

Report on the Proceedings:  
Conference on Professional Military  
Education

Rebuilding America's Intellectual Arsenal



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US Merchant Marine Academy, New York

**SPONSORED BY CONGRESSMAN STEVE ISRAEL**

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## Executive Summary

On Saturday, March 25 2006, Rep. Steve Israel convened a conference: Rebuilding America's Intellectual Arsenal, focusing on the status of Professional Military Education (PME), with a special focus on linguistic and cultural requirements. Over 40 leaders from the Military and Civilian Academic Communities attended, including Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO) the Ranking Minority Member of the House Armed Services Committee, and Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Plans, Ms. Gail McGinn.

The conference featured three main panels and a discussion group. The panels focused on:

- Strategic Issues: The broad challenges faced by the Department of Defense across all services in terms of PME and linguistic-cultural challenges, and the steps now being taken to overcome these challenges.
- PME Institutions: A survey of the specific challenges facing the graduate-level academic institutions of the military, and how they are evolving to provide targeted education to an ever-wider segment of the military population.
- Operational perspectives: Insights from a cross-section of the PME community, from military operators to civilian academics, on what is left to be done, and how the civilian and military worlds can find synergy to advance the interests of the nation's security education.

Key and recurring themes throughout the discussions were a) the need to build and sustain a stronger language and cultural capability throughout the military; b) the related need to tie such studies to career progression; c) the status of the partnership between the military and civilian academia; and d) the organization of PME within the department.

The Defense Science Board 2004 summer study endorsed the need for both language and cultural awareness. How, then, does the Department change the way it values and develops language? The first step has been to identify language capability as a formal military requirement, bringing it within the requirements bureaucracy. Beyond working the requirements system, the Department also faces the challenge of changing military culture and incentives, for example building an expectation in the officer corps that foreign language capability is important to career advancement.

It was also noted that the services are building their own centers of excellence for language and cultural training, as well as working with the civilian American educational system through such programs as the Flagship University Language Program laid out in the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap. However, many of these programs are at an early stage of development or even consideration, and sustained support (attention, incentives, and resources) are critical.

Of course, language is already taught to non-native speakers in the armed forces through the Defense Language Institute (DLI) and other military schools. Participants noted that several steps have already been taken in regards to increasing language proficiency within the military. On a broader, but less focused scale, there have also been

large increases in pre-deployment training (language and cultural sensitivity) for troops of all rank deploying overseas, and literally hundreds of thousands of language survival kits have been fielded. One concern is whether such efforts are ad-hoc or should be deepened and sustained in an integrated and expanded PME process at every level.

Efforts addressed in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) include the 09L program, increased pre-commissioning language requirements for officers, and new post-graduate PME opportunities in regional and cultural training.

Many at the conference agreed that these initiatives in the Department of Defense must be accompanied by a nationwide refocusing on the importance of international and cultural education, and language schools. Americans notoriously lag behind other Western nations in the quality and availability of language classes in their high schools, despite such programs as the National Security Language Initiative.

PME as a whole is gaining wider acceptance as a requirement for advancing military officers. At the same time, the number of officers attending military institutions of professional development is increasing. Still, the skills that develop with PME – language, cultural awareness, regional expertise – require the incentivization of such studies and career choices. It is not simply a matter of creating billets. It is incentivizing people to make the career choice to fill those billets. That means removing traditional cultural and career obstacles.

Perhaps the most critical discussion was over the “ownership” – or proponentcy of Professional Military Education, along with cultural and linguistic training – in the Department. There is already a Joint office for PME, it is true, but there is no one central point of contact between the diverse range of PME institutions and requirements. This issue will require further consideration.

## **Report on Proceedings**

Representatives Skelton and Israel introduced the conference. They highlighted the importance of linguistic ability and cultural awareness for today's troops, and questioned how to improve the structure and bureaucracy of the Armed Forces so as to incentivize officers and NCOs to advance their education, and how to institutionalize cultural knowledge and advanced PME.

Questions posed at the beginning of the conference included:

1. If everyone agrees on the importance of rebuilding the intellectual arsenal of America, how can the program be advanced?
2. How can this message be permeated through all PME institutions?
3. How can a continuum of learning be extended from commissioning through the flag officer level?
4. How can new partnerships be built between DoD and civilian institutions to expand linguistic studies?
5. Is there a need for a new Lodge Act or National Defense Education Act?
6. How do we remove the career obstacles that discourage officers from becoming Foreign Area specialists, linguists, or from going into the Civil Affairs or Information Operations branches?
7. How can interagency coordination be built into PME?

Panel 1: Strategic Issues.

**Ms. Gail McGinn**      **Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Plans)**  
**LTG David Petraeus**    **Commander Combined Arms Center and Ft Leavenworth**  
**MG(R) Robert Scales**   **Colgen, Inc.**

It is necessary to harness the human sciences and apply them to war. But such a relationship is a challenge to establish. Several proposals emerged from this panel.

- First that if the United States is going to succeed in this transformation, it will have to remove professional penalties to education in military careers by ensuring that higher education is not a hindrance to career advancement.
- Second, the past partnerships between the military and civilian academia must be reestablished.
- Finally, there is a need to invest a new concept of what it means to be a thinking soldier. What is needed is not soldiers advised by scholars – but rather soldier-scholars, or soldier-linguists, or soldier-social scientists, at appropriate levels.

The panelists noted that the requirement to focus on PME emerged in the immediate aftermath of the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, when linguists, particularly those with security clearances, were lacking. All of the conferees agreed that linguistic capability is a strategic asset, but it was noted that the Department of Defense's language capability had been based on the cold war model. There was some discussion as to whether language or cultural study should be a higher priority, but at this point DoD has chosen to focus on language capability. It should be noted that the Defense Science Board 2004 summer study endorsed the need for both language and cultural awareness.

How, then, does the Department change the way it values and develops language? The first step has been to identify language capability as a formal military requirement, bringing it within the requirements bureaucracy. Doing so will enable the growth of a greater organic capability, but will by no means remove the need for linguistic support from other government agencies and the private sector. Beyond working the requirements system, the Department also faces the challenge of changing military culture and incentives. For example, by building an expectation in the officer corps that foreign language capability is important to career advancement.

This broad strategic outline requires detailed implementation. How, for instance, can requirements for language be properly generated in a system that assigns Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) from the bottom-up? There is a need for top-down analysis of what language skills are needed, and how they can best be employed. For this reason, the Combatant Commands (COCOM) have been tasked to develop institutional language requirements. These will be passed back to the Department, and integrated into the overall PME program, specifically through the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap plans. Above and beyond COCOM requirements will be the need, Defense-wide, to build foundational expertise, and to create a surge capacity in languages that are not currently at the top of the priority list.

Foundational language expertise is that which is resident within the military, and which can be drawn upon as a base for future development. Some levels of foundational expertise in just about every culture and language of the world already lie unidentified in the military, so the Department of Defense has asked the Services to screen present personnel for knowledge, skills and ability, in order to determine what exists. It was also noted that the Services are building their own centers of excellence for language and cultural training, as well as working with the civilian American educational system through such programs as the Flagship University Language Program laid out in the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap.

For now, many conferees agreed that the large majority of surge capability in language resides in the private contractor community. Even so, it can be more efficiently utilized, for example by centralizing contract vehicles for the over 9,000 contracted linguists now supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. A study on the feasibility of a civilian linguist reserve corps is also ongoing. Such a corps might be composed of retired graduates of the DLI and retired Foreign Area Officers (FAOs), as well as civilian college professors, and members of ‘heritage’ communities. Another option to build surge capacity would be the creation of a Joint Service Language Corps, or similarly conceptualized Joint pool of language officers. A final effort in this regard is the highly successful 09L translator aid program, which recruits heritage language speakers into the Ready Reserve for deployment into their regions of origin. So far 515 09L’s have been recruited, and the relations they have built with foreign nationals in their deployments have clearly resulted in increased intelligence gathering and better civil-military relationships. The Army has set itself the goal of recruiting 250 09L’s per year to an endstate of 800, and is tracking retirees of the program for recall to active duty.

Of course, language is already taught to non-native speakers in the armed forces through the DLI and other Military schools. Some conferees stated that an increase in the proficiency of students would be helpful. DLI graduates typically complete their year’s training at about a 2:2:2<sup>1</sup> on the language proficiency scale and participants urged an increase to 3:3:3.

Participants noted that several steps have already been taken in regards to increasing language proficiency within the military. One of the most noticeable aspects of this has been the increase in size – and the spread into the Air Force and Navy – of the FAO program. There will be 700 new FAO slots across all Services by 2010. There are incentives of up to \$1,000 per month given to service members who speak foreign languages to maintain their proficiency. On a broader, but less focused scale, there have also been large increases in pre-deployment training (language and cultural sensitivity) for troops of all rank deploying overseas, and literally hundreds of thousands of language survival kits have been fielded.

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<sup>1</sup> This scale analyzes linguistic capability in oral skills, reading, and writing, respectively, with 1 being basic and 5 being native speaker with a postgraduate vocabulary.

Several of these efforts were addressed in the recent QDR, although there was discussion over whether the FY07 budget request truly matches funding to priorities. Efforts addressed in the QDR include the 09L program, increased pre-commissioning language requirements for officers and new post-graduate PME opportunities in regional and cultural training.

These initiatives in the Department of Defense, many agreed, must be accompanied by a nationwide refocusing on the importance of international and cultural education, and language schools. Americans notoriously lag behind other Western nations in the quality and availability of language classes in their high schools, despite such programs as the National Security Language Initiative. An expansion of such programs which seek to increase the number of Americans mastering critical languages must take place through the Department of Education, with a goal of creating pipelines of linguists from grades K-16.

Linguistic, and even cultural training are, however, just aspects of the ultimate goal - warriors better able to react and think in the ‘three-block war.’ The ultimate objective is multi-skilled leaders – soldiers who are not just warfighters, but are culturally, linguistically, and mentally adept team builders, diplomats, strategic thinkers, who are adaptable and culturally savvy.

Thus, there is, a need to change in the way we think about leader development and leader-development programs. This is contemporaneous with similar changes in the civilian academic and business environments; courses, for example, may change from lecture-based programs in ‘what’ to think to seminar-based classes in ‘how’ to think:

Further, the opportunity to learn from ongoing operations must not be lost. Lessons Learned is an important aspect of capturing the knowledge and experience we are gaining in Iraq, and modern technology provides a means to ensure that such lessons are better dispersed. The rapid transmission of lessons learned can now occur in palatable form, rather than large heavy tomes, for example through the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) website, which is now receiving over 500,000 hits per month, or through the adoption of such websites as Company Command. Modern communications technology even allows units preparing to deploy to “look over the shoulder” of units they will be replacing in the field.

Participants also noted that some aspects of the lessons learned are being addressed, for example in the pending establishment of a Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance and the new Army-Marine Counter Insurgency Center. In much the same way, a shift must also occur in collective training, from short force-on-force engagements that used to typify the National Training Center (NTC) and Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), to continuous and complex phase 4 and Counterinsurgency (COIN) ops.

It is important, in considering PME, not only to assess the content of the education, but also its effect on the way a student thinks. Reports have shown that even



studies in the liberal arts not directly related to military science can still help develop the multi-skilled leaders that are necessary in the post-9/11 environment where service members are focused not only on kinetic operations, but also on full-spectrum ops.

How far must such changes go? Several of the participants argued for a quantum shift in the way the US military thinks about human behavior. This is driven, in part, by the asymmetric nature of the current struggle, in which the enemy has concluded that the way to fight is on the battlefield of the mind and the intellect, in which his object is the will and perception of the people. These are yet early days, but we have at least identified the challenge, and the Department of Defense is beginning to shape an holistic response to it.

The challenges, however, are:

1. Properly understanding and evaluating what the requirements will be.
2. Focusing on “cognitive transformation” during a time of increased battle tempo
3. Prioritizing resources – in Congress, the Department of Defense and the Services – for the intellectual development of our forces.
4. Ensuring a continuum of education, rather than a “start-stop” approach.

## Panel 2: Academic Panel

**Dr. James Keagle**      **National Defense University Provost**  
**MG(R) Donald Gardner** **President Marine Corps University**  
**Dr. James Giblin JR.**    **Provost Naval War College**

What steps are being taken in the institutions of military academia in regards to cognitive transformation and what steps yet remain? The institutions are certainly playing an important, if not the central, role within the field of cognitive transformation, but must compete within the Department and within the Services, for tightly-stretched resources, as well as for support from Congress and other agencies. Despite this, they are believed to be well supported by the political establishment and are beginning to undertake transformations that can achieve broader focuses of study and interaction with other institutions, organizations and agencies.

One point of consensus was that Joint PME used to rely on Joint Specialty Officers, but the role of the military and its interaction with other agencies, whether in phase-four warfare, domestic relief operations, or in future combat missions, called for a broader scope of interaction than just inter-service. The next step, Jointness to Interagency national security, is needed and the panelists acknowledged they require curricula that will better prepare officers for interagency and international careers.

Regardless of any changes in JPME requirements, though, PME as a whole is gaining wider acceptance as a requirement for advancing military officers. For the first time the Navy has a policy that in order to accept a command at the level of, for example, a Destroyer or Carrier Air Squadron, an officer must have completed an intermediate Joint Service School degree. Further changes are likely to occur in Navy personnel manning, such as a requirement to have completed JPME-level 2 prior to assignment of command over a Cruiser or Aircraft Carrier.

Curricula are also changing at a more basic level. For example, regional and cultural studies are gaining attention and counterinsurgency classes may now be taught not only in terms of military strategy, but in terms of understanding the insurgent mindset. At the same time, the percentage of officers attending military institutions of professional development is increasing and is projected to keep increasing in the future.

Despite all these changes, it is important to remember that not every good officer will be a good academic. There is a need to shape education so that it provides the right mix for those who are not academic.

In terms of a Congressional role, it was believed Congress should ultimately look at whether there is proper resourcing for a broad program that sends officers not only to military institutions, but to civilian academies as well, where the range of opinions and perspectives is much broader. Of course this must be done in a context where budgets are tight and the overall end strength is in decline.

### Panel 3: Operational Panel

**Col(P) John Toolan** USMC Command and Staff College  
**Dr. MontgomeryMcFate** Institute for Defense Analyses  
**Dr. David Steinberg** President, Long Island University

The lessons of ongoing operations are not being ignored by the military – this was the message of the third panel. But the challenge is to institutionalize the lessons in current and future doctrine and plans and in the minds of American military officers. Part of this requires broadening military academic curricula to include phase 4 operations and culture knowledge.

Indeed, military planners ought to be prioritized in the delivery of such broader education. A good planner must be informed by history and by cultural awareness and must be able to understand a culture as easily as read a map.

It is argued that there is only limited time for professional education and extra skill training – that any skill or class added to the curriculum means another one removed. This may be true, but that should not stop the military from reassessing outdated curricula. Repetitive drills, such as sword drill (which arguably lends little to modern warfare) ought to be set against the potential benefits of language or cultural training.

Cultural understanding as a prerequisite for a successful military is not new, however, the discipline of cultural anthropology is not well understood outside of academia, despite the fact that cultural anthropology started in the US as a tool of the Army to understand native American tribal systems in order to facilitate frontier warfare. By better understanding the methodological underpinnings of cultural anthropology, the military might be able to put it to better use in their everyday operations. Although the most common way of understanding cultures tends to be through anecdotes, this is not effective. By adopting a more academic approach using metrics and thorough analysis that can graph and frame different cultures, the military will be better able to plan for, and adapt to, varying cultural requirements. However, it will still be necessary to overcome the barriers that have sprung up between civilian academia and the military since the Vietnam era. One problem that must be overcome is the antipathy that many in the field of cultural anthropology have for the military.

The basis of an educated military, however, is an educated population. Congress, the Department of Defense, the Department of Education, and the administration should all be focusing aggressively on a national strategy for building cultural and international knowledge and skills across all disciplines, from business to law to medicine. There should be a reinvestment in programs that send Americans abroad and give them language skills, as a way of embracing and perfecting the skills that will be useful to our nation as a whole. This is something being done to a great extent by developing countries such as China and India. It would also be useful to encourage undergraduate institutions to broaden their curricula in terms of international and regional studies.

## Open Discussion

The period of open discussion began with a key question: How might the proposed adjustments in leadership, education and character development be implemented by the Department of Defense? Some of the responses to this question focused on the top-down approach, observing that there is not only a need for institutional learning, but for cultural shifts within the Department itself. It is not enough to simply increase the number of PME opportunities. Yet, there was also opposition to hasty decision-making: The Department is still early in the process, is still learning the effects-based approach and still developing intellectual tools. Some felt that time was needed to observe the effects of the changes now occurring in the Department before introducing legislation.

The question also emerged of how to integrate PME and lessons learned across all services, ranks and institutions, such as the Air War College and the Naval War College. While a corporal in Fallujah doesn't need the same training as an Air Force Colonel taking over an air base in Pakistan, sharing techniques between learning institutions is necessary. But the issue is deeper than educational application. Some called for an internal study of the Services' cross cultural competencies, and a clarification of what is being taught. For example, regional familiarity is not the science of culture – troops may study the terrain of a region, but that is not necessarily cultural understanding.

Perhaps the most critical discussion was over the “ownership” – or proponentry of Professional Military Education, along with cultural and linguistic training – in the Department. At the current time there is no centralized point of contact, or any single overseer of the Department's and the Service's PME efforts. Discussion revolved around whether it was necessary to create a central proponent, whether within the Joint Staff or within the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

The discussion ended with a reminder to all present that whatever steps may be taken institutionally, it is ultimately the responsibility of every commander to provide opportunities for, and implement, PME at all levels. This reminder is specifically included in General Pace's Joint Staff Directive. His statement is a validation that PME cannot and should not be invested solely at the top. Rather, it must filter through all levels and permeate across our military. As with all issues, this requires leadership, proponentry and resources.

## Attendees

US Congress

<b>Rep. Steve Israel</b>	<b>Member of Congress, NY-02</b>
<b>Rep. Ike Skelton</b>	<b>Member of Congress, MO-04</b>
Mark Lewis	House Armed Services Committee
Joshua Paul	Office of Congressman Israel
Capt Chris Meyers	Office of Congressman Israel

Department of Defense/US Military

<b>Ms. Gail McGinn</b>	<b>Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Plans)</b>
<b>LTG David Petraeus</b>	<b>Commander Combined Arms Center and Ft Leavenworth</b>
MG Kenneth Quinlan	Commandant Joint Forces - Staff College
<b>MG(R) Donald Gardner</b>	<b>President Marine Corps University</b>
RADM MacMahon	USMMA- USMS Deputy Superintendent
<b>Dr. James Keagle</b>	<b>National Defense University Provost</b>
Dr. Dave Tretler	National War College Associate Dean
Nancy Weaver	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness)
Dr. Jerre Wilson	Marine Corps University
<b>Dr. James Giblin JR.</b>	<b>Provost Naval War College</b>
William T. Johnsen	US Army War College - Dean of Academics
Dr. Suzanne Logan	Air Force War College
Dr. Dan Henk	Air War College
<b>Dr. MontgomeryMcFate</b>	<b>Institute for Defense Analyses</b>
<b>Col(P) John Toolan</b>	<b>USMC Command and Staff College</b>
Col Jerome Lynes	USMC - Joint Staff J7 Chief of Joint Education and Doctrine
CAPT David Arnold	USN -The Joint Staff J1 - Chief Joint Manpower Division
CAPT John Hanus	USMMA- Director of GMATS
COL Plaudy Meadows	Dean, US Army Command and General Staff

Civilian Academia

Dr. Herman Berliner	Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Hofstra
Dr. Calvin Butts	President, SUNY Old Westbury
Dr. Sean Fanelli	President, Nassau Community College
Vincent Long	Long Island University
<b>Dr. David Steinberg</b>	<b>President, Long Island University</b>
Kevin Sullivan	Molloy College - History/Political Science Dept.
Christopher Williams	Long Island University

Private Sector

Thomas Cleere	Cleere & Smith LLP
Frank Otto	Edo Corp
LTC(R) Scott Rutter	Consultant
Dr. Lydia Staiano	Homeland Security Institute
<b>MG(R) Robert Scales</b>	<b>Colgen, Inc.</b>

**Bold** indicates panelist