AFCLC
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
CULTURE & LANGUAGE CENTER

Quarterly Bulletin

"Building a Cross-Culturally Competent Total Force."

Summer 2015

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Important Dates:

- Fall 2015 ITC Enrollment: 15-28 Sep
- Fall 2015 Intro to CCC Enrollment: 13-26 Oct
- Deadline for consideration by 2015 LEAP Selection Board: 15 August

U.S. AIR FORCE

AFCLC Works with Eaker Center to Integrate 3C into PCE Curriculum

Dr. Patricia Fogarty, Assistant Professor of Cross-Cultural Relations at the Air Force Culture and Language Center, gives a lecture on cross-cultural competence (3C) at the Eaker Center on Thursday, April 23, 2015. (AFCLC photo by Brandon M. Bridges)

by Brandon M. Bridges

Air Force Culture and Language Center

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – A core element of the mission of the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) is to help to build a cross-culturally competent total force. In addition to its own in-house programs and curricula, the Center regularly partners with peer organizations at Maxwell AFB. This involves regular lectures at the Ira C. Eaker Center for Professional Development, delivered by Dr. Patricia Fogarty, Assistant Professor of Cross-Cultural Relations at the AFCLC.

The Eaker Center's mission statement describes a goal of providing "the highest quality, multi-disciplined professional continuing education and training that drives the future success of Air Force, DoD, and international students." To that end, it oversees a variety of schoolhouses, one of which is the Personnel Professional Development School.

Working with the Personnel Professional Development School through the Eaker Center, Dr. Fogarty teaches two principal objectives: one, focusing on workplace diversity and culture, and the other, focusing on cultural diversity in other locations.

See Eaker, p.8

On the Cover

Four participants of the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) pose by the Prop and Wings at Air University Headquarters, Maxwell AFB, AL. The quartet visited Maxwell to provide language and culture support for a visiting delegation of Chinese officers. (AFCLC photo by Brandon M. Bridges)

AFCLC VISION

The Air Force Culture and Language Center, as the acknowledged experts, will lead the U.S. Air Force in building a cross-culturally competent Total Force to meet the demands of the Service's dynamic global mission.

AFCLC MISSION

The Air Force Culture and Language Center creates and executes language, region and cultural learning programs for Total Force Airmen, and provides the Service with the subject matter expertise required to institutionalize these efforts.

The Air Force Culture and Language Center was founded at Air University in April 2006, embracing the Air Force Chief of Staff's intention to improve Airmen's cross-cultural competence.

In April 2007, the Air Force further demonstrated its commitment to culture learning by selecting cross-cultural competence as the centerpiece of Air University's re-accreditation efforts. In December 2007, the Center was made responsible for culture and language training, as well as education, across the entire Air Force. The Air Force Research Institute hosts the AFCLC.

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From the Director

Colleagues,

Thanks for the warm welcome from all of you at the Air Force Culture and Language Center. I am privileged to serve this team as your new Director. I look forward to getting to know everyone as we journey together to improve our skills, grow our capabilities, develop each of your careers.

While I acclimate to the Center and all that we do together, I'm honored to come alongside you and discover the quality and expertise that you all bring. I'm already impressed and humbled. I've been preparing weeks to share this season with you, and now I'm delighted to complete this transition.

Personally, I enlisted for four years in the United States Marine Corps serving as a communications NCO. Later, I commissioned and spent almost 29 years as an Operations and Civil Affairs officer in the US Army Reserve. I've deployed to Beirut, Lebanon and served for over a decade in Japan and more recently completed tours in Kosovo and Iraq. My roles included a senior UN Liaison in Kosovo, the senior tribal advisor in Iraq, and ultimately as a GS-15 with the Human Terrain System in Baghdad leading a national level socio-cultural research team while serving as the program's senior representative in the country.

In the civilian world, I taught for 5 years on the graduate faculty at Cornerstone University, delivering courses including Organizational Leadership, Organizational Behavior, Global Impact, Organizational Change, and Qualitative Research Methods. Like my time on active duty, these teaching engagements took me to a number of different countries, including Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Burma and the Philippines.

Immediately before joining the AFCLC, I held a position as a Strategic Guidance and Security Cooperation Subject Matter Expert for the Air Force. While there, I worked with senior leaders in the Air Force and the State Department to implement guidance from as high as the Secretary of Defense and the President for our foreign advisors abroad. I also helped to apply national-level security cooperation issues to theater level planning and processes.

With as many overseas assignments as I've experienced, I value programs such as LEAP, culture studies, and our helpful field guides. As an educator, it's also easy for me to see the value in our distance learning courses, our eMentor efforts, and our collaboration efforts with peer institutions such as the Eaker Center.

In the weeks and months to come, I look forward to learning more about our people and missions carried out here. I pledge to support you, and to do everything possible to maintain and expand our footprint.

I'd also like to express my sincere appreciation to Lt Col Todd Butler, who served very capably as our Acting Director in the months prior to my arrival. Thanks to his professionalism and his dedication, we completed a seamless transition of leadership.

I look forward to coming alongside you, discovering more of your skills and interests, discerning relevance and value for our mission, and then articulating the way ahead for our center.

Very Respectfully,

David Ronan, Ph.D.
Director, Air Force Culture and Language Center

LEAP Supports Major International Visit to Air University

Maxwell AFB, Ala. - Major General Han Xing, Deputy Commandant, People's Liberation Army Air Force Command College, and PLAAF Command College instructors and students, visit Air University Headquarters and various schools, April 29, 2015. (US Air Force photo/released)

by Brandon M. Bridges
Air Force Culture and Language Center

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – A group of participants from the Air Force's Language Enabled Airman Program enjoyed a rare opportunity April 29, 2015, to provide direct support for a visit by senior international leaders to Air University.

As part of a reciprocal arrangement with the Air War College, Air University hosted a delegation of Chinese officers from the People's Liberation Army Air Force Command College. The four participants from LEAP joined the group of Air University personnel escorting the delegation around Maxwell, providing language and translation support along the way.

Purpose and Scope

The delegation visiting AU consisted of the deputy commandant of the PLAAF Command College and a mix of instructors and students, who were here to learn about how the Air Force trains its leaders and thinkers.

The LEAP participants were Capt. Thomas Chiasson and Capt. Kevin Chao, both of Los Angeles AFB; Capt. Timmy Wang, of Creech AFB, Nevada; and Capt. Shaoping Mo, of Lackland AFB, Texas.

"Events like this serve as a reminder that it's not just about us as Americans," said Lt. Col. Joseph Thomas IV, Air University protocol officer. "If we're going to succeed as a global influencer, then we have to show awareness of the cultures of those we respect and work with. Having people like our LEAP participants along who not only speak the language, but understand the culture, demonstrate that we truly value diversity and are serious about cooperating with our global community."

Involvement by LEAP

Upon being contacted by the LEAP office at the Air Force Culture and Language Center, Chao was quick to volunteer. A participant of LEAP since 2011, Chao had been abroad on Language Intensive Training Events twice—once to Beijing, and once to Taiwan—but had rarely had opportunity at home to put his language skills to use.

"My trip to Taiwan made me realize how important it is for an officer to be bilingual, to serve as that bridge between our country and our partners," said Chao.

Prior to joining LEAP, Chao saw it primarily as an opportunity to study Chinese and maintain his proficiency. In his job as a developmental engineer, he says, such opportunities are rare.

"Little did I know that not only does it focus on language, but also culture and provided enormous opportunities to utilize my language skills to support the actual mission," he said.

The selection of LEAP members to support the Chinese delegation reflects a key objective of the program: to create a pool of ready and willing Airmen with a variety of Air Force specialty codes to provide language support as needed.

"The advantage of having a toolbox of cross-culturally competent Airmen is that you're prepared no matter what situation comes up," said Chiasson, a developmental engineer whose participation in LEAP began in 2010.

"I was excited to take part in such an important event," said Wang, a flight officer who joined LEAP in 2010. "LEAP is great since it brings together people from all backgrounds. Most of us don't get to use our language skills on the job. Part of the excitement of coming here is to use our language skills."

For Mo, a LEAP member since 2011 and a pharmacist, participating in the Chinese visit represented a chance to make use of her native language proficiency. A native of China, she speaks seven different dialects of the language: Cantanese, Mandarin, Hakka, Chaozhaou, Fanghai, and Hunan, along with Kaijian, the dialect spoken in her native village.

"I'm just as excited," she said.

A Cross-Cultural Success

When the delegation first arrived, they were greeted by heavy rain. The moment, however, provided the first of what would be many opportunities for a cultural exchange.

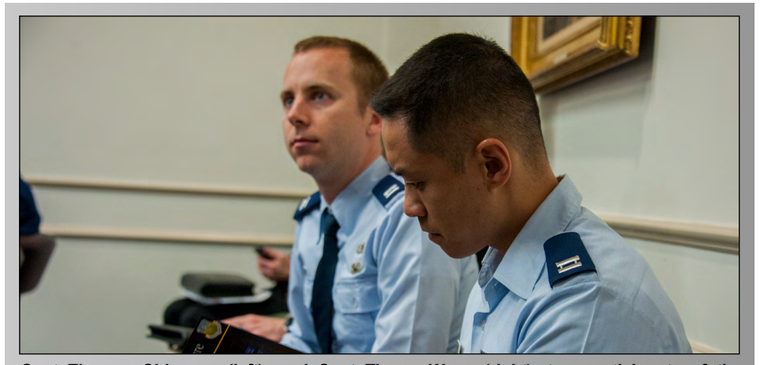
"To the Chinese, rain symbolizes washing away dust, and bringing good luck," explained Mo. "It was perfect timing."

Capt Shaoping Mo, right, a participant of the Language Enabled Airman Program, speaks with a member of the visiting Chinese delegation. Major General Han Xing, Deputy Commandant, People's Liberation Army Air Force Command College, and PLAAF Command College instructors and students, visited Air University headquarters and various AU schools, April 29, 2015. (US Air Force photo/released)

More important than the weather, according to Chao, was the welcoming climate that was established early on.

Throughout the visit, the LEAP participants engaged the Chinese officers in side conversations, and the on-the-spot feedback they received was consistently positive.

"They liked that LEAP was supporting the visit," said Wang. "The last time we did this there was just one translator for the entire group. This time, we only had five to six people per LEAP participant."



Capt Thomas Chiasson (left), and Capt Timmy Wang (right), two participants of the Language Enabled Airman Program, listen to a presentation during a visit by a Chinese delegation. Major General Han Xing, Deputy Commandant, People's Liberation Army Air Force Command College, and PLAAF Command College instructors and students, visited Air University headquarters and various AU schools, April 29, 2015. (US Air Force photo/released)

"I'd never met a PLAAF officer, so it was eye opening to sit down and have a conversation about our military life," said Chao. "Engagements and interactions like this strengthen our trust and boost our understanding of each other, and all this together will help eliminate misunderstandings and miscommunications."

"If you want to have global-reaching power," added Wang, "then you need to develop global language and culture understanding. And that's what LEAP does."

According to Col. Mark Swentkoske, the U.S. Air Attaché at the U.S. embassy in Beijing, the Chinese delegation lauded the AU stop as "the best" for support and information exchange, and Air University was quick to offer praise to LEAP for helping make that happen.

"Their professionalism and participation were key in making this visit a success," said Thomas. "Their unique skill set and expertise enabled AU and PLAAF to share ideas and information in a way that would not have been possible without their support. In addition, they displayed the highest level of professionalism and portrayed Air Force captains as competent and effective, further demonstrating the impact of professional education and formal training."

AFCLC, AFNC Partner with Squadron Officer College (SOC) to Promote 3C, Negotiation Skills

Capt James Garris begins a class on Cross-Cultural Negotiations at the Squadron Officer College (SOC). (AFCLC photo by Brandon M. Bridges)

by Brandon M. Bridges
Air Force Culture and Language Center

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – The nature of the mission of the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) is such that it contributes in ways great and small to a wide variety of missions across the Air Force. Collaboration with partners near and far is simply a part of the job—but an oft-overlooked truth is that some of the most important collaborations are those closest to home. One such collaboration is with the Squadron Officer College (SOC), in the development of the Squadron Officer School (SOS) program.

Since 1950, SOS has played a key role in the professional military education (PME) system, educating and mentoring students during the formative years of their careers and helping prepare them to be the airpower leaders of tomorrow. As part of that effort, since 2009, the AFCLC has played a critical role: helping shape the cross-cultural awareness of SOS students.

History

In its present form, SOS consists of a five-week graduate level experience focused on leadership development. SOS is offered seven times each year, with approximately 620 to 680 students in each SOS class. The course is required for all Air Force Captains, and is available to equivalent USAF civilians and international officers; every USAF O-3 is encouraged to attend. Its overall purpose is, in the words of SOS curriculum designer Capt Jonathon Noonan, "to take tactical-level experts in their field, and prepare them for the strategic-level thinking that they'll need at the field-grade officer level."

According to Capt Noonan—himself a graduated SOS instructor—the course includes cross-cultural competence (3C), leading change, general leadership principles, communication, the profession of arms, critical thinking, and joint operational planning. All represent key skillsets for any leader, but they are especially critical for a 21st century military leader, given the global and unpredictable nature of the Air Force's mission.

"These young officers are here to broaden their horizons, expand their experiences," said Capt Noonan. "We take the full gamut of what the Air Force does. Pilots, navigators, missile operators, nurses, psychologists, the list goes on—even international officers."

"We want to prepare Captains to be leaders who are ready to lead in complex, ambiguous environments," he added.

Indeed, the initial vision from Col Russell V. Ritchey, the first commandant of SOS, was to take in a wide swath of experiences, resulting in a curriculum written with a broad scope.

Partnership with AFCLC

So how does the AFCLC fit into the mix?

"We have two lessons that are hinged on cross-cultural communication," Capt Noonan explains. "These two are actually the longest lessons in the SOS course, and in terms of any one series of thoughts, they're the largest."

The first of the two lessons deals with cross-cultural negotiation, while the second focuses entirely on cross-cultural competence.

"How do you operate in a culturally-complex environment?" Noonan said in explaining the guiding questions of both lessons. "And then how do you effectively work and represent the US military in that environment, and then operate towards mission success?"

To answer that, the AFCLC provides content that fits with Captains' needs, as derived from the Institutional Competency List from Air Force doctrine, the Air University Continuum of Officer and Enlisted Professional Military Education Strategic Guide (a.k.a. the Continuum of Education Strategic Guidance, or CESG), and ongoing needs analysis discussions that take place with SOS leaders.

According to Dr. Patricia Fogarty, Assistant Professor of Cross-Cultural Relations, who serves as the primary liaison between AFCLC and SOC, much of what the Center provides is culture-general knowledge.

"Our content has mostly focused on general 3C knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs), on cross-cultural communication knowledge and skills," she explained. "We do content updates, as well as provide new content."

Recently, for instance, Dr. Fogarty, along with Mr. Greg Day, Director of Staff at the AFCLC, reviewed SOS's current lesson and teaching plans, and made suggestions for revision.

"In most cases, they show us what they're already doing, and ask if it's still current or needs revisions," explained Dr. Fogarty. "For example, over the past two years, we've worked with them on an ongoing basis to refine the source material to fit the changing needs of their curriculum. What we've found is that as 3C has become more integrated into the overall Air Force PME, SOS students have begun to require more in-depth instruction. So, where we used to only give that detailed education to field-grade officers, we've recently begun offering it to company-grade officers as well."

While the scope of AFCLC's involvement changes from year to year in step with SOS's needs and requirements, the two organizations continue to share a healthy and active partnership.

"It's telling that as long as this has been happening, SOS continues to find utility in cross-cultural competence curricula," said Mr. Day. "As long as they continue to look to us for that information, we're more than happy to provide."

Air Force Negotiation Center

Like the AFCLC, the Air Force Negotiation Center (AFNC) provides critical information and expertise to SOS in support of their curriculum. Negotiation is a required competency for all Air Force service members, whether enlisted or commissioned, and courses like SOS represent an ideal opportunity to instill that skillset.

"We support all of the schools here," said Mr. Hank Finn, Deputy Director of the AFNC. "Like AFCLC, we sat down with the instructors at SOS, looked at what they were working on, and said, 'Based on your need, here's what we think.' "

For the SOS course, Mr. Finn serves as an instructor, providing a one-hour lecture. That is followed by a two-hour class session with SOS flight commanders, which

deals with cross-cultural negotiations followed by an in class exercise to illustrate the teaching points and allows students to apply what they just learned.

But, added Mr. Finn, there's more.

"We also provide a mediation elective," he explained. "It's for a smaller class, usually 60 to 70 students, but mediation skills are just as important as negotiation, especially for anyone working towards a leadership position."

Overall, AFNC sees its role as helping SOS work through its needs, and providing support in whatever capacity is needed. With his background as an SOS Flight Commander, Mr.Finn knows firsthand that the needs of the teaching mission can change from year to year.

"We can provide as much or as little help as they need," he said. "We can provide the curriculum, advise or help craft the curriculum, or we can teach it."

Indeed, according to Dr. Stefan Eisen, Director of the AFNC, collaborations such as the one with SOS are simply part of the job. Dr. Eisen's background also includes time spent at SOS, and his time as a squadron commander there gave him a unique appreciation for AFNC's role in supporting Air Force PME.

"As senior leadership continues to stress the importance of Air Force members developing negotiation skillsets to operate globally," said Dr. Eisen, "we in the Negotiation Center remain dedicated to providing education and training support at every level."

Eaker, continued from p.1

"The first course is all about helping flight commanders relate to other cultures, as well as their own within the Air Force," explained Maj Anthony Pickett, Course Director for the Personnel Professional Development School. "The course is geared towards the internal dynamics of the US Air Force, and when you have 100 to 400 people in a single flight, it's a consideration you have to take into account."

A key element of recognizing the diversity of cultures within the US Air Force involves an acknowledgment of the various and diverse backgrounds of its members. Factors such as racial background, gender, and economic background all affect an Airman's beliefs and perceptions.

To demonstrate, Dr. Fogarty organized a series of exercises with the diversity students.

"First, I asked for a few volunteers," Dr. Fogarty explained. "We wrote down assumptions about each volunteer—including me—based on first impressions."

Next, she conducted an exercise to demonstrate how life events affect perceptions. A group of students lined up, and then moved forward or backward from the starting line based on their responses to specific scenarios or questions.

"It ended up giving people an understanding of the impact different events can have on one's life and perceptions of others, on rate of success in career and family," said Dr. Fogarty. "The goal is to give participants a perspective on other people's lives. It can help us understand that others may have a completely different outlook on life, assumptions about what's normal. And it's a reminder that they may not understand our perspective."

Dr. Patricia Fogarty, Assistant Professor of Cross-Cultural Relations at the AFCLC, gives a lecture to a group of students from the Personnel Professional Development School. (AFCLC photo by Brandon M. Bridges)

Then, the class performed the first exercise again, to see how the step exercise had changed their perceptions of one another.

The second course objective deals with cultural diversity in other locations, such as other countries, and provides instruction on dealing with non-American cultures.

"The challenge with a course like this is that participants are going to so many different places," said Maj Pickett. "They'd like information on specific locations, but we make the coursework more broad so we can make it relevant to everyone."

The second course objective focuses more on force support squadron (FSS) personnel, and reflects a growing emphasis across the Air Force on diversity, a broad implementation of what the AFCLC refers to as cross-cultural competence, or 3C. The FSS coursework has a broad audience, including mid-to-senior enlisted Airmen, as well as officers up through lieutenant colonel.

"We're being asked to incorporate diversity awareness and leadership training into all of our PCE coursework," explained Maj Pickett. "Collectively, both of the course objectives that Dr. Fogarty teaches reflect the core mission of the Eaker Center, which is to professionally develop our Airmen into better leaders."

About the Ira C. Eaker Center for Professional Development

Vision:

"The Center of expertise and innovation for professional development."

Mission:

"Provide the highest quality, multi-disciplined professional continuing education and training that drives the future success of the Air Force, DoD, and international students."

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LEAP to Accept Applications Year-Round Starting April 2015

by Brandon M. Bridges
Air Force Culture and Language Center

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – Starting in April 2015, the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) began accepting applications year-round.

The move marks a transition from the established practice of having specific application windows in advance of scheduled selection boards.

"We have almost two thousand participants as of spring 2015," said Rebecca McKenzie, who oversees LEAP at the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC). "Opening the application window year round will allow us to get a better overall picture of the language capabilities in the Air Force at any given time. We can then call on those capabilities at any time."

The ultimate objective, says Ms. McKenzie, is to better target the proper languages, ranks, and Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs) to meet whatever mission requirements may arise.

Under the new approach, dubbed "open application" by LEAP program managers, applicants will now be able to submit completed packages at any time during the year. Selection boards will continue to convene on a regular basis; when a board is scheduled, a corresponding cutoff date will be announced for applicants wishing to be considered by that board.

Capt. Kawika Berggren (far right) and fellow Language Enabled Airman Program participants pause for a photo after receiving their certificates of completion for the Language Intensive Training Events program in Ecuador, Sept. 13, 2013. As part of his LEAP training, Berggren traveled to Ecuador to immerse himself in the Latin culture and bolster his language skills. (Courtesy Photo)

This means that, although the application system will remain open and available after the board cutoff date, only completed applications received prior to the cutoff date will be reviewed by that board. Applications received after the cutoff date will be rolled over to the next board.

"This year," said Ms. McKenzie, "we have a board scheduled in mid-September. So we've set the deadline for online application completion for 17 August."

Interested in joining LEAP in 2015?

Current guidance, as published in the 2015 selection memo, outlines eligibility requirements for Airmen interested in LEAP:

- USAF Active Duty (AD) Enlisted Airmen (excluding 1N3 and 1A8 career fields) with at least 48 months Time in Service (TIS), rank of Senior Airman (SrA) through Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt), completion of all 5-Skill Level and Career Field and Education Training Plan (CFETP) requirements, and not within two years of separation or retirement.
- USAF AD Commissioned Officers not within two years of separation or retirement.
- USAF Officer Candidates with a commission date scheduled for the current academic year may apply. However, officer candidates applying now will be considered by a 2016 board instead of the fall 2015 board. Further instructions for cadet applicants will be released in August 2015. Cadets not career designated should understand that participation in LEAP may influence their ultimate career paths and/or assignments. Additionally, their chosen language may change to accommodate demand signals from career field functional managers and needs of the Air Force. Involvement in LEAP will in no way preclude participation in any rated Air Force program (pilot, navigation, etc.).

To apply, interested Airmen must be on a military domain computer with a CAC-reader and an Air University (AU) Portal account to begin a LEAP application. Applicants that need to create or update their AU Portal account will be redirected to the AU Portal before going to the application site.

Colleagues,

Greetings from the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) Language Training Detachment (LTD) at Air University!

I wanted to take a few moments to introduce myself and the rest of the DLI faculty, especially to those who didn't know there is a DLI LTD located at Maxwell AFB.

DLI has been teaching foreign languages at Air University since 2006, primarily focusing on Air War College (AWC) and Air Command & Staff College (ACSC) students. As the program steadily grew, AWC Commandant, MG Stephen Miller, formally requested that DLI hire a full time liaison to manage the blossoming language program at AU.

In his request to then-DLI Commandant, Colonel Tucker Mansager, MG Miller stated: "It was the CSAF's vision that Air University become a center of language learning for the Air Force, in efforts spread across the continuum of education." This request was eventually realized in October of 2009, when DLI hired me to serve as the DLI Liaison to Air University.

Since that time, the AU language program has had some significant changes. For example, when I first came onboard, language familiarization courses were mandatory for all ACSC students, and available on a volunteer basis for the AWC. 22 language instructors spent 6 months TDY to Maxwell AFB to provide foreign language instruction, and over 500 students would annually complete a DLIFLC language course. Currently, participation in the language program at both the AWC and ACSC is voluntary; despite the busy schedules of AU students, over 300 of them still choose to take one of DLI's language programs each year. Since the beginning, we have taught 10 languages at Air University, including Arabic, Chinese, Dari, French, German, Korean, Persian-Farsi, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili.

Alongside our support to AWC and ACSC, we also partner with the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) to support a variety of missions. Instructors from the DLI LTD have taught dozens of Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) participants in Language Intensive Training Events (LITEs), and we have also supported instruction of over a dozen General Officers heading for deployment as part of the General Officer Pre-Deployment Acculturation Course (GOPAC).

In early 2011, DLI Commandant, Colonel Danial Pick and the Commander, Spaatz Center for Officer Education, MG Robert Kane signed a Memorandum of Agreement formally establishing a DLIFLC Language Training Detachment at Maxwell AFB. In 2014, I hired the last of 4 full-time language training instructors to permanently staff the LTD. My team consists of some of the best language instructors from DLI: Daniel Jimenez, Assistant Professor – Spanish; Dr. Sandra Schoder, Assistant Professor – German; Dr. Dongdong Zhang, Assistant Professor – Chinese; and Dr. Victor Mbodouma, Assistant Professor – French.

Great things are happening at Air University each and every day; the work that happens here has the power and potential to reach all corners of the Air Force. All of us at the DLI LTD are pleased and privileged to have a role in making that work a success, and we look forward to more of the same in 2015 and beyond.

Very Respectfully,

Robert A. "Rob" Miltersen
Defense Language Institute Language Training Detachment Liaison

DLIFLC, LEAP Connect to Field Test New DLPT

by Brandon M. Bridges, Rob Miltersen, & Rebecca McKenzie
Air Force Culture and Language Center

A group of participants of the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) prepare to take newly revised versions of Defense Language Proficiency Tests (DLPTs) in German and Hindi. (AFCLC photo by Brandon M. Bridges)

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) will soon unveil a new set of Defense Language Proficiency Tests (DLPTs). Like any form of examination, the DLPTs must be formally validated before they can be implemented, and for that, DLI teamed up with the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC).

A critical element of the vetting process for the new exams is field testing, which involves Airmen taking the tests exactly as they normally would, and providing feedback to DLI to help make improvements.

Upon being contacted by DLI officials in Monterey, CA, regarding the field tests, DLI Liaison to AU Rob Miltersen saw a perfect opportunity to partner with the AFCLC's Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP). While a number of DLPTs are in the process of being updated, AFCLC is lending its support to two specific languages: German and Hindi.

"I'm very familiar with LEAP, and knew that they would have plenty of German and Hindi participants to help fulfill this requirement," said Mr. Miltersen. "It's a great help to DLI, and I think it will be a great opportunity for LEAP members who get this experience."

Altogether, the AFCLC brought 15 German and 6 Hindi LEAP participants to Maxwell in order to take part in the validation process. The group took a different version of the test each day for four days, beginning with a 3-hour reading test in the morning and a 3-hour listening test in the afternoon. Each participant holds a current DLPT score between levels 1+ and 3+ in their respective language.

"These tests are designed to gauge a person's abilities in a particular language, based on the United States Government's Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels," said Rebecca McKenzie, who helped coordinate between DLI and LEAP. "Our LEAP participants selected as testers all have relatively high DLPT scores, so they bring an added perspective to the process."

"We're definitely benefitting from [the LEAP particiapnts'] feedback," said Ms. Tara Hama-Amin, visiting from DLIFLC to oversee the testing process. "Native speakers know the language very well, and the non-native speakers have seen other DLPTs."

The result, she said, is very specific feedback, often right down to what words and passages need to be changed.

In the case of Capt Nora Scheiber, one of the LEAP participants assisting with the validation process, that feedback came with justification backed by experience.

"On the German portions of the old test, the passages were obviously written by a native speaker " said Capt Sheiber, a force support officer who joined LEAP in 2011. "Then it seemed like the English questions and answers were written by an American."

The Hindi test, too, provoked strong reactions from the testers, particularly TSgt Jignesh Patel, who joined leap in 2011. Patel, whose native language is Gujarati, serves as a supply NCO at an air base in Turkey.

"I've been using my Hindi language skills since before joining LEAP, especially while I was deployed to Oman," said Patel. "99% of the people who came on base were third-country nationals who didn't know Arabic or English. So when someone broke their hand and needed to communicate with the doctor, that was when I first started using Hindi skills. I've assisted ever since, but when I got back and learned about LEAP, I saw an opportunity to better use my language skills."

The LEAP Connection

In broader terms, the LEAP participants viewed it as an excellent example of how useful the program can be—and how important it is to the greater mission of the Air Force.

"With [the Secretary of the Air Force] saying that every dollar has to count," said 1st Lt Kedar Choksey, a logistics readiness officer stationed in Germany, who joined LEAP in 2010, "when you find capabilities like this that don't need to be trained, it's highly cost effective."

SSgt Amol-Kumar Rathod, a crew chief instructor from Sheppard AFB, TX, expressed strong concurrence.

"The capabilities and experience that we have aren't just on standby," he said. "They should be used to engage the cultural aspects of a mission. What we do on LITEs is to help us learn, with hopes of being used for actual missions."

AFCLC Training Prepares General Officers for Deployment

Lt Gen Stephen Kwast, Commander, Air University, delivers introductory remarks on the first day of the General Officer Pre-Deployment Acculturation Course (GOPAC), Monday, April 20, 2015. GOPAC offers a comprehensive course of instruction to help prepare general officers for service in support of the US mission in foreign countries. (AFCLC photo by Brandon M. Bridges)

by Brandon M. Bridges
Air Force Culture and Language Center

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – When thinking of deployments to a foreign country, most discussions turn immediately to the tactical questions: where is the enemy? And how can we best defeat them? For senior leaders, however, deployments feature another element, of equal if not greater importance: who are our allies? And how can we best work with them?

For a group of general officers and general officer selects preparing for duty overseas, the answers can be found in the Air Force Culture and Language Center's (AFCLC) General Officer Pre-Deployment Acculturation Course (GOPAC).

History

GOPAC was originally conceived in 2009, at the request of General Stanley McChrystal—then the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (COMISAF) in Afghanistan—in response to a perceived need for general officers to receive thorough preparation in language and culture before deploying to that country.

That request, made to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, led the AFCLC to develop a formal curriculum with a focus on language, culture, geography, and more. In its initial form, GOPAC consisted of a single AFCLC faculty member, Dr. Brian Selmeski, conducting one-on-one training sessions covering culture-general instruction; as demand grew, the course expanded over time to include an increasing amount of culture-specific material.

"Developing trust and establishing relationships with senior Emirati military officers has been both my most important and most challenging obligation," said Brig Gen John Quintas, who participated in GOPAC prior to beginning a tour of duty in Dubai. "Despite years of experience in the region, every culture within the Gulf region requires and deserves specific training. The basic tools I developed at GOPAC proved valuable in every engagement, allowing me to succeed very early in my command tour. More importantly, GOPAC instilled in me respect and acknowledgement of the danger of engaging with valuable partners without cultural awareness."

Today, GOPAC consists of a 30-hour block of instruction, with half devoted to language and half devoted to region/culture. Since its inception, AFCLC has conducted 20 GOPAC courses, graduating a total of 33 senior leader students.

The key to its lasting success, according to Dr. Brian Selmeski, former Director of Plans at the AFCLC, lies in part with its unique nature.

"No other service has a program like GOPAC," he said. "It's a weeklong culture and language prep for general officers going downrange."

Just as important, he added, is the fact that the course is fairly rigorous; Dr. Selmeski describes it as "an academic program built on solid theory and research."

"It's more than just a scholarly venture," he added. "We're preparing them to do things."

Preparation

As with any major undertaking, GOPAC requires a significant amount of planning and preparation. AFCLC and its supporting subject matter experts tailor each lesson to the specific needs and circumstances of the general officers attending.

"The greatest thing about GOPAC is that it's tailored for each general officer and their circumstances," said Lt Col Todd Butler, Acting Director of the AFCLC during both 2015 iterations of the course. "We do as much as we possibly can to make the course material relevant for their specific location."

Planning for the first 2015 iteration of the course began in early January. Dr. Will Dulaney, Assistant Professor of Organizational Communication at the AFCLC, served as the professor of record for both 2015 iterations of the course, and was responsible for the development of both curricula.

"This iteration of GOPAC was particularly challenging due to having two separate Areas of Operation, Afghanistan and Qatar, encompassing three distinct Air Expeditionary Wing missions," said Dr. Dulaney. "The Afghanistan course alone required extensive curriculum changes in order to meet the Culture, Regional Expertise, and Language education needs of General Officers taking command there, especially with leadership changes within the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. All in all, the challenge GOPAC presents brings out the best in the AFCLC; working with our peer organizations continually results in quality education for important people doing important work."

That last is especially important, added Dr. Patricia Fogarty, Assistant Professor of Cross-Cultural Relations at the AFCLC.

"In the United States, we're used to interacting with one another in a particular way," said Dr. Fogarty, who also served as an instructor for GOPAC. "We, for example, might introduce ourselves in a very concise way, which we may look at as efficient. In Qatar, that same introduction might seem insulting, since it doesn't observe their greeting customs."

To maximize the effectiveness of the course, GOPAC is designed to be a fully immersive experience. In addition to the rigorous course of instruction, the training areas each feature décor designed to mimic the countries being discussed. GOPAC 15-2 saw an entire wing of the AFCLC facility transformed into miniature replicas of meeting rooms in Qatar and Afghanistan, with touches both large and small.

Ornate floor rugs, gathered specially for the occasion, adorned one hallway. Miniature tapestries hung from the walls in the Afghan training room, while across the hall, Qatari pottery filled the shelves of a bookcase.

"With this year's GOPAC I finally got to see behind the curtain," said Olin Goodhue, Chief of the Mission Support division at the AFCLC. "From that perspective the most striking aspect of the program is the exhaustive interdisciplinary groundwork. It goes without saying this is one of the more critical things we do, and I can't over emphasize how the extensive preparation transforms this course into a comprehensive learning experience."

Collaboration

To make GOPAC a success, AFCLC routinely partners with several of its peer organizations, one of which is the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC).

As the DoD Executive Agent for foreign language instruction, the DLIFLC has provided all language instruction since the beginning of GOPAC.

"Of all the things DLI contributes here at Air University, GOPAC certainly gets the most visibility," said Mr. Rob Miltersen, who serves as on-site liaison between AFCLC and DLIFLC. "Each GO seems to really appreciate the language training they receive prior to deployment, and we like the opportunity to set them up for success."

The other major partner AFCLC works with on GOPAC is the Air Force Negotiation Center (AFNC). AFNC actually plays two roles in GOPAC: first, to provide cross-cultural negotiation training; and second, to plan and prepare for the end-of-course exercises.

"Any senior leader going into a foreign theater is going to need to know how to interact with someone from that culture," said Dr. Stefan Eisen, Director of the AFNC. "When you're acting on behalf of the United States military, a key element of interaction is going to be negotiation. Nothing is ever a given when you're interacting with a foreign leader, so it's critical that we equip our leaders with the skills they need to accomplish the mission."

The end-of-course exercise is particularly important, adds Dr. Eisen.

"Exactly what we do at the end of each GOPAC differs depending on a number of factors," he said. "This April, the GOPAC team did both a Key Leader Engagement (KLE) and a round table."

The round tables developed jointly by AFCLC and AFNC exercise critical negotiating opportunities when engaging with key leaders as they resolve issues. In addition, the KLEs involve building a specific scenario using inputs from experts and then simulating an actual meeting between US military leaders and their counterparts. In keeping with GOPAC's immersive nature, the experts typically appear in appropriate regional garb, and staff members stand in to play the roles of military and government attachés. Appropriate customs are also observed, down to the specifics of things such as pouring of tea.

"We want to make it as authentic as we can, and show them what it's actually going to be like," said Dr. Eisen.

Conclusion

Asked about his feelings regarding GOPAC, Lt Col Butler was effusive in his enthusiasm. "From my chair as the acting director of the AFCLC," he said, "I've now had the duty and privilege of overseeing the whole GOPAC process twice in 2015. I've said it many times before, but having watched the process come together, I'll say it again: the team we have here is as capable and as dedicated as any leader could hope for. Thanks to them and their hard work, we didn't just 'do' GOPAC, we've made it a very successful course."

Captain Journeys Back to Vietnam in One LEAP

by John Parker
Tinker Air Force Base Public Affairs

TINKER AIR FORCE BSE, OKLA. -- Born and raised in Vietnam until he was 15, Capt. Thomas Pham joined the Air Force in 2004 with hopes of one day using his native language fluency on behalf of his adopted nation.

So when the Air Force's Language Enabled Airman Program began, Captain Pham "leaped" at the chance. LEAP seeks Airmen already proficient in foreign languages to help sustain and improve their skills and be on call for key assignments around the globe.

"I thought this might be a great program to join and, who knows, I thought someday they might be able to send people to Vietnam to work in the embassy or anywhere," said Captain Pham, a science and engineering development manager at the Air Force Sustainment Center at Tinker AFB. "I applied and I've been in LEAP ever since."

After two LEAP-related assignments working with the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, Captain Pham said the experiences were dreams come true. His extensive work there included clearing a diplomatic hurdle in preparation for an historic secretary of state visit.

A 6-year-old initiative of the Air Force Culture and Language Center at Maxwell AFB, Ala., LEAP has grown to nearly 1,900 participants that speak over 80 strategically important languages. The career-spanning program is designed to help Airmen across all Air Force specialties sustain, enhance and use their language skills and create cross-culturally competent leaders who can meet Air Force mission requirements.

The program seeks out Airmen who are already moderately to highly fluent in those languages found on the Air Force's Strategic Language List (SLL). Biannual selection boards typically choose new participants from active duty enlisted, officer and officer candidate applicants.

After being selected, LEAP participants are provided career-long language sustainment training, including live online language instruction through the eMentor program and language immersion opportunities called Language Intensive Training Events (LITE). Advanced LITEs, such as the ones completed by Captain Pham, can include internship-style training in foreign nations -- essentially a chance to improve language skills through interactions with native military and civilian speakers.

Captain Pham was first called for LITE duty in Hanoi in 2013, but the captain's journey to America and the Air Force began in 1996. That's when his family, after a decade wait, was approved for emigration through family sponsorship. The captain's uncle was among the millions of refugees in the 1970s who fled the country after the Vietnam War.

The captain graduated from Oklahoma City's Western Heights High School, then acquired a bachelor's degree at the University of Oklahoma in 2004 and a master's degree in 2011. He earned naturalized American citizenship in 2001.

Captain Pham's first LITE assignment was as an intern for the Office of Defense Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi.

During six weeks, Captain Pham's duties included translating for Ambassador David B. Shear during a ribbon cutting for a U.S.-funded Disaster Management Center and a kindergarten. He also translated and helped coordinate planning for a survey of three major Vietnamese seaports and two airports for possible use in humanitarian disaster relief, if needed. It was a site survey for the U.S. Transportation Command.

Captain Pham also successfully negotiated "politically sensitive" flight permission with Vietnamese officials involving Secretary of State John Kerry's visit there in 2013, according to Air Attaché Lt. Col. Raymond M. Powell.

"In short, Tom had to adapt and overcome in precisely the manner required for service here on the wild frontier of foreign service, and his success laid the foundation for an historic diplomatic event," Colonel Powell wrote.

Capt. Thomas Pham is a science and engineering development manager with the Air Force Sustainment Center. (Air Force photo by Kelly White/Released)

Captain Pham's performance led to another trip to Hanoi last summer when the Office of Defense Cooperation requested him by name. He served as a cadre of the U.S. Army's Cadet English Language Training Team for two months.

Captain Pham has vacationed several times in Vietnam, but his work with LEAP was the first time he traveled there for the Air Force. They were his first trips to Hanoi and northern Vietnam.

The captain highly recommends LEAP for Airmen.

"If you already have that skill in a language, LEAP will help you throughout your career," Captain Pham said. "You get sent overseas to that country to immerse in that culture, that language, and it helps you better that skill throughout your career."

The captain said his LEAP experiences have been the highlight of his career. "I loved it," he said.

"I recommend LEAP for anyone who wants to improve their skill and someday connect with their home country and represent the U.S. military in some small way and improve the relationship of the U.S. in that country."

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Going abroad? Don't leave home without a guide!

AFCLC maintains a collection of culture field guides spanning a total of 29 countries, with more on the way! Each guide is a pocket-sized cultural sourcebook designed to help familiarize you with the culture, history, and geography of a specific country, with content broken down along the USAF's 12 cultural domains.

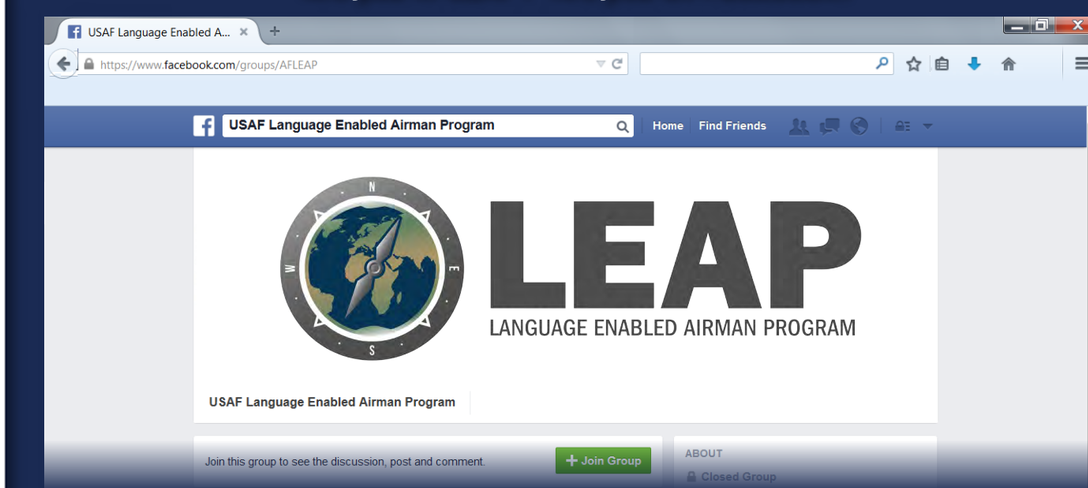
So before you travel, visit:

http://culture.af.mil/

and see if we have a guide for you!

*Don't miss our newest field guide, *US Forces Pacific Culture Guide: Japan*, published April 2015!

Are you in LEAP? Are you on Facebook?



Be sure to join* our Facebook group! Learn about all things LEAP, share your experiences, connect with your fellow group members, ask questions and get answers.

http://www.facebook.com/groups/AFLEAP/

*Closed group; memberships are subject to verification by LEAP staff.

AFCLC, DLI Partner for Language Day Event

Monterey, CA

8 May 2015

Capt Gordon Randall and Dr. Sandra Schoder represented the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) and Air University's Defense Language Institution Language Training Detachment (DLI LTD) at the DLIFLC Language Day event in Monterey, California on 8 May. The target audience was the 1,000+ airmen linguists in training, hundreds of language instructors, major language-focused stakeholders, and thousands of middle and high school students in attendance. On Soldiers Field, Capt Randall and Dr. Schoder explained the mission set of the AFCLC and DLI LTD in Air University to mold cross-culturally competent language-enabled airmen. They passed out nearly 300 Air Force Expeditionary Field Guides, over 100 brochures promoting the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP), and many culture-related quizzes and fact sheets. This was an outstanding opportunity to represent the AFCLC, DLI and LEAP, to recruit potential LEAP participants, and encourage LEAP utilization.