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Modern U.S. military speaks many tongues

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WASHINGTON

Uncle Sam's military, involved as never before in overseas aid programs and in gathering cold war intelligence, now speaks in 56 commonplace and exotic tongues — from Afrikaans, Albanian and Amharic to Urdu, Ukrainian and Vietnamese.

So greatly has American foreign policy increased the linguistic demands on U.S. officers, men and their families that the Pentagon has been obliged to revamp language training in all services under a new Defense Language Institute.

The new institute, in being only two months, is geared to provide working knowledge of one or more foreign tongues to 6,100 servicemen a year studying full-time, plus 15,000 part-time and another 50,000 to 200,000 on a volunteer basis.

THE SCHOOL IS a coordination of previous service programs, using the old Army language training facility at Monterey, Calif., as its West Coast branch and the old Navy language training school in Washington as the East Coast branch.

In addition, contracts with Yale, Syracuse and Indiana universities and with seven smaller commercial schools in the District of Columbia give the Defense Department a spectrum of language training unequaled anywhere.

Though expansion of the American military assistance program has been the single most significant factor in establishment of the institute, the one language most heavily enrolled is not spoken to any degree in any aid-receiving country.

That language is Russian. The institute currently is training 1,350 American military and other govern-

mental employees in Russian. A roll call of the sponsoring agencies — the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and others — is a tipoff of the institute's importance to U.S. intelligence work.

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DEMANDS ON THE school's various language courses also provide a fairly good barometer of the cold war. The second largest enrollment, 1,230 full-time students a year, is for Vietnamese, where the United States has committed about 14,000 troops as "advisers" in the fight against the Communist Viet Cong.

According to Col. Lloyd H. Gomes, director of DLI and a combat infantryman who speaks five languages, the Pentagon hopes to give every officer and most enlisted men going to Vietnam at least a struggling working knowledge of the native tongue.

Though certain administrative and accounting officers connected with the military assistance and advisory group (MAAG) stationed in Saigon have little direct contact with the Vietnamese military and officialdom, some knowledge of the language is considered helpful.

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INTELLIGENCE NEEDS are placing demands on the institute for training in four separate Chinese dialects — Mandarin, for which there are 548 full-time billets, Cantonese and Tientsinese (eight each), and Fukienese (one).

Also, the U.S. military's commitments in Spain and Portugal, where dialects other than those usually taught in U.S. public schools are spoken, require training of 618 men a year in Castilian and 124 in European as opposed to Brazilian Portuguese.

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