

A Language, Regional Expertise, and Cultural (LREC) Triad for Joint Foreign Area Officer Education and Training

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Executive Summary

Monterey, California serves as the nexus for the Department of Defense's (DoD's) effort to educate and train its corps of Joint Foreign Area Officers (FAOs). A serendipitous triad of language, regional expertise, and cultural (LREC) educational institutions offers a transitioning FAO the opportunity to fulfill an officer's requirement for a graduate degree in regional studies, a foreign language, and service-level intermediate college (ILC). The National Security Affairs (NSA) Department at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) (<https://www.nps.edu>), the Defense Language Institute (DLI) (<https://www.dliflc.edu>), and the Naval War College – Monterey campus (NWC – Monterey) (<http://www.nps.edu/Academics/Programs/NWC>) offer the most relevant and cost-effective initial training and education program for any service building new FAOs.

Network

FAOs who use the LREC triad (NPS, DLI, and NWC – Monterey) develop robust joint, social and professional networks that will be essential in their future job assignments. No other graduate education institution in the United States provides such a densely concentrated, multi-service environment for FAO education. The Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy use NPS exclusively as their graduate education provider for FAOs. However, the development of social and professional bonds among FAOs surpasses the sole value of the education alone. Although top-tier graduate schools, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, offer highly lucrative and influential networks, NPS offers the most relevant and valuable network for FAOs.

Networks matter in the FAO community, possibly more than in any other profession within the military. As Captain Todd Squire, USN, succinctly describes in his paper, *The Navy FAO Manifesto*, "The primary tool for the FAO is his or her network [and], as a FAO, your network is your weapons system." In any organization, the FAO's primary function is to advise the commander of the regionally specific threats and opportunities that can hinder or aid the command's mission; however, the FAO's secondary function is to navigate complex internal bureaucracies that all too often impede effective whole-of-government approaches to complex international issues. FAOs execute a commander's intent by brokering solutions across international, inter-agency, and inter-service boundaries. A well-developed network of social and professional bonds formed at NPS and DLI offer the FAO the most effective tool at breaking down the aforementioned barriers that detract from the effective execution of a commander's intent. Although the U.S. Government has extensive procedures and well-developed governing institutions, personal and professional networks remain a key enabling feature that allow an officer to navigate a complex bureaucratic landscape. Friendships among members from all branches of the services developed at NPS and

DLI promote inter-service cooperation, which enhances each FAO's ability to perform his or her job over the life of his or her career in government service.

In addition to connections formed with fellow members of the U.S. Armed Forces, FAOs at NPS also form strong personal and professional relationships with foreign military officers, who also earn their graduate degrees and graduate certificates from NPS. Every foreign military officer assigned to NPS receives a U.S. military sponsor for the duration of his or her degree program. The foreign officer sponsorship program often creates lifelong relationships between U.S. officers and foreign officers. Since the 1950s, NPS has educated over 5,000 officers at the graduate level from 101 different countries (Huber and Roser 2011). Even more impressive, since 1965, NPS's Defense Resource Management Institute (DRMI) has educated over 16,000 foreign military officers from 162 nations (Huber and Roser). Many foreign officers who are NPS alumni have achieved flag and general officer ranks. Notable NPS alumni include a King, two Ambassadors, six Ministers of Defense, and a Chairman of the NATO Military Committee (Huber and Roser). Since Internationals and U.S. families live in the same community, there are numerous opportunities to foster lasting friendships. Relationships developed with foreign colleagues at NPS offer the FAO added good will that can be leveraged when FAOs need to promote U.S. policies abroad, now and in the future.

In conclusion, FAOs depend on networks to get their job done, and the LREC triad provides the best educational opportunity available for the FAO to develop his or her relevant network.

Educational Focus Tailored to the Needs of the Services – Regional Education

The Naval Postgraduate School enables each service's FAO proponent to shape each curriculum in the National Security Affairs (NSA) Department to the needs of the U.S. Government (USG), DoD, and the Joint FAO Community. All of the services gather at NPS every two years to agree upon the educational skill requirements (ESRs) that govern the required content of each FAO degree program and the Joint FAO Skill Sustainment Pilot Program (JFSSPP) for advanced FAO education. Unlike other graduate education programs, such as Fletcher, SAIS, and Stanford, services can guide FAO education at NPS to reflect the dynamic educational needs of the DoD. Challenges in Afghanistan and Cyberspace demonstrate the DoD's need for NPS to serve as a responsive, top-tier graduate level education institution.

Furthermore, the NPS curriculum stems directly from a bottom-up approach that begins with the specific jobs required by each of the services, such as Defense Attaché, Foreign Area Officer, Political-Military Advisors, and Intelligence Officers (NPS Academic Catalog 2010). Curriculum sponsors set forth key educational attributes for each curriculum-associated subspecialty code, by developing a set of core skill requirements (CSRs). NPS faculty members then collaborate with the sponsors from each service to develop ESRs. Next, ESRs are translated directly into required courses of study for officers. When the officer successfully completes the course of study and capstone requirement, the officer earns a regionally focused graduate degree and a service-specific subspecialty code/additional designator. Again, no other graduate program can offer such a highly tailored education for the jobs that FAOs will perform.

Even beyond graduate education, NPS continues to provide current and highly relevant advanced FAO education through the JFSSPP. This program offers senior FAOs an opportunity to hone their regional expertise and language skills by working with the NPS and DLI faculty in Monterey for the first week, and then by working with regional experts in country for the second week. Senior FAOs develop stronger peer-level, inter-service networks throughout the course, and junior FAOs who are in the initial phase of their education and training at NPS and DLI have an opportunity to meet and develop mentoring relationships with senior FAOs during the Monterey portion of the course. JFSSPP represents the paramount contribution of the LREC triad to the Joint FAO community.

In conclusion, the LREC triad proactively responds to the needs of the DoD, the services, and the Joint FAO community with quality education and training that is delivered in a flexible format that supports a FAOs development throughout his or her military career.

Cost-Effective Education

The LREC triad (NPS, DLI, and NWC – Monterey) drastically reduces the costs for producing FAOs by decreasing permanent change of station (PCS) moves and by offering highly competitive tuition rates from each activity. According to the Defense Language Office (DLO), “Initial FAO training in FY 09 cost an average of \$222,878 per officer” (DLO, 2010). The U.S. Government (USG) and the DoD faces drastic cuts in spending, so savings on enterprises such as FAO production matter to each of the services. According to a recent *Newsweek* article, an austere fiscal environment and costly service-specific programs prompted Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates to devise plans to reduce DoD overhead by \$100 billion before 2015 (Barry and Thomas, 2010). The LREC triad offers economies of scope and scale that reduce the costs of producing officers with sophisticated LREC skills that can be uniquely tailored for each service’s needs.

First, few graduate-level institutions offer tuition rates that are as competitive as NPS’s rates. Air Force Regional Affairs Strategists (RAS) and Army FAOs complete a Master of Arts in Security Studies in their region in twelve months (non-thesis track with preceding or follow-on language training) to fifteen months (thesis track), for a total tuition cost of \$19,000 to \$23,750, respectively, in fiscal year 2012. Since the Navy already funds the NPS annual budget, Navy and Marine Corps FAOs complete the same degree with no direct tuition expenditures by the Department of the Navy. By adding three months to the FAO’s degree program, officers also have the option of completing ILC and earning Joint Professional Military Education Phase One (JPME 1) credit through NWC – Monterey. ILC at another institution would require a PCS move and at least ten additional months of in-residence coursework. Hence, the NPS and NWC – Monterey consortium offers the most cost-effective education for FAOs who require a regionally specific graduate degree and JPME 1 credit.

Second, services that use the LREC triad minimize costly PCS moves that are sometimes necessary to provide FAOs with relevant initial training and education for their assigned regional area. Once the new build FAO reaches Monterey, California, the officer can earn a graduate education, a foreign language qualification/degree, and

JPME 1 credit — within 21 months for a category one language requirement, or 31 months for a category four language requirement. If the FAO pursues his or her initial qualifications at a location other than Monterey, up to three PCS moves may be required. One PCS move can cost as much as \$90,000; on average, a PCS move will cost approximately \$30,000 (Navy Personnel Command 2010). In addition to saving the services from unnecessary expenditures on PCS moves and dislocation allowances, the LREC triad saves the individual military member money through a reduction in the frequency of personal relocation expenditures. Furthermore, a few years in the Monterey area provide a family with much-needed stability and time to reunite with a service member who has most likely returned from a long and arduous independent tour overseas, such as Afghanistan. Even beyond the personal benefits to the individual military member, the services save money by reducing the number of PCS moves required to produce FAOs.

As discussed, in the current austere fiscal environment, each service should rely upon the LREC triad to produce its FAOs. At present, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, and the Navy build their FAOs in Monterey, California; however, the Army still depends upon civilian graduate school institutions to educate the majority of their FAOs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the LREC triad (NPS, DLI, and NWC – Monterey) promotes personal and professional network development for FAOs, provides highly tailored FAO education and training, and reduces the cost of FAO production for each of the services.

Works Cited

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