Getting to know DLIFLC

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FRONT COVER: This latest podcast series, called Getting to know DLIFLC, gives a glimpse into the work and lives of students, staff and instructors at the Presidio of Monterey.

BACK COVER: A member of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Horse Detachment from Ft. Irwin, California rides through a course shooting at targets during a demonstration at Soldier Field as part of the Language Day celebration at DLIFLC. (Photo by Leonardo Carrillo, DLIFLC Public Affairs)

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FROM THE TOP

I am humbled and honored to have lead this great institute for the past year. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center’s mission, vision, and enduring purpose. Numerous examples of the true breadth and depth of the Institute’s global reach are presented in the pages to follow.

Vision: To generate, sustain, and enhance warrior linguists throughout their military service from apprentice to master.

Mission: DLIFLC provides culturally based foreign language education, training, evaluation, and degrees for the Department of Defense globally, to afford a comprehensive understanding of the joint operational environment, a competitive edge to our warfighters, and safeguard the national security of the United States.

The Institute is committed to its mission and vision. Our noble purpose drives us and no effort has been spared in our pursuit of excellence. We must remain steadfast and disciplined in our commitment to improve, a little each day, across the enterprise – especially in our main effort - basic language acquisition. There is great value in the diversity of our people, localities, and experiences throughout the Institute. We must capitalize on our people and their insights, identify best practices, and implement them across the breadth and depth of our impressive global footprint.

The DoD demonstrates its trust and faith in us with the impressive workload it places upon the Institute. We must seek to retain their trust through the prioritization of resources, tasks, and time, in accordance with DoD and Army guidance, in order to clearly articulate “the why” behind our decisions. We must remain positive in our approach to our people, our many stakeholders, and our ability to accomplish any mission given to us regardless of our level of resourcing from higher. DoD priorities shift frequently so we must develop and maintain a level of organizational agility.

I will conclude with a few of DLIFLC’s many accomplishments this year, which are by no means restricted to the Presidio of Monterey. We played a critical role in Operation Allies Welcome with civilian and military linguists. We returned to and completed a year of face-to-face learning in our undergraduate education basic language acquisition programs.

New incredibly deserving members were inducted into our Hall of Fame as we celebrated our 80th Anniversary. The command group began an important effort to reconnect with our global footprint and faculty stationed outside of the Presidio of Monterey. As always, we hosted and impressed a number of very important people – to include two Undersecretaries of Defense – and drove home the importance of language and culture to senior defense officials and decision makers. We brought back a time-honored tradition and hosted Language Day in style here at the Presidio.

Thank you all for your outstanding support to the mission and the warm welcome you gave another new Commandant!

Colonel James A. Kievit
Whew, is it over? Have we turned the corner towards normalcy? While it is true that we will most likely continue to deal with the impacts of COVID for many years to come and it is most likely incalculable the number of changes that each of us have had to endure in the recent past, there seems to be an ever growing glimmer of hope across the near horizon that we may be on path to return to some semblance of normality. With the return of many opportunities we once enjoyed, comes yet more change. Perhaps the lesson is that we must be prepared for the inevitable that is to come.

No doubt more change will come and, at times, may create difficulties, challenges, or obstacles. Each of us is indisputably a high achiever and performer. As such we have grown accustomed to solving problems, overcoming challenges and succeeding in the face of defeat as individuals. We have proven ourselves in the face of adversity and are the better for it. However, there are times when even the most accomplished of us need assistance, a helping hand, a confidant, or simply an ear to bend.

Who is your confidant? Maybe a family member, friend, battle buddy, peer, or mentor/leader? Who is the person/people you can reach out to who will drop everything they are doing to come to your aid? Who can you communicate your needs to for help and support without fearing judgement? In short - who is in your GOLDEN TRIANGLE*?

Never heard of the golden triangle? Simply stated it’s a means to identify your support structure. More specifically, it is comprised of your closest friends, battle buddies, family member(s), and leaders/mentors who are ready at moment’s notice to be there to support you. This, much like life, is ever evolving, so if you haven’t taken the time to know who these people are in your life, perhaps it’s time to inventory your golden triangle.

We all have our moment of crisis, and in that moment we all need to know who is part of our golden triangle. Equally important to know is, who is counting on us? Whose golden triangle are we a part of? Am I ready to answer the call when it comes? And be assured, the call will come. Each of us has endured much over the recent past. And at times it seems the path ahead of us is unclear and murky. But there is one truth that has not changed and will not change as long as we forbid it to change.

We do not have to meet life’s challenges alone. Each of us has someone in our lives who is willing to support us without reservation. Each of us is that someone to someone else.

Command Sgt. Maj. Ernesto L. Cruz

* The Golden Triangle is a component of SMA Michael Grinston’s initiative “This is my Squad.”
For the first time since the beginning of the pandemic, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center cadre and leadership were able to come together for a Military Language Instructor awards ceremony to recognize a year of hard work and accomplishments on April 22, 2022. “You are an incredibly important part of the [foreign language] learning process, alongside your civilian colleagues,” said DLIFLC Commandant Col. James Kievit, who presided over the awards ceremony.

MLIs are vital cogs in the wheel that produce military cryptologic linguists for all four branches of the military and the Coast Guard. Having graduated from the Institute themselves, MLIs are instrumental in mentoring new cryptolinguists and helping them overcome language learning hurdles as well as teaching them how to be good service members. “The role [as MLIs] that you play is that of setting an example for years to come for these impressionable trainees,” said Kievit, to the 16 MLI awardees and guests.

The MLI of the quarter was given to Navy Cryptologic Technician Interpretive 1st Class Sarah Wetzel for her outstanding work as an MLI in the
Korean school, which also earned her a Joint Service Achievement Medal.

“To be honest, I am humbled by this award, and I couldn’t have done it without the awesome support of the staff and my chief MLI,” said Wetzel. “I am grateful to be able to mentor the next generation of linguists.” Wetzel also completed all the requirements to receive her Senior MLI Badge.

Ten MLIs completed the Basic Instructor Certification Course which requires 60 hours of classroom instruction and a Defense Language Proficiency score of 2+/2+/2. Two individuals, including Wetzel, received the Senior Instructor Badge, that requires the completion of an additional two faculty development courses, a minimum of 240 hours of instruction, and attaining a minimum Defense Language Proficiency Score of 3/2+/2, or 2+/3/2.

Two senior non-commissioned officers received Master Instructor Badges for completing four faculty development courses, an Associate of Arts or higher degree in foreign language education studies, 480 instructor contact hours and a minimum DLPT score of 3/3/2+.

DLIFLC Commandant Col. James Kievit awarded the MLI of the quarter to Navy Cryptologic Technician Interpretive 1st Class Sarah Wetzel for her outstanding work as an MLI in the Korean school. She also earned a Joint Service Achievement Medal for her hard work and dedication. (Photos by Leonardo Carrillo DLIFLC Public Affairs)
Upon returning from Concordia, the students quickly resumed their DLIFLC routine. Their department chair, Dr. Mir Wais Gawhary, noticed a difference, particularly in terms of speaking proficiency. “The students now seem to have a greater sense of confidence when speaking in the target language,” he said.

With the pandemic in the rearview mirror, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center has restarted its domestic and international immersion programs for students studying some of the most crucial foreign languages for national security.

“We are so excited to restart the immersion program,” said DLIFLC Provost Dr. Robert Savukinas. “We are happy to be able to afford the students the opportunity to have that experience.”

DLIFLC halted its overseas and local immersion program activities in March of 2020. Early signs in January 2020 of an impending global pandemic caused leadership to recall students early from France and Ecuador. Domestic immersion programs taking place in Minnesota and southern California were simultaneously halted.

“It was an unprecedented time. When COVID hit we had to bring two overseas classes home early,” said former Immersion Language Office Director Van Ipson. All immersions were canceled thereafter.

This spring, DLIFLC restarted its two-week domestic immersion programs at the Concordia Language Training Center, sponsored by Concordia College, Minnesota, and at San Diego State University, California. Currently, Persian Farsi, Russian, Korean, Chinese, Spanish and French language programs are sending their students on local immersions. The overseas four-week immersion programs will also restart with the first students going to Korea, Ecuador and Oman this summer.

“I didn’t expect the mix of learn and play that we got,” said Airman 1st Class Michael Allison, who spent two weeks at the Concordia center with his classmates this May. “We had structured classes, but every day we would play a different game or do some out of the box things,” Allison explained.

Dean of the Persian Farsi School, Dr. Johnathan Gajdos, visited the campus to evaluate the program from an academic perspective and look at student accommodations.

“The activities they had kept the students engaged all day long, so much so that by the end of the day the students told me that they found themselves thinking in Farsi,” said Gajdos.

Much of the shared activities revolve around meals and common games that take place in the dining hall. Gajdos explained that the remote location of the campus and foreign-influenced architecture “promoted an immediate sense of detachment and calm,” in contrast to the busy DLIFLC schoolhouse atmosphere.

Some students were pushed out of their comfort zone, which is one of the main goals of sending students on immersion, away from a familiar setting and the comfort of working with their own instructors for months on end.

“The first few days were terrifying,” said Pfc. Craig Petrie. But as he and the other students got used to the new setting and the fact that communication was all in Farsi, Petrie said he began to enjoy the different teaching perspectives and the chance to do something out of the box.
Above, Chinese language students attending the immersion program at Concordia, Minnesota, work with instructors on their presentations. Left, Korean language students give a presentation. (Photo courtesy DLIFLC instructors).
For the first time in the history of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, two graduates were awarded baccalaureate degrees in foreign language during a graduation ceremony held on Soldier Field on Thursday, April 7, 2022.

Tech. Sgt. Joshua Miller, stationed at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, received the first bachelor degree in foreign language with a concentration in Russian, while Cryptologic Technician (Interpretive) 3rd Class Ruben J. Rivera, stationed at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, received the first B.A. degree in foreign language with a concentration in Chinese-Mandarin.

“It’s an amazing opportunity to be able to get a bachelor like this for doing our job,” said Rivera. “The military pays us to learn this language and now we’re getting rewarded with a degree for our work and I think that’s awesome.”

Rivera’s first experience with a foreign language came when he arrived to DLIFLC for the Chinese-Mandarin Basic Course. After completing the course, Rivera reported to his next duty station to work with his new language.

While actively working in his target language, Rivera was presented the opportunity to take the advanced course. At the time, there was no promise he would receive a bachelor degree, but he decided to take the course to further advance his skills. “Within our field, accuracy and quality of our work is extremely important. You have to sharpen your skills constantly. Anyone who has learned a language as an adult can attest to the fact that it’s difficult to retain,” said Rivera. “Taking the advanced course helped me level up my skills and I knew it would make me more efficient day to day. Most importantly, my advanced knowledge will help me help other linguists.”

Miller, who received his bachelor degree in foreign language with a concentration in Russian, said the journey was long and difficult but well worth it.

“I am glad to have finally finished. This is the equivalent of cramming what would be a four-year degree into a year and a half of study,” said Miller. “I’ve been lucky to have been actively using my language skills already and I really hope to continue doing that.”

For the past 18 years, DLIFLC has only been able to award associate of arts degrees in foreign language. In March of 2021, Congressman Jimmy Panetta announced the introduction of the Language Improvement Act which would allow DLIFLC to confer a bachelor of arts degree in foreign language to any graduate who fulfills the degree requirements. The bill was signed into law in December 2021. To receive the B.A. degree, students must satisfy their foreign language major coursework through the DLIFLC Basic Course and either the intermediate or advanced courses offered in residence in Monterey or at an accredited satellite campus. Service members must fulfill general education and elective requirements through outside coursework, earning a total of 120 credits for the degree.

“Today is the culmination of a very long journey. Not just for the service members receiving their bachelor’s, but for the Institution in general,” said DLIFLC Provost Dr. Robert Savukinas. “DLI originally opened its doors in 1941 with a small language program at Chrissy Field, San Francisco, teaching Japanese. Now look at where we are today through a team effort from people both internal and external to DLIFLC.”
DLIFLC Commandant Col. James Kievit presents Cryptologic Technician (Interpretive) 3rd Class Ruben J. Rivera, with one of the first bachelor degrees in foreign language with a concentration in Chinese Mandarin. Below, Tech. Sgt. Joshua Miller and Cryptologic Technician (Interpretive) 3rd Class Ruben Rivera await to receive their diplomas. Below right, Congressman Jimmy Panetta meets with the B.A. degree graduates during a visit to DLIFLC April 8. (Photos by Leonardo Carrillo, DLIFLC Public Affairs)
A multitude of high-level guests visited the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center June 28-30, 2022, to discuss in detail the foreign language linguist training pipeline and lifelong learning opportunities that may increase proficiency scores and affect retention.

“We are at a kind of inflection point to figure out if the [foreign language] requirements are correct, if we have the right governing system in place to produce incredible linguists, and to also provide the right systems and processes to manage them over a lifelong career,” explained Army Brig. Gen. Charles Lombardo, who is responsible for prioritizing and resourcing all Army training.

The visit was led by the Honorable Ronald Moultrie, the under secretary of defense for intelligence and security, accompanied by the Honorable Gilbert Cisneros, the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. Also joining them were Shawn Skelly, assistant secretary of defense for readiness, James Seacord, director, human capital management office, Brig. Gen. Terri Borras, department of Army G-2 headquarters, military intelligence, and Brig. Gen. Charles Lombardo director of training, G-3/5/7.

“We looked at a wider enterprise solution to train, employ and retain operationally relevant linguists for our country’s most important missions,” said DLIFLC Commandant, Col. James Kievit, who hosted the gathering at the Institute.

Discussions included looking beyond the DLIFLC Basic Course to get to higher levels of proficiency with on-the-job experience and follow-on training. Leaders discussed ways to retain trained linguist job satisfaction through proper placement and offering a Bachelor of Arts degree in foreign language through intermediate and advanced training upon reenlistment.

A number of visitors had the opportunity to observe students in the classroom and see firsthand the intensity of instruction and the proficiency of students at various stages of their studies.

By Natela Cutter
DLIFLC Public Affairs
“I can’t tell you how many times language analysts, who have graduated from this program, have briefed the president of the United States on things that we are doing around the world,” said Moultrie, who is also a Russian language course graduate. It was very encouraging [to see the students] because they represent the future of our nation’s national security. They are going to be the ones who keep this nation safe and secure,” he said.

Moultrie said his 43-year career involved working in the foreign language field one way or another. His intent to meet at DLIFLC was to draw attention to the issue of improving foreign language proficiency in the intelligence community to face future world events and challenges.

“For me, as the under secretary of defense for intelligence and security, I live [the foreign language challenge] every day. I live it with the Russia-Ukraine conflict that is ongoing right now ... I live it as we look at the pivot to Asia, I lived it through the heightened focus on the Middle East...” he said, adding that “language is the absolute foundation and cornerstone of all that we do,” in the intelligence field.

Moultrie stated that the beginning of all intelligence collection starts with DLIFLC training.

"I want to thank DLIFLC for not only what it is doing today, but for what it will do for us in the future. It’s a national treasure. We have to continue to support it, to polish the jewels on it, so that they can continue to shine as brightly as they have shone for over 80 years."
DLIFLC inducted four new members to its Hall of Fame as part of the Institute's 80th anniversary celebrations. Retired U.S. Air Force Col. Daniel Scott, retired U.S. Army Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky, retired dean Dr. Luba Grant and retired U.S. Army Master Sgt. Alan Ravitz were all inducted during a ceremony at the Weckerling Center at the Presidio of Monterey Nov. 5, 2021. All inductees made significant and lasting contributions to foreign language education and training within the Department of Defense.
The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center held a Hall of Fame induction ceremony Nov. 5, 2022, welcoming four new members and simultaneously marking 80 years since the inception of the Institute.

The selectees for 2021 were: retired Air Force Col. Dan Scott, former DLIFLC assistant commandant; retired Army Col. Vladimir Sobichevsky, former DLIFLC commandant; retired faculty member Dr. Luba Grant; and retired Army Master Sgt. Alan Ravitz, a Persian Farsi and Spanish language graduate.

“Each of these inductees has distinguished themselves through their dedication to foreign language and the understanding of foreign cultures,” said DLIFLC Commandant Col. James Kievit. “We want to honor them [as they] join the other members of this distinguished group who have made lasting contributions to language training and military linguist operations within the DoD or whose actions have significantly advanced foreign language policy.”

Ravitz, the oldest member of the inductees, graduated twice from DLIFLC, once from the Persian Farsi program in 1963 and once from the Spanish program in 1968. He played a significant role in “Operation Eagle Claw” as a member of the Delta Force that attempted to rescue 52 American hostages held at the U.S. Embassy in Iran in 1979. Two of the hostages were Ravitz’ close friends, leading him to volunteer for the mission.

“I can attribute every blessing and success in my life directly back to having attended the Defense Language Institute and the journey that I started on almost 60 years ago today,” he said.

Kievit presented each inductee with a plaque inscribed with their name and date of induction into the Hall of Fame, along with a certificate and a book on the pictorial history of DLIFLC.

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Maria Constantine, who worked from 1993 to 1995 for Sobichevsky, accepted the plaque and gifts on behalf of the deceased colonel’s family members.

“What I loved about Sobi, as we called him, was that he was rough and tough but also decisive and made decisions quickly,” she said.
At a time when the Institute was facing a Base Realignment and Closure action, Sobichevsky went to the Pentagon with Constantine to defend the need for the language school to stay open and remain on the Monterey Peninsula.

It was also with Grant’s invaluable help that the Institute was able to ride out the storm of the 1991 Base Realignment and Closure of Fort Ord and subsequent impact it had on the school and Presidio of Monterey.

Grant, a visionary leader, teacher, negotiator and valued advisor to the command, began working at DLIFLC in 1972 and retired after 42 years of service.

“When I came to DLIFLC, only one fifth of the students were female and nearly all faculty were male,” said Grant, who was one of the first female instructors hired through competitive selection and went on to be the dean of three schools.

It was during Grant’s tenure as dean of Asian School I, where Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Tagalog were taught, that the post 9/11 Proficiency Enhancement Program initiative began to take shape through dean council meetings.

By 2005, the DoD had accepted the PEP to improve student foreign language proficiency, which entailed a substantial investment into the foreign language program.

As the assistant commandant from 2006 to 2008, Scott, then an Air Force colonel who had recently returned from the field, understood the necessity of improving graduation rates from firsthand experience. Scott oversaw the obtaining and the proper disbursement of $362M received to implement PEP over five years.

“My goal was to make language training better to get ready for the next generation…I became known as the money guy, I briefed and briefed and briefed,” said Scott, speaking about his days spent at the Pentagon to explain how the Institute would spend its money and require more over the years.

The event concluded with the cutting of a celebratory cake by the current DLIFLC Assistant Commandant, Col. Jennifer Saraceno, using a saber.

The DLIFLC Hall of Fame, established in 2006, now consists of 32 members, honoring those who have been advocates for the significance of foreign language use in the defense of national security. The hall is a permanent display of photos and biographies at the Presidio of Monterey Aiso Library.

The selection of new Hall of Fame members in general occurs every five years. Nomination is possible through the Institute website on a continuous basis.
Colonel Daniel L. Scott - USAF retired

Retired Air Force Colonel Daniel L. Scott served as the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center assistant commandant from June 2004 to June 2008. Scott previously served as deputy director of intelligence at U.S. Central Command, where he led requirements for linguist operations support as well as targeting operations during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

As assistant commandant, Scott oversaw academic programs at DLIFLC and the push for achieving higher student proficiency levels.

During his tenure, Scott transformed DLIFLC day-to-day operations and implemented the Proficiency Enhancement Plan.

This program called for the reduction of the student-to-teacher ratio, higher student aptitude entry scores, updated curricula, enhanced faculty training, and classroom technology integration. These changes applied to the 24 basic courses for 3,800 resident students, 4,500 distance learning linguists, and pre-deployment training for 20,000 personnel. Scott aggressively managed a budget that increased from $77 million to $225 million in four years, plus $80 million for three academic buildings.

Scott first focused on hiring highly educated faculty members with knowledge of the latest classroom techniques, theories and practicums. Faculty training, education and the conference attendance budget increased from $50,000 to $1.7 million annually. By 2008, more than 900 new faculty and staff had been hired.

The first generation of computerized Defense Language Proficiency Tests were released under Scott’s leadership. The DLPT5 exam became the test of record for the entire DoD and set a high standard for other U.S. government language testing.

Scott retired from the U.S. Air Force in 2008. He continued to serve as a senior executive in the intelligence community and influenced the preparedness of the language force by leading the Foreign Language Program Office at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence with two other special assignments. Scott retired in April 2019 after 44 years of federal service.

Colonel Vladimir Sobichevsky - U.S. Army

Colonel Vladimir Sobichevsky, the grandson of a general in the Czar’s Army, left the Soviet Union during the Second World War at the age of 6. In 1949, he emigrated to the U.S. from a displaced persons camp in Germany. “Sobi,” as he came to be known, joined the Green Berets in 1956 and six years later reached the rank of sergeant first class. In 1965, he attended Officer Candidate School and as a commissioned officer joined the Special Forces. Sobichevsky came to Monterey in 1993 from Special Operations Command Pacific, where he was the director of operations.

Just two years before he became the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center commandant, the Department of Defense had decided in the Base Realignment and Closure hearings of 1991 to close nearby Fort Ord, which provided the Presidio of Monterey and DLIFLC critical support. Shortly after he took command, the BRAC ‘93 hearing put the Presidio itself on the base closure list. Working tirelessly with local, state and national leaders, Sobichevsky managed to remove the Presidio from the list, thus saving DLIFLC from what would have been a costly and disruptive move.

During the furious activity around BRAC, Sobichevsky took on duties as the Presidio installation commander as well as commandant, established a garrison organization to take over functions previously provided by Fort Ord, raised student test scores by almost 12%, established an Operations, Plans and Programs directorate, and increased support to warfighting commanders in the field.

When he relinquished command in 1995, the Presidio of Monterey was secure; 80% of the 3,000 students were performing above average and 1,380 faculty were functioning smoothly under a $54.3 million dollar budget.

Sobichevsky’s career was remarkable in many ways. He served in Germany, Korea, Panama, Vietnam and Laos, to include the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School. Retiring from the Army after his last assignment as commandant, Sobichevsky continued to work for the government overseas for 10 years before settling in Seaside, California, to reflect and paint. He died in 2016.
Dr. Luba Grant worked at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center for more than 42 years achieving great success as an expert in second language acquisition while serving as an inspirational leader and role model.

As one of the first competitively selected females for school dean, Grant held this position in three different schools. She successfully took on innumerable challenges and opportunities as the DLIFLC mission, pedagogy and programs were transformed to meet new global realities. When DLIFLC’s critical language focus moved from Russian to Arabic in the early 90s and then to Asian languages, she was asked to lead those programs and produce higher student proficiency levels.

In 1993 she was given the opportunity to start up a new Middle East School where Arabic and Persian Farsi were taught. By building a strong team, improving curriculum, and enhancing teamwork, the school’s scores rose while attrition declined.

Grant initiated and directed an innovative cable network project that for the first time linked both Middle East schools, the library and other nearby schools to a centralized satellite and video dissemination site that brought Satellite Communications for Learning, an international broadcasting channel in multiple languages, into more than a hundred classrooms.

In 2002, Grant was selected dean of Asian I School with more than 800 students in Chinese, Japanese, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese. She successfully oversaw 11 academic departments with over 250 faculty and staff members. During her last full year as dean, Grant oversaw the highest results achieved by the school, with nearly 80% reaching a score of 2/2/1+ and more than 40% of the students reaching 2+/2+/2 on the Defense Language Proficiency Test.

Dr. Luba Grant, retired dean

Grant retired from DLIFLC in 2015 but remains active in the foreign language acquisition community.

The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center dramatically changed the trajectory of Master Sgt. Alan M. Ravitz’s life and military career. His mastery of Persian Farsi and Spanish made him invaluable to his commanding officers in the field. He was the sole interpreter during Operation Eagle Claw, in the extraction attempt to rescue U.S. personnel from the American Embassy in Tehran, Iran, in April 1980.

Ravitz joined the U.S. Army in 1961. While he was stationed at Fort Ord, California, for basic training and advanced individual training, Ravitz learned of the Army Language School, later renamed the Defense Language Institute. Shortly upon enlistment, he was placed in the 47-week long Persian Farsi course. Ravitz was first assigned in Tehran, Iran, from 1963 to 1967 with U.S. Strategic Communications Command, where he was an administrative noncommissioned officer serving as unit interpreter.

In 1967, Ravitz returned to DLI for a 24-week Spanish course and graduated in 1968 after which he was stationed in Nicaragua from June 1968 to June 1971. From June 1972 to June 1976 Ravitz served as Senior Attaché Specialist at the U.S. Embassy Defense Attaché Office, U.S. Embassy Bogota, Colombia, where he was responsible for interpreting overt intelligence information and reporting it to the Defense Intelligence Agency.

In 1976, Ravitz was assigned back to Tehran, Iran, to interpret for Army advisors on the ground as the Iranian revolution gained momentum. Ravitz left Iran in March 1979 but continued to coordinate logistics for the final evacuation of U.S. personnel and contractors from the country.

In November 1979, the U.S. Embassy was seized by Iranian students and U.S. personnel were taken hostage. That December, Ravitz volunteered to be an interpreter for the Army Delta Force. Though the mission was unsuccessful, Ravitz was able to mitigate loss of life of Iranian nationals who were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Master Sgt. Alan M. Ravitz - U.S. Army retired

In January 1981, Ravitz was honored with an invitation to the White House to celebrate the return of the hostages, just a few days before his retirement from the Army on January 31, 1981.

WWW.DLIFLC.EDU
Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center held a Memorial Day ceremony at the Presidio of Monterey in person for the first time in two years, with all four branches of the military and the Coast Guard present on Soldier Field May 26, 2022.

“For many of us, today is a particularly haunting day that carries with it a particular grief. Memorial Day is the day we set aside to remember our fallen, to reflect upon their loss,” said DLIFLC Commandant Col. James Kievit. “This is a day to recommit ourselves to the joint truths that make us who we are as a combined military fighting force.”

Initially known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day in the United States originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. Kievit explained to the audience that Americans were not the first to honor their fallen with an observance, but that the practice dates back to 431 B.C. when the Athenian general Pericles delivered a funeral speech praising the sacrifice of those killed in the Peloponnesian War.

Retired Colonel Phillip Deppert, who served as commandant from 2015 to 2018, was the guest speaker. “Those who died while in service to our country deserve all of us taking a moment today to remember them, to honor them, and to understand that we all serve for reasons bigger than ourselves,” said Deppert.

“All of us who have served, or are currently serving, stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. None of you could, or would be, doing what you are doing today, without them. Those who came before us set the standard, showed us what right looks like, showed us the way,” he said.

Since 9/11, DLIFLC has memorialized 35 graduates who made the ultimate sacrifice for their nation while in uniform.

Emphasizing that honoring the
fallen is more important than ever, Deppert said, “Our country has formally declared war 11 times in our history and fought in numerous other conflicts. Without going through every battle loss, I would share that the United States has lost just under 1.2 million service members throughout our history.”
Tactical signals intelligence exercise supervisor Brian LeMaster, 344th Military Intelligence Battalion, showcases various locations to U.S. Army Col. James A. Kievit, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center commandant, during a tour of Forward Operating Base Sentinel, Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, July 12, 2022. FOB Sentinel is used during the 344th MI BN capstone exercise, a weeklong training that allows Soldiers to use all of the skills they have learned during training. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Michael Bowman)
Col. James A. Kievit, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center commandant, visited Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, July 12, to discuss the continuation of training for cryptologic linguists taking place throughout the 17th Training Wing.

Kievit began his visit at the Norma Brown building to meet with 17th Training Wing leadership to discuss the current status of cryptologic language training throughout the wing. The commandant reinforced the importance of continuing student language studies as they begin learning the fundamentals of intelligence and analysis.

Kievit was also able to tour the 316th Training Squadron schoolhouse to gain deeper insight into what linguist students experience day to day in the classroom.

“As partners in cryptologic language analyst training, it is important for Col. Kievit to understand what occurs after his students graduate,” explained Master Sergeant Andrew Claremont, 316th TRS section chief. “This visit allows Col. Kievit to see, first-hand, the training being conducted at the 316th TRS and to engage with the instructors, training managers, and other key partners in the CLA training pipeline.”

The commandant also visited with Soldiers assigned to the 344th Military Intelligence Battalion to understand their role within Army Training and Doctrine Command. The 344th MI BN took Kievit to Forward Operating Base Sentinel, the training area utilized by Army students when conducting their capstone training.

Kievit was impressed by the capabilities of the students, and recognized much of their success is due to the hard work of the instructors and cadre.

“Our cadre and instructors are the backbone of TRADOC,” said Kievit. “Without them, our Soldiers would be woefully unprepared when the time comes for them to work in the operational environment.”
This year, the two recipients of the Soldier of the Year and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year titles went to two Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center graduates.

Sgt. Justin Earnhart, who won Soldier of the Year 2021, graduated from the Spanish Basic Course program and Staff Sgt. Adam Krauland, who won NCO of the year, graduated from the Chinese Basic Course program. Both were awarded in a ceremony at the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition held October 11-13, 2021, in Washington D.C. It was a year that marked the return to in-person competition following a virtual contest last year.

“Striving to reach the very heights of their craft and profession, each competitor sets a fine example for every one of us to follow,” said Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Joseph M. Martin during the ceremony.

“By sheer determination, dedication and consistency, they fought through the mental and physical exhaustion and sometimes failure. But we can’t forget that failure is how we all learn … and grow.”

Earnhart hadn’t been at his command very long after graduation from DLIFLC when he signed up to compete in the Best Warrior Competition with the 470th Military Intelligence Brigade at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston as a way to put himself out there as a new Soldier without knowing it was an Army-wide event. And then he won.

“They said, ‘Alright, now you gotta get...
U.S. Army Spc. Justin Earnhart, assigned to U.S. Army South, takes a break after completing an obstacle course during the Army Futures Command Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, June 8, 2021. The 2021 Army Futures Command Best Warrior Competition recognizes Soldiers who demonstrate commitment to the Army values, embody the Warrior Ethos, and represent the Force of the Future. (U.S. Army photo Sgt. David Cook)

ready for a division contest in a couple months. ’I was not expecting it at all,” Earnhart said.

From brigade level to the final competition, Krauland and Earnhart trained and competed over the course of nine months. With events in categories such as ruck marches, rifle marksmanship and warrior tasks and battle drills, where low crawling and dummy dragging are required, a military intelligence professional isn’t exactly high on the list of careers with such stringent physical requirements. But this year, it was two DLIFLC graduates who won.

Krauland has a theory. He believes it is his training at DLIFLC that helped him when he struggled with his classes.

“Just the skills I learned, the study skills in being able to learn Chinese and the different techniques played a huge role in my ability to prepare and retain the knowledge for this competition,” he said.

“It’s funny,” said Earnhart, “you would think that to an intelligence person or linguist [being physically fit] is not in their forefront or even should be.” But it’s in the military intelligence corps creed, he pointed out. The line “with a sense of urgency and of tenacity, professional and physical fitness” is what speaks to him. “Maybe I am an intelligence professional or a linguist but I’m also a Soldier.”

In the end, it wasn’t strictly the physical aspect that was needed, as Krauland learned. There was intelligence in the strategy, in the innovation needed for new situations or even in just using your energy efficiently during the 12-hour ruck march.

“I honestly say that intelligence plays a factor in every single event in the competition,” said Krauland. ●
USMC DETACHMENT

The U.S. Marine Corps Detachment on the Presidio of Monterey held a change of command on Soldier Field June 9, 2022, welcoming Lt. Col. Anna Maltese Voyne and bidding farewell to Lt. Col. Timothy Mayer. Mayer retired after 27 years of service, while Voyne came to DLIFLC from Okinawa, Japan, where she served as the G-2 in the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, the Aviation Combat Element of the III Marine Expeditionary Force. In 2010, Voyne studied at the Naval Postgraduate School where she received a master’s degree in Security Studies. In 2012 Voyne graduated from the DLIFLC Chinese language program and was stationed in Beijing, China, for a year as a part of her Foreign Area Officer training that entailed extensive traveling throughout China and Southeast Asia.

IWTC

Navy Commander Matthew Dalton took command of the Information Warfare Training Command Monterey May 6, 2022, from Navy Commander Josie Moore. Dalton came from Naval Base Coronado, California where he was the Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Force Cryptologist leading NSW’s cryptologic workforce conducting special operations globally. Dalton, a native of Phoenix, Arizona, received his commission from the United States Naval Academy in 2005, earning a Bachelor of Science in history. He also holds a Master of Arts in Strategic Intelligence from American Military University and was the Navy Federal Executive Fellow at Chicago Council on Global Affairs think tank from 2019 to 2020. He has served in multiple operational assignments at sea and ashore.
229TH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE BATTALION

Lt. Col. Christopher Gin assumed command of the 229th Military Intelligence Battalion June 17, 2022, relieving Lt. Col. Matthew Upperman. Gin returns to DLIFLC with over 17 years of active duty service to command the 229th Military Intelligence Battalion. He is a native of Fremont, California, and left home in 2001 to start his Army journey three months before September 11. After earning his commission at the United States Military Academy in 2005, Gin served two combat tours in Iraq as a Stryker Battalion Intelligence Officer with the 1-14 Infantry Battalion. Following the MI Captains Career Course, he commanded Charlie Company 229th MI Battalion and then served as the battalion operations officer from 2012-2014.

314TH TRAINING SQUADRON

Lt. Col. Juan Araoz took command of the Air Force 314th Training Squadron from Lt. Col. Joseph Ladymon on June 16, 2022. Araoz came to Monterey from the Pentagon where he served as the deputy for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Force Readiness Division and was in charge of global force management, readiness, foreign language and deployment. Araoz was commissioned in 2004 through the U.S. Air Force Academy and completed intelligence officer training in 2005. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Latin American Area Studies from the Air Force Academy and a master’s degree in Homeland Security from the American Military University.
The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center is a unique place. The military’s best and brightest are assigned to the Institute to learn languages at an incredibly fast pace. Every service member and civilian play instrumental roles in the success of the students, from leadership all the way down to the students. This latest podcast series, called Getting to know DLIFLC, gives a glimpse into the work and lives of students, staff and instructors at the Presidio of Monterey.

Below are the highlights of the podcast. For the full episode, visit soundcloud.com/DLIFLC.

On books vs. movies

Cruz: A book will always outperform a movie...Peter Jackson, the director, right? He had a visualization of what Lord of the Rings was, he knew what it looked like in his head, and he’s been interviewed, and he had a vision, but his vision wasn’t my vision because, when I read the books, I visualized the characters’ interaction in a particular way. The best way I can describe it is a book has a particular “texture” that you don’t get from a movie. So, regardless of the fact that there were epic theatrical events [portrayed], and well worth watching, [they were] still not as good as the expenditure of time reading the book. You will get more richness out of the book than you can from the movie.

On worst jobs

Kievit: What I took away from that job [Ross], which was definitely the worst job I ever had, was that I needed to double down on efforts in school and make sure I was never in a position where I didn’t have control of the job I wanted to do or the profession I wanted to take on.

On leadership

Saraceno: I do remember one situation where I experienced my first frustrating boss, my first frustrating leader, and I remember talking to a mentor of mine. He said you just have to chalk this up to “this is how you don’t want to be when you are in that leadership position, how you don’t want to be period – as a leader.” I was a young captain at the time, still learning my way and developing my leadership style and I really took that to heart because I thought the only way I’m going to get through this job is to think about it in that way. I’m going to rise above it and be the best that I can be, that’s not who I want to be and maybe I can help that individual with my own behavior and my own leadership style. Help that individual help everyone else in the organization. I carried that with me throughout my career.

On trends they would like to make a comeback

Saraceno: I’m tired of smartphones. Sometimes I just want to kick it old school, lay on the floor, the phone in my ear, the cord hanging down,
reminiscing my childhood talking to my friends, and then no one can reach me when I'm not at home.

Kievit: Standard transmission vehicles, that is the sign of a real driver. It requires you to concentrate on the act of driving and gives you the thrill and feel of actually being in control of the vehicle instead of the vehicle being kind of like a bumper car. Because I feel like that’s what you get with the automatic transmission generally, a bumper car. And then you add in Col. Saraceno’s smart phones and you have a disaster waiting to happen. But if you have your hand on the shifter and your left foot on the clutch, you don’t have time for texts or smartphones. You are in the act of driving and you’re paying attention to the road and having a great time in that vehicle.

Cruz: I wish empathy would come back. The reason being is, growing up in school or with my parents or whatever, I was brought up to listen to other people, and understand where they were coming from. That didn’t mean that I had to accept what they were saying, I didn’t have to accept it as truth or fact, but by showing empathy or understanding, we could communicate clearly and freely without potentially hurting each other’s feelings. Because I understand what you mean when you say [something], because I can empathize with where you are in your life because I’m listening to what you have to say. I may not agree with your viewpoints whether its political or religious or pick your topic. I don’t have to agree with you, but if I can show empathy and understand you, then through understanding, we can communicate freely. We can create a better way ahead.

Content has been edited for brevity and clarity.
Military Language Instructors, or MLIs, are a special breed of enlisted service members. They graduated from the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, served in their career field for several years, often at multiple locations with different missions, and then came back to Monterey to help train up the next generation of linguists. MLIs have been in the student’s boots and know their struggles. In their positions, they not only act as instructors but are the liaison between civilian instructors, the students and the units. Bringing MLIs together often involves raucous fun and joking – this Lingo episode, with Air Force Master Sgt. Alex Aiuto, Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Jason Noble, Marine Sgt. Joan Lee and Army Staff Sgt. James Fedo, is no exception.

Below are the highlights of the podcast. For the full episode, visit www.SoundCloud.com/DLIFLC.

On DLIFLC marriage
Fedo: [A] fun fact about me, I’m a DLI marriage. I know. I met my wife in my Russian class. The same section, six people, and we were next to each other. And we’re still together eight years later. So, it can work. [The] first year of marriage was just sheer stubbornness. I was like, we’re going to get through this. We’ll get through this. Because I’m not going to let anyone tell me they were right, and I was wrong. And, you know, eventually from that love blooms.

On apex of his linguist career
Noble: One time when I was flying from Ethiopia to Djibouti, Africa. In front of me, there was a Somali businessman trying to translate a Chinese and a German person talking to each other. It was hilarious to hear someone be like, “I don’t know what you’re saying in German,” and the person going, “I don’t know how to translate that in Chinese,” to the other person, Somali. I’m like, “I can’t talk to you, but this is what I was made for.” It’s the epitome of everything.

On worst experiences also being the best
Lee: It was great because I made good connections and I had a lot of opportunities to do things I would never be able to do. Like for the Marine PMEs, half of them were real PMEs. Like we discussed books and like [the] Marine Corps, knowledge and orders and stuff. But then the other half of the time, it was like us going out in town to eat food and to go to camel races and to visit the aquarium.

On taking his own road
Aiuto: I think it’s common for people to just to check a box and go for a degree that you’re already 90% of the way to getting through whatever
credits you’ve earned through your professional education. I think a lot of people do that because to higher ups it doesn’t matter what your degree is in, just as long as you have one. But I kind of like rejected that pressure and decided to go with something that was actually an area of interest for me, which is computer science. So, I took an online degree program. I spent six years doing it, used a lot of free TA money to get it done. But, at the end, I felt like it was worth it…what I didn’t imagine is how many ways you can apply those skills, even in our job in the military.

Content has been edited for brevity and clarity.
of the fact that he was German. He spoke German and he wanted to make an opera for German speakers. I mean, he was, you know, obviously performing in Austria primarily … at that time.

On accents
Hughes: So, I do think that there’s a connection between language and the ability to do accents. But really at the end of the day, when you’re learning a foreign language, you’re imitating someone else’s sounds or another culture as a sound, if that makes sense. And so, to some extent, I do think that there’s a correlation between having what I think musicians refer to as a good ear, and being able to at least reproduce language, um, from the phonetic perspective.

On Arabic dialects:
Hughes: I’d be curious … do you consider the different varieties of Arabic to be different languages?
Kaoyess: No, I count them as one. But if this is the question, then I’ll have at least 20 languages. I understand most of them, but if you ask me to produce them, I’ll always end up speaking with my Lebanese dialect. But I’m very familiar with the Iraqi dialect, Egyptian dialect. These are the main ones around me.

Kabrina-Coolidge: So, can you tell, let’s say if somebody is speaking Arabic, and you tell right away this person comes from this particular region?
Kaoyess: Even within the same dialect, you would know where in the Levant [the person is from]. For example, I would know if somebody is Syrian, if somebody is Jordanian, Palestinian or Lebanese, while we call all it [over here], Levantine.

On American vs. Russian vs. Lebanese culture
Kabrina-Coolidge: When somebody offers you something (in Russia), even if you want it, you’re not going to say, oh yes, definitely. I want it, give it to me. A person may say, “No, no,
thank you.” But then you offer them something again. And then we say, “Oh no, no, it’s okay.” But then you offer it again and they say, “thank you.” And they would think it, even if you’re just sitting at the table, let’s say if you’re having a meal together and we’re going to give you a little bit of the salad. “Oh no, no. It’s okay.” “But please have some more.” “No, no, it’s okay.” “Okay. I’ll have some more.” But in the U.S., it’s kind of the other way around.

Kaoyess: Like for food, we have so much in common. But for flowers, if you’re going to give somebody flowers, make sure it’s not 12, give them 24. You have to be generous in the Arabic culture [especially with] food. Try to be at somebody’s house, let’s say my mom’s house. And she made [food] for you. She’s trying to offer it for you. And you say, “no, thank you.” That’s offensive. You have to try it. She’s going to be like, “No, no.” And in our culture, it’s just out of love that they’re giving you food and they really want to feed you. Even though you just had dinner, it doesn’t matter. So, you just want to say, “oh, thank you” and try it.

Content has been edited for brevity and clarity.
Becoming a Foreign Area Officer

Foreign Area Officers, or FAOs, comprise less than 5% of the student body at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Monterey. These commissioned officers often attend classes side-by-side with the enlisted linguists. The FAO job essentially entails focusing on political-military operations at U.S. Embassies across the world. Each branch of the military has a different pathway to get their service members qualified, and each member has a unique story to tell about how they became a FAO. Listen in as four student officers share their experiences. https://soundcloud.com/dliflc

Get to know your FAOs

Foreign Area Officers comprise less than 5% of the student body at DLIFLC in Monterey. Each branch of the military has a different pathway to get their FAOs qualified for service and each member has a unique story to tell. Listen in as four student officers share their experiences. https://soundcloud.com/dliflc

By Tammy Cario
DLIFLC Public Affairs

FAOS in Lebanon specifically… they really turned me on, and it was always in the back of my mind to join [the] FAO [program] because I wanted to travel… [and] I can [also] use my background and my language to the benefit of the Department of Defense as a whole.

On supervising recruits at Parris Island

Riopelle: I was just mesmerized with this drill instructor situation, you know, what they are doing for these 70 training days. It was really valuable for me to see how, when a high school kid is wanting to join the Marine Corps. He goes, he becomes a “poolee” and then he becomes a recruit and then he goes through the 70 training days and earns his eagle, globe and anchor, and he becomes a United States Marine. It was neat to get to work with the drill instructor teams and watch that transformation happen. And then know what to expect as an officer of a Marine in a unit.
know that when that Pfc. shows up, this is all the knowledge he has so far, and I know what I can expect of him and what further training he needs in the (military occupation specialty) to achieve his goals.

**On daunting experiences**

**Wiser:** So, you know, it’s hard to be in a group like that and see the talent and feel the talent and not feel like maybe you’re out of your league. I don’t even know who said it, but a fun quote that I’ve heard and that I really like is, if I’m the smartest guy in the room, I’m in the wrong room. It’s just surround yourself with people who are better than you, who will bring you up all the time.

**On trying to fail but winning anyway**

**Widulinski:** So, I told the Admiral, I said, “You know, sir, this isn’t the job I wanted,” during my interview. I said, “You know, if I work for you, I will do my best,” but I said, “honestly, it’s just not what I want to do.” And of course, I got selected. So, I went to work with the Admiral. But it was the best career decision I ended up making.”

Content has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Nearly 95% of the students who come to DLIFLC end up learning category IV languages, which are the hardest to learn for native English speakers. To get into DLIFLC, prospective students are tested using the Defense Language Battery Test, an essentially made-up language test, not linked to a specific language, but used to gauge if they have the ability to learn a foreign language. Needless to say, the school receives some of the smartest service members in the country, who are therefore stereotyped as nerds. Being smart, however, will only get you so far when learning a foreign language at such a rapid pace. An often-used phrase to describe the training is “trying to drink water from a fire hose.” Our students not only build important life skills such as resiliency, grit, and time management, they develop a sense of community that can lead to lifelong friendships. If you’re thinking about becoming a linguist, have a child who is currently in training or you just want to relive your glory days as a student at DLIFLC, you’ll want to listen in as Air Force Airman 1st Class Tanner Cope, Marine Lance Cpl. Joseph Villalobos, Seaman Chris Moyer and Specialist Nafisa Kabir talk about their time at the Institute.

Below are the highlights of the podcast. For the full episode, visit SoundCloud.com/DLIFLC.

On time management
Nafisa: Before I came here, I was neurotically reading reviews on reddit as if that was going to help me at all. But I just wanted to know what I was getting myself into. The biggest thing that they said was, “Oh you’re going to have to schedule time to spend with your family. Otherwise, you simply will not.” And I was like, there’s no way. I love my husband. How am I going to just like throw him to the wolves, right? No, they were so right because there are days where I’m so engrossed, I’m so stressed over one project or another, my marriage is the absolute last thing on my mind. Not saying I don’t care, you know I do care. I just absolutely do not have time. So if we don’t schedule time to have date nights, even eat dinner together... it’s not going happen.

On imposter syndrome
Tanner: It can be very surreal and it can make you really wonder, “do I belong here?” And also I think we come in contact with so many incredible people here. I think everybody here was probably the smartest person in their hometown, right? And whether it’s your friends or peers or leadership or graduates. You see the Hall of Fame and Aiso library and there’s just so many incredible people that have come through here and you’re like “is this... am I here too? They let me do this?” I mean, sometimes those thoughts go through your mind and I think the intensity of the program can make you feel swamped and make you feel like you just have no idea what’s going on sometimes.

On outside activities
Joseph: All of the most fun activities I’ve done have been volunteering,
whether it’s with the Veterans Transition Center or just this past weekend I went out to a Boy Scouts Lodge and literally paved a six mile trail that a bunch of Boy Scouts are going to go to next weekend and just hike. So getting out there and knowing that you’re not only having fun, but helping the community is one of the best things in my opinion to do.

On the most important lesson learned

Chris: I guess that if I continued effort into trying to do something or achieve something then I definitely can. And I learned through a lot of hardships that happened to me since I’ve been here. If I really want to achieve something, no matter how difficult it gets, I can do it. And I think that was really relieving for me because I did want to give up a couple times just because of everything. I was almost at my breaking point, but I just kept thinking, if I could just overcome the situation, get to the end and pass, I think I’d be really proud of myself and just know for myself for the future. Even if there’s something, no matter how difficult it is, I can do it.

Content has been edited for brevity and clarity.
After a two-year hiatus, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center held Language Day May 13, 2022. This traditional celebration of language and culture is DLIFLC’s open house when the local community and high school students from all over California can visit.

This year, the event was much smaller in scope and size due to health and safety protocols. About 2,500 visitors attended the event, entertained by DLIFLC language students and instructors who presented more than 50 stage performances.

A special treat this year was the presence of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Horse Detachment from Ft. Irwin, California. The 11th Cavalry Regiment was originally assigned to the Presidio of Monterey from 1919 to 1941 when it was moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, and eventually converted to a mechanized cavalry.
The 229th Military Intelligence Battalion’s second annual Griffin Games served as a friendly competition that built esprit de corps, resiliency and readiness among Soldiers.

“This event is for all of you,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Lourdes Barragan, the battalion’s senior enlisted advisor, to the approximately 1,500 Soldiers on the Presidio of Monterey’s Price Fitness Center field at the kickoff April 22, 2022.

“Thank you for all that you do every single day to be successful, not only within your schoolhouses, but also for our Army,” Barragan told the Soldiers. “We can’t do what we do, and we can’t be the great Army that we are, without each and every one of you.”

Most Soldiers assigned to the battalion are language students at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, and they competed in teams by company in challenges that included the Army Combat Fitness Test, a ruck march, pugil stick fights, a dodgeball tournament, a variety of games and much more. Company C took the top honors.

The event focused on competition to reinforce resiliency and mental toughness, said Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Reynolds, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the games.

“The fight or the victory starts and ends in the mind,” Reynolds said. “It’s a mindset…so we put them against each other to compete and remind them of that mental toughness, that mental agility, to understand that they can overcome, physically, any challenge.”
Service members participated in the Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month Teal Run on April 27, 2022, at the Presidio of Monterey. Lt. Col. Matthew Upperman and Command Sgt. Maj. Lourdes Barragan, command team of the 229th Military Intelligence Battalion, led the run, which began at the Hilltop Track and ended near Soldier Field with volunteers showering participants in colored powder as they neared the finish line.

The Teal Run is an event that raises awareness about sexual assault and sexual harassment. Each year the Presidio of Monterey SHARP and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response offices organize events for the month of April such as Chalk Walks, Consent is Cool, and Open House with the participation of all military services and many professionals from the Chaplain’s services, Staff Judge Advocate and the POM Medical Clinic. This year’s theme for SAAPM was, “Prevention starts with you.”
The nature of the cryptolinguist’s work after training at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center is often shrouded in mystery because of the secrecy involved in the mission. Thankfully, sometimes the job takes the graduates to amazing places to do things they can talk about.

One such event took Army Sgt. Hailey Fairchild, to Indonesia to participate in a joint exercise called Garuda Shield held in the summer of 2021.

“Approximately one month before moving (from DLIFLC), I received a call from my chief stating that I needed to begin the passport process because I would be heading to Indonesia,” said Fairchild.

This tasking was unexpected as Fairchild had just graduated from DLIFLC in November of 2020, the first class to finish their entire language training program online.

“Just one day after starting class we moved to Microsoft Teams due to coronavirus,” she said. “From then on my small class was totally virtual until the date of our DLPT.” The DLPT, or Defense Language Proficiency Test, is the final test students take at the end of the course. The DLPT was the first time the class was able to meet their instructors in person.

Without face-to-face interaction, the students had to get creative, Fairchild said, with things like talking to themselves, listening to podcasts or recording themselves talking about the news. Fairchild also labeled everything in her barracks room with the idea that she would constantly see Indonesian vocabulary. She believes it was the combination of these efforts and the teaching team that helped her be successful in the program.

She was so successful that, within 18 months of starting her first Indonesian language class, Fairchild was on a plane to Indonesia to participate as an interpreter in exercise Garuda Shield, a joint training exercise between the Indonesian Army and the U.S. Army that helps to strengthen the diplomatic and military partnership through training.

“Both nations are able to gain things and learn a lot through cooperation, friendship and partnership building,” Fairchild said. “It was an incredible opportunity to work with the Indonesian military, the extremely talented foreign area officers stationed in Indonesia, and an incredible opportunity to work for my commanders.”

Fairchild and her unit stayed in the field in Baturaja, South Sumatra, living in tents for about a month with temperatures sometimes reaching the real feel of 110 degrees. When they first arrived in country a week early to quarantine for coronavirus, they noticed there were bells often ringing in town. Fairchild learned that they had arrived during a holiday, Indonesia’s Independence Day. She said it was her teachers and instruction team who helped her class understand the cultural nuances, knowledge that was
useful particularly during the exercise.

“(DLIFLC training) provided me the opportunity to understand things like religious celebrations, the food we got to enjoy, interpersonal relations taboos, and more.” Because of the depth of her knowledge of the language and culture, it also gave her a chance to have deeper conversations with their Indonesian partners.

During the exercise, she not only worked as an interpreter, but Fairchild was considered a subject matter expert for her command team.

“Where Sgt. Fairchild stood out was her understanding of American and Indonesian military jargon to provide more accurate and fine-tuned translations than her civilian counterparts,” said Capt. Evelyn Payne, company commander for Delta Company, 65th Brigade Engineer Battalion. Garuda Shield had approximately five to 10 civilian translators that assisted with logistics, military operations and briefings but they didn’t necessarily know the military jargon, said Payne, and that can make a big difference.

One of the things that stood out the most to Fairchild during the exercise was her opportunity to interpret and work with the Chief of Staff of the Indonesian Army, Gen. Andika Perkasa, a four-star general, and his wife. “It was an opportunity I never imagined I would have,” said Fairchild. Considering that less than two years ago Fairchild had never spoken a word of Indonesian, this was an impressive jump. She credits her success to her instructors because of their hard work and dedication.

“The teaching team was amazing,” she said.
It was in late August 2021 that the staff and faculty at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center got the call – the Air Force and the Army were looking for volunteer Pashto and Dari linguists to help with Operation Allies Welcome, the federal government-wide effort to support vulnerable Afghan refugees and assist in their resettlement.

The backdrop was complicated. DLIFLC not only trains military members, a number of whom lost their lives in the 20 years fighting the war on terror in Afghanistan, it also employs people from all over the world, to include Afghans who still have family and friends in country.

To say that the U.S. pull out of Afghanistan was bittersweet would be to oversimplify it. As rescue operations grew to epic proportions, it became clear that linguists and native speakers would be needed to assist in all aspects of the resettlement process.

“I was excited for the opportunity,” said Sgt. 1st Class Bobby Keeth, chief military language instructor for the Persian Farsi schoolhouse, who volunteered to assist. “It was something I’d never done before.”

Keeth and his team of Soldiers arrived in early September to the Rhine Ordnance Barracks, Germany, just one of eight U.S. military installations across Europe taking in evacuees.

The expectation, Keeth said, was to process the evacuees rapidly and send them off to their respective locations stateside for more in-depth processing. Because of an agreement with the German government to have the refugees in country no more than 10 days, they planned to have all the evacuees taken care of and on to their next destination by mid-September.

“There were five military linguists and maybe five or 10 contractors for a group of something like 8,000 individuals,” Keeth said.

Keeth used his Persian Farsi, a language very similar to Afghan Dari, to help with what he referred to as “exfil” or exfiltration, the quick processing of evacuees to get to their next station in one of eight different military installations across the U.S. This meant confirming their identity, getting the families together for the bus manifest and then plane manifest. All done typically within 12 hours.

But within five days of Keeth’s arrival, a measles outbreak caused the Center for Disease Control to shut down flights for three weeks. And the entire operation took a massive turn.

“It went from being a straight exfil operation to sustainment operations,” he said.

The move from exfilling to finding accommodations, bedding, facilities and food for the thousands of evacuees was quick. Gigantic, hard-sided tents were used, complete with fans to cool and heat as needed. It also meant that Keeth and his team switched their focus to helping the Afghans to be as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, which brought its own logistical challenges.

They began holding daily meetings, or shuras, with the elders, to talk about expectations, making sure certain standards were being met and addressing any concerns.

“We [were] looking to create trust with the Afghans,” said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Turner, a DLIFLC linguist who was also assigned to ROB as an interpreter. “We tr[ied] to be viewed as humans every day,” added.

Meanwhile, several Air Force linguists who were DLIFLC staff with Pashto, Dari and Farsi language skills had been sent to Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, to help the Afghans, or guests as they were called, settle into the villages built specifically for the evacuees. They landed at the base in late August, expecting to take the next flight to Germany to help out there. Instead, they stayed in New Mexico.

“We were the first ones there along with the civil engineers,” said Staff Sgt. Heather Stock, a Persian Farsi linguist and an academic training advisor at DLIFLC. This meant that they watched the camp, called Aman Omid Village, being built from the ground up. “We also arrived before the evacuees,” she added.

In fact, the linguists arrived only 12 hours before the first flight was supposed to fly in. It was still in the early days before the complete withdrawal from Afghanistan and the forces were scrambling to have everything prepared for their guests.

“For these people, hospitality is huge in their culture,” explained Tech. Sgt. Phil Rowe, a Pashto-speaking chief MLI at DLIFLC. “We wanted them to be viewed as humans every day,”
rather than as a refugee, which can have a negative connotation, he explained.

The guests would be staying longer at Holloman AFB while their paperwork was being processed by the State Department, so the focus for the linguists there was on sustainment—how could they help make things easier for these displaced people who were not only coming from an incredibly difficult situation but were now in an entirely different culture?

Stock found it to be a challenge to communicate at times.

“We were translators, but we turned into social workers,” she said. She explained that it can be complicated to communicate in your own language let alone in a foreign tongue when you don’t have the solutions. “Having to empathize with a mother who lost her child because the Taliban murdered them in target language is nearly impossible.”

It was a potent mix of uncertainty, fear and reaction. One small way to alleviate some of that discomfort was to always speak to the evacuees in their language, whether they knew English or not.

“We still always initiated conversation in target language to let them know, that’s why we’re here — make sure that they can articulate their feelings and needs in their own language instead of having to adjust to English,” Stock said.

Despite the challenges, long days and frustrations, there was a universal consensus that it was a life-changing experience.

Being there from the start, helping to build everything from the ground up meant Rowe was reluctant to leave. “You begin to get this sense of ownership, and get protective over what you have built,” he said. He’s still part of the text threads, paying attention to how things are going after he left.

Even with two deployments in the war on terror under his belt, Keeth felt it was the most fulfilling thing he had ever done in the Army. “This was far beyond anything that I’ve done [with] it being a humanitarian mission. Just the ability to go out and actually give these people a voice and help them was very fulfilling.”

Article written with contributions from Shaylee R. Borcsani at USAG Rheinland-Pfalz.
What are the chances of getting on a reality show in the United States, or in any other country for that matter? For Tech. Sgt. Brendan Cummings, becoming recognizable on the streets of Seoul, Korea, was just another exciting couple of days in his eight-year linguist career.

“There was a 30 second trailer and two people came up to me to ask me if I was the guy on the trailer. Everyone in my apartment building knew,” said Cummings, in an interview from Songtan, near Osan Air Force Base, Korea.

“As life inevitably presents one with the unexpected, Cummings, who graduated from the Korean Basic course in 2015, was stationed in Korea during the pandemic and still resides there with his spouse and young family.

“This Korean broadcasting company first approached my wife and asked her if we would want to participate in a reality show,” said Cummings, adding that featuring foreigners on the show who lived or were visiting Korea for the first time was popular with the domestic audience.

“Technically, the show is about foreigners’ first experience in Korea. In the original show, they wanted people who didn’t necessarily speak Korean, so they could experience certain Korean cultural events for the first time and see their reaction,” explained Cummings who said the producers told him to speak what comes naturally. For the Cummings family, Korean is the first language.

How did this all come together? "My wife pitched the idea to film our daughter’s first birthday. This is a big event for Koreans because it symbolizes health and prosperity and is celebrated lavishly,” he said.

The first shoot took place last November, with segments featuring Cummings cooking in the kitchen with his children patiently waiting for breakfast, chit chatting back and forth with their father in Korean. The second segment covers shopping for a special Korean traditional dress for his daughter, followed by the third and final shoot in February 2022 of...
the actual birthday party with a small audience, mainly family and fellow service members.

When the show was broadcast, unlike in U.S. reality shows, the main guest is present in the studio and is offered the opportunity to comment on what is shown.

“Koreans like commentary on the videos by the person in the video, which makes it reality TV [for them]. On the bottom right [of the screen] there will be a commentary box, with famous actors and the person who was on the show,” said Cummings.

Coincidentally, Public Affairs had an opportunity to travel with Cummings on his first immersion to Seoul in 2015, when his proficiency was much more modest. When asked how he felt about his career and subsequent life choices, Cummings said that the opportunities presented to him by learning Korean definitely set him on an unexpected course.

“There are so many life decisions I have made that are seemingly random, or [a result of] lack of experience and [the need to] have to do something,” he said, citing how he joined the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps to get a scholarship, but that a failing class turned him toward DLIFLC.

“I would have never seen myself here. But in the same vein, I also feel surprisingly at home with a lot of the people that are in this career field. It’s almost like we had the same random doors open for us and ended up in the same room.”

As for the future, Cummings said that his wife is such a good entrepreneur who runs a bakery in Songtan, that he could envision himself becoming a stay-at-home dad, or maybe a teacher in North Carolina someday.
Jennifer Anne Champney says she is naturally one of those people whom everyone talks to about their concerns, challenges and issues.

“I have a wide variety of experiences and life lessons that let me see many perspectives and help find creative solutions.” As the ombuds, she says she is always ready to help solve interpersonal issues at the lowest level and focuses on repairing and growing relationships.

Champney’s history in having difficult conversations and conflict resolution is part of what makes her ideal as the new ombuds for the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. Her job is to help people feel like they have someone to talk to and who will listen to them without bias when they feel they are unable to communicate effectively with a co-worker, a supervisor, or someone they supervise.

“We want the ombuds to be a recourse for people in the workplace,” said Steve Collins, Chief of Staff for DLIFLC. “The ombuds position does not substitute for or supplant the Equal Employment Office or the Inspector General.” Rather, Champney’s role is to be an impartial person who provides an independent, confidential and informal avenue for anyone struggling with discord in their office.

“Often, just increasing communication and being able to see an issue from another person’s perspective can solve a great many problems in the workplace,” Collins said. “We are very happy to have Anne join our team.”

Most people view conflict as a bad thing, Champney says, but she sees it another way.

“There are so many different ways to change and grow and learn, and you can’t do any of that without conflict. Whether that’s conflict within yourself or conflict with others,” she said, “I only see it as a way to grow and move forward.” Champney also offers tools to help navigate change, which often becomes a point of tension and conflict, as well as training in a variety of areas.

Champney, who goes by her middle name, Anne, came to DLIFLC from Naval Station Newport, Rhode Island where she worked for the Navy with Fleet and Family. She was a major part of the Base Suicide Prevention and Awareness efforts by providing training and education. She also was on the emergency operations team, provided case management for disasters and worked with leadership to provide targeted training in many life skill topics. Before that, she worked as an ombuds for wounded warriors, where she provided case management, mediation and resources for Soldiers and families.

Over the years and at several Military bases, Champney has held various instructor positions where she has delivered training on such topics like communication, gratitude, mindfulness and battling cognitive distortion. Champney plans to continue to offer some of these ideas to the DLIFLC community as a tool to help mitigate stress and conflict.

“I feel that having and practicing some of these basic skills is the best way to resolve conflict. It’s nothing new, and it’s not rocket science, but these basics can get pushed aside in the hustle of the daily mission,” she said.

Jennifer Anne Champney, DLIFLC’s new ombuds, goes by Anne and can be reached at 831-242-3500 (Photo by Natela Cutter, DLIFLC Public Affairs)
Airman 1st Class Tanner Cope was awarded a Joint Service Achievement Medal Feb. 4, 2022, during a ceremony held at Hilltop Track on the Presidio of Monterey. Cope received the medal in recognition of having saved the life of a civilian by performing the Heimlich maneuver.

On Nov. 17, 2021, Cope, a student at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, was out to lunch in a downtown restaurant when a man stood up from his table and began yelling for help while his friend, Belinda Deranieri, was bent over, coughing and gasping for air.

“He just jumped up and didn’t hesitate to step in,” said Natela Cutter, the DLIFLC public affairs chief who had taken her team to the restaurant, along with Cope, who had been working with them while awaiting the start of his classes. “Before the rest of us realized what was going on, it was all over and we were in shock.”

After the event, Deranieri thanked Cope profusely.

“He saved my life!” she said.

During the award ceremony held before the 311th and 314th Air Force Squadrons gathered for a Friday resiliency exercise, Col. James Kievit presented the award to Cope in recognition of his bravery.

“Cope did what we want everyone in uniform to do – see something wrong and have the personal courage to help, despite any fears or embarrassment,” Kievit said, comparing it to the kind of intervention needed when a fellow classmate is suffering.

Air Force Col. Jennifer Saraceno, commander of the 517th Training Group, said of Cope, “He was in superhero mode.”

Below, Airman 1st Class Tanner Cope after receiving the Joint Service Achievement Medal Feb. 4, 2022, during a ceremony held at Hilltop Track on the Presidio of Monterey. Cope received the medal in recognition of having saved the life of a civilian by performing the Heimlich maneuver. (Photo by Natela Cutter, DLIFLC Public Affairs). Left, Maj. Gen. Anthony R. Hale, the commanding general of the Intelligence Center of Excellence and Fort Huachuca, presenting Cope with his coin during a visit to the Institute (Photo by Leonardo Carrillo, DLIFLC Public Affairs). Cope with Deranieri after saving her life at a local restaurant. (Photo by Natela Cutter, DLIFLC Public Affairs)
Nearly 200 service members at the Presidio of Monterey have paid tribute to an installation bus driver by giving him a name tape to display inside his bus.

Retired Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Robert "Gunny" Enriquez started "Gunny's Wall of Fame" with only three name tapes three months ago, and it has grown exponentially since then. Most of Enriquez's passengers are students from all branches of the military attending the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center.

"It really shows how much we mean to him," said Airman 1st Class Sebastian Peralta, who is assigned to the 314th Training Squadron and gave Enriquez one of his name tapes. "I think it's a way of us showing how much he means to us by kind of immortalizing ourselves on the bus."

On weekdays, seven shuttle buses rotate to help students get from place to place during peak hours. Enriquez has driven a bus on post for about eight years, and before that, he served in the Marine Corps for 22 years. Other decorations on the bus—Marine Corps stickers, challenge coins and stuffed animals—make it clear he takes pride in his service.

Enriquez enlisted in the Marine Corps directly after he graduated from nearby Seaside High School in 1971. He served as a crew chief on CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters and served in Hawaii, Africa, Korea, Guam and Okinawa.

He loves his job as a bus driver, Enriquez said, because he enjoys being around military personnel. He was born at Fort Benning, Georgia, and grew up as a military brat in Hawaii and California. His father was a drill sergeant at the former Fort Ord and he treasures his time in the Marine Corps.

"I owe my life to the Marine Corps," Enriquez said. "I wasn't going down the right path before I joined the Marine Corps. I was messing up in high school, and luckily I graduated, and the day I graduated I went straight into the Marine Corps."

Not only does Enriquez cherish his time in service, he wants the service members to know he values their service as well. The Wall of Fame is a tribute, he said.

"I appreciate them for doing everything that they're going through," Enriquez said. "Not only are they trained to become linguists, but they also have their military obligations to fulfill while they're here. I admire them. I commend them. They have a full plate of responsibility."

Service members said they gave Enriquez name tapes because they appreciate the way he treats them and because the Wall of Fame boosts morale.

"Sometimes, especially after a long day of classes—it can be pretty brutal—and just knowing that your name is up there is a little, 'Hey, that's me. That's my bus,'" said Airman Johnathan Sanchez of the 314th Training Squadron.

Peralta noted that when an Airman with a broken leg got on the bus and Enriquez cheerfully greeted him—and made sure he had plenty of time to get to his seat—it was typical behavior for Enriquez.

"He's always willing to say, 'Hi,'" Peralta said. "Just like when that Airman with the broken leg walked past, he was, 'Hey, what's up? How are you doing?' He's very interactive and very fun."

Airman Andrew Martz of the 314th Training Squadron also contributed his name tape and said he appreciates how Enriquez treats everyone.

"Gunny just has a really special energy about him," Martz said. "First of all, every other bus driver you call him 'sir,' but Gunny, we all call him 'Gunny.' He's just Gunny, I guess. He's always..."
really friendly coming up on the bus, and just by seeing this up on the wall, you can see there’s a real appreciation there.”

Brian Clark, director of the PoM Logistics Readiness Center and a former logistics officer in the Air Force, said he gave Enriquez a name tape from his time in the Air Force in hopes that others would do the same. The display is a great morale builder, he said, and it’s exciting to see how many people have participated.

“Gunny is very popular with PoM’s service members and hopes to bring joy to those who ride his bus,” Clark said. “Gunny’s positive attitude and his name-tape display are a welcome and fun distraction from the stressful day that all service members experience while attending DLI.”

Enriquez said he wants to help the students as much as possible because he appreciates that they volunteered to serve their country. By helping the students he continues to serve his country.

“Once they start riding my bus enough, I get to know them,” Enriquez said. “I get to know the students. I know when they’re down and out or there’s something bothering them. So, then I ask them, ‘Are you OK?’ Because when they’re not their normal self, something’s wrong, so I ask them.”

For example, a Marine Corps teddy bear on Enriquez’s dashboard is from a former student he helped. The student told him she was having trouble with her Arabic classes and was thinking about quitting. Enriquez told her, “Just take it a day at a time and do the best you can every day. That’s all they can ask of you.” She did exactly that, and after she passed her classes, she presented Enriquez with the bear to say thank you.
When the plane landed in the United States, for 10-year-old Yan Voskanov, the drive from the airport to their new dwellings was full of ghosts, zombies, and demons. It was Halloween weekend – 1994.

"Everything that used to be black and white [in Armenia] all of the sudden turned to color," said now Senior Master Sgt. Voskanov, the liaison for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center.

"Coming from Armenia, where there was little choice, I looked at stores with an abundance of colorful toys and was blown away," he said. "Obviously, as a child, I saw this difference as being able to choose, but later it became about choosing what I wanted in life and being free to do so," he explained.

The early 1990s, as the Soviet Union began to slowly unravel and shed its communist hold over satellite republics, the power vacuum in the newly founded nation states often reignited age-old political, religious and economic disagreements. This in turn, created instability within the newly founded nations.

For Voskanov, whose grandparents had been sent to Russian dictator Joseph Stalin’s gulags, an opportunity to immigrate to the United States was an easy decision to make as relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan deteriorated, eventually leading to armed conflict.

A few weeks after Sept. 11, 2001, an Air Force recruiter walked into Voskanov’s vehicle shop class in high school and told him that he could go to college for free if he joined.

"He asked me if I wanted to work on super charged Camaros that chase after these cool U2 spy planes and go to Germany. I thought ‘sure, sign me up,’" he said. "My mother would be happy because I can go to college, even though I didn’t really want to study," he said.

To Voskanov’s chagrin, he would not see a U2 spy plane until 15 years later, but he did get to go to Germany. "As I was standing in line in Ramstein, a guy walks up to me and speaks to me in Russian… stunned, I said ‘yes,’" and from there, most of Voskanov’s career reads like a true spy novel.

"He asked me if I wanted to be a linguist, to study Russian, and do these really cool trips to Russia, to be a nuclear arms control inspector, and study Russian, and do these really cool trips to Russia, to be a nuclear arms control inspector," he said.
so to speak,” he explained. “I ended up going to DLI to perfect my Russian and learn translation and interpretation. Let me tell you, it wasn’t easy. I thought it was going to be a breeze, but oh boy, it was humbling,” Voskanov said with a chuckle.

With the conclusion of his training, Voskanov became a member of an elite team that would combat weapons of mass destruction, as a part of DTRA, the U.S. representatives who verify the reduction of nuclear arms. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty was signed by the U.S. and the then Soviet Union, in 1991. In the years to come, the treaty stopped the deployment of 6,000 nuclear warheads and another 1,600 intercontinental ballistic missiles.

“I am very proud to have been part of the last original START treaty escort team, and the first to conduct inspections in the second ratified 2011 agreement,” said Voskanov, who today serves as a liaison officer between the language school that trains the inspectors and DTRA headquarters at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia.

“One of my more memorable adventures was one night in Murmansk, Russia. There were three of us Americans and five Russians sitting in a truck. They were supposedly making sure that no one touched the Russian submarine we were supposed to examine the next morning,” said Voskanov.

As the conversation got going on a very cold spring night, the Russians began talking to their counterparts and soon found out that they knew a few more words in Russian than they expected. One of the U.S. members started talking in Russian about all kinds of things, from zombies to vodka and immediately, the five Russians became silent.

“You like vodka?” one asked, said Voskanov, “Yes,” said my colleague, whom I had taught how to say a few words.” All of a sudden the Russians exited the truck, one after another.

“We sat there looking at each other, thinking, ‘wait – where did they go, aren’t they supposed to be watching us watch the sub?’” In a half hour the group showed up with smoked salmon, rye bread and vodka.

“It was a fun night and thank goodness I don’t drink, so we were able to do our inspection, and everything went great,” he said.
Members of the Defense Language Institute’s Russian Language Soldiers’ Chorus sing in front of the Sloat Monument, former Fort Mervine, Monterey, Calif., 1965. Nicholas Vorobiov, instructor and choir master, directs them. (Photo Credit: Courtesy photo)
During World War II, the Military Intelligence Service Language School, the predecessor of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center at the Presidio of Monterey, established a choir that allowed members to learn and sing traditional Japanese folk music. The MISLS choir facilitated learning in the target language, gave insights into the culture of the language being taught, and had recreational aspects.

Members practiced during their off time and on weekends, often performing in the historic chapel of Fort Snelling, Minnesota, where the school was then based. The choir gave featured performances during graduation ceremonies even after moving to PoM, choosing to sing “Megumi No Hikari,” a tune composed by the well-known Japanese organist Eizaburo Kioka, and directed by Staff Sgt. Tsuyushi Matsumoto for the December 1946 graduation.

In 1947 the Army recast its Japanese language school into a multi-language program better suited to the needs of a “cold war” with the Soviet Union. Russian quickly became the flagship program with up to 1,000 students studying at PoM at any given time. Without skipping a beat, the newly established Army Language School recruited dozens of Soldiers eager to improve their language skills by learning to belt out Russian folk tunes.

That same year, the ALS Soldiers’ Chorus performed “Stenka Razin” and “Polushko” at the October commencement. While the MISLS Choir set the precedent, the ALS Soldiers’ Chorus was perhaps more consciously modeled upon the world-famous Don Cossack Choir organized by Serge Jaroff in 1921 from the charismatic exiled opponents of the Bolsheviks.

Nicholas Romanoff was the first director of the ALS choir, but Nicholas Vorobiov went on to lead it for more than two decades transforming the choir into a signature program of the school, which became as well known in its time as Language Day is known today.

By Cameron Binkley, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center Command Historian
Shortly before World War II ended, the nascent school, then known as the Military Intelligence Service Language School, which was established to teach Japanese, offered one single class in Mandarin Chinese. Planners expected U.S. forces would need to fight Japanese forces in parts of China occupied by Japan. However, Japan’s earlier-than-expected surrender eliminated that requirement.

In 1947, the MISLS became a multi-language program renamed the Army Language School. Along with 10 other languages, ALS again hired instructors for a one-year Mandarin course taught to about 20 students.

In 1949, the communist People’s Republic of China took control of mainland China, which solidified an ongoing U.S. military requirement for skillful Chinese linguists. Chinese language training was here to stay.

In the early 1950s, ALS responded to the Korean conflict with an expanded Chinese program, including a Cantonese department that was second only to Russian in number of students — 446, along with 32 Cantonese and 34 Mandarin instructors. A typical instructor was Nancy Cheng, originally from Beijing, who arrived from Taiwan in 1952 but with credentials from New York University. By the late 1950’s, the school’s requirement for Chinese linguists dropped below 150 per year, caused in large part by the Air Force having established an Asian language training program at Yale University. That decision provoked congressional concerns, and in 1963 the Defense Department reorganized linguist training for all branches of the military under a single authority, and renamed the school to the Defense Language Institute.

In the early 1960s, the Vietnam conflict brought another increase in Chinese language students. DLI trained more than 2,000 Chinese linguists in the years from 1966 to 1970, peaking in 1968 with 630

By Cameron Binkley and Dr. Joseph Ryan
Command History Office
students. In 1965, the Air Force closed its Chinese program at Yale and in turn, DLI established the Mandarin Air Force Aural Comprehension Course in Monterey. [The Institute changed its name once again in 1974, to the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, as it came under the stewardship of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command.]

The move of the Air Force program from Yale was shepherded by Mr. Robert Tharp (1913-1993). A pioneer in language laboratories, Tharp had created the program at Yale and was hired by the Army to replicate it at DLI. Born to missionary parents in Manchuria, Tharp enjoyed a long career in Chinese language education at various locales, but returned several times to teach at the Presidio of Monterey. Tharp was honored by the National Security Agency for his work in language and in 2011 was inducted into the DLIFLC Hall of Fame. Although the MAFAC program was successful, it remained separate and distinct from the existing Chinese Mandarin program, resulting in institutional tension. These issues were eventually resolved and were the driving force behind the development of a new program called the Chinese Mandarin Aural Comprehension Course, which began in 1970.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon visited Beijing, China, as a step toward normalizing relations with the PRC. With a perceived diminishing threat, Chinese language training at DLIFLC also decreased, falling below 300 enrolled students per year. A new interagency effort to develop a new Chinese language course began around this time, which came to be known as the ICC - Interagency Chinese Curriculum. Introduced at DLIFLC in 1978, the ICC was soon abandoned, probably for lack of instructor buy-in. DLIFLC instructors returned to developing their own curriculum. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter visited Beijing, resulting in the formal recognition of the PRC. Chinese language enrollment fell again to under 100 per year.
In the mid 1970s, the labs pioneered by Robert Tharp became more comprehensive as pedagogy and technology interacted in search of both quality and efficiency. The CMACC program also became the standard Chinese language course, itself ever more refined by the quest for accreditation, which DLIFLC courses gained in 1979. In that year DLIFLC graduated 2,358 students in 29 languages.

By early 1980, the Chinese Mandarin program was one of the six largest departments by number of students graduating. Chinese instructors also produced the Chinese Basic Course by melding elements of the ICC and CMACC programs. By the mid-1980s, the new 47-week Chinese Basic Course produced steadily climbing scores on the Defense Language Proficiency Test III. One of the more interesting individuals teaching Chinese during this period was instructor Hung Tao Lung, a former Republic of China major general, who had fought both the Japanese and the Chinese communists during the 1930s and 40s as a tank commander. After retiring from the Nationalist Chinese Army, Lung became an instructor at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute in Taiwan and later DLIFLC.

In the 1990s, a new reorganization took place as a result of a Chinese curriculum review and subsequent formation of a Chinese Technology Task Force. The Asian School I deans, Ben De La Selva and Charles Olney, and the Chinese department heads Harry Olsen and Victor Wen, spearheaded this reorganization. The move was driven by increased student input, faculty shortages, and the need to lengthen the Chinese course from 47 to 63 weeks. The course extension was a much-desired goal but one which required a new curriculum for a much longer course. Out of the task force’s work also came computer-based classes for the department’s new Macintosh computers. Despite these rapid changes, around 40% of Chinese language students were reaching a 2/2/1+ level of proficiency when taking the newly created Chinese Mandarin DLPT IV. Chinese remained the largest language in Asian School I throughout the nineties, and in 1999 it added a third department.

The Chinese Language Program began the new century with an age-old problem – faculty staffing. Forty-two Chinese sections required
84 instructors in 2002. In 2003, that number dropped to only 64 instructors. Asian I School dean Peter Armbrust navigated this difficult personnel terrain, followed by Dr. Luba Grant. By 2005, the Chinese program encompassed four departments and had 90 instructors. The CBC was conducted in three semesters, was continually revised, and Chinese language students consistently won language competitions, throwing their hats in with students from universities such as Berkeley and Stanford. In 2007, the Asian I School added two more Chinese language departments for a total of five. Additionally, the Chinese language was routinely studied on Apple personal computers, tablets, and iPads. The year 2012 saw a 2/2/1+ graduation rate growth to 84.7% and the Chinese program continued to expand. 

By 2015, U.S. military leaders called China a “peer competitor.” Disputes between China and other nations on the high seas and on the Indian frontier were signals of growing Chinese bellicosity. With this trend continuing, the need for Chinese linguists remained consistent into the 2020s. Management of the Chinese language program continues to rest on the ability to adjust numbers of students and faculty, to deliver high-caliber instruction under frequent organizational shifts, and the wisdom to adjust pedagogical approaches and curriculum. With decades of experience, DLIFLC’s Chinese language program remains a model of flexibility and achievement.
A member of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Horse Detachment from Ft. Irwin, California, rides through a course shooting at targets during a demonstration at Soldier Field as part of the Language Day celebration at DLIFLC. The 11th Cavalry Regiment was originally assigned at the Presidio of Monterey from 1919 to 1941 when it was moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, and eventually converted to a mechanized cavalry. (Photo by Leonardo Carrillo, DLIFLC Public Affairs)