

**OPENING STATEMENT TO THE
SUBCOMMITTEES ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES
UNITED STATES SENATE
“FOREIGN MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAMS”**

LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHARLES W. HOOPER, USA

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Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member Peters, for convening this hearing today.

The training and education of foreign military personnel in the United States is one of our most effective tools to strengthen alliances and attract new partners. As a Foreign Area Officer and career security cooperater, I have worked alongside many foreign military leaders whose training in the United States established an appreciation for American culture and values and has shaped long-standing cooperation and partnership with the United States.

While the value of these types of military training and education programs cannot be overstated, I want to be clear that *nothing is more important than safeguarding American lives*. The incident in Pensacola was tragic, and my heart remains with the families of those that we lost and with the people of Pensacola for the impact this event has had on the community. My colleague and I today will be sharing new procedures the U.S. Government has put into place to reduce risk and improve the training environment so that all U.S., foreign military, civilian personnel, and their families remain safe and have the opportunity to continue benefitting from our foreign military training programs.

The training and education of foreign military personnel alongside U.S. forces, and specifically in the United States, is one of our most effective security cooperation tools. What makes the U.S. approach to security cooperation different from that of our strategic competitors is that the basis of our approach isn't the sale of goods and services, but the enduring relationship that comes along with it. At the heart of any defense relationship is a *human relationship* that is built and fostered through opportunities for U.S. and foreign military students to train alongside one

another. When international military students attend training and education in the United States, they are exposed to our values, our culture, and our people. These experiences serve as the building blocks for our long-term strategic and defense relationship.

In addition to building lasting relationships, these training programs build the capacity of our allies and partners to provide for their own defense and contribute to shared security challenges. Education and training in the United States is foundational to building an enduring interoperability with our partners and allies.

Since the year 2000, over one million international military students have been trained by the United States. We have trained more than 28,000 Saudi students over the life of our security cooperation relationship. It is worth noting that close to 4,000 Heads of State, Ministers of Defense, Chiefs of Defense, and other General Officers received training by the United States. This delivers a lasting *strategic* return on our security cooperation investments.

Recently, our own Secretary of Defense discussed his personal experience training alongside foreign partners. He attended West Point with students from other countries, trained at the Hellenic Military Academy, and trained alongside an officer from the African continent while he was active duty. These experiences have shaped his strong support for foreign military training and education programs and informed the Department's response to the incident in Pensacola.

International Military Students can receive training and education in the United States under a variety of programs. The Department of Defense and the Department of State both have authorities and appropriations to fund military training in the United States. Most of this training occurs at Department of Defense facilities and schools.

The Department of Defense provides and funds international military training and education under a variety of DoD programs such as Section 333 Global Train and Equip, the Counter-ISIL Train and Equip Fund, the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund, the Regional Centers for Security Studies, and the Regional Defense Combating Terrorism and Irregular Warfare Fellowship Program, which we now refer to as the Regional Defense Fellowship Program.

The Department of State has three main programs to fund U.S. training of foreign militaries for which the Department of Defense is the main implementer: the International Military Education and Training (or IMET) program, Foreign Military Financing, and the Peacekeeping Operations account, which includes the Global Peace Operations Initiative.

Department of State funding, via the IMET program, is focused on the professionalization of partner nation military forces. By emphasizing Professional Military Education at every level of an individual's career, we seek to develop professional leaders with whom the United States can work and foster enduring relationships that enable collaboration over the long-term.

The Department of State also uses Foreign Military Financing to fund training, which typically focuses on tactical or operational subjects and/or is directly related to a procurement made through other programs.

In addition, State funds training through the Peacekeeping Operations account, which is almost exclusively conducted in partner nations and is primarily for peacekeeping, counterterrorism, maritime security and military professionalization purposes in select countries.

The programs I have discussed thus far are programs that rely primarily on U.S. grant assistance. However, many of our allies and partners use their own money to come to the United States for DoD provided training associated with procurements of defense articles and services under the Foreign Military Sales program. DSCA is responsible for ensuring transfers of defense articles and services, to include the necessary training and education to ensure the effective operation and sustainment of these systems.

DSCA's role, in supporting foreign military training executed pursuant to these authorities, is to implement and administer these programs by providing policy guidance and support to the U.S. government stakeholders who are part of the enterprise. Those stakeholders include the Geographic Combatant Commands and the security cooperation offices at embassies, the State Department's Political Military Affairs Bureau, and the Military Departments, whose schoolhouses run a majority of the training and education programs. DSCA's support ranges from annual security cooperation planning conferences to issuing and maintaining DoD-wide guidance for the execution of its security assistance and security cooperation programs.

For example, while DSCA is not directly involved in the screening or vetting of international military students, the Agency issues policy and procedural guidance that requires international military students to receive security and medical screening in their home country. However, due to the unique individual nature of our bilateral relationships, each U.S. Ambassador determines the local security screening process for their post. Meanwhile, any student who comes to the United States under one of these programs is also screened and vetted to determine their eligibility for a U.S. visa. The visa application process includes screening against biographic and biometric databases, an interagency counter terrorism check, and, at 37 posts worldwide, including those in Saudi Arabia, screening by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement /Homeland Security Investigations Visa Security Unit.

DSCA, the Department of State, the Offices of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Policy, the Military Departments, and our foreign partners are all critical to ensuring the success of our foreign military training programs – and we have been working hand-in-hand to update processes and policy guidance in response to the events in Pensacola.

In closing, I want to reiterate how invaluable foreign military training programs are to advancing our national security objectives. International military students are here as student visitors to learn skills and professions, but also to learn about our people, our culture, and our values. And this cannot be overstated. These *human relationships forged between our respective military members* promote long-term defense and strategic relationships, increase our interoperability, and enable partners to contribute to our shared security objectives over the long term.