

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL SUE ANN SANDUSKY, U.S. ARMY, COMMANDANT, DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER, VIA TELECONFERENCE TIME: 11:01 A.M. EDT DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2009

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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG, (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): So hello. I'd like to welcome you all to Department of Defense's bloggers roundtable for Monday, March 30th, 2009. My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating the call today.

A note to our bloggers on the call: Please clearly state your name or organization you're here with prior to asking your question.

Today our guest is Colonel Sue Ann Sandusky. She's the commandant of Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. Colonel Sandusky will discuss the mission of DLI's Foreign Language Center.

With that, Sergeant Lamar, if you'd like to turn it to the colonel, and the floor is hers. SGT. 1ST CLASS BRIAN LAMAR (U.S. Army, Defense Language Institute): Yes. One second. Here she is right here.

COL. SANDUSKY: Okay. Good morning, everybody.

Q Good morning.

LT. CRAGG: Good morning.

COL. SANDUSKY: Hi. It's a beautiful day out here in Monterey, California.

I'm looking out my window overlooking the Monterey Bay. (Background noise.) Okay, I got a little noise here from a printer going off, so let me just move to the other side of the desk. Sorry. We can hear a little better. Okay. Should we put this on speaker phone? Hello?

LT. CRAGG: There might be an echo, ma'am. I'm not too sure. You can try.

COL. SANDUSKY: Okay, well, there's an echo with the regular phone, so I don't know if the speaker phone will be better or worse.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, you can go ahead and try, ma'am.

COL. SANDUSKY: Okay, we're going to try. (Switches to speaker phone.)
How's that? Can everybody hear me?

LT. CRAGG: We can hear you fine.

Chuck?

Q Yeah, I can hear her just fine.

LT. CRAGG: Okay.

COL. SANDUSKY: Okay. Great. Well, I appreciate everybody being on the line here today. I am trying, myself, to get into the 21st century and get a blog online. I think it's going to be hanging on the CAC, the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, website. But it's not up there yet, so this is my first foray into the blogosphere directly, so I appreciate your giving me the opportunity to do that.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Do you have a topic statement, ma'am, that you'd like to start with before we turn it over to Chuck?

COL. SANDUSKY: Well, sure. I -- I don't know how much your participants know about the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, but we are DOD's center for culturally-based foreign language education, training, assessments, sustainment and enhancement. We've been around a long time, in that we trace our lineage to, actually, a secret school that was created just before the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. It's gone through some name changes, but that's, you know, almost 70 years of experience in training U.S. military personnel in foreign language. For many years, I think, the DLI was perhaps perceived as rather limited to hard-core intelligence MOS's -- military occupational specialties -- that required high levels of language.

But in fact I think really from almost the beginning, we've also addressed the needs of the more general-purpose forces, and certainly since 9/11, that's been a major growth area for the school.

So, really I guess I'd just be happy to take the questions of the blog participants. Let me just give a couple more details that you may or may not know.

We currently teach 24 foreign languages here at the Presidio of Monterey. Just for your background, there is another defense language institute, which is known as the Defense Language Institute English Language Center, in San Antonio, Texas, at Lackland Air Force Base, run by the Air Force. And they teach English, mostly to foreign officers who are coming to the United States to do training in U.S. schools.

We teach foreign languages to U.S. military personnel for the most part, although we do have some allied and partner nation participation in our courses. Currently we've got a few Danish officers learning Pashtu for Afghanistan, and we just completed an Afghan language familiarization for some Latvian officers in Europe. But for the most part, the vast majority, overwhelming majority of our resident course students are U.S. military. And of course, most of the people we're giving predeployment and familiarization training to are U.S. military.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am.

Let's turn it over to Chuck. Please go ahead.

Q Good morning. Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal. As I watch the snow fall outside my window here in Rochester, New York, I wish I were in Monterey, even though it's early in the morning.

COL. SANDUSKY: (Laughs.) Right. But you know, this is the cold part of California, so -- but thank goodness, not as cold as Rochester.

Q Yeah. Twenty-four languages. Obviously, some are more popular than others. Which -- I'm going to be perverse and ask which are the smallest classes that you teach. COL. SANDUSKY: (Laughs.) Well, the first thing to say is that we don't sit up here in our ivory tower and think up these languages to teach.

We're driven by the requirements of the services, the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. And they come up with their requirements based on the assessments of the different areas of operation, areas of responsibility of the combatant commanders, the COCOM commanders, such as General Petraeus in CENTCOM, General (sic; Admiral) Stavridis in SOUTHCOM, who identify languages, and other DOD SecDef-level, secretary of Defense-level, policy people examining languages, coming up with what you might call a strategic language list, and then passing specific requirements for training down to DLI.

So -- well, let me just give you some examples. You know, over time you can imagine that our language mix has shifted. I already said we started out as a secret Japanese language school. Now our Japanese program is very, very small, may not be technically the smallest, but it is very small.

After the Second World War, we taught all of the Warsaw Pact languages, the communist bloc languages in Eastern Europe, and now we don't teach any of those in residence here at the Presidio of Monterey.

Q Not even Russian?

COL. SANDUSKY: We teach Russian, yes. We teach Russian, but we don't teach the other Eastern European and former Warsaw Pact languages.

Nevertheless, we can deliver those languages. If, for example, you're going to be the Defense attache to Sofia, Bulgaria, you still need to know Bulgarian. We can deliver those other languages. We consider them low-density, low-demand languages through contract programs overseen by our Washington office. We have a Defense Language Institute Washington Office that basically manages and oversees contracts and some additional special training.

So I -- you know, Japanese is pretty small. Right now Serbo- Croatian -- now you're going to say why did I just say there are no Warsaw Pact languages. Well, if you remember your history, Yugoslavia left the Warsaw Pact, and Serbo-Croatian was not a Warsaw Pact language. We began teaching Serbo-Croatian in the '90s, with the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. We still have very, very small demand for Serbo-Croatian.

Q And that would be due to the deployment in Kosovo? COL. SANDUSKY: In Bosnia.

Q In Bosnia.

COL. SANDUSKY: (Now ?).

Q The Kosovo one would be an Albania requirement?

COL. SANDUSKY: That's correct. And that's also -- we were teaching Albanian in residence here, and I believe we have no longer any Albanian resident program, but again, if somebody needs Albanian, we can deliver that through contracted program.

We also have some materials online in Albanian. If you already have a level of proficiency in Albanian, we've got online materials to help you sustain your efforts.

I guess that's another thing I'd like to recommend you all perhaps peruse at your -- on your own time -- our website, www.dliflc.edu. If you go on there, you will find a drop-down box on the left side, and you can get various products -- Field Support, which gets you into a whole bunch of products, to include Head Starts and what we call Countries in Perspective.

But the most interesting thing, if you're already a language learner, are the materials at the Global Language Online Support Center, GLOSC. Again, access -- you can access it from that drop-down box on the left side of our main webpage.

GLOSC items are very interesting little lessons -- in fact, prepackaged lessons at an identified level of proficiency for autonomous learners out there, civilians in high school or college. We use them in our basic courses. Our people use them for sustainment and enhancement training.

Q Can you give me the website again? "FLI," and then I missed the rest of it.

COL. SANDUSKY: No, it's www.DLIFLC. So that's --

Q DLIFLC. Okay.

COL. SANDUSKY: Right. So that's Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center.

Q All right. Now, you are a joint operation?

COL. SANDUSKY: We're multi-service.

Q Multi-service.

COL. SANDUSKY: The Army runs the school as the executive agent, but our students come from all the services, plus, from time to time, other federal agencies -- although those are just onesies and twosies.

Q All right. Now, does your agency control all of the foreign language training for the military, or are you just one aspect of it?

COL. SANDUSKY: Well, we are the primary deliverer of DOD military culturally-based language training. Now, there are -- I have already mentioned that we also manage some contracts. And there are presumably other contracts that are not centrally managed by ourselves; although it makes a lot of sense,

if a commander is out there seeking foreign language resources and materials, he ought to come to DLI first rather than spending his own contract money, because we may very well have a contract in place that could help him. Q All right. Where I was headed with that was I just saw a release about the availability of Rosetta Stone.

COL. SANDUSKY: Yes. Rosetta Stone is available to all U.S. Army personnel. We don't have anything to do with Rosetta Stone, but if you are a language learner -- (audio break) -- perfectly legitimate source of language-learning material.

We have our material as well, in some of the same languages as Rosetta Stone and then in a lot of other languages.

Q Okay. How immersive is your program?

COL. SANDUSKY: Our classes are mini-immersion experiences. Our classes are extremely intense, six or seven hours a day in the target language. However, when the student leaves the classroom, he or she is not, you know, duty-bound to remain in the target language.

And obviously they have military training to accomplish as well; they need to talk to their platoon sergeants and do, you know, that kind of business after class. And that is not in the target language, except in very unusual circumstances.

But it's a very immersive environment. Our courses are between 24 weeks for the, quote, "easy" languages for an English speaker to learn -- and those would be essentially the Romance languages: French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese -- to 64 weeks in length for the most difficult languages for an English speaker to learn: Chinese, Arabic, Korean and Japanese.

And more than 90 percent of our students are here for what we call a Category 3 or a Category 4 languages -- language. The Category 4 languages I just mentioned, the Chinese, Arabic, Korean and Japanese; and the Category 3 languages are almost everything else that you can think of: Russian, Pashtu, Dari, Persian, Farsi, Uzbek, Urdu, Hindi, et cetera. And those Category 3 languages are 47 weeks in length, so roughly a year. So most of our students are here for a year or more with us learning those Category 3 or 4 languages -- that is, our resident program students.

Q Okay. Now, once you've taken the 47-week, the 64-week, whatever, is there then a next-level course?

Or does that then go to contracts and that kind of additional preparation?

COL. SANDUSKY: No, we offer intermediate and advanced courses here in residence at the Presidio Monterey, to include some work that we do for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and very, very advanced-level Russian speaking. We also have sustainment and enhancement, which is getting to that intermediate level that we deliver with our instructors at satellite locations, various places around the country where there are high-density -- high populations of military linguists.

So, you know, we can support all of the language professional requirements of DOD.

Q Okay. Let's get into some numbers, if we could.

LT. CRAGG: And Chuck, one thing.

Q Yeah?

LT. CRAGG: I'm going to -- after this question I'm going to ask -- Tim Kilbride's on the line. He wants to ask some questions as well.

Q Ah. Okay.

LT. CRAGG: Go ahead, Chuck. (Brief pause.)

COL. SANDUSKY: I think Chuck was going to ask about some numbers?

LT. CRAGG: Yeah. Chuck, go ahead with your numbers, and then I'll ask Tim.

Q Yeah. Yeah. Can you tell me about both staffing and numbers of students? How many civilians, how many military in staff? And then approximately how many students? I know that's going to vary.

COL. SANDUSKY: Right. Right. We have approximately, at any one time, 3,000 students, and we've got about 1,700 civilian faculty.

Not all of those are platform instructors. Some are in test development, curriculum development, faculty development, some of our supporting functions. But of this roughly 1,700 civilian faculty, 98 percent are native speakers of the languages they teach. About 40 percent have advanced degrees. Not all the advanced degrees are in linguistics, applied linguistics, second-language learning, but the fact that they have advanced degrees, I think, does demonstrate the level of competence of our faculty.

Military, we've got about, oh, another couple hundred, 150 or so military personnel in all varieties of staff and leadership positions to include some military language instructors who are in the classroom with our civilian professors and then, you know, commanders of the service units and the support staff of the service units.

That gives you a rough order of magnitude, I think.

Q Okay. And then speaking to GRASA (ph), do you concentrate on reading and writing, on speaking, both equally? And also what kind of native language library do you have on site?

COL. SANDUSKY: Okay. We work on three modalities primarily, reading, listening, reading and speaking and we give DOD high stakes examinations in those three modalities. Listening and reading are tested by something called the Defense Language Proficiency Test and speaking is tested through something called the Oral Proficiency Interview. Those are DOD gold standard, in fact, national gold standard -- very high stakes test regimes.

Writing is a supporting modality not directly tested and we see all three of those modalities, well, even all four modalities to include writing as interacting with one another, building a student's proficiency.

We measure outcomes in terms of language proficiency and proficiency levels have been defined over the last 40 years or so by something called the Interagency Language Roundtable, which is as the name implies, an interagency DOD and other U.S. government agencies agreed description of tasks that an individual at a particular level of proficiency ought to be able to perform.

Just to give you a rough idea, somebody who is a Spanish major at a university for four years is probably not at a level two of what we call limited functional proficiency at the end of those four years, and yet that's the level that we are trying to get our students to obtain in either a six month Spanish course or an 18 month Arabic course.

In the 18 month course when you do the math with the amount of contact hours that people have been exposed to, it equates to about 10-and-a-half full load semesters of language and area studies instruction with the area studies instruction being in the target language. Q All right. And then native language library?

COL. SANDUSKY: Yes, well, we have a library and I actually don't know the number of volumes in the holdings, I should check on that, but the key thing nowadays is the material that we have online and make available for our students via the gloss items and our other online materials. We can probably check on the volumes in the library, but I'd really recommend that you take a look at the online materials, which are also used in the classroom.

LT. CRAGG: Wait a second, Chuck, I want to give Tim a chance. Tim, did you have any questions or did Chuck ask all of them for you? I just want to make sure.

Q Just a couple of quick ones and good morning, colonel, thanks for talking.

COL. SANDUSKY: Good morning.

Q I'm Tim Kilbride with the American Forces Press Service and I also work for the New Media Directorate here.

Working recently with some folks from the Defense Language Initiative program as part of the National Security Language Initiative President Bush launched a few years, I was just curious how Monterrey fits into that program and what DOD has been doing overall?

COL. SANDUSKY: Right. Well, of course, you know, we get, for the most part, about 85 percent of our students are right out of basic training. They come to us so they are, you know, the typical young recruits who has joined the military at this time, millennials with all the strengths and weaknesses that the millennial generation brings to the table and they're mostly strengths, but one thing that we see is that they've not always had opportunities to be exposed to foreign language learning in the public schools and I think the national security education program, National Security Language Initiative as you called it are aimed at trying to encourage public schools across the country to invest in greater amounts of foreign language education from an early age.

So we have, I guess, maybe collaborative relationships. We go to conferences. We share materials with some of the flagship programs that are participating in that national security education program.

Q Okay. Thank you. And sort of tied to that, you may have answered this indirectly, but who is eligible for Monterrey versus who is actually required to go?

COL. SANDUSKY: Well, U.S. military personnel who are recruited for specific MOSs are, I guess, you would say eligible to go and they're also in some sense required to go, I mean, this is how they get their language if they're in a language-dependent MOS, this is where they get their language. Eligibility, I guess, is also defined by scores on a test called the Defense Language Aptitude Battery Test known by the acronym DLAB, D-L-A-B, Defense Language Aptitude Battery Test, that is a screening device that helps us access an individual's aptitude for learning language.

Now, look, it's not rocket science. The human brain is built to learn languages. I know that may be a shocker to a lot of Americans, but it's really something that comes relatively naturally to the human mind, but the experience here at DLI is very intense and we like to have individuals who show some aptitude to learning languages in a very intense environment and that's what the DLAB does for us, it gives a screened, you know, sort of a preliminary evaluation of somebody's aptitude.

So they're like entrance scores on that exam to get into the hardest languages you have to have the highest DLAB.

Now, does it mean that you have a high DLAB, you're an automatic success or if you've got a lower DLAB, you're an automatic failure? No. It doesn't work out like that because the students also bring motivation, effort, discipline, previous experience, et cetera to the table and, in fact, motivation and effort once the student is selected and gets into class, motivation and effort are probably the most important elements.

Q Okay. And so -- the last question I had was -- what sort of cultural education is provided if there is? Is there some sort of partnership with the State Department or anyone else to do more -- what to expect on the ground?

COL. SANDUSKY: Right. Well, you know, we have as part of our mission, the delivery of culturally based language training and education. Culture is both implicit and explicit in our curriculum, explicit in the sense that we have area studies and culture courses as I previously stated delivered in the target language. So they're learning about the history, politics, geography, culture, ceremonies, art, et cetera, literature in the target language in the course and that's explicitly part of the curriculum and the implicit part is our instructors come from the cultures where the language is used.

And so they naturally bring into the classroom the whole gamut of what the experience of using the language in the country or the countries where the language is used entails and so that brings into the classroom culture at many different levels from the behavioral dos and don'ts to food, film, music, art, artifacts up to the more abstract, sort of frames of reference definitions of culture, the understanding of beauty and evil and authority and obligation, all of those deep culture concepts that are arising from the same sort of impulses that the language itself arises from. So, in other words, here at DLI, we see language and culture as very intertwined almost inextricably intertwined and we handle them together right from day one.

Q Okay. Thank you very much.

LT. CRAGG: And we have time for one more question if you'd like to follow up.

Q With the Bloggers Roundtable, we've had the chance to talk with military officers throughout the world and there are two areas that I've been particularly interested in, one is the Africa Station that the Navy has and the other is Operation Continuing Promise, which, again, is a naval operation which last fall worked in the Caribbean and had to assist in Haiti after a disaster.

Are you folks working with languages like Creole or West African languages to help support some of these humanitarian missions?

COL. SANDUSKY: Right. Right. I actually have spent quite a bit of time in Africa, about 10 years as a defense attache in various locations mostly in West Africa.

Yes, at the present time, we've got what we call language survival kits which are kind of what you would need if you are going in on a humanitarian mission, just a very basic familiarization, stop, don't shoot, take me to your leader, where does it hurt, you know, is this water clean? All kinds of very basic survival-oriented phrases and they are phrases, so it's not a language learning course at all, but they certainly would serve you well if you were going into an unfamiliar setting and we've got and I don't have the list right here in front of me, but we have many West African languages. We also have some Haitian Creole materials, Hausa, Yoruba, those I know we even have in gloss items, Swahili, which is East Africa. We even have those with gloss items.

So that means getting up to a level two and three functional proficiency and general professional proficiency.

We do not offer at the present time any resident courses in those languages because the services have not yet demanded them, but we can provide those languages and we have done, provide those languages through our contracting service in the D.C. area for individuals who are going to work in Haiti, work in Nigeria, work in Guinea, et cetera.

Q And just -- and, Lieutenant, if I could real quick --

LT. CRAGG: Yes, go ahead.

Q How do you handle, ma'am, the differences in dialect? For example, there is no real Chinese, but even in Italy there are -- I forgot -- 40 or 50 Italian dialects. How do you handle that so that the individual gets the dialect they need to be understood? COL. SANDUSKY: Right. Well, that's a very good question, first, let me just say one more thing about the support to the naval African missions. I'm not aware of any direct support to the Africa Station, but I do know that we have provided instructors on ships. I think these were principally West African training crews' vessels, but we certainly are able to put instructors on ships and be with personnel who are getting ready to deploy or getting ready to work in humanitarian missions.

I think we also did one in South America, but I can't remember the name of the ship.

Q Mercy.

COL. SANDUSKY: So that could have been like the continuing promise. It was a hospital ship and the languages, you know, governmental interaction or engagement in West Africa and North Africa, of course, you would be well served with French and Portuguese and in North Africa Arabic. So you don't have to get real exotic to have a language capability that will serve you in a West African crisis context.

Okay. Now, on dialects. The dialects are a big challenge. The languages that you mentioned all have a standard dialect or a recognized standard form and that's what we emphasize here in the school, but we do expose our students to the variety of dialects, for example, in Spanish, our Spanish teachers come from all over the Spanish-speaking world. In Arabic, our Arabic instructors come from all over the Arabic-speaking world. In Arabic as you may know, dialects are a major, major challenge. They're almost, you know, to a layman like me in the sense that I'm not a linguistics expert, a layman would say some Arabic dialects are almost like separate languages because the vocabulary and pronunciation and even some of the grammar structures are so different and so to compensate for -- to ensure that our students have an adequate familiarization, we've got materials online that help them become familiar with different accents and different dialects and we also offer courses in specific dialects.

We have, for example, basic Arabic courses begin with Iraqi dialect and we can also do almost any dialect that's required.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Well, we're drawing near to the end of the show, so ma'am, I'd like to turn the floor over to you. We had some great questions today and if you'd like to end with a closing statement today?

COL. SANDUSKY: Well, sure, the only thing -- we didn't really focus on the importance of language and culture to the general purpose forces and what we were talking mostly about today was our core mission of providing language training to the language professionals for DOD. The stuff about the ships in Africa and Haiti, that's getting a little bit more towards the general purpose forces, but we do a lot of pre-deployment training through mobile training teams. We've provided training to close to 80,000 service members, pre-deployment familiarization training through MTTs. For the MTTs, we use both those language survival kits that I mentioned; you can find those online, you can go online and see those and along with our countries and perspective materials that also have language embedded in them, but in addition, we've got some great programs called Head Start. We don't have them in every language, but we've currently got them in Iraqi dialect Arabic, so there you go for a dialect, Iraqi dialect Arabic, Dari, Pashtun, Persian Farsi, Mandarin Chinese, again, a standard dialect of Chinese, the standard, Mandarin, Korean, and we will soon have French, Spanish and Russian.

Now, these are programs that give a real absolute beginner an introduction to all four modalities, listening, reading, speaking and writing in a very, kind of practical military-oriented way. They use avatars. They're interactive and they're really exceptionally good language learning materials.

LT. CRAGG: Great. Thank you, ma'am, and I just wanted to say thank you very much for joining us for the bloggers online. Beth Wilson was going to

join us and if she has any questions after this, I can get back to her and forward any questions to you if that's okay, ma'am?

COL. SANDUSKY: Great. No problem. You might want to make sure that Sergeant First Class Lamar is on the e-mail because I'm going to be traveling and it might be a little hard for me to get to my e-mails.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. We'll do that. Note to everyone online today's program will be available online at the bloggers' link, which is on DefenseLink.mil and where you will be able to access a story based on today's call, along with the transcript and the audio file.

Again, this concludes today's show and thank you, ma'am, for joining us and Chuck, thank you.

Q Thank you.

COL. SANDUSKY: Thank you very much.

END.