

# A Strategic Asset for Engagement Enhancing the Role of National Defense University

By KEITH D. DICKSON

**T**he recently published National Defense Strategy lists promoting security as one of the five objectives of the Department of Defense (DOD). Certainly one way the United States pursues its national interests is by promoting security within cooperative relationships. In developing these relationships, DOD helps build the capacities of a broad spectrum of partners through security cooperation. The geographic combatant commands are responsible for developing these cooperative relationships and building security capacities in their campaign plans.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen has stressed the value of education as a means of enhancing cooperative relationships and building capacities. Traditionally, one of the most effective security assistance activities is the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, funded by the Department of State as part of its international affairs budget. The program provides both professional military education and technical training to students from allied and friendly nations. Given the continuing high demand for joint qualified U.S. officers, only a

limited number of professional military educational positions per year can be reserved for international officers.

In addition to IMET, training exercises, partnerships, and exchanges are effective security assistance activities, but like IMET, they are limited in scale and scope and cannot have the broader influence required to meet our strategic goals. The National Defense Strategy's objective of promoting security involves the requirement to educate professional military officers of partner states who can function as commanders, staff members, and liaison officers in a joint environment as part of a coalition force. These officers would be fully able to plan and conduct effective joint operations and contribute to a coalition planning effort. To meet this strategic objective, professional military education must be capable of reaching a larger audience through educational activities that go beyond IMET.

Professional military education is a powerful draw and represents a singularly important engagement opportunity. The concept of jointness has attracted the interest of many national and military leaders of key partner states. The demonstrated effectiveness of the U.S. joint force has led to a desire among

a number of states to develop joint education programs for military officers and to reorganize current military structures into joint organizations. Unfortunately, while the demand for joint professional military education is growing, the United States lacks the structure to identify requirements or to develop, coordinate, and support programs. Combatant commanders, who are responsible for identifying key states and prioritizing efforts to build partner capacities through training or education, have few resources to support and sustain such activities. To meet the growing need for these educational requirements, combatant commanders need to be able to tap into other resources through the Joint Staff and be able to integrate joint professional military education capabilities into their long-term planning. One such resource, the National Defense University (NDU), exists under the direction of the Chairman.

The National Defense University is the center for joint professional military education. No other institution has greater expertise in this type of education. NDU has a threefold mission of education, research, and outreach, which is well suited to supporting a joint educational engagement strategy. It has the resident knowledge and expertise in national security strategy and policy, national resource management, and joint and multinational campaign planning and warfighting to support international partners in initiating, developing, and sustaining their own joint educational programs. Moreover, NDU explicitly promotes cultivating national and international relationships through national security education programs and by investing in faculty and staff to promote excellence in education and outreach.

The university already has a strong outreach program, which includes course participation of about 200 international officers a year, as well as faculty and student exchanges.



Secretary Gates addresses international students at National Defense University

OSASD Public Affairs (Jerry Morrison)

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These activities, while useful and important, have inherent constraints. Physical capacity and class size limit the number of international officers who can attend in residence. Exchanges are often ad hoc and dependent on limited funding. What is missing is the strategic focus of NDU efforts in international engagement activities as part of its outreach mission requirement. The Chairman, through the Joint Staff, can provide the strategic focus necessary by identifying priority combatant command requirements for professional military education programs and providing direction to NDU

As part of providing strategic direction to NDU, educational engagement activities should be divided into three levels. Level I activities, some of which are already occurring, are programs for mutual exchange of ideas and processes. They serve as a means for senior field-grade officers to engage peers in discussions on planning methods and to participate in a practice staff exercise to develop means and methods for effective cooperation. These week-long programs currently run once a year. For key engagement states, these programs would be sufficient to maintain professional contacts

These seminars could be developed for a number of targeted audiences and be held sequentially or simultaneously. Seminars could be held for military and civilian senior leaders as workshops or tabletop exercises in inter-agency coordination. Other seminars could assist host nation faculty members in developing a joint operations curriculum for a staff or war college or in preparing to teach courses in joint operations or developing curricula related to joint operations. Seminars on strategy and operational planning could be directed at midgrade officers identified for future high-level positions. These seminars could be held in either the United States (at the National Defense University in Washington, the Joint Forces Staff College [JFSC] in Norfolk, or the combatant command headquarters) or in the host country.

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for supporting these activities. NDU, in return, could provide a tailored curriculum for partner states and conduct courses at various levels to assist in the development of military leaders who understand and appreciate joint warfare and can plan and conduct joint operations. Exportable educational modules ranging from basic joint operations orientation to strategy formulation could be developed and presented. In addition, NDU could support activities for establishing joint staff institutions, including joint operations instructor training and curriculum development, which could provide regional expertise, language skills, and educational expertise in both curriculum design and subject matter knowledge.

and build mutual knowledge and understanding. For other states, this program format can serve as an introductory course in joint operations and planning in preparation for more formal and detailed instruction. Depending on demand, these programs could be held as often as desired and as NDU resources permit.

Level II activities would involve a more formal educational setting, using the seminar model for detailed instruction in joint operations and warfighting. These seminars would be held once a year or every 6 months and last 1 to 3 weeks to provide military officers and civilian government leaders with an appreciation for the operational level of war, joint operational planning, and joint perspectives and attributes.

Level III activities would assist a host nation in developing its own joint professional military education system. This could involve long-term support for curriculum development, faculty preparation, long- and short-term residencies, seminars and workshops, library and administrative operations, instruction by NDU faculty, and other activities. This would involve a 1- to 3-year commitment involving exchanges and visits between NDU and the host country's staff or war college or defense university, with the goal of developing a long-term partnership.

The U.S.–Russia Colonels Program and U.S.–Pakistani Colonels Program are models for employing NDU resources and capabilities with which to meet both national and theater security cooperation goals. These programs, hosted at JFSC, have served to promote cooperation and understanding among senior officers who will play a role in future decisionmaking and policy, while also serving as a unique learning opportunity to test and practice different methods for forming effective coalition staffs. The cooperation among the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, U.S. Embassies, combatant command staffs, and NDU in conducting these programs is also a model for identifying combatant commands' requirements and coordinating a long-term and comprehensive program of educational support from NDU to meet those requirements.

At present, NDU supports two Level I activities a year. These exist as the Russian and Pakistani colonels programs and can be held in the United States or in the host country. These activities are accomplished as an additional duty within JFSC and the Institute for National Strategic Studies, and program expenses are funded almost entirely outside of NDU. In the



School for National Security Executive Education international students graduate from National Defense University, 2007

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short term, other Level I programs could be initiated through the combatant commanders contacting NDU directly and requesting Level I support. Funding could be provided by the combatant command, the host nation, or both. NDU faculty volunteers would be tasked to develop the curriculum, coordinate with the appropriate agency within the combatant command, and deliver the tailored program. With some lead time, Level II activities could also be developed and initiated.

A longer term solution is to ensure that NDU's support of engagement is included as part of the Guidance for Employment of the

coordinating with the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, NDU could tap into the resident regional center affiliates (the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, and Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies) to supply theater expertise. NDU could develop procedures to set schedules, establish outcomes, manage funding, and develop a plan of action to support the activity requested, scheduling and executing the missions based on the 3- to 5-year goals listed in combatant commands' campaign plans. It also could identify faculty and staff throughout the university who are willing to support these

means for transforming their military organizations and making them more compatible with the United States and other partner nations. Educating officers in developing plans through the joint operational planning process would create a cohort of experts able to work effectively in a coalition as liaison officers or as members of a combined staff, drawing on the same principles and processes found in U.S. military staffs and interagency organizations. In this way the United States can contribute directly to creating strategic partners capable of deploying military and perhaps interagency organizations and working effectively with other states to address a wide range of contingencies and crises.



Secretary Gates speaks with civilian defense experts at National Defense University, September 2008

DOD (Cherie A. Cullen)

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Force. The combatant commands would begin to identify the professional military educational goals and requirements of key states in their areas of responsibility as part of their security cooperation activities. A number of states, such as Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Georgia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Saudi Arabia, and Ukraine, are already important security partners and would potentially support a long-term educational partnership. It is not unreasonable to expect that Afghanistan and Iraq could be included in a future list. The combatant commands would submit their campaign plans to the Joint Staff, identifying Level I, II, and III engagement activities and request NDU support. The Joint Staff would prioritize the activities and provide funding arrangements.

NDU would have to be appropriately resourced and structured to meet the expanded requirement of supporting the educational needs of priority partner states. Within NDU, the newly established Office of University Outreach could provide university-wide oversight of its international cooperative relationships. The university could assess how it would plan, organize, and support these expanded activities and coordinate with the combatant commands, drawing on the strengths of its various colleges, research centers, and other components. By

program activities. Additional staff and faculty would be needed to provide administrative support and develop the necessary instruction materials and lessons derived from existing curricula and specifically tailored to support a combatant commander's requirement.

Once initiated, Level I and II events most likely would become standing yearly requirements. A Level III event may become a multi-year activity, with faculty and staff remaining in-country for weeks or months. In the initial stages of the program, volunteers from the faculty and staff should be sufficient, and they should be recognized and compensated for this additional duty. But in all likelihood, there would be an increasing demand for a full-time faculty and staff. NDU would need to be prepared to make the administrative and budgetary changes necessary to sustain this program as it matures.

Joint professional military education should be seen as a strategic resource for the United States. Educating both military officers and strategic leaders from partner states in the concepts and principles of strategy and operational planning supports long-term U.S. objectives in several ways. By developing an appreciation for joint perspectives and attributes, partner states would have an institutionalized

More importantly, these educational programs build personal relationships between faculty and students over the years, creating opportunities for improved working relationships between the partnering nation and the United States. Engagement through joint professional military education has the opportunity to influence a generation of officers in partner nations immediately by providing them with new perspectives and approaches to problem-solving, while fostering joint approaches and building a common strategic perspective that allows states to address their own security. These programs also would directly benefit NDU by extending its reputation internationally and providing more opportunities for faculty, staff, and student dialogue with foreign counterparts.

It will take vision, dedication, and imagination for the United States to meet its strategic goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The National Defense University already has a model for educational engagement activities as part of a coordinated and integrated effort in support of the campaign plans of the geographic combatant commanders. This model could be expanded, organized, and funded as a major component of the NDU outreach mission. The potential strategic benefits of this program for the United States are significant. Already an indispensable strategic asset, the National Defense University has the opportunity to play a more significant role as part of the Nation's military instrument of power. **JFQ**