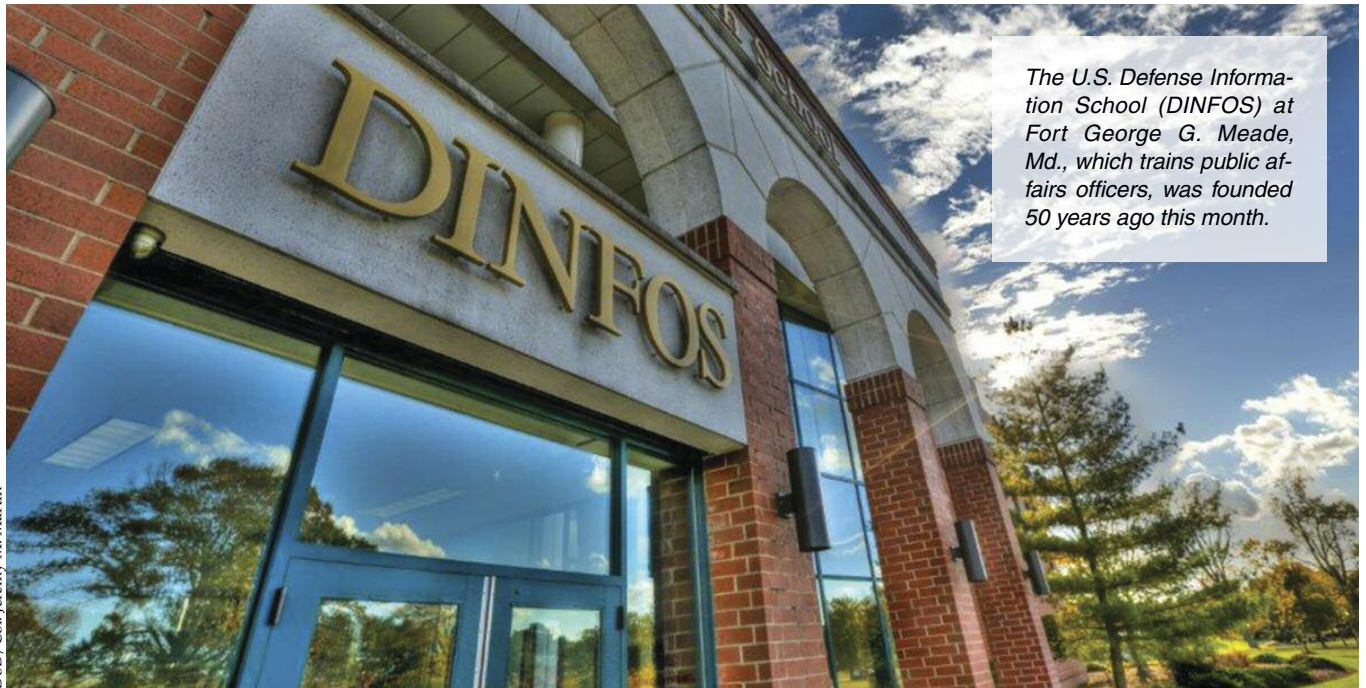


# PAO Up!

## Public Affairs Course Builds Partner Capacity



DoD/Col. Jeremy M. Martin

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A joint service school to train public affairs officers is becoming an important tool for building international relationships with other militaries. Based at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, the U.S. Defense Information School has a special public affairs course for international students that is gaining attention as the Army concentrates on postwar rebuilding of ties to other nations. This is not a completely new idea. Over the last two decades, international students from about 70 countries have received training from the Defense Information School, known in military circles as DINFOS. About 40 students from more than 20 countries have graduated from its public affairs course to date.

**E**xpectations for the course are growing. As America's military balances its global security requirements with fiscal responsibilities, it will be more important than ever to build enduring strategic partnerships with our friends around the world. Although we will likely be a military in transition over the next several years, history reminds us we will face evolving threats and challenges that will require a timely military response anywhere America's interests or partners are threatened.

In response to discussions from the Department of State and the Army's Security Assistance Training Field Activity, DINFOS worked closely with security assistance officials to develop the Public Affairs Course for International Students (PACIS), which launched in 2012. The course supports goals relative to building partner capacity in the President's 2010 National Security Strategy. PACIS was developed for international military and civilian personnel selected by governments of partner nations to perform public affairs functions. The course is broadly based on existing DINFOS curriculum

but requires a less rigorous English comprehension level to accommodate nonnative English speakers.

Rather than emphasize a U.S.-centric approach to military public affairs, PACIS compares and contrasts U.S., NATO and U.N. approaches. Through lectures, performance exercises, case studies, assigned readings, field trips and guest speakers, students acquire a foundation in current public affairs concepts and skills transferable to the requirements of individual nations, particularly those participating in coalition and peacekeeping operations. The material is organized into the following functional areas: public affairs in international operations; media relations; public affairs planning; public affairs communication skills; and social media.

The course culminates in the students' development of a plan to address communication challenges faced by their current commands.

DINFOS-trained international officers understand unity of effort and the important need to clearly convey intent



U.S. Army/Spc. Joseph Joynt

*Charles Brown, front left, chief of the International Military Student Office, and assistant Nicole Meade, front right, stand with graduates of the second Public Affairs Course for International Students last November at DINFOS. The five-week course teaches international officers.*

## DINFOS at 50

The U.S. Defense Information School (DINFOS) at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, which turns 50 this July, has a distinguished history of training military communications specialists.

Various efforts to break up and consolidate service information training date to 1953. DINFOS was established on July 1, 1964. The school's charter tasked the Army to establish and operate DINFOS to conduct common training in information techniques on a DoD-wide basis and to conduct other separate information courses deemed necessary to meet service requirements.

From 1964 to 1998, DINFOS trained more than 40,000 students for public affairs duties throughout the world. They served as working journalists, broadcasters and public affairs officers at posts and bases as well as on ships. In addition, 35 foreign nations sent students for public affairs training at DINFOS.

In October 1991, the American Forces Information Service (AFIS) assumed operational control of DINFOS and also of the Defense Photography School (DPHSCH) at Pensacola, Florida, and the Defense Visual Informa-

tion School at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado. They began operating as a single, joint-service educational facility at Fort Meade. For the first time, all the elements of DoD's communications needs were consolidated into one training organization.

Since then, nearly 50,000 military, civilian and foreign military personnel have been trained in residence at the school, in correspondence through advanced distributed learning and via mobile training teams operating worldwide. Military and civilian graduates of the school are found in every major military unit/organization supporting their requirements for broadcast and print journalism, broadcast maintenance, public affairs, photojournalism and combat photography, computer graphics, and other related operations in the U.S. and overseas.

The more than 350 military, civilian and contractor professionals who make up the staff and faculty are dedicated to the school's vision of being recognized as a premier learning institution vital to organizational communication success across DoD and are firmly committed to the school's motto: "Strength Through Truth."

and resolve to key audiences in various regions of the globe. They also understand the vital need to provide regional context, which will mitigate the potential for misunderstanding among diverse audiences. Additional benefits of having a DINFOS-trained communication professional in a given region of the world include a common foundation for communicating; better regional and cultural perspectives for communicating messages that resonate; greater understanding of and networking with local and regional media; and more efficient access to regional military organizations.

### 'Strength Through Truth'

The DINFOS motto is "Strength Through Truth." PACIS students observe firsthand the importance of establishing and cultivating a relationship with the media that is based on trust and accountability. They gain a perspective on

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DoD principles of information—the intent to make available timely and accurate information so the public, Congress and news media may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. This is a powerful introduction to public affairs for newly minted professionals, many of whom return to fledgling democracies.

Many of the PACIS students arriving at DINFOS express a desire to gain a better understanding of how to apply social media to their communication strategies. DINFOS provides instruction on how to best implement social media in their plans through lessons such as Introduction to Social Media; The Power of Twitter and Facebook; The Power of Blogs; and Social Media in Crisis Communications.

Each class visits the Pentagon and receives a briefing from the director of press operations. The students engage with members of the Pentagon Press Corps and attend media briefings and press availabilities conducted by the Pentagon press secretary. Students also visit the U.S. Department of State and engage with media representatives at the Foreign Press Center.

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The inclusion of international partners in DINFOS courses has come a long way since former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara established the school on February 21, 1964. As DINFOS prepares to celebrate its 50th year as a DoD school on July 1, one of the accomplishments to be celebrated will surely be the launch of the PACIS course. ★