

# GLOBE

*The Professional Journal of the Presidio of Monterey Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center*



*Farewell Colonel Sobichevsky*

# Presidio Portrait

of  
**Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky**  
Commander, Presidio of Monterey  
and Commandant, DLIFLC



**Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky**

Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky, a grandson of a general in the Czarist Russian Army, was born in Kiev, Russia, in 1937 and escaped the USSR with his mother in 1943. In 1949 they left a Displaced Persons camp in West Germany and immigrated to the United States.

In February 1956, he joined the U.S. Army for duty with the Special Forces and has spent most of his 40 years in the military with this branch. As an enlisted Special Forces soldier, he served nearly 10 years with the workhorse and backbone of Special Forces — the Operational Detachments “A.”

Sobichevsky graduated from the Infantry Officer Candidate School in 1965 with the Army Reserve. He was appointed as a Regular Army officer in 1968. The Special Forces Branch was established on April 9, 1987, and he changed into this branch the same year.

He has nearly 15 years of overseas service — three tours in Germany, two in Korea and one in Panama. His Special Forces combat assignments were as a

sergeant with “White Star” operations in Laos, and as a captain with Studies and Observations Group in Vietnam. As a Special Forces staff officer, he served as the battalion adjutant, twice as operations officer, and as executive officer. He commanded a Special Forces operational detachment, a company and a battalion.

He also has numerous assignments outside of special operations to his credit, including associate dean, school secretary and chief of staff of DLIFLC.

His most recent assignment was as director of operations, Special Operations Command, Pacific, a sub-unified command of USCINPAC, with responsibility for all Special Operations Forces Joint/Combined operations in the U.S. Pacific Command.

In 1992, the Department of Defense General Officer selection board selected him to serve as commandant of DLIFLC. He also became the commander of the Presidio of Monterey on Oct. 1, 1994.

Sobichevsky holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Government from the

University of San Francisco. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the National War College. He speaks Russian and has a working knowledge of several other languages. His awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star and 22 U.S. and allied awards. He wears the Combat Infantryman’s Badge, U.S. and Vietnam Master Parachutist Badges, Scuba Diver’s Badge, Special Forces and Ranger Tabs, and Special Forces Regimental Crest.

Sobichevsky is married to the former Karin Mechler, a native of Mannheim, Germany, and has a grown son, Mark.

*Presidio of Monterey, California*

**GLOBE**

*The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center  
Command Publication*

The *GLOBE* is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-81 and is published monthly by the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, Presidio of Monterey, CA 93944-5006, phone (408) 242-5104 or FAX (408) 2425464. The *GLOBE* has a circulation of 4,000 and is printed by offset press. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense or Department of the Army. The commandant, public affairs officer and editor reserve the right to edit materials as necessary to conform to *GLOBE* editorial policies. All photos, unless otherwise credited, are Department of Defense photos.

**Photo Support**

Jim Villarreal Terry Soliz



**Commander/Commandant**

Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky

**Command Sergeant Major**

Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Bugary

**Command Advisor**

Col. Robert E. Busch II

**Chief, Command Information**

Michael J. Murphy



**Editor**

Master Sgt. Ron Hyink

**Staff Photojournalist**

Bob Britton

**Staff Photojournalist**

Petty Officer 1st Class Todd Hans

**Photojournalism Support**

Pfc. David C. Gresch



Page 6



Page 9



Page 18

## -CONTENTS-

### Command news

Col. Sobichevsky built a legacy for the future of DLIFLC	4
The path of a leader: Col. Sobichevsky's career highlights	6
When DLIFLC wound up on the BRAC list in 1993, things changed	9

### Spotlight

The City of Monterey and the National Security Agency bid farewell	10
--	----

### Feature news

Sometimes change is not made for the sake of change	12
Proficiency scores FLOed sharply upward during Col. Sobichevsky's tenure	14
Students in Troop Command improved both language and military skills	15

### Presidio Pulse

Former co-workers of the commandant reminisce over his previous tour at DLIFLC	16
Students, staff and faculty say goodbye and express appreciation for his support	17

### Farewell

A pictorial glimpse at Col. Sobichevsky's life and career	18
Col. Sobichevsky speaks to us all in his farewell letter	19

## ABOUT THE COVER:

The crests of the four branches of the U.S. Armed Forces surround the crest of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, indicating the joint service atmosphere of the Institute. Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky, commandant of the Institute and commander of the Presidio of Monterey and POM Annex, retires Dec. 31 after nearly 40 years of service to our country. This issue of the *GLOBE* is dedicated to his life, career and retirement. (Front cover designed by Ron Williams, DLIFLC graphic illustrator)

# Sobichevsky's leadership provides legacy for future

By Col. Robert E. Busch II  
Assistant Commandant

Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky is stepping down as the DLIFLC commandant and the Presidio of Monterey installation commander, and retiring from active duty after nearly 40 years of exceptionally distinguished service to the U.S. Army and our nation.



Col. Robert E. Busch II

From private to colonel, he set the benchmark as a soldier, leader, staff officer and commander. With his final assignment as our commandant at DLIFLC, he leaves us a legacy of success which charts the course of foreign-language training for all four services and the Department of Defense as we move into the 21st century.

Sobichevsky's numerous and significant contributions to DLIFLC's mission date back to 1987 when he first joined the Institute's staff as a lieutenant colonel. As assistant dean of the School of East European Languages, he quickly mastered the nuances of managing a multi-ethnic civilian faculty in their native language of Russian. He also gained the respect of the entire provost organization, which consistently relied upon him for advice in structuring the schoolhouse to meet DoD's changing language needs.

In February 1988, the commandant selected Lt. Col. Sobichevsky to serve as the acting chief of staff of the Institute. His leadership was immediately felt, and he became the linchpin of the Institute in ensuring DLIFLC was the winner of the

Training and Doctrine Command, or TRADOC, first-place trophy in the Communities of Excellence competition for an unprecedented two consecutive years.

Sobichevsky later took on a new set of responsibilities as school secretary. During his term, he was responsible for the new General Instructional Facility and the upgrading of numerous historic buildings. He also made significant improvements in the audiovisual training program and led the effort to close the DLI San Francisco branch, relocating the operation to POM. This complex installation-level move was accomplished without the slightest negative impact on student proficiency scores; in fact, they continued to rise during this operation.

Based on his established reputation as a leader in foreign-language training, in 1992 a seven-member panel of general officers from the four services selected Sobichevsky to serve as commandant of DLIFLC.

The Institute is the largest and most renowned foreign-language training institute in the world, training approximately 3,000 students annually with 1,380 faculty and staff members and a \$54.3 million budget. With its DoD-wide responsibility to Train, Sustain and Evaluate linguists under the Defense Foreign Language Program, no other foreign-language school offers as many hours of language instruction to as many students.

DLIFLC accounts for 10 percent of all foreign-language hours of instruction offered above the high school level in the nation, 85 percent of the federal government's foreign-language training, and 96 percent of the military's foreign-language requirements with contractual oversight of the remaining four percent. The majority of the DLIFLC students are

junior enlisted members from all four services who go on to worldwide assignments critical to security interests.

Early in his tenure as commandant, Sobichevsky viewed the collapse of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War as a signal to re-evaluate the mission and future direction of DLIFLC. He saw the need for a major restructuring of the Institute to prepare for the transition into the 21st century. He firmly believed U.S. armed forces would require both greater numbers and better trained linguists. He also saw an increasing need to respond to more crises in widely-separated and linguistically-different parts of the world than was the case during the Cold War.

Beyond rebuilding efforts inside the Institute, Sobichevsky proved an able manager in base operations. Throughout his three years of command, Sobichevsky faced a nagging question on the future location and structure of the Institute. Immediately after he assumed command in January 1993, the Presidio of Monterey was placed on the BRAC '93 closure list. This news sent waves of anxiety through the civilian staff, already shaken by a major reduction in force and the impending closure of Fort Ord.

Sobichevsky believed the BRAC commission needed to understand the full story of DLIFLC as a national asset and why Monterey is the best location to conduct DoD language training.

The BRAC '93 Commission later visited DLIFLC and studied the information provided by Sobichevsky — what the Institute was and what it was not. Commission members saw firsthand the breadth of DLIFLC missions and the invaluable contributions made to national security and determined the language mission should not be moved. The

Photo by Bob Britton



Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky

Monterey community played a significant role in getting DLIFLC off the BRAC list. In the end, DLIFLC was removed from the closure list.

In order to meet these new challenges of increasing the graduating service members' language proficiency, Sobichevsky initiated a three-phase restructure of the entire Institute.

Phase I was a major restructure of the schools to include both the internal structure and the curriculum. Early in Phase I, Sobichevsky visited every department in each school to fully evaluate the student balance, classroom areas and office space for teaching teams and the administrative elements supporting student training. He saw that the Institute was in real danger of leveling off in its endeavor to advance graduating students' language proficiency.

To this end, he ordered an Institute-wide reorganization which recognized DoD's changing language needs, balanced the senior academic leadership among the seven schools and instituted a consolidated team configuration within each school. His bold and radical move allowed the proficiency levels to continue moving toward the Institute-wide goal of 80 percent of DLIFLC graduates reaching levels 2/2/2 in Listening, Reading and Speaking.

In Phase II of the reorganization, his assessment showed that the Institute critically required a single point of contact for outside customers seeking support for training and sustaining linguists.

Sobichevsky created a new organization — Operations, Plans and Programs — consolidating three operations. With this improvement in place, he turned his attention to boosting support to war-fighting commanders through the creation of language-survival materials for deploying units.

His efforts spearheaded the vigorous pursuit of technological innovation by opening the newly-created LingNet computer bulletin board to Internet access, and positioned DLIFLC at the leading edge of TRADOC's efforts to create a "wall-less classroom" environment through the innovative use of two-way, satellite transmission of language training. His visionary approach contributed to providing top-quality language-sustainment training for DoD at a reasonable cost.

His first two phases of reorganization in the schools and support organizations created a recharged atmosphere across the Institute, where language proficiency scores are soaring to new heights.

These historic increases intensified Sobichevsky's move to complete the third and final phase of his restructuring agenda. Under Phase III, the team leader and fellow instructors will be more responsible and accountable for the entire training process from the time the student arrives to final graduation.

Sobichevsky's vision and leadership skills were put to task with his additional responsibilities as the installation commander when POM took over the duties once held by Fort Ord, a Forces Command installation.

He set about his first and most immediate task to build a garrison operation from scratch as the Presidio of Monterey became TRADOC's newest installation on Sept. 30, 1994.

A second and more complex issue facing Sobichevsky was consolidation with

the Navy, a key concern expressed by the BRAC '93 commission. Maintaining two installations on the Monterey Peninsula with separate directorates for public works was not cost effective.

As a result, Sobichevsky initiated a study to determine the potential for cooperation with the Navy with a focus on public works, housing, vehicle and equipment maintenance and other areas of possible duplication. His belief was that if the Navy, which was already engaged in those activities, took on POM's work, both institutions would benefit.

Sobichevsky rallied his staff and produced a set of Interservice Support Agreements with the Navy. The resulting ISAs, the largest in TRADOC's 20-year history, saved DLIFLC \$683,000 in annual operating costs and another \$513,000 in contracting and supplies. This set of ISAs eliminated duplicate property management and public works overhead, while improving on customer service for more than 1,600 housing units on the Presidio and the Presidio Annex.

From his early days as a private to his climb through the officer ranks, Sobichevsky served in increasingly higher levels of responsibility in key leadership and staff positions throughout the Army. His consistently visionary commitment and vigorous leadership at DLIFLC significantly shaped foreign-language training for the Department of Defense.

His contributions to the Defense Foreign Language Program and the Defense Language Institute are certainly nothing short of spectacular. The facts are indisputable: an impressive 11.5 percent jump in fiscal 1995 — the highest language proficiency attained for DoD linguists in the Institute's 53-year history!

From the days of the Vietnam War, through the Cold War, to the breakup of the Soviet empire, and into the dawn of the 21st century, Sobichevsky has made a lasting contribution to our nation's defense. Sobichevsky's "legacy for the future" to DLIFLC is clearly a fitting capstone to such an exceptional military career. We shall miss him! 

# Path of a leader: Sobichevsky reflects on remarkable career

By Bob Britton

*(Editor's note: The following three articles are based on interviews with the commandant about his career. His life's path lead him from Russian immigrant to Green Beret to commander, and assistant dean to commandant.)*

## Long, winding road has rough start

He's Russian by birth, and has spent almost 40 years wearing the U.S. Army uniform, mostly as a Special Forces Green Beret NCO and officer. Upon his retirement Dec. 13, Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky will step down as the commandant of DLIFLC and the installation commander of the Presidio of Monterey.

Col. Sobichevsky enlisted at the age of 19 for Army Special Forces after reading an article about Special Forces guerrilla warfare in the 1950s.

"Without fully understanding or knowing the nature of the beast, I got wrapped up in a romantic version after reading the article, without knowing what I was getting into," said Sobichevsky. "That's what I enlisted for."

After enlisting, he received his first impression of the elite force with his assignment to the 77th Special Forces Group, Fort Bragg, N.C. At first he was discouraged, since he was cleaning grease pits on kitchen details almost every other day and not doing any training.

That quickly changed when he was assigned to the Special Forces radio operators school with continuous-wave Morse code. Graduation required sending and receiving 18 words per minute.

"I went through the first eight weeks and could send well enough, but could not receive well," Sobichevsky said. "I simply had little natural talent for receiving Morse code. During the course, a sergeant first class who was in charge of the radio school said, 'You don't have a natural ability for Morse code, but I have a gut

sense you will be a great Special Forces radio operator.' He told me to take a three-day pass and start over again in another class (I almost hated him for this decision). I did and graduated."

Next the new Green Beret was assigned overseas to the 10th Special Forces Group in Bad Tolz, Germany, located at the foot of the German Alps. It was like stepping into a different army and had over 50 percent of Lodge Bill soldiers.

"This was named after Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and involved the immigrants from World War II," Sobichevsky said. "This bill allowed those who wished to serve in the U.S. Army for five years and, after serving honorably, would give them U.S. citizenship and a chance to start a new life. That unit was filled with Russians, Czechs, Hungarians and a few former members of the French Foreign Legion.

Photo courtesy Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky



Spc. 4 Sobichevsky, left, plays his role as a guerilla member briefing Special For teams in preparation for an airborne infiltration exercise in France, 1960.

“We spent a lot of military time skiing the Alps with 100-pound rucksacks,” he said. “I could barely keep up with these men who were in their early 30s and I was 19. After spending three years there, they had brainwashed me. I never imagined such a sense of belonging and soldierly comradeship with such an organization.”

After this tour, he got out of the Army for some 80 days and missed the combination of military professionalism and comradeship with the 10th Special Forces Group. Then he re-enlisted after reading an article about Special Forces operating in Laos before the Vietnam War period. He went to Fort Bragg again and got his request for duty in Laos.

Sobichevsky served several Green Beret tours and reached the rank of sergeant first class after several years of service. He received his commission through the Infantry Officer Candidate School program and held several Special Forces leadership positions as an officer commanding a detachment, a company and a battalion, also in staff positions as a battalion adjutant, an operations officer and an executive officer. He also served as Special Assistant to the Commanding

General and Commandant, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg.

During his last parachute jump, he was manifested aboard an MH-53 helicopter with his brigadier general boss, some Navy SEALs and other SOF officers and NCOs, all younger by about a decade.

“As I waited for the exit light inside the aircraft to turn green before my final jump, I asked myself, ‘Vladimir, when are you going to grow up and stop jumping from planes at 55 years of age?’ In short, time was ripe to depart from the physically demanding environment of Special Operations, where about 35 percent of my years were spent in harsh and austere environments, such areas as the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and many other places. To an outsider, they may have seemed exotic and exciting, but for the most part, Special Forces didn’t stay in hotels or places like that, but stayed in places where even dogs would not cross.”

In closing, Sobichevsky reflected on his overall impression of Special Forces. “I grew up in it and lived through many evolutions to what it is today,” he said.

Photo courtesy Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky



Cadet Sobichevsky at Fort Benning, Ga., in 1965.

“It became my life. After I became a field-grade officer, I began to concentrate on doctrine, tactics and other utilization of this force, and toward the establishment of Special Forces as the 17th branch of the Army — the Special Forces Branch. Special Forces was my life.”

## New path leads from special forces

He’s familiar with day and night airborne jumps over land and water, guerrilla warfare, covert operations, combat patrols and rigorous physical training. He wears Ranger and Special Forces tabs on his left shoulder and the green and yellow lightning patch of the Army’s elite Special Forces on his right shoulder. He also earned the Combat Infantryman’s Badge, Master Parachutist Badge and Scuba Diver’s Badge.

Col. Sobichevsky served as an assistant dean, East European School, from July 31, 1987, to March 1, 1988, when he was promoted to colonel. Then he became the Institute’s chief of staff from March 1988 to August 1988, and the school secretary from August 1988 to July 1990.

He’s also a veteran Green Beret officer.

Why would a highly decorated Special Forces field grade officer be assigned to DLIFLC with a completely different environment representing the purple suit concept of all military services training together?

“I was the commander of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group, when I was sent to the National War College,” said Sobichevsky. “While attending that school, I became very ill and it scared the hell out of me. At that time, I thought I shouldn’t return to Special Forces because I wouldn’t be able to participate professionally in airborne operations, parachute jumping and other stuff.

“I’ll be damned if I’ll sit on a second-

string bench,” he continued. “I got a lot of pressure from my mentor, Maj. Gen. James Guest (now retired), to stay with Special Forces, but I asked the system to allow me to transition to a less physically demanding position and still contribute to the service. The system obliged and sent me to DLI in 1987.”

The school was quite different in 1987 from what it is today. While assigned to Monterey, Sobichevsky started experimenting physically and working out on Soldier Field to recover from his illness. After a while, he found out he could keep up with the younger soldiers from Troop Command and do other things physically

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

— not passing them, but keeping up.

“During this first tour, I spent a great deal of time absorbing how this Institute operates and had a unique vantage point observing everything,” he said. “This served me well later on my present tour.

“I learned the nature of the beast when I was an assistant dean in 1987 of the School of East European Languages,” he continued. “I learned a great deal about

hard-working instructors with their frustrations, their dedications and relative low pay in this high-cost area.

“Before I became the chief of staff, that position was slated for a Navy captain,” he mentioned. “When he came on board, I became the School Secretary with some 11 directorates under me. I further learned how the support function provides support to the Institute, so they can properly execute their three-part mission of training, sustaining and evaluating.”

During his first tour, the Green Beret officer frequently called his Special Forces buddies around the Fort Bragg, N.C. area. He missed the comradeship and wanted to return to Special Forces. One of his mentors, Maj. Gen. Joseph Lutz, assigned him to Hawaii as the Chief of Operations, Special Operations Command, Pacific Command. He left the Institute in 1990 for that assignment and returned in January 1993 as the new DLIFLC commandant.

## End of trail means fresh start for DLI

He improved the building blocks of his predecessors and streamlined operations into a more efficient DLIFLC. He also put more emphasis on language-sustainment training for military linguists away from the Institute and worked with staff and faculty to improve student language-proficiency levels.

Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky asked for his present assignment as commandant of DLIFLC during his final year in Hawaii with the Special Operations Command, Pacific Command, when he found out his predecessor, Col. Donald Fischer, was retiring. Sobichevsky previously served at the Institute from 1987 to 1990 as an assistant dean, the Institute’s chief of staff and school secretary.

Two commanders-in-chief — CINC-PAC and CINCUSSOCOM — nominated Sobichevsky for the position. However, before it became final, his name had to be approved by a seven-member, joint-service General Officer Board in the Pentagon. The Board looked at five other candidates and selected Sobichevsky, who assumed command Jan. 22, 1993.

“Until that time, I couldn’t spell BRAC or didn’t know what it was,” he said.

“From the day of my assumption of command, I began to live BRAC (’93). Then I made assessments of the Institute for about 90 days. I began to walk and touch every school and directorate. It became clear to me that if we were to survive not

only BRAC ’93 and future ones, we had to change with the times.”

The commandant mentioned his accomplishments were based on building blocks and achievements of all previous DLIFLC commandants.

“Because of BRAC and the real possibility of closing this Institute or moving it, I consolidated their achievements and began to build on them,” Sobichevsky said. “If we were to survive, we had to teach foreign languages better than anyone else in the United States, whether a contractor or universities, and do it at the lowest possible cost.

“We needed to retool and re-engineer the sustainment effort to the field,” he continued. “We had to provide more effective and better foreign-language support to the field, the command language programs, and also be responsive in foreign-language support for operations other than war. We had to keep on improving the evaluation part of our mission with the Defense Foreign Language Proficiency Test, the Defense Language Aptitude Test, and other tests leading to further development of Final Learning Objectives.”

Since 1993, student language-proficiency levels have increased significantly toward the mandated goal of 80 percent of students reaching the 2/2/2 levels in Listening, Reading and Speaking in all 24 resident courses at DLIFLC.

“During this fiscal year, comprehension levels in the three areas rose 11.5 percent, and for 2/2/1 proficiency levels, it increased 12.4 percent,” said Sobichevsky.

“The MLI 3+ program is an irreplaceable aspect of DLI,” he continued. “They are significant as are all their contributions. MLIs bring field expertise from countries like Germany, Japan, Korea, Thailand and others. They are the best role models that we could possibly have. Their language proficiency is level 3/3/3 or above, and this has a very positive effect on the students they are teaching.”

After Sobichevsky retires, he wants to be remembered for reorganizing the Institute and giving it his best. “During my career, I had about eight or nine years of command at various levels,” he said.

“I have learned throughout this process that when you command, you give it all you’ve got,” he continued. “You get personal satisfaction that you have left something in better condition than when you started.

“I look forward to my retirement, and the military has been good to me,” he continued. “I firmly believe that when your time is over, it is over. Soldiering is not for everyone, but it was for me. I would not trade my experiences and the places I’ve been stationed, and the soldiers, NCOs and officers I knew with the wealthiest man in the world.” 

# DLI off '93 BRAC closure list

By Bob Britton and Pfc. David Gresch

It was February 1993 and Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky had assumed command of DLIFLC only three weeks earlier. The Special Forces officer was settling into his new assignment when the Base Realignment and Closure Commission released its 1993 recommendations. The Presidio of Monterey was slated for closure, and DLIFLC's fate was uncertain.

Rumors flew. Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, and Fort Huachuca, Ariz., were mentioned as alternative sites for the Department of Defense's language school. DLIFLC would either move or its mission would be contracted out to a university.

"It was Sobichevsky's first crisis," according to Dr. Stephen Payne, DLIFLC command historian.

When news of the possible closure surfaced, Sobichevsky wrote all DLIFLC personnel and urged everyone to remain calm. He made sure his staff fully cooperated with the BRAC committee.

Local communities sprang to action to support DLIFLC, emphasizing the economic consequences of a Presidio closure. The Monterey Bay area was already feeling the effects of the impending closure of Fort Ord, so the Monterey City Council hired a consulting firm to help prevent DLIFLC from moving. Sobichevsky knew of the school's importance to national security, and believed that language training would suffer long-term harm if forced to relocate.

A fact sheet, *Critical Facts: Why DLI Cannot be Duplicated*, was issued. The

three-page paper stressed the importance of linguists to national security, as well as the Institute's three-prong mission: to train, maintain and evaluate DoD linguists for the field.

In a survey, more than half of the faculty stated they would stay in Monterey rather than move if DLIFLC relocated. The paper estimated rebuilding the teaching faculty would take five to seven years.

"We teach better, in more languages, and with more students than any other intensive language-training program in the world! The quality and quantity of foreign-language training at DLI is not duplicable by any other program anywhere in the country," said Sobichevsky.

The *Critical Facts* paper laid down the challenge: "DLI welcomes the opportunity to directly compare DLI's accomplishment of these critical missions with that of any prospective contractor or academic institution," the paper concluded.

BRAC Commission hearings continued for four and a half months, while Sobichevsky and staff hosted visiting members of the BRAC Commission, local officials, generals and the governor of California, who toured the facility. The consensus was that the BRAC Commission was very impressed with DLIFLC.

Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Cindy Harris



BRAC Commission Chairman Jim Courter, Col. Sobichevsky and California Governor Pete Wilson tour DLIFLC April 23, 1993.



Dr. Stephen Payne



Col. William Oldenburg II

On June 24, 1993, the BRAC commission voted unanimously to retain POM and DLIFLC.

"The commandant is known for his sincerity and caring approach to everything at the Institute — his Institute," said Col. William Oldenburg II, DLIFLC's chief of staff. "The Institute has broken the sound barrier and is certainly 'dress-right-dress' in terms of proficiency gains since he became the leader — a gain of 11.5 percent in fiscal 1995 alone." 

# CITY OF MONTEREY



## PROCLAMATION HONORING COLONEL VLADIMIR SOBICHEVSKY, USA UPON HIS RETIREMENT

WHEREAS, Colonel Vladimir Sobichevsky, United States Army, began his military career in 1956 as an enlisted Special Forces soldier; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Sobichevsky graduated from the Infantry Officer Candidate School in December 1965 as Second Lieutenant of Infantry, and was appointed as a Regular Army Officer of Infantry in 1968; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Sobichevsky served the Army and the Nation with distinction in a number of foreign countries and in a variety of assignments both in and out of Special Forces; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Sobichevsky became the Commandant of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in 1993, and Commander of the Presidio of Monterey in 1994; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Sobichevsky's superior leadership skills enabled him to guide the Defense Language Institute through a very difficult period, while sustaining the strong ethic of excellence which continues to be a source of pride for the men and women of the Institute; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that I, Dan Albert, Mayor of the City of Monterey, on behalf of the City Council and citizens of Monterey, extend to Colonel Vladimir Sobichevsky, on the occasion of his retirement, our deepest appreciation for his many years of service to the Nation and the Monterey community.

BE IT FURTHER PROCLAIMED, that the City Council and citizens of Monterey look forward to a continued rich relationship with Sobi, and extend our best wishes for health and happiness to Sobi and his family in his retirement.

DATED: December 13, 1995

  
Dan Albert, Mayor





**NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY  
CENTRAL SECURITY SERVICE**  
FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755-6000

27 October 1995

Dear Colonel Sobichevsky,

As you near the end of your tour as Commandant, you have much to be proud of. Your tour began as none of us would have wished: with a protracted struggle to save the Presidio of Monterey from closure and the consequent move of the Defense Language Institute. The forces which you mustered and led to save the Institute were successful largely because of your effort. As a result, the Armed Forces, the Defense Intelligence Community and the National Security Establishment were spared the years of disruption that would inevitably have resulted from such a move.

Having saved DLI, you then rebuilt it. You accomplished an institute-wide reorganization to trim staff, streamline management and teaching, and adjust the entire staff, faculty and student cadre to the post-Cold War realities of a new and demanding world. The reorganization involved the establishment of courses in languages which DLI had not previously taught and substantial growth in other critical language programs, while at the same time you oversaw the downsizing of programs that had traditionally been mainstays to the DLI mission. It also included the physical move of several thousand people on, and onto, the Presidio. That these changes took place over a very short period of time and with no disruption to the teaching mission or decline in student results is an exceptional achievement and a tribute to your vision and organizational ability.

With the Department of Defense's unprecedented restructuring, you assumed new command obligations — management of the closure of your former host command and assumption of the functions formerly carried out by Fort Ord that are vital to DLI and to other regional defense needs. You managed the integration of the new functions and personnel into your command and negotiated a level of interservice cooperation never before imagined for the Monterey area.

Through it all, you maintained your focus and that of the Institute on the mission: to train linguists of the Armed Forces to the operational standards expressed in the final learning objectives, and to sustain and evaluate the linguists in the field. Under your leadership, the Institute has succeeded beyond all expectations. The sustainment effort has grown exponentially and evaluation has improved and expanded into new areas, testing the broad range of objectives and providing the data needed to improve the entire system. The increase in graduate proficiency over the last three years has been exceptional. In a change of direction that is every bit as significant and is clearly attributable to your forceful, concentrated advocacy, the other critically important learning objectives are now finally seen as integral parts of the programs and mission of DLI. The increased abilities of DLI's graduates are apparent throughout the community and they come at a time when the need for reliable and self-sufficient linguists is paramount. The linguists who are graduating now will form the core of the community for years to come. You have given that core the rock-solid foundation it will need to sustain our national security effort into a new and uncertain future.

Yours are proud achievements for which we are all grateful. Congratulations on a mission, not just accomplished, but splendidly done.

  
JULIA B. WETZEL  
Cryptologic Training Manager

# Change can mean success

By Petty Officer 1st Class T.E. "Scoop" Hansen

Change — the dictionary defines the word as an act, process, or result of changing. According to the late Dr. W. Edwards Deming, the godfather of total quality leadership, change frightens people because they are used to doing something the same way repetitiously and it becomes the status quo in their work. They don't want change because they feel it will hinder quantity and quality. Deming blamed this mainly on management styles and said change is a necessity to improve a system, a corporation or an individual.

Much could be said about Deming's viewpoint and philosophy as it intertwines with the changes and improvements that have been made at DLIFLC during the tenure of Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky.

Three prominent Air Force officers at the Institute — Lt. Col. Roderic Gale, associate provost and dean of students; Lt. Col. Jerome Pradier, associate dean of Evaluation and Standardization and Director of Evaluation; and Lt. Col. Maria Constantine, director of Operations, Plans and Programs — recently expressed their thoughts on improvements made at the Institute under the leadership and guidance of Sobichevsky and how they've affected the students.

Gale said Sobichevsky was instrumental in making a number of changes for the benefit of the Institute. "He changed the focus of DLIFLC to zero-in on our mission instead of us simply doing what we felt was best, and hoping the customers could use our product — the students,"



Lt. Col. Roderic Gale

he noted. "This new focus has enabled the customers to put the graduates directly into appropriate follow-on training or duty positions. He also recharted the mission as one for a military-training center focused on predetermined objectives such as the Final Learning Objectives, or FLOs.

"Additionally, he pushed the integration of the military-civilian partnership in defining, leading and accomplishing the mission," Gale mentioned. "This resulted in a greater role for qualified military members. Another change he made was to increase the operational tempo and sense of urgency to get the mission done and done better."

Gale arrived at DLIFLC Aug. 1, 1992, after a tour of duty at the U.S. Central Command. He then served as the Middle East School associate dean from August 1992 to June 1993. There was only one Middle East School during that time period. He has been in his current position since June 1993 — a position that was created by Col. Sobichevsky. He said that, although the commandant has made many changes and improvements for the better, reorganization of several schools and directorates resulting in higher student proficiency rates may be what he is best remembered for.

"Col. Sobichevsky reorganized the schools in 1993 to get them ready and accountable for the broader training mission of resident, non-resident and operations support," he said. "Similarly, he reorganized the Language Program Coordination Office, the Operations, Plans and Doctrine Office and the Directorate of Distance Education to create a single point of contact for customer requirements. This better enabled the Operations, Plans and Programs Directorate to interface with and match user requirements with resources drawn from the Provost."

Gale said that Sobichevsky also helped

the Institute by bringing the FLOs led by the Defense Language Proficiency Test, or DLPT levels to the forefront. "He made them the visible focused measure of our mission and mission success," he stated.

According to Pradier, the scope of improvements during Col. Sobichevsky's tenure was focused on people. "He instituted a focus on the customers — the students and the agencies that use our graduates' skills," he said. "This focus identified the technical skills through which the graduates use their languages, and it resulted in changing the curriculum to teach language in the context of those skills. Since the vast majority of students are being trained for specific career fields, teaching the FLOs represents a major curriculum improvement. This new focus resulted in giving students goal-oriented training, which propelled them farther along in their ability to perform those tasks which they will be using for much of their careers."

Pradier mentioned the results of these improvements have been significant. "In a recent trip to Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, and Fort Huachuca, Ariz., instructors and supervisors reported to me that our graduates are now better prepared to begin their training when they get to these schools, and the result is a higher success rate in follow-on training," he noted.

Pradier, who has been in his current position at DLIFLC for a little over two years, said the changes made in the directorate as a result of Sobichevsky's leadership have been vast and effective. "We have seen significant changes in the importance the command group of DLI places on the perceptions of students," he



Lt. Col. Jerome Pradier

explained. "Col. Sobichevsky took a strong interest in the opinions students have about their training programs. When he saw students pointing out a problem in the Automated Student Questionnaire, he took a serious look at the source of these problems.

"Although he is a leader who allows managers the opportunity to fix problems on their own, when he saw a problem that affected the whole institution, he took bold and direct steps to find the root cause and eliminate it with positive actions," he stated. "For example, he convened task forces to improve language tapes, the grading and testing systems, the Oral Proficiency Interview system, and to study the benefits of FLO teaching and testing on our students. Additionally, he initiated the development of an Interim Student Questionnaire for getting students' opinions during their training to give DLI a chance to solve problems before training ends."

Pradier mentioned that Sobichevsky also encouraged the development of a family of student questionnaires for every course DLI offers or sponsors for its resident and non-resident training programs, and oversaw the initiation of a Graduate Field Survey to get the opinions of graduates in the field about the helpfulness of DLI training.

"On the technical side, he spearheaded the advancement of computer-aided testing with the development of standardized FLO Subskill testing," continued Pradier. "He also achieved certification of DLI as a federal laboratory for the purpose of cooperating with civilian industry in developing and marketing DLI's state-of-the-art computer programs," he mentioned.

According to Pradier, Sobichevsky took a genuine interest in the grading system and made changes to improve it. "For several months, we noticed comments about testing and grading practices that led us to conclude that the grading system was a major irritant to the students," he noted.

"How to define the problem and how

to determine the root causes, however, were not so easy to determine," he said. "Col. Sobichevsky conducted many meetings with evaluation personnel and personnel in the provost's organization to accurately define the problems students were having. The results of these meetings were a complete review of the DLI grading policy and a commitment to simplify and update the policy. The provost (Dr. Raymond Clifford) and I worked for several months to rewrite the policy and identify improvements to it. Without Col. Sobichevsky's interest and active involvement, we would not have been able to make such comprehensive changes so quickly."

Lt. Col. Maria Constantine has been the director of Operations, Plans and Programs for the past two years. She arrived at a time when Sobichevsky decided that the directorate needed a major reorganization. "We had functions that were scattered all over the Institute," Constantine explained. "Col. Sobichevsky was very adamant about a reorganization taking place and taking place quickly — he wanted to bring all the functions together working as one team."

She explained that the commandant proceeded to subordinate all of the distance education faculty back under the provost. "He reorganized the directorate and streamlined it into Operations, Plans and Programs vice the old Operations, Plans and Doctrine because he deemed at this level the Institute doesn't do doctrine." When that occurred, OPP was born and now provides support to more than 40,000 linguists and 278 command language programs.

Constantine said that Sobichevsky put a great deal of emphasis on support to the field. "He very emphatically allowed us to make the push to develop a truly viable and useful program for the field," she noted. "He was a strong proponent of field assistance visits, Mobile Training

Teams and Video TeleTraining. Col. Sobichevsky knew that this type of training was needed to sustain their vital skills as linguists. He realized from all of his experiences as a linguist and from his former units what all went into this — he was heart and soul into this effort of sustainment. I think his support has put us 10 years ahead of where we were just two years ago. His support and guidance have benefitted everyone — resident, non-resident, MTT's and VTT."

Constantine said that Sobichevsky's support has led OPP to what it is today. "Overall, I would say that without his support, the directorate wouldn't have become what it is now without properly acquiring new positions, expanding support to the field and being a forerunner in command language program support, distance learning and contingency mobilization support," she stated. "Very importantly, he gave us a free hand without micromanaging — he's been the guiding light and given us the opportunity to work in a creative fashion — and for that, we are grateful to him."

Constantine also said that her job keeps her quite busy. "OPP is never dull! I can't remember a day that I've been bored or not challenged, and I think the main reason behind that is because it has been a lot of fun working with Col. Sobichevsky," she said. "At times, he seems to be almost full of wonderment at the possibilities that exist and at the kinds of responses the Institute is capable of accomplishing. At times he's been a little skeptical asking the question, 'Can we do it?' If we can, then his famous phrase is, 'Don't screw it up.' He's very aware of the reputation DLIFLC has, and he wants to continue to enhance that reputation."

Summarizing the working relationship between Col. Sobichevsky and OPP, Constantine described it as a happy medium for success. "I think it has been just the right mix of his appreciating us, pushing us and driving us to be excellent," she mentioned. "This has led us to provide excellent services and products for the field and our customers." 



Lt. Col. Maria Constantine

# DLI meeting, exceeding goals

By Dr. Ray Clifford  
Provost

As Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky first arrived at DLI in 1987, the Institute had just begun to implement Team Teaching. As assistant dean of the East European School, he was a full participant in the sometimes turbulent transition from a "substitute teacher" philosophy without teacher accountability, to the creation of teams of teachers who remain with their students and are accountable for the levels of proficiency those students attain.



Dr. Ray Clifford

In 1988, the General Officer Steering Committee, or GOSC, for the Defense Foreign Language Program noted the increased proficiency results achieved under team teaching and asked that the Institute develop a plan to accelerate the process of improving proficiency results.

In 1989, the GOSC approved DLIFLC's Proficiency Enhancement Plan that Sobichevsky had helped refine. The Proficiency Enhancement Plan laid out the steps needed to achieve the GOSC-stated objective that 80 percent of DLIFLC's graduates attain Level 2 proficiency in Listening and one other skill, and no skill lower than Level 1. Eight of the 11 major initiatives proposed were approved.

The major components of the approved "constrained" Proficiency Enhancement Plan were:

- Provide stable budgets with the work years needed to staff team teaching.
- Fully implement team teaching and associated accountability concepts.
- Eliminate large cyclical swings in enrollments from year to year.
- Create professional development op-

portunities for the faculty.

- Reduce the maximum number of teachers for better supervision.
- Stagger aptitude requirements for students so higher-aptitude students study the more difficult languages.
- Lengthen the Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Korean basic courses.
- Establish a new merit-based personnel system for the faculty.

During his two tours at DLIFLC, Sobichevsky ensured that these initiatives were carried out. As we look back, we see that each initiative has been or is being addressed. Despite a few delays, the Institute has been unwavering in its pursuit of improved instruction.

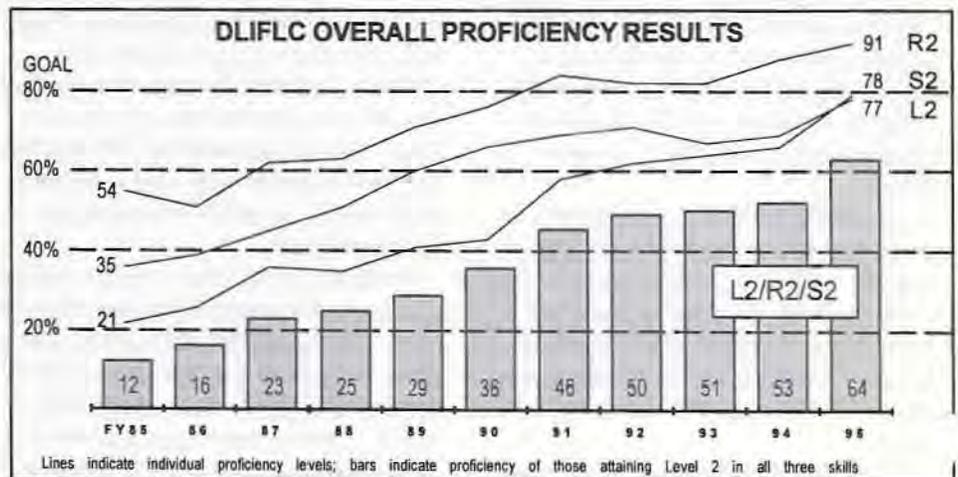
To respond to changes in the world political and military situation during the last five years, DLIFLC found it necessary to rapidly reduce the size of some language programs and increase the size of others. Despite the fact that hundreds of faculty members were affected, the associated turbulence was handled with skill and the mission did not suffer.

In 1992, the GOSC was so pleased with the progress that they raised the proficiency goals for basic courses to 80 percent achieving a Level 2 in each of the skills of Listening, Reading and Speaking.

Facing this new challenge, Sobichevsky continued to support the Institute's Proficiency Enhancement Plan and added to it a very significant change that further improved the quality of instruction at the Institute. He included in the allocation of classrooms a breakout room for each teaching team. This allowed the teaching teams to provide tailored, small-group instruction on a regular basis.

The fact that small-group instructional hours accounted for more than one-third of the 500,000 class hours taught this last year shows that the process is working. The fact that the proficiency results achieved in the last year jumped more than 11 percentage points shows that the process is effective.

The average proficiency results for fiscal 1995 are shown in the accompanying chart. DLIFLC programs have improved significantly since Sobichevsky arrived. Under his leadership, DLIFLC has accomplished what few outside the Institute thought was possible. In fiscal 1995, more than 75 percent of its graduates met the Proficiency Enhancement Plan goal set during his first tour at the Institute. Furthermore, 64 percent of the graduates met the latest goal of achieving Level 2 proficiency in all three skills. 🏆



DLIFLC's entire battalion came together for a run through the installation's streets as Army units celebrated the 220th birthday of the nation's oldest branch of military service on June 17.



# Skills improve in & out of class

By Lt. Col. Jack Dees  
Commander, Troop Command

Army Troop Command has undergone a major evolution over the past three years during Col. Sobichevsky's tenure as commandant. The command has dramatically increased its involvement in the Institute's academic mission while improving its ability to program and execute its responsibility for military training. Graduation DLPT scores have increased dramatically, and follow-on training sites continue to complement the skills, motivation and knowledge of soldiers arriving from DLIFLC.



Lt. Col. Jack Dees

The increased involvement in the academic mission was directed by Col. Sobichevsky, and has led to a significant change in the orientation of company commanders and staffs. Unit leaders now view themselves as being at least partly

responsible for the linguistic skills of graduates. As a result, unit-level programs to reinforce academic instruction have flourished. Peer-tutor programs, mandatory study hall, cadre involvement in school decision making, postgraduate language maintenance programs and company-level computer language labs have all become major components of the company commanders' mission statements.

Military training, especially the TRADOC-mandated soldierization program for initial-entry trainees, has undergone major revisions. Troop Command established clear and concrete military requirements for graduation, standardized its soldierization program for all companies, and is formalizing a military program of instruction for all arriving soldiers. Field training has increased and, most importantly, the command has integrated schoolhouse and unit-level language training into its training plan. In so doing, it avoided the training conflicts of the past while reinforcing the notion that language and military training are inseparable in training great soldier-linguists.

At the same time, TRADOC-directed downsizing has had its impact. The command has lost more than 10 percent of the personnel assigned to its battalion and company staffs, including the inactivation of one company.

Nonetheless, the quality of cadre has improved dramatically. Working with officer and enlisted personnel managers at Army Personnel Command, Troop Command has been able to bring on board seasoned and proven linguist-leaders as military language instructors and platoon sergeants.

Troop Command's focus for the future includes improving quality of life for its soldiers, especially barracks and physical-fitness facilities. Unit language labs are being upgraded to more comprehensive, multimedia study facilities. The command is also working an action to obtain a historical designation as a military intelligence battalion. The bottom line remains, however, an unswerving commitment to provide the force with the toughest and most competent soldier-linguists in the world. SOLDIERS FIRST! 

Photo by Bob Britton

# Former co-workers reminisce over Sobichevsky's prior tour at DLI

By Bob Britton

“Col. Sobichevsky gives the impression of a gruff and austere military demeanor, but deep down inside, he is kindhearted, considerate and humane,” said Dr. Nicholas Itsines, chairperson of the Multilanguage Department, Middle East I School and former chairperson of the Greek Department in the East European School.

Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky, the present DLIFLC commandant and commander of the Presidio of Monterey, previously served in Monterey from July 1987 to July 1990 as an assistant dean of the East European School, and the Institute's chief of staff and the school secretary.

In 1987, the East European School was located in Bldg. 450, with the late Jawdat Yonan as the dean and Sobichevsky as the assistant dean. Primary languages taught at that time included Czech, Polish, Greek, Hungarian, Bulgarian and Serbo/Croatian. The Polish and Hungarian courses were taught at Larkin School in Monterey, while the others were at DLIFLC, according to Itsines.

“He treated teachers as professionals and was the only assistant dean who went into teachers' offices and asked if he could help the instructors,” Itsines said. “He visited classes regularly,



Dr. Nicholas Itsines

including the two languages taught at the Larkin School and socialized with teachers during social functions, such as picnics.”

“We all smoked the same brand of cigarettes, so sometimes he borrowed from us or we borrowed from him,” said Czech instructors Georgia Strednansky and Dagmar Pavlik, presently with the Multilanguage Department, East European I School. Both worked with Sobichevsky in the East European School in 1987.



Dagmar Pavlik and Georgia Strednansky

“He liked the DLI multicultural environment, and sometimes would converse with other instructors in Russian, since there were many Russian speakers in the Slavic languages. He was a positive individual who helped the school achieve its goals and tried to be as helpful as he could be,” said Strednansky.

Sobichevsky's job was to discipline students with academic problems. “He would discipline students and have them standing at attention by his desk,” Itsines recalled.

“Col. Sobichevsky disciplined the students when necessary,” said Strednansky. “Once, I was having trouble controlling some of the students in class. He came to the class and told the students to respect the teachers. They got the message, quieted down and paid attention.”

Both instructors mentioned he was a good friend, looked out for teachers and



Col. Sobichevsky was formerly assigned to DLIFLC 1987-90.

frequently visited classes and faculty to solve problems in a timely manner.

“He was one of the people above us who was so close to us as teachers,” Pavlik said. “He was always so helpful to us in the Czech Department.”

In 1987, Czech was the largest language in the school with about 260 students. Polish was the second largest with more than 100 students, followed by Greek with about 35 students and the remainder of the small enrollment multilanguages had 25 students.

The total student enrollment was about 400 military linguists. All languages were 47 weeks long for the basic courses. The East European School existed from 1982 to 1989, then it was abolished and became the Slavic School, said Itsines.

When Sobichevsky was assistant dean, there were 54 Czech teachers. The Greek Department had 10 teachers, including Itsines as the chairperson. John Dege chaired the Polish Department with about 34 teachers. The Bulgarian/Serbian-Croatian Department had eight instructors, while the Hungarian Department had five teachers, continued Itsines.

Changing world conditions decreased the importance of many of these Slavic languages from 1987, so there are fewer students and instructors required for these courses today. 

# What would you like to say to Col. Sobichevsky as he retires?

*(Editor's note: We wandered the hallways and sidewalks of DLIFLC and approached several people at random, asking each to bid farewell to our commander/commandant. Here are a few responses.)*

Interviews by Petty Officer 1st Class T.E. "Scoop" Hansen  
Photos by Petty Officer 1st Class T.E. "Scoop" Hansen and Terry Soliz



**Air Force Maj.  
Cindy Baker,  
Associate Dean,  
Asian School II**

"I would like to say thanks for always listening to our initiatives and responding with, 'What can I do to help you,' and then following up with the resources to get the job done. Of course, the two biggest projects I'm referring to are curriculum development for the Korean Basic Course and our pilot immersion program. You always made us feel like we were appreciated and trusted. For that we sincerely thank you."



**Air Force Airman  
1st Class  
Antonio Medina,  
Korean student**

"I can remember when I began studying in the Korean School, and when things got hard, I thought back to Col. Sobichevsky's speech during the Armed Forces Day ceremony about the benevolent soldier who gave him a piece of gum when he was but a child (in Germany after World War II). Even though it had nothing to do with Korean grammar patterns, I could think about that story and tell myself, 'He learned English and became a colonel — I can learn Korean as well!'"



**Air Force Master  
Sgt. Daniel R.  
Wessling,  
Korean MLI,  
Asian School II**

"Colonel, I represent all Korean MLIs when I say thank you for the many positive changes you have effected as commandant. Due to your leadership and support, we now are literally fat with Korean MLIs, pumping out more 2/2/2 graduates than ever, writing a wonderful new course curriculum, experimenting with a new immersion project, receiving superb in-house instructor training, enjoying new computer-aided instruction ..... I could go on and on. They say actions speak louder than words. Well, sir, you have spoken loud and clear. Thank you and good luck!"



**Navy Seaman  
Jason Fawcett,  
Arabic student**

"Your professionalism and pride that you have displayed during your tenure at DLIFLC have gained you a reputation that transcends inter-service barriers as a devoted and just leader. You will be sorely missed at the Presidio."



**Army Spc.  
Vicki Loges,  
Protocol office**

"Thank you, sir, for supporting BOSS (Better Opportunities for Single Service members) and giving us the opportunity to make a difference. I hope that whoever takes your place supports BOSS as much as you did. I hope you enjoy your retirement!"

Photo by Jim Villarreal



Photo by Master Sgt. Ron Hyll



## Farewell Col. Sobichevsky

As a final farewell to Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky, here are a few photos from various times of his career. Clockwise from right: The colonel takes a stroll with his dogs in February 1995; The colonel and his wife, Karin, cut a cake featuring the DLIFLC shield during the change of command reception when he took over as commandant in January 1993; Sgt. 1st Class Sobichevsky in 1964; Capt. Sobichevsky in Vietnam, 1970; Maj. Gen. John Herrling, TRADOC chief of staff, presents the colors to the colonel Sept. 30, 1994, signifying the Presidio of Monterey's status as TRADOC's newest installation; and Lt. Col. Sobichevsky pinning Parachute Wings on his son, Mark, at Fort Benning, Ga., in 1984. (Photos courtesy Col. Sobichevsky, except where noted.)





DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDANT

Dear Faculty, Staff, Students and Friends,

We have been through a great deal together since January 1993. These were the worst and best of times. The worst involved BRAC '93 and the real possibility of BRAC '95; various periodic murmurs on realignment and resubordination studies; painful closure and absorption of Fort Ord territory; and so much more. Yet, at the same time, these were the best of times. We survived BRAC '93, overcame various resubordination efforts, and successfully transitioned from Fort Ord — a FORSCOM installation — to a TRADOC installation in October 1994, and established an effective POM Garrison from the ground up. I'm keeping all this short, since words cannot adequately describe the scope and depth of all that we have been through together.

During this time, we didn't falter in our mission — to Train, Sustain and Evaluate. In fact, during the past fiscal year, we broke all previous records for increases in foreign-language proficiency in the 53-year history of this Institute, or whenever they began to compile this data — an 11.5 percent rise toward our goal of Level 2 in Listening, Reading and Speaking for the 24 resident languages taught at DLI. Today we stand at 64.4 percent overall. This is a lot like hitting a slot machine jackpot of three bars in Las Vegas, and today we hit three bars 11.5 percent more often than ever before. Two bars are so much easier than three, and here we also increased by 12.4 percentage points at Level 2 in Listening and Reading — 74.6 percent overall. It is probably a world record! But who's counting....

The Institute owes all these achievements to each and every one of you. Whether you teach language in the classroom or support our mission in a myriad of other ways, I thank each and all of you — again and again.

It's time for me to leave and allow younger blood to try a hand at this worthy endeavor. From the bottom of my heart, I wish my replacement success in everything the new commander and commandant touches, and may he or she be more successful than ever before. I know he or she will have your strongest support, just as I was privileged to enjoy through these three demanding but very satisfying years. I bid you farewell without sadness or remorse.

With fond memories,

  
COL Vladimir Sobichevsky

