

Statement
of
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Before the
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Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
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Chairman Snyder and members of this distinguished subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on this very important topic.

Our volunteer Force is a Global Force. They selflessly serve, often far from family and friends, in locations where the people, languages and cultures are significantly different than their own. Through lessons learned, we know that Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and DoD Civilians who deploy must not only be competent in their occupational skills, but must also possess language skills, regional knowledge, and cultural competence appropriate for the interactions they will have with the local population and the missions they are charged to accomplish. In today's operational environment, we not only have to focus on fighting our enemies and gaining the trust of the indigenous population, we must also understand and build coalitions with our partners. Therefore, our personnel must have an understanding of the cultures and be able to communicate with our nation's partners and allies. These vital skills are central to operations, missions, and the 21st century global environment.

Strengthening the Defense Language Program to support the war fighter aligns with the Personnel and Readiness strategic priority to develop personnel to execute current and future missions and shape and maintain a mission-ready All Volunteer Force. Our efforts to provide language skills, regional expertise, and cultural capabilities to the Total Force began with the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap. This document was an actionable plan that focused on developing and/or adapting the programs, policies and initiatives to build foundational language and regional expertise; create the capacity to surge; and, develop a cadre of advanced language professionals within the Department of Defense. Now, we are moving beyond roadmap. And while we have done many things right over the past several years, there is still more to do.

We appreciate the recommendations contained in this subcommittee's November 2008 Report, "Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: DoD's Challenge in Today's Educational Environment" and in the Government Accountability Office Report dated June 2009, "Military Training: DoD Needs A Strategic Plan and Better Inventory and Requirements Data to Guide Development of language Skills and Regional Proficiency." We agree with the recommendations and will continue to adapt existing language programs to develop the capability necessary to meet the challenges of operating in a changing and complex environment. The Department will also continue to refine its processes to develop a Department-wide, sustained strategic and systematic approach to identify and prioritize language skills, regional expertise, and cultural capability requirements; to build a Total Force to meet those requirements; and to improve our partnership building capabilities.

Recommendations

Overall, the nine recommendations of the 2008 report reflected a need for the Department to improve its strategic direction and oversight. Today, the Department has an effective, comprehensive oversight process linked to an integrated strategy for language skills, regional expertise, and cultural capability. We have used the subcommittee's recommendations to improve our efforts and have made significant progress in the past 22 months.

The first recommendation called for the Department to clarify policy characterizing foreign language, regional expertise, and cultural awareness as critical or core competencies essential to DoD missions. Based on that recommendation, the Department has designated foreign language, regional expertise and cultural capabilities as "key enablers." This term is a more accurate description of these capabilities and aligns with other key enablers included in the

2010 Quadrennial Defense Review. As an ongoing process, the doctrine, policy, and guidance are reviewed to ensure the existence of adequate coverage for these capabilities.

The Department paid close attention to the HASC and Government Accountability Office's recommendation to develop a comprehensive foreign language, cultural awareness, and regional expertise strategy that includes the prioritization of efforts and resources. A draft DoD Language, Regional Expertise and Culture Capabilities Strategic Plan is currently in the senior-level formal coordination process. This actionable plan establishes three goals to move the Department's efforts beyond the initial foundation established by the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap and sets the strategic direction for the next six years.

This Committee and the Government Accountability Office also recommended that DoD focus on the need to improve deficiencies in the requirements generation process. The Department recognized the need to standardize the reporting of combatant commands' operational needs and for an established process to identify emerging and future capability requirements. We are in the final stages of a capabilities-based assessment to develop a standardized methodology for Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC) to identify and prioritize language skills, regional expertise, and cultural capabilities required for their missions. The assessment also created a process to integrate, validate, and prioritize the GCC capability requirements in order to send clear demand signals to the Services, who are the force providers. The changes recommended by this assessment are being reviewed internally and are expected to be approved and implemented by the end of this calendar year.

The third recommendation was for the Services to use a secondary occupational code or special experience identifier for personnel who, while not language professionals, have validated language training/skills or regional expertise. Based on a task in the Roadmap, we can identify

qualified linguists and personnel with language skills who are not language professionals. While we can identify regional experts, i.e., Foreign Area Officers (FAO) and Regional Area Officers (RAO), through Service and DoD personnel data systems, we are not currently able to define and establish criteria to identify lower levels of regional expertise, which represent the majority of DoD personnel. However, we are continuing collaborative efforts to define and establish the criteria and processes to identify personnel who possess lower levels of regional proficiency. These lower levels of regional proficiency could be gained through training, education, experience or family heritage. Once the criteria are identified, the Services and DoD agencies will be able to capture this information in the data bases.

To address targeting ROTC language and culture grants, the National Security Education Program (NSEP) is our lead for implementing the ROTC Language and Culture Project grants to develop critical language programs. During 2008-2009, the Department expanded the Project Global Officer (GO) program, which provides funding through a competitive process to colleges and universities, which provide the Department with the largest number of officers through their ROTC programs. As a result of this initiative, Project GO has provided grants to 24 U.S. colleges and universities, including 5 Senior Military Colleges, to improve the languages, regional, and intercultural communication learning opportunity of future military officers. The project has funded over 480 domestic and overseas summer scholarships to ROTC students for critical language study and has supported university infrastructure development in critical languages of strategic interest to the Department, to include Arabic (all dialects), Chinese (Mandarin), Russian, Persian (Dari, Farsi, Tajik), Uzbek, Pashto, Swahili, Wolof, and Korean. Project GO is the only program offered for ROTC students to use to study critical languages domestically during the summer and for summer language study abroad.

There is a recognized advantage in gaining foreign language skills pre-accession. Therefore, DoD has focused on providing opportunities to encourage ROTC cadets and midshipmen to study a foreign language, particularly those of strategic interest to the Department. One incentive to encourage ROTC students is the Skill Proficiency Bonus, which was authorized in the FY 2009 National Defense Authorization Act. Eligible ROTC cadets and midshipmen may receive up to \$3,000 per year to pursue courses in a foreign language and/or cultural studies program relevant to the strategic needs of the Department. During the first year of partial execution, (Academic Year 2009) 29 students were paid the Skill Proficiency Bonus. We anticipate greater ROTC student participation in 2010, which will be the first complete academic year of the program.

In addition to the ROTC programs, the Service Academies continue to provide foreign language and cultural instruction for cadets and midshipmen to better prepare them for leadership roles in today's global environment. The United States Military Academy, United States Naval Academy and United States Air Force Academy all have robust programs that offer opportunities for cadets and midshipmen to travel and study abroad.

In response to the recommendation for DoD to improve the placement of NSEP Fellows into positions within the Department, we have implemented the Professional Development Program. This is a two-year pilot intern program, which allows NSEP Fellows non-competitive conversion to career or career-conditional status after successful completion of the program.

The Department has also placed greater emphasis on critical language and cultural programs in its own school system making it a model for producing students with language proficiency in critical languages. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) Foreign Language Program prepares kindergarten through 12th grade students to meet the

challenges of the world community by providing opportunities to develop communication proficiency in one or more foreign languages and to recognize the importance of other cultures. Students can select classes to communicate in multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies beginning with elementary school foreign language programs such as Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES), Partial Immersion and Host Nation. Languages in these programs include Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Turkish. DODEA requires a minimum of two years of foreign language in secondary schools for graduation and has developed distance learning and virtual school offerings as well as a unique hybrid cyber-school pilot program for Spanish heritage speakers.

The Department recognizes the importance of recruiting personnel with language abilities and regional or cultural expertise, maintaining their proficiency, and utilizing them in follow-on assignments to maximize their knowledge, skills, and abilities. All of the Services have heritage recruiting plans designed to meet their specific requirements. The Army's Interpreter-Translator or "Zero-Nine-Lima (09L)" program is the most extensively executed plan, which to date, has graduated approximately 1,000 soldiers from Advanced Individual Training. These soldiers have been (or are now) utilized in Iraq or Afghanistan. The Army is undertaking a pilot program with United States Africa Command and United States Pacific Command to generate interpreter-translators fluent in languages found in these geographic regions. The Army, Air Force, and Navy also recruit native and heritage speakers through the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) Pilot Program, which was launched in November 2008. This program recruits legal non-citizens with critical foreign language and cultural skills, as well as licensed healthcare professionals, and as an additional incentive, they receive expedited U.S. citizenship processing in return for their service. MAVNI recruits add significant foreign

language depth to the Department, as nearly 50 percent speak their target language at the General Professional Proficiency level or higher. Approximately 66 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher education and 30 percent possess a master's degree or higher. To date, the program has generated over 5,000 qualified language leads and 1,000 qualified healthcare professional leads.

Issues for Further Study

The committee report offered 11 issues for further study that suggested we look at training and education efforts across the Department to evaluate the similarities and differences in the policies and programs.

The Department places a high priority on recognizing and employing personnel with in-depth language, regional expertise, and cultural capabilities that will maximize utilization of these skills. For example, the Department recently launched the Afghanistan-Pakistan (AF/PAK) Hands program to create a core of approximately 730 military (and a small number of civilian personnel) with language and regional skills. The personnel assigned to this program are highly successful military and civilian personnel who have proven they are capable of performing at a very high level. They will rotate between relevant assignments in-theater and stateside.

Since the value of assessing foreign language skills as part of readiness cannot be overstated, the Department launched a comprehensive effort to improve language proficiency assessment. The Services have 474 operational test sites that deliver lower and upper range web-based tests in listening and reading. In FY 2009, a total of 104,340 web-delivered foreign language proficiency tests had been administered in listening and reading by the Services. There has also been a marked increase in the number of Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs)

administered throughout the force. The Department administered approximately 2,800 OPIs in FY 2008 and administered 9,900 in FY2009 and anticipates administering 14,000 in FY 2010. The Department is also developing very low range listening and reading tests as well as computer-delivered OPIs in response to increased demand. These tests will enable us to assess the full range of proficiency needed for language professionals as well as the General Purpose Force and Special Operations Force with greater fidelity.

The Department is working to develop a process to standardize procedures and establish criteria to assign regional proficiency skill levels and track them in DoD data bases as recommended by this Committee and the Government Accountability Office's June 2009 report. This effort is aligned with the regional expertise requirements procedures developed during the Language and Regional Expertise and Associated Culture Capabilities Based Assessment outlined earlier. The methodology should also generate the information needed to determine the best sources of language skills, regional expertise, and cultural capabilities.

The Department has streamlined the language requirements submission process and improved the visibility of language assets present in the DoD inventory. As a result, we can better identify DoD personnel with language assets and match them against requirements.

The Department closely monitors the Service FAO programs and annually provides DoD senior leadership feedback from each of the Services. We continue to standardize, develop, and expand our Foreign Area Officer capacity and sustain these skills. In a related effort, in January 2010, the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence asked the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) to develop a pilot Civilian Foreign Area Specialists (CIVFAS) Program with the goal of identifying and developing a CIVFAS cohort over a five-year period. The establishment of a CIVFAS Program for the Defense Intelligence Enterprise complements the DoD FAO Program,

especially with the increasing demand for personnel with language skills and regional expertise at the professional level.

Another significant issue raised in the HASC report concerns the Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus (FLPB). The purpose of the FLPB program is to encourage military personnel to identify, sustain, enhance and test their skills, thus increasing the Department's capability in strategic languages. The current FLPB program has been in effect for three years and pays a maximum of \$12,000 a year for sustaining the highest language skill proficiency levels and is one of the only incentive bonuses (or pays) that doesn't differentiate between Active Duty and Reserve service. We have initiated a review which starts this month and will run through June 2011 to determine the effectiveness of the current FLPB policy for military personnel and explore options to improve this program. Specifically, the review will include: (1) Service's FLPB programs and determine if there are any "best practices" that could be employed by all; (2) explore a variety of revised FLPB payment options that may encourage the military linguist to become 2/2, 2+/2+, and 3/3 skill level proficient, earlier in his or her career; (3) validating our current skill level certification and Strategic Language List processes; and (4) a comparison of compensation programs being offered to linguists in the private sector, to ensure the DoD military FLPB program remains "competitive." The National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) was launched in 2006. This initiative was an interagency collaboration involving the Departments of Defense, Education, and State as well as the Office of the Director of National Intelligence; it addressed the necessity to expand the pool of potential hires with competencies in languages critical to national security. The Department's contribution to the NSLI was primarily through the National Security Education Program's (NSEP) expansion of the Language Flagship initiative in high need critical languages, such as Arabic and Chinese, to

produce certified superior level graduates that may be hired by the federal government, particularly the national security community. Additionally, the National Language Service Corps is designed to provide immediate access to qualified language professionals during times of national need or emergency. It provides a pool of language-qualified personnel to augment steady-state resources.

Study abroad, cultural immersion, and personal relationships that enhance language learning and cultural awareness are also risk indicators that slow down the granting of security clearances. Consequently, the Department has determined that NSEP award recipients can be processed for clearances upon acceptance of their award as opposed to waiting until a position is offered and accepted. This allows processing to begin much earlier in the hiring cycle and speeds up the entire process.

Finally, we are examining language, regional, and cultural courses, the curricula, and programs of instruction for officer and enlisted Professional Military Education. The purpose of this task is to provide independent and objective analyses of language, regional and cultural content within Enlisted and Officer Professional Military Education and officer and enlisted accession programs across the Services and five DOD Regional Centers in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the language, regional and cultural education and training in meeting mission requirements, and what steps, if any, should be taken to address any gaps or shortcomings in these programs.

Notable Defense Language Program Initiatives

The Defense Language Program continues to mature and meet the needs of the war fighter. The Afghanistan Pakistan Hands (APH) program provides a cadre of experts who speak

the local language, are culturally aligned, and are focused on regional issues for an extended period of time. These experts enhance the region's engagement and communications, which are essential for strategic success. APH personnel rotate between positions in theater and out of theater that directly influence the U.S. strategy in the region. The program will create a core of approximately 730 military (and a small number of civilian personnel). As of May 2010, 86 APH have deployed and 103 are in training. The most recent graduating class demonstrated strong results. More than 78 percent of graduates achieved the elementary level proficiency of 1/1 or higher on the Interagency Language Roundtable scale) on the Defense Language Proficiency Test—a noteworthy accomplishment.

The demand for language training to meet the needs of the force has grown beyond traditional brick-and-mortar language institute methods. The Department has committed to an innovative, locally-provided, life-long learning approach, through the use of Multi-purpose Language Training Detachments (MPLTDs) and dedicated highly specialized Language Training Detachments (LTDs). To support the operational needs of the Total Force, the Department is investing \$33 million, over the Fiscal Year Defense Plan, to fund 10 LTDs at key continental United States (CONUS) locations to improve the language and cultural capabilities of the general purpose forces in support of major deployment operations.

Current operations have also placed heavier burdens on the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) than ever before. DLIFLC has met this challenge and is now an agile, globally focused institution capable of responding to immediate and urgent training demands. It currently operates 23 LTDs in 21 different locations. From October 2009 to the present, DLIFLC instructors have taught over 8,500 students in nonresident language training, provided nearly 43,000 students language familiarization training, and have shipped over 1.5

million language survival kits. Additionally, within three days of the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the DLIFLC supplied over 20,000 Language Survival Kits to troops deploying to Haiti. These tools proved extremely useful in enhancing communication between the Haitians and our Service men and women.

The Defense Language Transformation Roadmap directed the development of the Language Readiness Index (LRI) as part of the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS). The LRI is a strategic, near real-time, web-based tool that compares language capability inventory against requirements for Component missions and roles, allowing analysts to identify gaps in the Total Force. Senior leaders can use this tool to make informed decisions, develop risk assessments, examine risk mitigation measures, and shape the future force. LRI was used during the Department's responses to the recent earthquakes in Haiti, Chile, and Turkey. It not only identified what language capabilities were available in the force, but was also used to generate a by-name list of DoD personnel who spoke the language, where they were assigned, their language proficiency skill levels, and their availability.

It is a challenge to build the level of proficiency needed to support current operations, when most recruits or new employees have little or no prior language and cultural background. Therefore, we are making an investment today to strengthen the language and cultural message to future employees.

The State Roadmap Project represents an important federal-state partnership to explore how language education issues might be systematically addressed at the state and local level. This Roadmap effort represents a re-conceptualization of the approach to building, sustaining, and mainstreaming language learning into the educational process at the state and local level. The initial Roadmap projects include three states: Ohio, Oregon and Texas. Three existing

Language Flagship institutions, at Ohio State University, University of Oregon, and University of Texas, Austin, assisted and advised the States in their Roadmap development efforts. The ultimate goal of the State Roadmap Project is to serve broad national socio-economic, educational, and political interests more effectively by educating students to become globally competent.

The Department has initiated or completed numerous activities and studies to improve the level of language skills, regional expertise, and cultural capabilities throughout the force. These actions range from emphasis on pre-accession language training in our nation's schools and in our Academy and ROTC programs, targeted recruiting, special pays, increased focus on better defining the requirements and the language talents we have in the Total Force. The result will be a full spectrum effort to institutionalize and grow these capabilities for our Force.

The goal is to ensure that DoD personnel and warfighters are prepared for 21st century challenges. More work remains to be done as we continue to seek creative solutions to these challenges. The results are worth the time and resources as commanders provide lessons learned about the successes gained due to having DoD personnel with the requisite language skills, regional expertise, and cultural capability.

Thank you for your continued support of language and culture.