

2 December 2011

National Defense University's (NDU) Response to Joint Staff Action request, Screening Process for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Trainers and Speakers (U)

Background: recent negative media attention on the FBI's CVE training and DOD lectures delivered to DOD personnel raised questions about the accuracy and quality of materials and the credentials of those presenting the material. Although the focus of this inquiry started with CVE training, the OSD is concerned about the process for vetting curriculum development for cultural awareness and for choosing instructors and guest lecturers to present this material.

Discussion: As stated in the Joint Staff Action Processing Form, "A central tool in countering that [Al-Qa'ida] ideology is knowledge – knowledge of the complex religious, cultural, and social context in which as-Qa'ida tries to advance its worldview." As a graduate institution, dedicated to the education of military and government leaders who will be asked to make national and international security decisions, one of NDU's goals is to stimulate intellectual development through exposure to multiple perspectives. Our student body consists of senior-level military officers, civilian leaders in government (interagency), and international officers. The seminars are intentionally small so that the discussion can be robust and the interaction among this diverse group engaging and collaborative. Cultural issues are often discussed as a result of classroom discussion, diversity of the students, and faculty – student interaction. ***The curriculum is vetted through College-level curriculum committees or academic review committees which ensure students receive a senior-level professional education (vice training) in national security strategy.*** Our faculty members consist of civilian Title Ten employees who must go through a rigorous hiring process and military faculty who are sent to us by their individual Services. Civilian faculty members are chosen based on education, experience, and ability to teach. Although we do not have as much of a choice in bringing on our military faculty, we develop their teaching ability through faculty development programs and monitor their progress closely. We value military faculty for their operational experience, balancing theory and practice in the classroom. Each College requires student feedback to ensure continual improvement in both curriculum and faculty performance. Through this feedback loop, College leaders make decisions about what is working and what is not.

In our Joint Professional Military Education institutions (National War College, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and Joint Forces Staff College) College-wide speakers address topics related to the core curriculum. The College Dean of Faculty and Academic Programs reviews and vets proposed speakers for their subject matter expertise and academic and teaching credibility. ***The Commandants have the final review of recommended speakers and issues invitations to those he approves.*** Given the educational mission of the Colleges, we invite some speakers to come who provide alternative viewpoints that are grounded in credible scholarship and/or experience. Have alternative viewpoints challenge our students' powers of analysis and critical thinking. Often recommendations for speakers come from the faculty, Senior Fellows, and other stakeholders or the individual is chosen to speak based on a previous presentation that had been seen. In addition, speakers are chosen from among faculty colleagues, usually outside the College, to come in and speak because of they are subject-matter experts.

2 December 2011

NDU has courses that deal with Military Information Support Operations, Civil-Military Operations, Information Operations, and Military Intelligence which may contain some CVE instruction. In most cases, faculty members seek subject-matter experts to address the issues (for example, in one class from Information Operations, they cover the “jihadist” use of IO and invite a colleague from another College with the expertise to conduct that lesson). One program directed by former CJCS, Admiral Mike Mullen, is the Afghanistan-Pakistan (AFPAK) Hands Fellowship Program (constructed by the Industrial College). Working with the Joint Staff to ensure that the program meets operational requirements and to identify and assign the right students to the program, ICAF built the program on the foundation of their curriculum, with tailored electives, Regional Security Studies, and local visits. AFPAK Hands students must also complete a Nation-Building Industry Study. Although this program is not a pre-deployment training program, it does mobilize the University’s capacity in support of the current conflict.

Academic freedom is very important at NDU and our policy of non-attribution in the classroom provides our speakers, faculty, and students the ability to discuss issues candidly. We believe that our curriculum and our teaching methods provide our students a rich environment in which to discuss many topics that will advance their knowledge and provide them with tools to develop successful strategies without undermining or inhibiting any group’s ideology.

Contact: Dr. Brenda Roth, Deputy VP for Academic Affairs, (202) 685-3789 or by email at [rothb@ndu.edu](mailto:rothb@ndu.edu).

***(Emphasis added)***