

STUDY - DISTRICT SENIOR ADVISOR LANGUAGE TRAINING

I Members of the Ad Hoc Committee

Mr. Jones, VTC/FSI
LTC Spinelli, VTC/FSI
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II Problem

To determine the feasibility and desirability of extending the Vietnamese language training for the District Senior Advisor trainee at Viet-Nam Training Center.

III Courses of Action Considered

1. Various extensions of the present DSA TDY course at VTC, from several weeks as a minimum alteration, to a doubling of the Vietnamese language portion of the course (300 to 600 hours) which would increase the overall course length from the present 18 weeks to about 30 weeks.
2. A preliminary phase of language instruction to be conducted by the Defense Language Institute at a level of 11 weeks or 330 hours, after which students would then report to VTC for instruction in operational subjects and an advanced phase of 300 additional hours of language instruction.
3. As a variant of 1, above, a screening system to be established to train only selected high aptitude language students at a level of 600 hours, permitting the remaining majority of students to meet scheduled assignments at the conclusion of the present 18-week course.

IV Discussion

1. There was unanimous agreement that District Senior Advisor trainees would be better prepared to function well in the field if they received approximately twice as much language training as they are presently given (600 hours instead of the present 300 hours). However, in view of the multitude of other factors involved, there was no unanimity that a net benefit would ensue if such a course of action were adopted. This view was reinforced by a general satisfaction with the training as now conducted and a feeling that further improvement would not entirely offset the adverse aspects involved in such a change, including possible unanticipated problems.

2. At this point in the evolution of pacification in RVN, the need for the best qualified advisors would appear to be quite as important and perhaps even more so than in the past. Numbers of advisors are decreasing but quality must to some degree be made to compensate.

3. The DSA program, particularly the 18-month tour, presently bases its attractiveness on various advantageous aspects, including material ones, which if reduced would certainly affect its fortunate present status. This program, being somewhat out of the usual military career pattern, does not inherently offer enough career advantages to sustain itself or to draw to it the high quality officer which is needed unless these material bonuses continue. Thus, the material aspects comprise more necessary motivating factors than would otherwise be the case.

-- The loss of per diem (i.e., the \$25.00/day financial asset) would be a major demotivating factor, if the present 18-week course at VTC were extended beyond 20 weeks, requiring PCS status.

- A longer period in a training status, especially while acquiring a "hard" language such as Vietnamese, would contribute to a lessened attractiveness, psychologically at least.
- Increased costs would be incurred regardless of which particular solution were adopted. More language training and more time in a training status would require more funds. Obviously, there is a range of options here.
- Language costs are expected to increase even if the current program is continued, because there will be pressure to reduce the degree to which this program is subsidized by AID.
- An increase in training time would result in a reduced input of trainees for a period of months. This would require a major personnel re-programming action to include possible involuntary extensions of DSA tour lengths in some cases, or at least until the pipeline again began to produce the required input to MACV.
- If language training were conducted in two phases, of less than 20 weeks each, the first phase at a site other than VTC/FSI, the problem of PCS could be avoided. However, there would arise the undesirable aspect of several successive periods of TDY and the impact of this on tour stability and family hardship.

4. If a decision were taken to provide added language by a preliminary TDY of 11 weeks (for 330 hours) at a military facility prior to reporting to VTC, in such case VTC/FSI could design its language training (300 hours) to build upon the foundation established by the preliminary (presumably DLI) course. Such a joint venture would require primarily technical coordination

between the language departments of DLI and FSI (VTC). Such a decision could also be taken by Defense and Department of the Army with only the above-mentioned technical coordination with AID and FSI agents. This option would, of course, result in an alteration of the DSA pipeline, as noted under paragraph 3 above. It would add to tour instability and family hardship. It would also add to total cost of program, as would any extension of language training no matter by whom.

5. As a final alternative, a very small percentage of particularly apt language learners among the DSA students could be permitted to remain at VTC as special students beyond the normal 18 week tour and until an agreed upon level of skill had been acquired (possibly at the 2/2 level on the FSI scale). Such a proposal would insure that the additional funds expended would result in an optimum product practically guaranteed. However, such flexibility in the pipeline would create an assignment problem for MACV and DA as well. Such a proposal could be broached to MACV by a unilateral action within Defense. If the plan met with approval and personnel management problems were worked out, FSI could very easily handle the technical details of selection and further training. A further disadvantage voiced by one committee member is described in the attachment.

6. Finally, it is difficult at present to project the DSA program, or for that matter any of the RVN advisor training programs much past FY 1973 with any degree of accuracy. This fact motivates against the advisability of any major "surgery" being performed on these programs now.

III. Conclusion and Recommendations

1. In view of the present highly favorable reputation enjoyed by this training program and the degree of uncertainty concerning the future, the committee agrees that no major change should be made to the DSA language training program at this time.
2. The problem of revision to this course toward a goal of increased Vietnamese language can continue to be a matter of joint coordination between Defense, State and AID representatives.

Raymond G. Jones
COL. USA (Ret'd.)
Chairman

ATTACHMENT

Reference, Paragraph III, 3.

Comments: If language ability of 2/2 is required for one DSA, it is required for all. If only a building block is required for those with a mediocre linguistic capability, then such is more than sufficient for those with greater than mediocre capability. The Army is not sending people here to be language officers; so their additional training is based on what the Army perceives to be the minimum required training. I do not feel the Army can develop a rationale which will support a position that people with greater talent should receive more training to do the same job as their less talented contemporaries.