

Foreign language, Cultural Diplomacy, and Global Security

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diplomats must be thoroughly fluent, not just in foreign languages ~~but~~ ^{with} the issues that matter most to those we're dealing with. Questions of social development such as education, literacy, and poverty; environmental degradation; postconflict stabilization; women's and minority empowerment; corruption, rule of law, and market

studies (Title VI) and the resources exist today at select universities with Language Resource Centers and National Resource Centers

On April 21, 1978, President Carter published Executive Order 12054, establishing the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies. The Commission issued its report in November 1979, concluding, in a well-known quote, "Americans' incompetence in foreign languages is nothing short of scandalous, and is becoming worse." The report contained recommendations for the educational system, and for business and labor. The important recommendations of this report that resonate within the theme of this paper were:

The U.S. Government should achieve 100% compliance in filling positions designated as requiring foreign language proficiency....

The President should designate a major official as the possible officer to be the point of contact on all matters involving foreign language and international studies.

Establish a National Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies.⁹

In 1991, the Congress passed the David L. Boren National Security Education Act. This Act provided authority to the Department of Defense for scholarships and fellowships for American students to study abroad (and return for government service) and also authorized grants for higher education. As a result of this legislation, 45n.88 0 Td ()T2STd ()T2STd ()Te8 ()-10 (a)4 (

America needs people who understand foreign cultures and who are fluent in locally spoken languages. The stability and economic vitality of the United States and our national security depend on American citizens who are knowledgeable about the world. We need civil servants, including law enforcement officers, teachers, area experts, diplomats, and business people with the ability to communicate at an advanced level in the languages and understand the cultures of the people with whom they interact. (emphasized) (Akaka,

to encourage reform, promote understanding, convey respect for other cultures and provide an opportunity to learn more about our country and its citizens. To do this, we must be able to communicate in other languages, a challenge for which we are unprepared.

The agencies participating in NSLI sought to stimulate the study of languages in critical need for national security, and to engage the nation in an endeavor to increase the number of students of these languages beginning at an early age. The breadth of NSLI was remarkable since it began with children in kindergarten and elementary school. The stated goals of NSLI were:

- x Increase the number of U.S. residents studying critical languages and starting them off at an earlier age.
- x Increase the number of advanced level speakers of foreign languages, with an emphasis on mastery of critical languages.
- x Increase the number of teachers of critical languages and providing resources for them. (U.S. Department of Education, 2008. P.1)

As noted in the State Department Fact Sheet, the Administration requested \$114M in Fiscal Year 2007 to support NSLI. Some specifics of the initiative were:

The Department of Education focused its Foreign Language Assistance Programs to focus on critical needs languages. These three year grants totaled secondary schools were

Over 45,000 students and 10,000 teachers have participated to date, with over 70% of students stating they intend to continue studying a world language following their STARTALK participation and the vast majority of teacher trainees stating they intend to earn teacher certification and/or teach a world language in the U.S. As of 2015, STARTALK offers in eleven languages: Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Farsi (Persian), Hindi, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish

succeed without them, the words and interest DoD leadership, the findings of the House Armed Service Committee Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and the experience of the Special Operations soldier highlighted at the beginning of this paper demonstrate the critical need for these skills. Finally, DoD makes language policy and program decisions hoping to influence the behavior of over 2 million members of the Armed Forces and civilian employees. Over the past decade DoD engaged in an extraordinary effort to cultivate, and sustain foreign language proficiency. There may be lessons in the DoD experience for the rest of government.

The House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight conducted an investigation of DoD's program and confirmed DoD's concern about the need to grow national capability. The report also underscored the DoD need:

It is difficult to predict the exact price tag for developing needed language and cultural capabilities. However, we do know what the cost to the military and the nation is if we continue to fail to greatly enhance these skills. The risk is more conflict and prolonged conflict, and the cost is more lives needlessly lost on all sides. (U.S. House of Representatives, 2008, p. 54)

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, DoD found itself without capability in the languages of the countries where its forces were engaged in operations. There were few, if any, speakers of the languages of Afghanistan, notably Dari and Pashtu, and similarly few Arabic speakers. This was of great concern to the Secretary of Defense who, it seemed was in constant communication about numbers of speakers, languages being taught, and plans for the future.

DoD dedicated itself to improving language capability. All components appointed a Senior Language Authority at the General/Flag Officer or Senior Executive level, and these Senior Language Authorities comprised a Defense Foreign Language Steering Committee (later and now known as the Defense Language Steering Committee). The Senior Language Authorities helped determine needs and establish policies and the Defense Language Steering Committee was the body that crafted and coordinated the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap.

The Defense Language Transformation Roadmap was published in 2005. It began with assumptions about the need for foreign language:

Conflict against enemies speaking less commonly taught language and thus the need for foreign language capability will not abate. Robust foreign language and foreign area expertise are critical to sustaining coalitions, pursuing regional stability, and conducting multinational missions especially in post-conflict and other than combat, security, humanitarian, nation building, and stability operations.

Changes in the international security environ

- x Establish a cadre of language professionals possessing Interagency Language Roundtable proficiency of 3/3/3 in reading/listening/speaking. Address language requirements (below 3/3/3 level ability). There was a growing recognition that language capability needed to be enhanced beyond the levels currently taught by the Department's school house – the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center which was graduating students with a level 2 proficiency.
- x Establish a process to track the accession, separation, and promotion rates of military personnel with language skills and Foreign Area Officers.

Some features of the Defense Language Program stand out for purposes of this paper. A Defense Congressional witness in 2010, Nancy Weaver, described two programs to recruit native level language skills. One of these programs, Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest, was a pilot to recruit noncitizens with critical foreign language and cultural skills. The recruits received "expedited U.S. citizenship processing." The program began in February 2009, and by July 2010, the Army had recruited 792 members with critical language skills. (Weaver, 2010, p.6) The other program created a new Military Occupational Specialty 09L, which recruited native speakers as interpreters, focusing on the languages of Iraq and Afghanistan. The program started in 2003, and 1,000 individuals were recruited, trained, and sent to Iraq and Afghanistan (Weaver 2010, p.6)

These two programs, initiated in a time of war to meet a language crisis, demonstrate the aggressive action the Department of Defense was taking to meet its immediate needs. These language skills were not available in the force or in the numbers required in the public from which DoD recruited. (McGinn, 2014, p.21)

A second and more enduring program is the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program. Foreign Area Officers possess high levels of language capability and understanding of specific regions of the world. In 2012, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness testified before Congress and described this field as follows:

These officers combine military skill with specific regional expertise, language competency, and political

To expand, in conjunction with other federal programs, the international experience, knowledge base, and perspectives on which the United States citizenry, government employees, and leaders, and

To permit the federal government to advocate on behalf of international education.

This section concludes “As a result, NSEP is the only federally funded effort focused on the combined issues of language proficiency, national security, and the needs of the federal workforce.”

These words would seem to clearly place NSEP in the forefront of a comprehensive U.S. approach to supporting cultural diplomacy and global security.

There are nine specific programs within NSEP. Boren Scholarship Fellowships support individual study abroad in return for federal service (an African language component has been added to this). The Language Flagship provides grant universities to develop program and graduate students at high levels of language proficiency. English for Heritage Language Speakers helps to improve English proficiency of those who speak critical languages. Project Global Officers focuses on the language and cultural education of students in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (there is also a program combining ROTC education with the Language Flagship effort). Language Training Centers at selected universities provide training for military and civilian personnel of the DoD. And, finally, the National Language Service Corps establishes an on-call language capability for emerging requirements. All of these programs deserve mention and are extensively discussed in the NSEP report. For purposes of this paper, there are three that deserve particular mention because of their potential reach across government.

Boren Scholarship and Fellowship Programs.

As noted above, the National Security Education Program was created as a result of the David L Boren National Security Education Act in 1991. It has its origins in the scholarships and fellowships awarded to deserving undergraduate and graduate students to allow them to study abroad in countries of interest in supporting our national security, in return for federal service. Since these awards began in 1994, over 5,200 scholarships and fellowships have been provided to deserving students. Over 2600 of these students are employed, or have been employed in support of national security at federal agencies. These agencies spread across the Government, again demonstrating that concern about cultural diplomacy and global security does not rest exclusively with the State Department or the Department of Defense. The list of employing agencies is found at Appendix A. (National Security Education Program, 2014, p. IV and p. 85)(McGinn, 2014, p. 16)

Boren Scholarships and Fellowships are awarded to individual undergraduate and graduate (respectively) for study abroad in regions and with an emphasis on languages deemed critical to national security. In return for this financial and placement support, the students agree to a national service requirement – one year working in a federal agency important to national security. Under current legislation, agencies of first priority are: DoD, Homeland Security, State Department, and Intelligence components. While positions may not always be available in these agencies, students may branch out to other agencies with national security missions. Absent positions there, students may find employment in education. The leaders of these programs determine the areas and languages of the world to focus on by surveying federal agencies. The

The Language Flagship sought to address this issue by creating a structure within universities for a special emphasis on a program that would allow students from many majors and language backgrounds to achieve professional level proficiency. Students participate in special programs and “interventions”, including extra practice and tutoring, taking content courses in the target language, and an overseas Capstone experience. The NSEP notes that over 95% of 2014 Flagship students achieved a score of 2+ or above based on an Oral Proficiency Interview. (N

The Department provides hiring and financial incentives in the management of language

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The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) a 2012 appearance before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight of Government

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has employed the third highest number of NSEP graduates, following the Department of Defense and the Department of State. Within

(FSI). Secondly, languages are required for assignments overseas. Currently, 20% of positions are Language Designated Positions (LDPs). USAID is planning to increase that number. USAID has a goal of enhancing its capability in Arabic. If potential hires claim to have language, they are given a telephonic Oral Proficiency Interview and, if results are positive, they are sent to FSI to be tested. USAID does hire individuals without language capability as technical experts and offer follow-on language training. Depending upon the job, the Mission can waive the language requirement. When there is an unmet language need on a site, Foreign Service Nationals can fill voids, or they hire local interpreters.²⁴

Federal agencies overall share challenges and issues in building the capability they need – the right people – the right languages – and, the right proficiencies.

A starting point for consideration is a report that was issued by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) entitled: “Foreign Languages: Human Capital Approach Needed to Correct Staffing and Proficiency Shortfalls.” At that time (2002) the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget were interested in instilling this approach across the whole of government. The elements of the human capital approach were development of strategic plans, conducting an inventory of the workforce, ascertaining existing competencies and identifying needs, and making plans to meet those (GAO, 2002, pps. 31-34) A discussion of this approach and agency progress became a theme underlying a series of Congressional hearings focused on foreign language conducted by the Subcommittee on Oversight of Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. In a perfect world the GAO recommendation to apply this approach would make sense. But what were the issues affecting agencies who were trying to plan?

Filling positions with the right skills, the right language and the right proficiency is a challenge.

languages are spoken (e.g. Arabic, Chinese, Dari). These languages require intensive training, over one year in duration, to achieve the proper proficiency. Agencies need to make decisions about whether to fill a position without foreign language training, or hold it vacant until training is completed. (Thomas Greenfield, 2012)

DoD faces a similar issue. The DoD witness at 2012 hearing testified that in Fiscal

trains about 3500 military students per year (many of them starting with little or no language background) in 22 languages

The investment in language training is significant. The costs are in money, time, and waived requirements.

There is an additional cost when agencies don't plan for language requirements and don't require language in hiring. The Federal Government's needs are unstated and don't demonstrate a market for language skills. This affects the pipeline of students studying languages since there is not a demonstrated market for language skills. It also, no doubt, affects the reaction of higher education as to how language is taught and proficiency developed.

In truth, there is no detailed understanding of federal agency needs for foreign languages. One of the recommendations of the National Research Council's work was that Congress require the Secretary of Education, in coordination with other federal agencies, to publish a report every two years "...outlining national needs identified in foreign language, area and international studies, plans for addressing those needs, and progress." (National Research Council, 2007, p. 244)

It would be useful to know some facts about the language needs of our Government from agencies who use language (perhaps using the NSEP list as a start). Some pertinent questions might be:

- x How does your agency use foreign language in accomplishing your mission?
- x

- x Machine Translation. Machines can translate volumes of materials much more quickly than humans can. Unfortunately, machine translation is not perfect, and does for the most part require human review of documents deemed important to the user. The FBI predicted that demand for translation services will steadily increase. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012, p.2)
- x Avatar based training holds promise for cultural training, as avatars negotiate a foreign culture and must react properly, as prompted by the user.
- x Distance learning and language sustainment. Those who develop proficiency in languages need a way to sustain that proficiency or even grow it. The private sector vendors to support this need, but some Government solutions exist as well. DoD High Joint Language University, the DLIFLC and the Foreign Service Institute.
- x Enhanced use of technology overall. For example, the Department of Defense developed a website www.cultureready.org "to foster a virtual community of people with interest or need for culture education, training, and readiness."
- x Blended and adaptive learning – including a "flipped" classroom where technology enabled programs can be accessed outside of class, with more class time devoted to teaching. The use of technology for this purpose is being developed.

In addition, on September 15, 2015, the Department of Defense awarded a grant to the University of Hawaii to establish a Flagship Technology Innovation Center. This center will help to infuse the use of technology within the Flagship institutions and will probably produce lessons learned for other institutions.²⁶

CONCLUSION

Today's military establishment, its active duty, reserve, and civilian personnel, must be trained and ready to engage the world with an appreciation of diverse cultures and to communicate directly with local populations. These skills save lives....They can save the lives of our personnel and can greatly reduce the risk to the indigenous, non-combatant populations that the military may be trying to protect or win over. Speaking the language with an appreciation of local culture is a potent tool in influencing a mission's outcome in our favor.

This is a quote from the beginning of the House Armed Services Committee report on DoD's language program (House Armed Services Committee, 2008, p. 9). It resonates with one of the opening quotations in this paper, that of Ambassador McEldowney, discussing the new complexities that all of our diplomats, from the officials in the State Department to the soldier on the ground, face when engaging with the world today.

²⁶ See: <http://www.hawaii.edu/news/article.php?ald=7439>

Understanding foreign cultures and regions is important, but adding foreign language to that understanding provides a decided edge ~~critical~~ global security in all of its aspects, from war fighting, to assisting developing countries, to combatting disease.

This paper has hopefully demonstrated the importance of these skills, but has also demonstrated that ~~the~~ has not been a national ~~will~~ solve these problems. There is no overarching leadership for the development of national language skills. Absent that over

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