

REVIEW OF COUNTRIES' LANGUAGE POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

1. The Defence Language Action Plan (DLAP) includes a tasking for the Defence Language Intelligent Customer Cell (DLICC) to carry out a review of the other countries' language policies.
2. At the Bureau for International Language Co-ordination (BILC) conference 6-10 Jun 05 the DLICC circulated a questionnaire to all participants. The questionnaire (copy at Annex A) is based on issues raised in the DLAP. Responses have been received from 16 countries and are detailed at Annex B.

AIM

3. The aim of this report is to summarise other countries' responses to the DLICC questionnaire on Language Capability and to identify recommendations for improvement.

FINDINGS

4. Defining the Language Capability Requirement. Country A has identified G2 requirements and is currently developing policies that will define a broader statement of capability requirement. The Country B MOD identifies requirements by defining the most likely areas of development of Country B troops over the next 1- 5 years, identifying required (local) languages and making careful assumptions as to the required number of linguists and their target SLP. The Country C MOD bases its capability requirement on the number of active legacy linguists occupying billets and the number of new linguists required to meet operational requirements. For a number of countries, in particular Eastern European countries, the main focus is to ensure that military personnel meet the English language requirements as laid down in EG 056.

Recommendation for Improvement: A more accurate definition would be achieved if the language capability requirement were embedded in the overall defence policy and responsibility for determining requirements were set at the Department of Defence level.

5. Defining the Operational Requirement. Some countries (Country D, Country E, Country F, Country G and Country H) are content that they have defined their operational requirements. Other countries eg the Country I, are trying to improve their defining of the operational requirement to ensure that their "horizon" is extended beyond a couple of months. Other countries believe that their definitions are as yet imprecise and that they do not have the flexibility to be able to plan more accurately. Operational requirements are defined in a range of ways. In Country A, requirements are defined at short notice by the responsible ad hoc command. In other countries eg Country J, Country D and Country K, the definition is based on experience from overseas operations

and feedback from units and commands involved in these operations.

6. Meeting Operational Requirements. Operational requirements are met by using trained military personnel, contractors, Locally Employed Civilians (LECs), reservists, civilian defence personnel and civilians (identified through the Immigration Service and commercial interpreting/translation officers).

7. Defining the Standing Requirement. Whereas some countries have identified their standing requirements, others have not. Those countries that have defined their Standing Requirement have done so by using Service-level documentation or guidance from appropriate Directorates. The Standing Requirement is met by training (at home or in-country) or by using personnel who already have sufficient language skills in the target language.

8. Provision of Refresher Language Training. The provision of refresher language training is varied. Whereas some countries have no system of refresher training, in other countries it is provided through residential courses, CDs, internet-based courses, commercial courses, garrison-centred courses, self-study materials and immersion courses in-country. Individuals are identified for refresher training through self-nomination, testing, by line-managers or by the Services. In countries where refresher training is available, demand normally outstrips supply. The Country C details, at Annex B the extent to which challenging refresher training courses have delivered consistently better results than before.

Recommendations for improvement: market refresher courses more effectively; validate extant refresher training courses, establish an exhaustive refresher and short term course programme covering all skills and areas of activity, establish self-access centres and improve long-term career planning of individuals with language skills.

9. The Provision of Incentives. Participating countries reveal a range of incentives ranging from no financial incentives to promotion benefits and significant monthly financial awards. In Country L financial incentives are paid on a monthly basis for certain levels of language in Russian, French and German. In the Country I students are provided with free maintenance training and compensation for time spent in training. In some countries eg Country H, students are encouraged by an international posting. In Country K personnel must have SLP 3333 if they are to be able to undertake certain jobs eg command a unit. In Country C financial awards are made which are proportional to the difficulty of the language being used and the level of linguists' proficiency. Linguists with command of 2 or more language obtain greater compensation. Recent developments are resulting in incentive awards as high as \$1,000 per month.

10. The Extent to which Language Skills are "Career-enhancing". In some countries eg Country M, Country A, Country E, Country K and the Country I, language skill in widely-spoken languages eg English and French, do enhance an individual's career opportunities. In other countries eg Country J., Country F, Country G, Country H and

Country N the possession of language skills (typically English, although French is on the increase) will enable military personnel to apply for international posts. In Country L and Country O it is recognized that skills in rare languages (Russian, French and German) will only offer opportunities to a few individuals. In Country C language skills have not traditionally been regarded as career enhancing, however, this has changed since 2001. Country C is aiming to make language a “core competency” in the military services. It is to be noted that the new Country B Defence Language Policy states that personnel with language skills should be offered better chances of promotion.

11. Quality Assurance of Language Training. Suggestions for quality assurance of language training range from independent assessment, evaluation of teaching staff, internal validation, classroom observation and guaranteed professional status of teachers.

Recommendations for improvement: ensure teachers have greater knowledge and understanding of Armed Forces activities and international activities, improve continuity of contract teaching staff and spend more time on training and developing teaching staff.

12. Extent to which Language Training is cost effective. Participants recognise that training individuals in minority languages is not cost-effective, however, as Country C comments, there are no short cuts in language training. Language training is a very costly endeavour.

Recommendations for improvement: improve co-ordination of language training in minority languages; finding the optimum balance between in-house and outsourced training, improved prioritisation to avoid wasting resources, ensuring that future postings maximise the language skills that service personnel have laboured so hard to achieve and improving selection processes.

13. Cultural Awareness. The vast majority of participants deliver cultural awareness alongside language training. Topics covered as part of the course include the political system, geography, military, religious matters, gender differences, immigration, social issues, economy, differences between own culture and target culture, habits, traditions, general attitude towards the local people and authorities, gestures and body language, technology and security.

Recommendations for improvement: in-country training, including in the training input from the military who have already been deployed in the area, improving the awareness of language teachers as to the significance of cultural awareness training and provision of more materials to develop the real world knowledge needed to function at higher proficiency levels.

14. Career Management of Linguists. In some countries the careers of linguists are managed, however, this is normally in countries where English is the main foreign language requirement. In the Country I there is recognition that there are few career possibilities for linguists because in most languages there is simply not enough demand

on various levels to make a real career as a linguist possible. Decision makers do not want to give language skills higher priority than other skills.

15. Tracking Linguists. Some participants comment that they have no system for tracking military linguists. In other countries wide use is made of databases to track individual linguists eg in the Country I personnel are invited to register language skills on a database which subsequently records their positions and deployments.

Recommendations for improvement: Develop process to actively seek out personnel with specialist language skills.

Annexes:

- A. Language Capability Questionnaire.
- B. Summary of Participating Countries Comments to Language Capability Questionnaire.