

**International Students Expand Education Experience  
Defense Information School  
Public Affairs Leadership Department  
By Lisa Slappy**

FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, Md. -- International students attending the Public Affairs Qualification Course at the Defense Information School here educated their classmates about their home nations during country study presentations during their course that ended Oct. 7.

These presentations gave the students from Estonia, Pakistan, the Czech Republic, the Philippines, Italy and Romania an opportunity to discuss topics ranging from the geography and history to the culture of their home nations.

“I was very happy to tell my classmates a little about Estonia,” said Navy Chief Petty Officer Roland Murof. “I learned the students knew a lot about my country, and it helped me establish common ground with my classmates,” he added.

The four largest cities of Estonia are Tallinn (the capital), Tartu, Narv and Kohtia-Jare. Sixty-eight percent of the population is Estonian, 26 percent is Russian, 2 percent is Ukrainian and 1 percent each is Belarusian and Finn. The national day of Independence is Feb. 24.

The students were able to draw cultural and language comparisons between each of the studies and were more able to understand the essence of the cultures. Most of the students know very little about other cultures, and getting a brief about the different countries can help them in their careers, said Air Force Maj. Michael Johnson, a PAQC team leader.

Pakistan Army Capt. Muhammad Sohail Ashfaq Khan discussed the four provinces of his country and the 167.7 million people living there. All government schools provide a free education, Khan said.

Students speak Urdu, the national language. Pakistan is situated in southern Asia, between the ranges of the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas and the Arabian Sea. Pakistan is slightly less than twice the size of California and Pakistan has four mountain peaks that are among the top 20 tallest in the world.

“The country brief is a fantastic way for international students to introduce their country and themselves to classmates and faculty,” said Johnson.

Italian Air Force Lt. Col. Alessandro Alfonsi provided his country brief to students and faculty early in the course, and it was a great success, said Johnson. Alfonsi talked about Italy's geography, history, political make-up and military structure. He concluded the brief with photos of good Italian food, scenic views and famous Italians.

“The brief was fantastic and I think it helped the students bond with Alfonsi,” said Johnson. The information provided helped students understand his country and his military job, said Johnson.

“International students presenting a country brief are very beneficial to the U.S. students,” said Charles Brown, chief of the International Military Student Office at DINFOS. “Most everything we do is now in a multi-national situation. When we go to war, we are not alone, so understanding other cultures and military capabilities can only help our service members,” he added.

“U.S. students need to understand that the international students are learning as much about our culture as they can to better understand how we live in this free and democratic society,” said Brown.

The Defense Information School trains and educates Public Affairs and Visual Information personnel for the U.S. Department of Defense, along with representatives of other departments of the U.S. government and partner nations around the world. The Public Affairs Leadership Department is responsible for curriculum and instruction offered in PAQC, along with the Joint Public Affairs Expeditionary Course, Joint Intermediate Public Affairs Course, and the Joint Senior Public Affairs Course. For more information on the Defense Information School, go to <http://www.dinfos.osd.mil/>."