

WHINSEC

**Forging International Relationships,
Strengthening Regional Democracies**



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THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE Institute for Security Cooperation, or WHINSEC, commemorated its 10th anniversary on 13 January 2011, with a special celebration attended by the deputy commanding general of the Combined Arms Center, local dignitaries, a former commandant, and Maneuver Center of Excellence leadership. The celebration featured pre-recorded congratulatory video messages from the Department of Defense, combatant commands, and partner-nation military/law enforcement leadership. The event served as a platform for organizational reflection to move WHINSEC into its second decade of providing quality training and education to the security force personnel of the Western Hemisphere. The distinguished guest speaker was U.S. Ambassador to Brazil Thomas A. Shannon, a former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. He spoke about the evolution of regional relationships and WHINSEC's enduring support to sustain the U.S. as a preferred partner for the 21st century and beyond. WHINSEC is a reflection and a clear demonstration of the U.S. commitment to security, stability, and prosperity in the Americas.

Despite its small size and tiny budget, WHINSEC plays a significant role in our nation's military education system. Congressmen support this organization because, while it operates on tactical and operational levels, it has a strategic impact on U.S. foreign policy, and not only in the Western Hemisphere. Simply put, this is an "economy of force" organization, one that costs very little but yields big strategic dividends.

Appreciation for WHINSEC's accomplishments comes from its "customers," particularly the commanders of the U.S. military's Northern Command and Southern Command. Both leaders and their predecessors have commended the institute during congressional testimony. As an Army Training and Doctrine Command organization, WHINSEC implements the most current Army training model. Its curricula consistently remain pedagogically sound as well as U.S.-doctrinally approved. This ensures the highest quality level of training and education for all students.

The contributions this organization makes to the nation reach far beyond the Department of Defense, and are the beginning of the relationships between nations that serve to make our hemisphere, and our world, a safer and more peaceful place.

Lieutenant Colonel José M. Marrero currently serves as the WHINSEC chief of staff. His previous assignments include senior analyst for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy; military strategist for Strategy, War Plans, and Policy Division, Headquarters, Department of the Army, and assistant professor, United States Military Academy. Marrero holds an M.A. from Vanderbilt University.

Lieutenant Colonel Lee A. Rials, U.S. Army, Retired, is the public affairs officer of WHINSEC. He holds a B.S. in English from Murray State University. Rials served in a variety of command and staff assignments during a military career of over 21 years.

PHOTO: Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, Fort Benning, GA.

Geopolitical Conditions

In the past, conflicts were primarily between nation states, but we now live in a world of new geopolitical dynamics. Threats have become transnational and endanger us all. In addition, we all share challenges in nature and in our daily commerce. No single nation, however strong, can face these challenges by itself; any success in combating these transnational threats and challenges will depend on international cooperation. This requires the building of partnerships and relationships.

International partnerships, like personal friendships, are not developed overnight. They are cultivated through a process involving effective communication among all parties involved, reciprocated support, and identification of common goals, leading to mutual understanding, trust, and the unwavering willingness to make shared sacrifices.

How WHINSEC Fits In

With fewer than 250 military, law enforcement, and civilian personnel from several nations, and operating with an annual budget smaller than 1/50,000th of the defense budget, WHINSEC serves as both a powerful strategic partnership promoter and an effective capability builder. The organization brings military, civilians, and police together (almost 14,000 from 34 nations over the past eleven years) and teaches in languages common to all (Spanish and English) the courses that enhance the professional capabilities of our own and partner-nation security forces. It constitutes a unique hemispheric forum in which U.S. and international students and instructors learn with and about each other, forging personal relationships that lead to international cooperation.

WHINSEC has played a key role in preparing our friends and allies in the Western Hemisphere to conduct peacekeeping operations as part of United Nation missions, including those in Haiti and Angola. Its Peace Operations Course includes U.N. distance learning components, so that those leaders who complete it are well prepared to participate in the multinational teams that perform those missions. The relationships fostered at WHINSEC also enhanced five partner nations' security contributions on the world stage (as they did in Iraq and Afghanistan).

While WHINSEC has strategic impact, its courses have great value in the tactical and operational arenas as well, not only in the instruction offered, but also in the sharing of knowledge and experience by those who face the transnational challenges common to all nations. Counter-drug operations courses improve the skills of the law enforcement and military personnel who are committed to fight a scourge that respects no border. The WHINSEC experience has increased their effectiveness in dismantling drug trafficking organizations, interdicting narcotics, and prosecuting organization kingpins and their gunmen. Civil affairs courses improve the ability of military forces, almost always the first responders, to deal with disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Medical assistance courses prepare young medics to provide care in nations that have vast areas of no medical coverage. Although the professional trained at the institute may be in uniform, in many instances he returns to his nation as the only medical expertise available for remote civilian communities. Engineer courses allow for a variety of skills that are sometimes purely military, but often also have civilian applications. The institute has developed its Captains Career Course on the model of the Maneuver Center of Excellence's course, and it is also taught in Spanish so our partner-nation professionals and U.S. Army captains can learn and share experiences in a forum enhanced by the latest military doctrine and supported by state-of-the-art technology.

WHINSEC's 49-week long Intermediate Level Education (ILE) course is certified and a direct reflection of the U.S. Army ILE course taught at Fort Leavenworth. Both U.S. and international officers attend this course, sharing experiences and learning from each other, further improving students' cultural awareness and language skills. Through the ILE course, WHINSEC students can attain the same Masters of Military Arts and Sciences degree that is available to officers at Fort Leavenworth.

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DOD

Fast-rope training during a WHINSEC counterdrug operations course. Seventy-eight students from seven partner nations attended this nine-week course in late 2011. The course is designed to train counterdrug security personnel in planning, leading, and executing counterdrug operations.

U.S. Cadet Language/Culture Immersion Program

In an initiative that predates the U.S. Army Cadet Command's Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency Program, WHINSEC brings ROTC and West Point cadets into the Cadet Leadership Development Course alongside partner-nation cadets for a unique and cost-effective language and cultural immersion experience. The course serves as a learning laboratory to immerse U.S. cadets in the Spanish language, while they live and work with cadets from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, or any of the other nations that send cadets to WHINSEC. Instructors from various hemispheric countries teach and share their extensive experience with them, speaking only Spanish. According to survey results, the cadets would like to expand this program. One of them, who had studied Spanish for years and had the chance to live abroad, stated that the immersion experience at WHINSEC enabled him to learn more Spanish than all the classes he had taken in his "high school and university combined."

The Roy Benavidez NCO Academy offers courses to improve the leadership skills of non-commissioned officers. Given existing threats and

conditions, most military and police operations are asymmetric in nature, requiring decentralized execution. Such small-unit operations require professional, trustworthy, and well-trained sergeants to take charge whenever necessary to get the job done to standard.

The NCO academy conducts one course focused on junior leaders, the Small Unit Leaders Course, and an NCO Professional Development Course that helps sergeants take charge and lead squads, platoons, and companies. The NCO Professional Development course is offered three times a year in Spanish, and once in English for the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean basin. Coming soon is a course based on the Army's Sergeants Major Academy curriculum, tailored to meet the needs of our partner nations.

All of the courses at WHINSEC, not just the NCO courses, have a core emphasis on leadership, are doctrinally sound, and are relevant to the requirements of hemispheric friends and allies. The WHINSEC learning model supports U.S. interests and foreign policy objectives in the Western Hemisphere to ensure that students understand the necessity of doing the right thing, morally and ethically, as a member of a professional military or law enforcement organization while accomplishing the mission.

Democracy, Human Rights, and Ethics

The law that created WHINSEC mandated that it teach five specific democracy and human rights topics to every student in every course. These are human rights, the rule of law, due process, civilian control of the military, and the role of the military in a democratic society. WHINSEC has expanded this to devote at least 10 percent of each course to these themes by not only giving the classes, but also incorporating the principles into WHINSEC training—democratic, human rights, and ethical values are not only taught, but lived. They are part of the command climate and work environment.

Reaching Out

In addition to the resident and mobile training team courses, WHINSEC participates in many other major events in the U.S. and abroad, such as seminars, symposiums, and subject matter expert exchanges. In almost every case, these are joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational activities with opportunities to build relationships.

WHINSEC operates with the oversight of a Board of Visitors made up of Secretary of Defense-appointed members from academia and human rights organizations; elected political leaders representing the Senate and House Armed Services Committees; the commanders of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, U.S. Southern Command, and U.S. Northern Command; and a representative from the U.S. Department of State. Scrutiny by a group of such eminence gives great credibility to WHINSEC.

Unlike other organizations that bring international students to the United States, WHINSEC plays an integral role in its students' careers. Many international students attend WHINSEC at cadet, junior, and field grade levels.

It is no exaggeration to say that the institute is unique in many aspects. Its courses—open to military, civilians, and police/public safety civilians—emphasize profession of arms tenets. WHINSEC trains international partners at all levels of leadership from military noncommissioned and senior field grade officers (including cadets) to mid- and senior-level law enforcement officials and government civilians. WHINSEC engages these leaders early in their careers, when they are most open to

internalizing the merits and principles of respect for democracy and human rights. Many of these leaders are selected for subsequent assignment at the highest levels of their national defense institutions and/or civilian governmental offices. Staff and faculty at WHINSEC are linguistically and culturally attuned to the hemisphere and can engage with students on all levels, fostering partnerships and building lasting relationships.

WHINSEC has earned the Army Superior Unit Award, which was established by the Secretary of the Army to recognize the outstanding performance of a unit during “a difficult and challenging mission under extraordinary circumstances.”

WHINSEC's staff and faculty are proud of their physical location. It places the institute in the finest environment to educate and build future leaders and strategic problem solvers. The Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning is the U.S. Army's premier training center, and has reached out to WHINSEC to join forces in building capacity, forging lasting and meaningful relationships, and strengthening democracy among friends and allies.

WHINSEC's 10th Anniversary celebration marked the beginning of a second decade helping others to mitigate their own regional security challenges, supporting security cooperation goals, and forging international relations. The institute will continue to do so. It is an investment today to save lives and to mitigate transnational threats tomorrow. During the last ten years, it has played a vital role in enabling our friends and allies to conduct peacekeeping, disaster relief, and counter-illicit trafficking operations—to mention just a few such operations. The professionals who attend its courses actually “live” the goodness of democracy and the U.S. way of life and values, and become informal goodwill ambassadors throughout the region.

As an integral component of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, WHINSEC enjoys a reputation for excellence at home and abroad. The institute is envisioning a new dawn making efforts to offer some of the WHINSEC course menu globally. With continued Department of Defense leadership, WHINSEC will continue performing its resilient, strategic outreach, supporting our efforts to prepare friends and allies to face hemispheric threats together. **MR**