sentiment expressed by and within partnering countries, both implicit and overt. Increased contact combined with increased resentment and ill-feelings creates a major dilemma for the Army: how to maximize mission effectiveness while working with allies that harbor some measure of anti-Americanism. Into this challenging situation are thrust the officer corps of both the United States and international militaries. As these are the individuals who are actually in regular contact with each other as well as with their own nations and governments, it is these officers on whom falls the responsibility for both mission performance and for easing tensions and dispelling misperceptions.

If the Army is to be successful in its cooperation with other countries' militaries, it is essential that it understand the sources of the anti-Americanism as well as what can be done to ameliorate those sentiments, all the while working toward improving the performance of multinational efforts. The present paper addresses some of the key issues and illuminates both the sources of anti-Americanism and some potential solutions. Using semi-structured interviews with both American and international officers attending various joint training schools, the author describes some qualitatively derived findings and conclusions about these issues. The report also makes recommendations for both further research and concrete actions that could be undertaken to improve both mission performance and multinational relations. This preliminary set of observations could guide future efforts to assist the Army as it operates in an increasingly diverse and international environment.

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# INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND MULTINATIONAL MILITARY COOPERATION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Research Requirement:

The significance of international military cooperation can scarcely be overstated. In the post-Cold War era, the United States has participated in a growing number of multinational missions across the globe. The American response to the September 11 terrorist attack highlighted how America's national security relies not only on military technology but also on good relations with foreign military entities. The core thesis is that American military officers can play a key role in countering incipient and overt perceptions of American arrogance.

### Procedure:

This report is based on interviews with international officers (IOs) at American war, command and staff colleges in each of the services. These IOs participate in the program known as International Military and Education and Training (IMET). Similar interviews were conducted at the Joint Service Command Staff College in the United Kingdom. Additionally, interviews were held with officers from various countries at SHAPE in Belgium. Field observations, moreover, were made in peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo.

### Findings and Utilization of Findings:

Overall, the level of multinational cooperation is quite remarkable. Indeed, one finding is that military officers often find themselves more comfortable with fellow military officers from other countries than they do with civilian staff of the same nationality. Yet, Americans must accept the reality that because our nation is preeminent in economic and cultural influence as well as military might, even our allies may have some resentment, albeit at a low level. Awareness of steps that can reduce such resentment can lead to more effective military cooperation.

Certain problem areas are analyzed with attendant recommendations for improvement. At the IMET level, these include: (1) make medical insurance available for family members of all foreign officers; (2) decrease the classified material unavailable to IOs because of security classifications; (3) add more curriculum content on multinational operations; (4) be alert to the unique status of Arab IOs; and (5) make more effort to incorporate the spouses of IOs into the American social scene.

Regarding multinational headquarters, recommendations for American officers include: (1) some use of non-English phrases in social interaction with IOs; (2) avoid speaking too quickly or using acronyms that are not familiar to IOs; (3) be alert to the stereotype of Americans as having a "zero-defects" or "check-point" mentality and an

obsession with work; (4) encourage more cross-national informal activities; (5) read something about the home country of a fellow IO with whom one regularly works; and (6) rethink the career paths of Foreign Area Officers such as closing a military career with a shift to a position in the State Department, C.I.A. or D.I.A.

# INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND MULTINATIONAL MILITARY COOPERATION

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Multinational Military Cooperation:  
Enhancing American Military Effectiveness

“International skills are true force multipliers and essential to our ability to operate globally.”

General John P. Jumper  
Air Force Chief of Staff  
August 26 2002

Introduction

The significance for the United States of international military cooperation can scarcely be overstated. In the post-Cold War era, multinational missions have been recurring across the globe. These range from surveillance missions over Iraq, peacekeeping forces in the Balkans, the war in Kosovo, as well as humanitarian missions ranging from Somalia to Haiti to East Timor. International military cooperation assumed even more importance with the expansion of NATO and the Partnership for Peace initiatives in Eastern Europe and former Soviet countries.

Most significantly, 11 September highlighted the unpredictability of threats to our national security. The American counterattack on the perpetrators of terrorism could not have been as effectively carried out without support from allies. The war in Afghanistan again demonstrated that access to foreign airfields was a key requirement of effective use of American air power. The role of the International Security and Assistance Force is crucial in the establishment of a post-Taliban regime in Kabul. In any impending military action against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, multinational military support would again be a major factor. Only by better understanding the reaction of partners in multinational missions can the efficacy of American military operations be maximized. The core thesis is that American military officers can play a key role in countering incipient and overt perceptions of American arrogance.

That the United States is the world's preeminent superpower goes without question. The French Foreign Minister coined the term "hyperpower" to describe America's new status. The German president has warned Americans that "when it comes to the use of military means, partners have to be ready to speak with each other and listen to each other."<sup>1</sup> This is at the same time that the European Union is on the road to develop a common defense policy and force. An astute observer of America's international role has described U.S.A.-European relations as one of "drifting apart."<sup>2</sup>

In a survey of opinion-makers around the world, conducted in December, 2001, a striking finding was that 66 percent of West Europeans (in contrast to 28 percent of the

Americans) thought the United States acts mainly in its own interests rather than taking into account the interests of its partners in the fight against terrorism.<sup>3</sup>

However overdrawn, characterizations of American "unilateralism" and cultural naivety are a key factor affecting our nation's military effectiveness. The possibility of war with Iraq has further highlighted differences between the United States and its potential allies. Reactions to the uniqueness of American preeminent global position -- economic and cultural as well as military -- are not so well understood in the United States. It is commonly observed that our education system and media foster an insular mentality. In brief, as we enter the 21st century, American's national security will rest not only military technology and force size, but also on good relations with actual and potential military allies.

Obviously, resentment of America is multifaceted and complex. A major arena of improving international military cooperation is that of relationships between American and non-American officers in a variety of settings such as multinational missions, military professional schools, and international military headquarters. Of course, individual behavior cannot erase generalized resentment toward American superpower status, but individual American officers can make a big difference. The greater the interpersonal understanding of coalition partners, the greater the efficacy of American military operations.

The purpose of this report is to suggest some fresh ways to think about international military cooperation and thereby to specify concrete actions that will enhance America's military effectiveness. We shall indicate areas of cultural irritants between American and non-American military officers and to suggest practical ways of reducing these irritants. Of course, disputes and irritants are inevitable in multinational forces even as they are in single nation operations.

The plan of this report is five-fold:

1. An overview of theoretical issues
2. Description of the methodology employed
3. Factors affecting international military cooperation in three case studies:
  - a. International Military Education and Training in the United States
  - b. A comparative analysis of international military education in the United Kingdom
  - c. International relations at NATO headquarters
4. Problem areas affecting international military cooperation
5. Recommendations to alleviate those problems

## II. Theoretical Issues

The literature on cultural diversity in multinational civilian organizations is extensive.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, multinational civilian organizations differ from multinational military organizations, but some lessons from the civilian experience may be transferable to the military setting. Issues of trust formation are at the core of organizational effectiveness. It has been suggested that trust formation processes differ among cultures that hold different values, thus making the creation of mutual trust in multinational settings more difficult to achieve. Yet, the literature on diversity in multinational organizations also includes arguments that diversity may increase the task-relevant skills available within an organization and perhaps result in better quality decisions.

In what has become a classic study of cultural differences, Geert Hofstede specified four dimensions along which culture values may vary: (1) the respect and deference given by subordinates to superiors in a given culture, (2) whether a person's core identity is defined by personal choices and achievements or by the character of the groups to which he or she is attached; (3) the extent to which members of a culture prefer detailed plans and orders versus those who feel comfortable in ambiguous circumstances; and (4) the relative emphasis on personal assertiveness versus interpersonal harmony.<sup>5</sup> To this list, I would add how various national groups may have different time perspectives as reflected in conceptions of accuracy, punctuality and speed.

Based on Hofstede's categories, Joseph Soeters conducted a study of the value orientations among the cadets of thirteen military academies in Europe.<sup>6</sup> The core findings were that the military cadets shared significant shared values of a European wide culture, even while displaying cultural differences based on national affiliation. Speaking broadly, West European countries are more amenable to the concept of overarching international bodies than are Americans.

A survey of American reservists who volunteered to serve in the Multinational Force and Observers in Sinai revealed low levels of acceptance of non-Americans.<sup>7</sup> Only a quarter or the respondents responded in the affirmative to the question "people from most countries are pretty much alike." Asked whether one can trust foreign nationals as much as one can trust people from the United States, only about one in seven agreed.

A study of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus found that officers who served in the multinational headquarters increasingly identified with fellow officers from other countries, but increasingly held the United Nations civilian staff in low regard.<sup>8</sup> That is, the major line of organizational difference was between military personnel and civilians, not between the different national contingents. Something similar seems to have occurred in Bosnia and Kosovo with regard to, on the one hand, United Nations and NATO civilian staff, and, on the other, military officers from the participating nations. There is, moreover, always some tension between the multinational command and "national" control of troops.



In sum, differences in national cultures while important should not obscure the fact that there is also a military culture common to armed forces around the world, especially Western armed forces, who share similar professional education and social identity.<sup>9</sup>

### III. Methodology

Three categories of research sites were visited: (1) American war and staff colleges, (2) the Joint Services Command and Staff College in the United Kingdom, and (3) the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium.

A major research undertaking was conducted at each of the war and staff colleges in the United States. Research visits were made to each of the following institutions of professional military education (PME): National War College (Washington, D.C.), Industrial College of the Armed Forces (Washington, D.C.), Army War College (Carlisle, Pennsylvania), Air War College (Montgomery, Alabama), Marine Corps University (Quantico, Virginia), Army Command General Staff College (Leavenworth, Kansas), Air Command Staff College (Montgomery, Alabama), and Navy Staff College (Newport, Rhode Island.). Interviews were conducted with non-American officers who were participants in the program known as International Military Education and Training or IMET.<sup>10</sup> These officers are fully incorporated with their American cohort into the general academic program in all these institutions, with partial exception of the Navy Staff College.<sup>11</sup>

Note: For convenience sake, we shall refer to non-American military officers as International Officers or IOs, the most common designation (though, depending on locale, the terms International Fellow or International Military Student are also used).

The interviews were conducted toward the end of the academic year 2000-2001, a time when the IOs could have a retrospective view of their American experience. The typical interview setting was to have four or five IOs and one American officer present for a 90-minute session. All told, 82 IOs were interviewed, about one in five of all IOs attending war or staff colleges in the United States during the time of the field research. In addition, faculty and American students at the war/staff colleges were also interviewed. In all the site visits, meals and informal discussions with IOs and American staff members added to the information collection.

In March 2001, interviews were conducted at the Joint Services Command Staff College (JSCSC), Shrivenham, England. The JSCSC is equivalent of the command and staff college in American PME. The purpose was to compare and contrast the international military education given at a British staff college with that of the United States. Again, the typical interview setting was to have four or five IOs and one British officer present for a 90-minute session. Fifteen officers were interviewed in this manner as well as discussions with British staff members.

Also in March 2001, interviews were conducted at NATO headquarters in Belgium. Over two days, sessions were held in which some twenty officers, principally IOs, were interviewed.

In connection with other research activities, the principal investigator was also able to interview IMET graduates in their home countries. These included Chile, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Additionally, field research has been conducted with American forces in numerous multinational operations over the years, including the Gulf War, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo.

The interview guides are given in Appendices 1 and 2. Remarks pertaining to perceptions of national differences by both American and non-Americans are given in Appendix 3. To protect the confidentiality of the interviewees, identifications of individuals by nationality in remarks that might be viewed as sensitive will not be given.

Several aspects of this methodology must be noted. It should be stressed that the data collection was qualitative, not quantitative. In seeking to ascertain opinions of international military cooperation, information is better acquired through an empathetic interviewer than through survey methods. Unlike statistical approaches, a qualitative approach to national cultural difference helps apprehend the subtle attributes of group differences that come to play in international organizations.<sup>12</sup>

Using a semi-structured interviewing technique, it was also possible to obtain a more complete understanding of the social context of the IOs and their American counterparts. Inasmuch as the research seeks to describe cultural aspects of international military cooperation, the qualitative method is deemed most appropriate. Obviously, personality variations among military officers obviously contribute to different evaluations of their international experience.<sup>13</sup> Here, however, we focus on foreign officers as a sociological category and seek to uncover national similarities rather than personality differences among IOs.

#### IV. International Military Cooperation: Findings

##### A. International Military Education and Training (IMET)

In 2001, close to 9,000 foreign military officers coming from over 100 countries received some form of professional training in American military programs. The largest of these programs is known as IMET for International Military Education and Training. The analysis presented here deals with foreign military officers in American war and command staff colleges, the acme of the IMET program. This group, some 400 annually in recent years, is the elite of the various military education programs. Such officers are generally viewed as on the way up in their home military organizations.

Although the academic programs and curriculums differ somewhat between the various war/staff colleges, there are essential similarities. Typically, IOs come together

for an orientation period in the summer preceding the start of the academic program in the fall. The orientation period is generally for three or four weeks. This initial time is when the IOs get to know each other as well as the Americans who manage the local IMET program.

The first distinction in the process of "settling in" of the IOs is between those who come with family members and those who do not. An informed estimate would be that three-quarters of the IOs come with families. Unlike the unaccompanied IOs, those with families must quickly find housing usually on the civilian economy. While some unaccompanied IOs also rent on the local economy, the large majority of the unaccompanied live in bachelor officer quarters on base. Although being accompanied by one's family increases settling-in problems, it is almost universally regarded as worth the trouble by the IOs. As one IO put it, IMET without a family is a "remote tour." There is a general feeling that it is only with one's family, especially with children, that one can acquire the full American experience.

All war/staff college schools have a "sponsor" system for their foreign students. These sponsors are both military and civilian. Military sponsors are generally fellow students of the IOs. Certain faculty members, civilian or military, can also be sponsors of IOs. The key sponsor role, however, is often played by a civilian from the local community. As a general rule, IOs have closer relations with civilian sponsors than with military sponsors who are fellow students. IOs see their fellow American students as very busy with their own time demands. And indeed, American students often see their war/staff college year as a time to reconnect with their families. IO-American relations vary, of course, from distant to close, but generally, are very positive.

It is also a reality, however, that wives of IOs coming from non-English speaking countries often have a poorer command of English than their husbands. This means that such wives are often somewhat isolated from the American society. (The general view is that the wives of Islamic IOs lead the most sheltered lives.) For this reason, English language classes for IO wives are extremely valued. Sometimes American officer wives or the wives of IOs coming from English-speaking countries teach these classes on a volunteer basis. In some areas, volunteers run English-language programs in the local community. The Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, runs a particularly well-regarded English course for the spouses of IOs at Maxwell Air Force Base.

IOs with school-age children are particularly concerned with the local educational system. Typically, IOs have children in the elementary or middle school levels. The quality of local public schools in IMET programs is quite varied. Quality ranges from very good schools in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Leavenworth, Kansas, and Newport, Rhode Island; to mixed reviews in Quantico, Virginia; to not well regarded in Montgomery, Alabama. Virtually all military officers at Maxwell Air Force Base, American and foreign alike, send their children to private or parochial schools. At the National Defense University, in Washington, D.C., nearly all IOs with school-age children live in Northern Virginia or Montgomery County, Maryland.

The common experience for IOs with non-English speaking elementary school children goes something like the following. "By Christmas, they have learned English. By the end of the school year, they are the best in the class." This may be an exaggeration, but one hears it often. From the IO viewpoint, a very significant side benefit of the IMET year is the opportunity for their children to learn fluent English.

Friendships across national lines vary, of course, by individual personality, but some general patterns reappear. Because of the shared experience of being in a new country, and because of the nearly month long orientation period, strongest friendships occur among the IOs themselves. I observe a similar pattern among international students at my own civilian university.

IOs from the so-called "ABC" countries -- Australia, Britain, and Canada -- often become the de facto intermediaries between the IOs as a collectivity and the American personnel at the war/staff college. IOs from these countries, while native English speaking, are, nevertheless, still not Americans. This unique position of having a foot in both camps gives "ABC" students a unique position in just about every war or staff college.

Among IOs, there is a natural tendency to group with fellow IOs of the same linguistic or cultural backgrounds. This is most notable among Arabs and Latin Americans. To some degree it also pertains to IOs coming from countries that shared a British or French colonial period. (A Trinidadian IO remarked that a fellow officer from Sri Lanka was also a good cricket player.) Again speaking generally, American students find it easiest to make friends with those from the ABC countries followed by IOs from Europe. Still, not to be lost sight of, there is a remarkable degree of interaction between all categories of students regardless of nationality.

Curriculum. IOs note that in seminars involving role-playing, American students typically assume a problem is an American problem and are much less likely to recognize the utility of a multinational or international entity. IO critiques of the curriculum are, not surprisingly, that it is too American centric. Still, as one IO said: "But after all, we are in an American war college."

IOs often see some of the mandatory courses as a waste of time and, almost to a person, would prefer more electives than their American counterparts. Likewise, IOs almost universally find lectures to be less informative than seminars. IOs also seem to have a general preference for civilian over military instructors.

A very strong complaint of IOs is that certain classes are closed to them because they contain classified information. This fosters a perception among IOs that they are second-class members at the war/staff college. Even more bothersome is when IOs are used as assistants to the Americans rather than full participants when class exercises simulate a strategic crisis. A Scandinavian officer put it succinctly: "Either fully include us or exclude us. Half way in is worse than being all the way out."

An integral part of the IMET experience is the field trip. These trips are major events at all war/staff colleges. For the IOs such trips usually include a visit to Washington, D.C., military bases, but also American historical sites and even industrial/commercial enterprises. These trips are extremely well regarded by the IOs. The only downside is that to be accompanied by one's spouse requires that the IO pay a hefty share of the bill.

As with English-language capabilities, there is great variation with the computer proficiency among the entering IOs. Computer expertise increases exponentially during the course of the academic year. Unlike the situation with the American students, however, notable differences in computer literacy can persist among some IOs through the end of the IMET year. Still, for many IOs the Internet becomes a way for daily checks of their home country newspapers.

Student Perceptions. It must be stressed that the IMET experience is typically a most positive one not only for the IOs, but for the American officers who see the IO presence as a great boon to the academic curriculum. Only by awareness of some of the negative attitudes of the two groups, however, can we proceed to make concrete recommendations to improve international military education.

American officer perceptions of IOs vary, but show some patterns. A widespread American view is that IOs represent the best and worst of the total student body. The most intellectual students are almost always seen as among the IOs. For those IOs regarded as at the bottom of the cohort, many Americans believe that such IOs are non-promotable at home and therefore should be screened before their acceptance into IMET. Another common view is that IOs are less involved in physical training than the American officers. What must be stressed, however, is that the overriding view of American students is that IOs give them an international perspective they would otherwise never have obtained.

IO perceptions of Americans also show definite patterns. Many Europeans see Americans as "taking themselves too seriously" or "not knowing how to enjoy themselves." Also, Americans are seen as displaying a "check point mania" and a "zero defects" mentality. Despite a lot of American rhetoric about thinking "out of the box," there is little real encouragement of independent thinking. The most prevalent stereotype, by far, is that Americans are not as aware of the larger world as are the IOs. Many IOs are surprised that they are not queried more about their home country. Though one European IO remarked: "Maybe Americans don't know as much about Europe as we do, but they know more about Asia and Latin America than we do."

Very noteworthy, American officers with extensive multinational experience share many of the same perceptions of American officers as do the IOs. Namely, that Americans do not have enough understanding of foreign sensibilities and the international scene. This must be placed in the context of the overall finding: the IMET program is very highly regarded by the overwhelming majority of IOs.

## B. Joint Services Command and Staff College, United Kingdom

The Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC) in Shrivenham, England, is the British equivalent of the command and staff college in the United States. Non-British officers are officially referred to as Overseas Students, though International Students is used in common parlance. For consistency, we shall refer to the non-British students in the United Kingdom as International Officers (IOs) as we did with regard to non-American students in the United States. There are both differences and similarities in comparing the JSCSC with its American counterparts.

First the differences. IOs make up a substantially larger proportion of the student body at JSCSC. For the academic year 2000-01, 90 of the 327 students were non-British. Another difference is that the course of instruction begins with a joint period, then goes into single service components, then back to a joint program. One other major difference, all IOs and their families are covered by the national health insurance while in the United Kingdom.

But the similarities between the USA and the UK are more significant than the differences. In both countries, the IOs have an intensive period together in the orientation phase before the start of the regular academic year. The orientation period is three weeks at the JSCSC. Best friends tend to be fellow IOs. Again, as in the USA, all IOs are supposed to have good command of English, but in reality there is great variance. A sponsor system exists much like the American one. JSCSC field trips are an important part of the IO experience in the United Kingdom, just as they are in war/staff colleges in the United States.

Evaluations of IOs by the British students parallel those of American officers in the USA. IOs are seen as the best and the worst of the students. Again, some IOs are seen as making the most significant contribution in classroom discussions and others as being slackers.

Another similarity is that many of the IOs view the curriculum as too host nation centric (the Army component at JSCSC is also viewed as too tactical). The overly British content receives the same mixed reviews from the IOs as does the overly American content in the war/staff colleges in the United States. Again as in the USA, there is a tendency for native-English speaking IOs to take a leading intermediary role with the British administration. When I mentioned the "ABC" country phenomenon in American war/staff colleges, I was told by an IO that we have a "double A and C situation here," i.e. America, Australia, and Canada.

All IOs become members of the Cormorant Club, named after the bird that can fly, dive into the water, and walk on land. A statue of three cormorants, each representing a service, dominates the main lobby of the JSCSC building.

In comparing IO family life at the JSCSC with the counterpart in the United States, several differences can be noted. Close to 90 percent of the IOs at the JSCSC are accompanied with their families, somewhat higher than the ratio of IOs at American war/staff colleges. IOs and their families at the JSCSC all live in relatively comfortable on-base housing, thus mitigating the "settling-in" problems of IOs often found in the American situation. The local schools are considered good and the IO children do very well. Because many of the British officer students are living on campus as temporary bachelors, while going home on weekends, there is more bonding during the school week between host country students and IOs than is usually the case in America. As in the American war/staff colleges, an International Day is held once during the academic year. This is the day when IOs and their wives prepare a display of their home country, often with local national food.

The bottom line for the IOs at the JSCSC, as in the American war/staff colleges, is that it is the proverbial "best year of their life."

### C. NATO Headquarters

Some 800 officers serve in the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). In addition to the large majority of NATO officers, the headquarters staff also includes some number of Partnership for Peace (PFP) officers from the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The typical tour length is about two years, somewhat longer for junior officers. Americans use the term "Shapian" to describe the headquarters group collectively and often refer to the non-Americans as "Euros." Again, for convenience sake, we shall continue to use IOs, or international officers, to refer to non-American officers.

Best friends tend to be fellow native language speakers, especially for the Americans. Those who live on the SHAPE compound tend to have more cross-national ties than those who live on the civilian economy. Same national friendships, due to language competency, tend to be much more common among the enlisted ranks than is found for the officers. As is true for the IMET and JSCSC students, the Internet is widely used for home country news.

Quality of family life and educational opportunity for the children of SHAPE staff is well regarded by both Americans and IOs. At the elementary school level, there are many national schools, e.g. American, Belgium, British, Canadian, Dutch, German, Italian. For the IO children coming from other countries, the definite tendency is to send their children to English language schools. The International High School, in reality an American secondary school, is highly esteemed. The International High School attracts students from across the widest variety of national contingents. One concern for many IOs, however, is that a high school diploma from the International High School may not be advantageous for their children's admission into universities in the home country. (Of note, the "nerd versus jock" distinction seems to be a unique peculiarity of American students at the International High School. Some things never change!)

As is the case in the American and British war/staff colleges, the wives of IOs tend to be somewhat less international than their officer husbands. A significant social event at SHAPE is the monthly meeting of the Officer Wives Club. Some 350 to 400 spouses attend these luncheon meetings. The Catholic Women group at the chapel is seen as the most international venue for SHAPE wives.

The overriding finding is that the level of respect and cordiality between the officers of the various nationalities at SHAPE is remarkably high. Contributing to this collective "Shapian" self-identity are the common military culture, the common experience of being "away from home" in a foreign country, the transient nature of the assignment, and, not to be overlooked, the positive evaluation of the mission they are committed to.<sup>14</sup>

## V. Concerns and Issues

Looking first at the IMET program, there are some concerns that come up regularly in all of the war/staff colleges. In ascending order of importance, they are differences in income of IOs while in the United States, English language competence, and the lack of medical and hospital coverage for family members of IOs.

Inasmuch as IOs receive salaries from their home countries, income disparities between those IOs coming from wealthy nations and those from impoverished nations are unavoidable. These differences are mitigated to a degree by living allowances covered in IMET funding. Still, as one IO put it: "We have everything from princes to paupers." Similar perceptions occurred at the JSCSC in the United Kingdom.

The stereotype of the Arab prince flaunting his expensive car and the third-world officer barely getting by is a common one. Since September 11, my sources report, Arab students in IMET have made special efforts to dispel incorrect perceptions regarding Islam. The status of Arab IOs is one that requires sustained attention.

These income differences mean that IOs from the poorer countries cannot keep up with the level of hosting or off-duty social events easily afforded by American officers or others from economically advanced countries. Still, many informal IO events are, in the words of a British officer, "delicately organized" to allow the well off to help out the less well off.

English language deficiencies are most pronounced in written performance. It is generally understood, though never stated, that those without good English-language skills are not held to the same standards as those with fluent command of the language. One American war college student put it plainly. "To talk to an IO with poor English is just too much work." (Note: I felt the same way in a few of my interviews with IOs.)

But of all the concerns, by far and away, the most significant was the lack of medical coverage for family members of many of the IOs. The same issue was raised



repeatedly by those American military staff members who manage the IMET program. The policies concerning medical coverage of family members of IOs while in the United States vary greatly from country to country. But in most instances, family members with medical needs extending beyond what can be treated at the base clinic are in serious financial trouble. In such cases, major medical treatment or hospitalization is not covered by an insurance plan.

As one American military officer on the staff of a war college put it, "Our big fear is that there will be at least one major medical emergency in each class." The plight of these uninsured family members affects not only the family directly involved, but is widely discussed within the whole cohort, especially so among the IOs.

Looking at multinational headquarters more generally, a key issue is whom is accountable to whom. This is related to on whom does one's promotion depend. In all international military organizations, one's immediate superior is likely to be other than a fellow national. But the promotion to higher rank must come from within one's home military organization. Moreover, senior officers in both SFOR (Bosnia) and KFOR (Kosovo) reported that there is always a probability that in sensitive missions, a commanding officer would report to the home country before the international headquarters.

Military-civilian interactions also confound matters. Here, as previously noted, there may be better cooperation between military officers of different nationalities than between military officers and civilian officials of the same nationality. The proportion of civilians in a multinational headquarters is also a variable.

## VI. Recommendations

Interviews with IOs and American officers lead to several major recommendations to improve international military cooperation. We group these by setting: IMET and multinational headquarters.

### A. IMET

1. The most pressing issue in the IMET program in the United States is to obtain some kind of health insurance for the family members of all IOs. This is the universal recommendation of all the American civilian and military personnel who deal with IOs. The sums involved would not be exorbitant, but the return in good will would be immeasurable. Alleviating this problem would significantly benefit the positive impression of IMET on all IOs.

2. In the IMET program in the United States, there should be a review of what must be classified material in the curriculum. The exemption of IOs from classified materials aggravates an incipient feeling of being second-class citizens in the academic program. The consensus among American students at the war/staff colleges is that most of what is classified is pretty innocuous. At the minimum, IOs, as do all American military officers, should be able to use .mil for computer access. Even the "Early Bird" (the daily collection of newspaper articles on security and military developments) can be accessed only by using .mil. American military officers consistently say it should be easy to build a computer "firewall" between what is really sensitive material and what is not.

3. In the IMET program in the United States, consideration should be given to some modification of the curriculum in our war/staff colleges. Not only the IOs, but many American students believe that the curriculum should have more coverage of alliance operations, coalition warfare, peacekeeping, international organizations, and so forth. As one American officer put, "the curriculum is still in the big war" mode. Of course, professional military education in the United States must necessarily have a strong American content. But some re-thinking is in order on what is required as to maximize the future benefits of a war/staff college year for both the American and international students.

4. Prior to their arrival at a war/staff college, a number of IOs attend the English language program at Lackland Air Force Base. This program is very well run, but some of the students wish the program included more on military terminology, more tutoring on English writing, and some computer instruction. Some of the IOs also reported they felt their rank was not respected by being placed in living quarters with Spanish-speaking enlisted personnel coming from Puerto Rico.

5. Special attention needs to be given to selection of civilian and military sponsors of IOs from Islamic countries, especially those of Arab origin.

6. In both the American war/staff colleges and the JSCSC in the United Kingdom, IOs made the point that inviting non-native English speakers to give an occasional lecture would be seen as recognition of the multi-nationality of the curriculum. If need be, use an interpreter. As one IO put it, "There are smart people who don't speak English."

7. Recommendations of a less sweeping nature follow: (a) Make English language courses more available to IO wives and consider having an elective course that wives can take while their husbands are attending the regular program; and (b) Insure that incoming IOs receive some kind of hard copy of the IMET program before they depart, inasmuch as the Internet is not always convenient for many IOs in their home countries.

## B. Multinational Headquarters

Derived in part from the SHAPE experience as well as observations made at international headquarters in Bosnia and Kosovo, some recommendations on international military cooperation follow.

1. Even an occasional use of a phrase or word in a fellow officer's native language is appreciated, e.g. bon jour, guten tag, graci, etc. Such phrases are particularly well received by IOs coming from smaller countries whose native languages are not widely spoken outside of the home country.

2. American officers should be alert to the reality that they often speak too fast for easy comprehension by IOs. Similarly, a reliance on acronyms without explanations must be avoided.

3. American officers should offer to check memos written by non-native English speakers. Also, with computers, grammar/spelling checks are great practical aid.

4. Inquiry of IOs as to events in their countries. Such inquiry should be informed by being conversant with current events in other countries. As an American officer at SHAPE put it: "Americans get their news from The Stars and Stripes. Even a Herald Tribune will be left unread on a waiting room table." In this regard, reading international coverage in The Economist would greatly advance the knowledge of American officers of an IO's home country. At a minimum, American officers should be required to read at least an encyclopedia entry on the country of a fellow IO with whom they regularly work.

5. One proposal by an American officer is rather intriguing, though unlikely to be implemented. Namely, use British spelling at international headquarters. This would put Americans at a slight disadvantage, but would make Americans appear less "super-powerish."

6. A common stereotype of Americans is that they are too work oriented and "don't know how to have good time." Special consideration should be focused on

enhancing inter-personal activities across national lines, though more informal dinners, drinking occasions, and excursions.

7. Foreign Area Officers (FAO) career paths should be subject to rethinking. American officers who possess foreign language competencies and in-depth knowledge of particular countries are a valuable national security resource. This is particularly true for those countries outside of the major European nations. In most cases, a FAO will not reach general rank. Some thought should be given to how a FAO, toward the end of a military career, might shift over to a position in the State Department, the C.I.A, or D.I.A.

8. Advantage should be taken of visiting comedy groups that could poke some fun at Americans (and others) at multinational military headquarters. One such group is Boom Chicago, an improvisational comedy troupe, based in Amsterdam. Boom Chicago is frequently asked to do corporate shows along similar lines. See [andrew@boomchicago.nl](mailto:andrew@boomchicago.nl) (Full disclosure: Andrew is the son of the author of this report.)

Item: Camp Bondsteel, the American base in Kosovo, has unintended but positive consequences on international military goodwill. Many allied military personnel who served in Kosovo reported that the highlight of their tour was spending a few days on leave at Camp Bondsteel. They reflected fondly on the dining facilities (including American fast food chains), PX items and prices, internet access, entertainment facilities, etc.

## VII. Conclusion

Sustaining international military coalitions in which America takes part is vital to our national security. The missions can vary tremendously: conventional warfare, anti-terrorist campaigns, air surveillance, peacekeeping, humanitarian missions, among others. America must accept the reality that because our nation is preeminent in economic and cultural influence as well as military might, even our allies may resent us at some level. Our alertness to steps that can reduce such resentment can only lead to more effective multinational cooperation. This will greatly serve our military and our nation. Much is at stake.

## Appendix 1. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR IMET RESEARCH

1. Self-introduction and thanks for participation
2. Inquiry as to family status
3. Since you have been here, what happened that you did not expect?
4. What did you expect to happen that did not happen?
5. How much of what you learned here will be useful when you return to your home country?
6. What did you think of the course of instruction? Are there any changes you would recommend?
7. Who are your best friends here?
8. How does your family find living in America?
9. What field trips did you take? Which were the most interesting, which the least?
10. Any other observations or comments?

Throughout: probe for how Americans are viewed in comparison with officers of other countries.

Throughout: probe for perceptions of American arrogance.

## Appendix 2. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SHAPE RESEARCH

1. Self-introduction and thanks for participation
2. Inquiry as to family status
3. Since you have been here, what happened that you did not expect?
4. What did you expect to happen that did not happen?
5. Who are your best friends here?
6. What do you think is most valuable part of being assigned to SHAPE?
7. Do you any recommendations and how to improve international military cooperation?
8. Any other observations or comments?

Throughout: probe for how Americans are viewed in comparison with officers of other countries.

Throughout: probe for perceptions of American arrogance.

## Appendix 3. SELECTED QUOTES FROM INTERVIEWEES

### A. International Officers (IOs) on IMET Curriculum

1. Slovakia: Inevitable there would be too much on emphasis on America, especially in reading materials. But why so much on the US Constitution, which Americans should know anyhow. Better to compare the US constitution with constitutions of other countries. This would be more interesting and better for the Americans too.

Romania: Of course, the IOs want to learn about their own region and the American role in that region. East Europeans cannot be too interested in Latin America.

Australia: We are supposed to be taught leadership, but never any real discussion with a leader. We need to talk about real-life problems rather than abstract principles of leadership.

Norway: Reading Alexander Hamilton is very difficult. But when I was asked by instructor to compare USA and Norwegian constitutions, I found this excellent. This is a very good way to get IOs interested.

Bulgaria: Expected more about military strategy and the future of the military. Too much on US history. After all, the US Civil War is not really applicable today.

Hungary: I went to staff college under the communist system and now the American system. Here we learn how to think. Russians staff school was sheer memorization.

Germany: Much less pressure in the British advanced course. Brits more gentlemanly in their school. Here there are real pressures in term papers and exams.

Turkey: There is an unwritten competition between the old guard who has Soviet PME, those who go to Germany or France for PME, and those who are USA IMET graduates.

### B. Non-Americans on Americans.

Netherlands: In America, everything not specifically allowed is forbidden. Check point mania. Zero Defects. Despite "out of box" rhetoric, little encouragement of independent thinking.

Italy: Americans see PME as a credential and hoop to go through. IOs seem PME as a novel military experience. We had to go through all kinds of channels just to get six officers excused from a mandatory lecture [they needed a yearbook meeting].

Netherlands: The USA is not driven just by money or power. Patriotism is very strong, unlike at home.

Czech Republic: Language barriers are number one in fostering anti-Americanism or the perception that Americans are arrogant. Without good English, the non-Americans feel rebuffed from start.

Britain: We tease the Americans for being so super power, but when we were in East Timor, Australian logistics were "in rag." Thank God we had an American aircraft carrier off shore to help us out.

Australia: I was told when going to USA, you are going to a foreign country. Drive-in ATMs, laws against leaving children in the car. I was told "you won't be making any good American friends." Not really true.

Norway: Why did we have to be told not to shoplift at the PX? I found this demeaning.

Egypt: There are different levels of friendship. Americans start by being friends from the beginning, but don't follow up. Somewhat frustrating because Americans pull away when favors asked. For IOs, friendships start much slower, but are much deeper.

Canada: The American attitude is you need us, we don't need you.

Malaysia: I don't find the American officers as arrogant. It is the State Department types who are the worst.

Denmark: Friends? Absolutely none of the Americans have an interest in us. Maybe there are afraid to display their lack of knowledge of Europe. Americans don't really open up.

Poland: Americans are not arrogant. Maybe they are not as familiar with Europe as we are, but they know more about the Middle East and South American than do the European IOs.

Australia: I expected USA and Australia to be alike, but surprised at the differences. USA is much more bureaucratic, inflexible, and bound by regulations.

Britain: The USA works 24 hours a day. But all the countries, even those are less organized, get the job done too. We saw a European with a sandwich on his desk the other day working on the computer at lunchtime. "Your American passport came in the mail?"

Finland: Americans are big on "presentism." Are present at work, but not really working. Europeans are more efficient.

Britain: We are better at intelligence than America because we are openly cynical. Just look at how we get people to commit treason for her Majesty's government. The USA uses money. The Soviets used both money and blackmail. We use thwarted ambition.



Greece: Americans are hardworking, tolerant and patient people, although a people of a superpower. Or course, there is anti-Americanism in particular countries. In the former Warsaw Pact countries, there are still some number of communists in the military ranks. Anti-Americanism in Western developed countries is only a result of jealousy. It is human nature to be jealous.

Poland: I've been here for almost a year and no American has asked me what's happening in my home country.

Germany: Americans build a fence around themselves. Look at the PX and the schools. US wives in Bonn, never left the kaserne on their own. American officers here are not interested in learning about Belgium. You should select American officers who speak other languages. American officers are stationed in Germany for two years and learn no German.

Germany: Germans are straightforward, speak what they really think, no secret agenda. Americans pretty much the same way, that is why we get along best.

### **C. Non-Americans on Non-Americans**

British officer: [Re Sarajevo, 1998] Americans: for God's sake don't let any American get killed. We Brits have done this for years; this is a low threat environment. French -- let's plan to do something tomorrow.

New Zealand: I expected stronger language skills among the IOs. Maybe a third have real problems with English. On the other hand, some may put up language deficiency as a sort of shield not to participate.

Norway: Poles, Czechs and Hungarians stand aloof from the other Europeans. Want to be with the USA, Brits, and Canada. Use English even if more comfortable with German. The three new NATO countries are the most anti-EU military forces.

Italy: The challenge here is much bigger at home because we must represent our nation as well as our rank and military specialty. We must speak in a foreign language. And there is much great variability among the officers of the same rank here than one would find in one's home country.

Canada: It is natural for people who speak the same language to associate more with each other. But the herding instinct wears off over the year -- except for the Arabs.

### **D. Americans on Non-Americans**

IMET: We try to pull IOs into seminar discussions. Nobody cuts off an IO like they would an American.

IMET: Some IOs can become "very needy." Will latch on to one person This is one reason we seem to be superficial. Because we are.

SHAPE: Broadly speaking, Europeans don't see as much of a contradiction between a supranational NATO identity and their own national identity as do the Americans and the Brits.

### **E. Americans on Americans**

IMET: Americans are arrogant in the sense they take charge. But after, who is in charge?

IMET: Of course, the IOs are more likely to make more friends among themselves than with Americans. This is because of the common experience of being foreign in America and because of the summer prep course. American are not really arrogant, we are just culturally insensitive.

SHAPE: We are in a hurry to get things done. Non-Americans always take things more slowly. We are looked upon as intellectually inferior because we can speak only one language.

SHAPE: Americans come to work early, stay later than anyone else. In August, Europeans close down. Also take 10 days for Christmas.

SHAPE female officer: American women working in multinational headquarters have special problems re sexual harassment. There are different definitions of harassment in Italy and Turkey, for example. We don't how to handle it. Telling a foreigner to stop not as easy telling an American.

SFOR: There are some US military who do a great job in getting along with and understanding foreigners, but they do it on their own. Americans are ignorant that they are arrogant. At least the French know they are arrogant.

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## Footnotes

The mode and presentation of the data collection reported herein are the sole responsibility of the principal investigator and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Air Force or the Science Applications International Corporation.

<sup>1</sup> New York Times, Feb. 23, 2002, p. A8.

<sup>2</sup> Peter W. Rodman, Drifting Apart? Trends in U.S.-European Relations (Nixon Center, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center, reported in International Herald Tribune, Dec. 20, 2001, pp. 1,6.

<sup>4</sup> Susan E. Jackson, ed., Diversity in the Workplace (Guilford Press, 1992); Efrat Elron, "Top Management Teams Within Multinational Corporations: Effects of Multicultural Heterogeneity," Leadership Quarterly, Vol. 8 (1997), pp. 393-412; P.M. Donley, J.P. Canno; M.R. Mullen, "Understanding the Influence of National Culture on the Development of Trust," Academy of Management Review, Vol. 23 (1998), pp. 601-620. See also Monteagle Stearns, Talking to Strangers: Improving American Diplomacy at Home and Abroad (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Geert H. Hofstede, Culture's Consequences: International Difference in Work-Related Values (Beverly Hill, CA: Sage, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> Joseph L. Soeters, "Value Orientations in Military Academies: A Thirteen Countries Study," Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 24 (1997), pp. 7-32. See also Joseph L. Soeters, et al. "The Importance of Cultural Information in Multinational Operations," Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies, Nr. 4, 2001, pp. 55-65; Donna Winslow and Peer Everts, "Inter-Cultural Challenges for NATO," in Gustav Schmitt, ed., NATO: The First Fifty Years (London: McMillan Academic, 2000), pp. 34-49.

<sup>7</sup> David R. Segal and R.B. Tiggler, "Attitudes of Citizen-Soldiers to Military Missions in the Post-Cold War World," Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 23 (1997), pp. 373-390.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Moskos, Peace Soldiers: The Sociology of a United Nations Military Force (University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> For an insightful current account, see Peter van Ham and Richard L. Kugler, Western Unity and the Transatlantic Security Challenge, (Garmisch, Germany: Marshall Center,

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2002). See also R.A. Preston, "The Multi-Cultural and Multi-National Problems of Armed Forces," in New Dimensions in Military History, ed., Russell F. Weigly (Presidio Press, 1975); Roger A. Beaumont, Joint Military Operations (Greenwood Press, 1993); Richard L. Kugler, U.S.-West European Cooperation in Out-Of-Area Military Operations (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994); and Efrat Elfron, Boas Shamir, and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Why Don't They Fight Each Other? Cultural Diversity and Operational Unity in Multinational Forces," Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 26 (1999), pp. 73-98.

<sup>10</sup> For background information on IMET, I relied especially on John A. Cope, International Military Education and Training: An Assessment (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1995). An update of this significant study is in preparation. Also relevant are Fred A. Coffey, Jr., Best Dollar Spent: A Look at the Informational Program for Foreign Military Officers (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1985); Spiro C. Manolas and Louis J. Samelson, The United States International Education and Training Program, DISARM Journal, (spring, 1990), pp. 1-13; General Accounting Office, Security Assistance: Observations on the International Military Education and Training Program, (Washington, D.C." GAO, June 14, 1990); R.F. Grimmett, International Military Education and Training Program (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Unlike the typical 11-month programs at the other war and staff colleges, the Naval Staff College (NSC) has terms of 5 and 1/2 months. Typically, there are 32 students per class of which one is an American. The parallel College of the Naval Command and Staff College has not international students. The benefits of this model are that more small countries can participate if their officers are away from their home countries for only a half year rather than whole year. And, in fact, the NSC has a much higher proportion of non-European and poorer countries than any other IMET program. The downside is that there is much less interaction between IOs and American students and the curriculum has to be compressed.

<sup>12</sup> On field research, see Thomas D. Cook and Charles S. Reichardt, Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Evaluation Research (Sage, 1979); Jerome Kirk and Marc L. Miller, Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research (Sage, 1986); and Michael Quinn Patton, Qualitative Evaluation Methods (Sage, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> See, Schahresad Forman and Peter Zachar, "Cross-Cultural Adjustment of International Officers During Professional Military Education in the United States," Military Psychology, Vol. 13 (2001), pp. 117-128.

<sup>14</sup> Of some note is that the German perception of American military personnel, even at SHAPE, derives from their observations of the stereotypic insular life on U.S. military bases in Germany.