

**US Army Signal Center provides
training, friendship, understanding
to 50 nations**

by Russell T. Maddox

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Each year foreign military trainees come from nearly 50 different countries to train at the US Army Signal Center. These independent nations are of varying size, population and wealth; many of them are new nations, others have histories going back many centuries.

Some of the new nations are undergoing revolutions — some peaceful, others disruptive. Revolution implies change in the political, cultural, and economic structure; but change does not necessarily imply political stability. These developing nations are compressing into a short time, changes which have taken other nations centuries to accomplish. They are achieving this through education, motivation, and self-help, coupled with material assistance, guidance, and training from other nations.

To many of our emerging nations, the dominant leaders come from the military. Military service often attracts some of the best educated people, offering comparatively good opportunity for achievement and advancement. Most military organizations such as our own, stress tradition and loyalty, the spirit of duty, honor, and love of country — characteristics of effective leaders. These too are characteristics of the foreign military students, potential lead-

ers who come to Fort Gordon each year for communications/electronics training.

Of course, not all foreign military trainees are leaders and not all are officers. Both foreign officers and enlisted soldiers come to Fort Gordon to learn a variety of electronic skills which they can put to use in their military units and which are also adaptable to civilian life and occupations.

Today, modern defense communica-

HALLWAY OF HATS



tion systems and programs are extremely complex and very costly. It continues to be increasingly difficult and uneconomical for any one country, particularly a developing country, to fill all of its defense requirements from its own industrial design and industrial base. Many nations, therefore, look to the United States for assistance; our industrial base coupled with our economic and military technology allows us to provide defense articles, services and training that these nations cannot provide themselves. By bolstering their military and defense capabilities, we permit our friends and allies to undertake their own defense responsibilities which might otherwise have to be assumed by the United States.

The United States has been assisting friendly foreign countries for many years. In both World Wars I and II, the US provided military and economic assistance to allied nations. The Lend-Lease Program, enacted even before our direct involvement in WWII, set a precedent whereby US defense articles could be sold, exchanged or loaned to any foreign government deemed vital to our security. After WWII, the communist threat to Greece and Turkey prompted President Truman to issue his famous address to Congress which provided the basis for what became known as the Truman Doctrine. His doctrine represents the beginning of Security Assistance as we know it today. Following the Truman Doctrine came the Marshall Plan under which economic assistance was provided to a war torn world. The emphasis, then as now, was on the containment of communist aggression and expansion. Under President Nixon, Washington's policy was aimed at arming strategic allies who could serve as regional protectors of American interests. President Carter tried to reverse course and use arms sales only as an "exceptional foreign policy implement." Under President Reagan, the shift is explicit: "The US views the transfer of conventional arms and other defense articles as an indispensable component of foreign policy."

Through the various security assistance programs, transfers of military aid have been made through sales, grants and loans to friendly foreign





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governments throughout the world. These programs have contributed to the broad cooperative relations that have been established with many nations which permit US facilities on their territories, or access by US forces to their facilities in time of need. Good examples are our air bases in Spain and the Phillipines.

Most often asked is: What do we hope to achieve by training foreign military personnel? First and foremost, we want to provide them with the skills that are needed for the effective operation and maintenance of the equipment that has been acquired from the United States, but in addition to the military training provided, it's imperative that we offer them friendship and an understanding of their nation and its people. Fundamentally, these are our goals. We seek to present an image of a powerful nation with a government based on law, a nation whose moral principles exercise a strong influence on its day-to-day actions, a nation actively and continuously in a climate of social change, one constantly modifying its political structure and systems of values to meet its aspirations and to satisfy the goals of all of its people.

Each year, approximately 400 Allied students, both military and civilian, receive instruction at the US Army Signal Center. They train in many different fields of communications right along with US personnel. Upon entering the 2d Signal Training Brigade's Allied Student Support Office, we feel as if we have just arrived at a miniature United Nations: as we first enter, we are greeted by personnel in various military uniforms from around the world, speaking languages that can be classified only as "foreign." In the ceremony room, flags surround the walls -- flags of the free-world. On down the hall is the prayer room or mosque for the Islamic students; a sign on the door states, "Remove shoes before entering." We then encounter the "Hallway of Hats," hats of different sizes, shapes, and colors left by former students on their departure from Fort Gordon. One room has been converted to a learning center; although quite small, it is nearly always filled to capacity with students and often with members of their families wanting to im-

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prove their English or studying one of the many programs that are offered as self-instruction. In the administrative offices, we are awed by the numerous plaques, pictures, and other memorabilia presented by former students to the Allied Support Staff.

The mission of the Allied Student Support Office is twofold: the first is to provide academic, administrative, logistical and personal assistance to the Allied students as well as being point-of-contact and advisor to the Signal Center staff/faculty in all matters pertaining to foreign military training. The second is to conduct an informational program designed to give the Allied students a perspective on American life.

Although the foreign military student comes to Fort Gordon for communications/electronics training, the Department of Defense considers it of equal importance that he acquire an understanding of our society, institutions, and goals (in addition to his strictly military experience).

To conduct the Informational Program, there are eleven specific DOD objectives that govern the non-academic activities planned. Each objective bears on a significant area of life in the United States. These objectives are:

US GOVERNMENT - local state, and national governments and their relationship.

THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM - federal and state judicial systems, constitutional and legal status of the Armed Forces with emphasis on their non-political character.

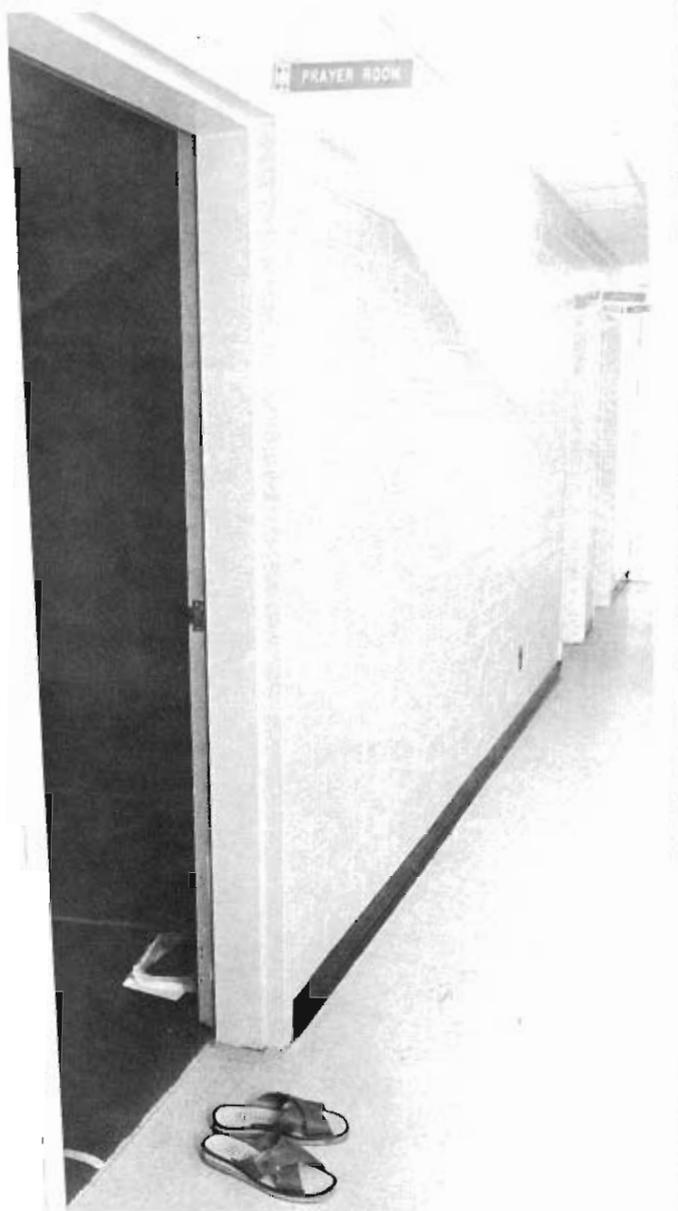
POLITICAL PARTIES - American political parties and electoral procedures; the role of opposition in a two-party system.

PRESS - The role of free press and other communications media.

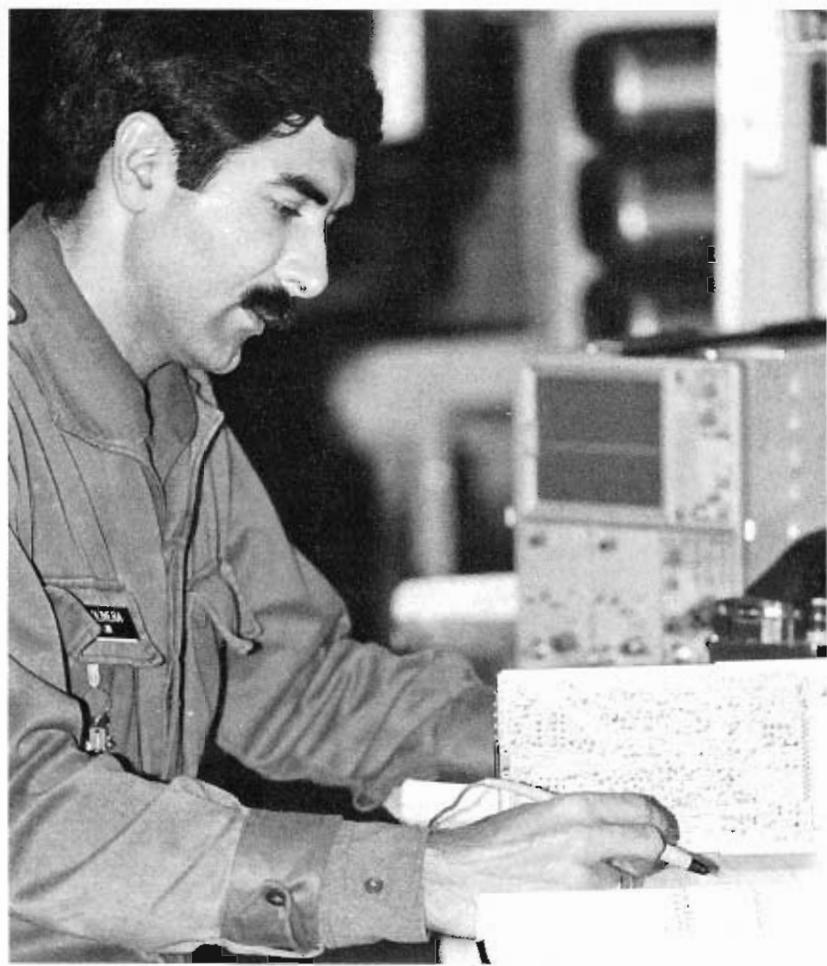
DIVERSITY OF LIFE IN THE US - The geographic, ethnic, religious, and social diversity of American life and how recent technological changes and urbanization processes are affecting this historical trait.

MINORITIES - Minority groups in the United States with reference to the recent progress in applying American ideals to all minorities.

AGRICULTURE - The factors underlying agricultural production and



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the changing life and role of the farmer today.

ECONOMY - The national economy, diversity of industry and business enterprises; the role of government; and the role of private and commercial credit.

LABOR AND LABOR-MANAGEMENT - The scope of these organizations and the objectives of the leadership.

EDUCATION - The purpose and range of secondary and higher education institutions and the relationship between education and a responsible citizen.

PUBLIC AND SOCIAL WELFARE - The care of the indigent, particularly the sick and the aged; assistance to the underprivileged; unemployment benefits; and the Social Security System.

Most of the military trainees are in the United States for the first and only time. It is important that they understand America as it really is, not just from things they have heard. The importance was recognized by President John F. Kennedy when he said "There is little question that the reception and treatment of foreign visitors coming to the United States have an important effect upon the attitudes of other peoples toward the United States; dedicated Americans in international exchanges will help us to achieve our common hope for a durable and just peace."

Various methods are used in conducting the Informational Program; two of the most affective means of acquainting foreign students with our way of life are supervised trips to areas of interest and a planned sponsorship program.

An example of the trips taken is the week long visit to Washington, D.C. The foreign officers enjoy a guided tour of the capitol, visit the many landmarks, are guests at a luncheon hosted by a congressman, and have the opportunity to visit their respective embassies. A major purpose of this visit is to round out their introduction to US political institutions and to introduce them to some key officials, both military and civilian.

Local visits are planned to provide the student with a working knowledge

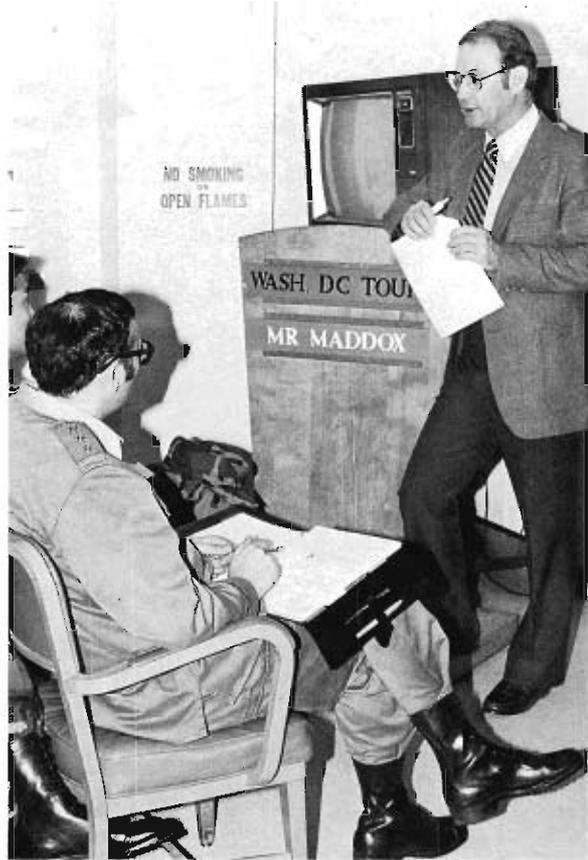
of city and county government and to give them the opportunity to meet the mayor of Augusta. Other visits are made to the chamber of commerce, to financial organizations, to one of the local television stations, and to the Medical College of Georgia as well as to local factories and numerous manufacturing plants.

While at Fort Gordon, most students also have the opportunity to tour the city of Atlanta where they visit the state capitol, see the assembly of automobiles by General Motors, receive a briefing on the new rapid transit system, visit WTBS television station, shop at the Atlanta Farmer's Market and other areas which fall under the preview of the DOD objectives.

The most talked about tour, and probably the highlight of their visit to the United States, is the Florida Tour. On this tour, the students get a tour of Cape Kennedy, Disney World and the just recently opened Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (more informally known as EPCOT). It was once stated that it should be mandatory for all foreign visitors to visit Disney World before returning to their home countries.

The sponsorship program, which is called the Host Family Program (HFP), is a hospitality program designed to provide foreign students at Fort Gordon, and in some cases their wives and children, an opportunity to become acquainted with American family life in the broadest sense. To show the true America, show the American family.

Families participating in the HFP are volunteers who agree to take a genuine interest in the student and to help him know and understand the American people by giving him the opportunity to participate in home and community activities. Most often, the student will interpret America to his countrymen in terms of the family. Activities which are commonplace to us are usually most interesting and informative to the foreign visitor. They enjoy family picnics, PTA meetings, shopping at the local malls, sightseeing trips, backyard cook-outs, Scout activities or basically any type of family get-together. This informal communication of ideas is most rewarding for both family and



student. The true heart of America and its greatness is demonstrated through the family to the student.

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Their praise of America is usually qualified, and their criticism is nearly always constructive. They are aware of the stereotype, but often they see or have heard of the many-sided society, the idealism and the cross commercialism, the intellectual sophistication alongside ignorance and bigotry. Hopefully, the informational program will provide a better understanding and a more favorable impression of the United States and the American people. Moreover, when they interpret America to their fellow countrymen, they will interpret Fort Gordon and

Augusta, Georgia, as their home-away-from-home. Because of the large number of foreign students training at Fort Gordon and the continuing turn-over of the students, there is always a need for host families. To volunteer to become a host family, contact the Allied Student Support Office.

What does Foreign Military Training achieve?

It provides a means through which the US tangibly demonstrates its concern for the security interests of friendly foreign countries.

It enables the US to influence the selection of training perceived by the US as being of the highest priority, and which the foreign government may, for various reasons, be unable to purchase.

It also contributes substantially to the objective of establishing communications and influence with foreign military leaders of tomorrow.

These foreign students are filling seats in our classrooms because of na-

tional interest. Every foreign student comes to Fort Gordon as a result of a state department, congressional, or presidential decision. Foreign military training has been and continues to be an important, effective, and relatively inexpensive instrument for the achievement of US security and foreign policy objectives.

Who are these students? They are education hungry people, the elite of their military, ambassadors of the countries, potential military leaders of tomorrow.

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US Army photos by Janet M. Walker

