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Requirements for Linguists in Government Agencies

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Requirements for Linguists in Government Agencies

Summary

As part of the war on terrorism, it is widely recognized that the U.S. government has a substantial and growing need for personnel with knowledge of foreign languages and especially languages that may be spoken in limited and remote areas of the world. In 2002, the federal government employed about a thousand translators and interpreters in four agencies responsible for security-related functions. In addition, these agencies employ nearly 20,000 staff in positions that require some foreign language proficiency. Yet there is a widespread consensus that requirements for foreign language qualified personnel are not currently being met. The report issued by the 9/11 Commission in July of 2004 makes several references to this deficiency and suggests corrective action to address it.

Government agencies have addressed requirements for linguists in several different ways. Persons with existing foreign language expertise can be hired on a full or part-time basis. Employees can be trained in a foreign language either in a government training program or by an academic or commercial institution. Language skills can be obtained by contract or by use of a linguist reserve corps. Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages. There are significant costs associated with each of them.

Taken together, these approaches have helped agencies react to the changing requirements of the past decade. Few observers believe, however, that they are adequate to what appears to be likely escalating requirements of coming years. In particular, greater human intelligence collection, widely advocated by intelligence specialists, creates a need for officials with near-perfect qualifications in local languages or dialects.

Persons with existing foreign language skills generally fall into two categories — those who have learned the foreign language at home and those who acquire foreign language skills in schools or colleges. Given growing requirements for skills in a wide variety of less commonly taught languages, federal agencies are increasingly turning to persons who have learned foreign languages at home. Foreign language instruction at U.S. academic institutions has tended to concentrate on a small number of languages, especially Spanish, French, other Romance languages, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian, along with classical languages. In general, there are far too few graduates who have acquired language skills currently needed by federal agencies and fewer still whose skills enable them to interpret or engage in complex conversations.

To a large extent finding language qualified personnel for government agencies is a responsibility of the Executive Branch, but Congress must appropriate funds for agency efforts, and it conducts oversight of programs. In addition, funding for foreign language instruction in civilian institutions originates in legislation. At the present time, a number of issues in regard to foreign language capabilities appear to be receiving congressional attention. This report addresses many of these issues and is intended as background only and will not be updated.

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Introduction

As part of the war on terrorism, it is widely recognized that the U.S. government has a substantial and growing need for personnel with knowledge of foreign languages and especially languages that may be spoken in limited and remote areas of the world. In 2002 the federal government employed about a thousand translators and interpreters in four agencies responsible for security-related functions (the Army, the State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Central Intelligence Agency); in the same agencies a total of nearly twenty thousand staff were employed in positions that require some foreign language proficiency.[1] In addition to these four agencies, other government offices have extensive requirements for persons with foreign language skills.

Government agencies need personnel with foreign language skills for various purposes — to translate the enormous gathering of printed documents and transcripts of conversations made possible by the introduction of new technical means of collection. An active diplomacy creates a need for officials who can advance U.S. policies persuasively through conversations with local officials and opinion-makers. Intelligence and law enforcement officials need to be able to converse with potential informants — a mission that often can require a mastery of a local dialect and informal slang.

There is a widespread consensus that requirements for foreign language qualified personnel are not currently being met. The report issued by the 9/11 Commission in July of 2004 makes several references to this deficiency and suggests corrective action.[2] There are widespread reports of difficulties involved in obtaining the services of adequate numbers of translators and interpreters, of intercepted

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[1] Government Accountability Office, *Foreign Languages: Human Capital Approach Needed to Correct Staffing and Proficiency Shortfalls*, GAO-02-375, Jan. 2002, p. 4.

[2] On page 77 the report states that the FBI, "lacked sufficient translators proficient in Arabic and other key languages, resulting in a significant backlog of untranslated intercepts." On page 92 the report discusses the CIA's "difficulty in recruiting officers qualified for counterterrorism. [and that] Very few American colleges and universities offered programs in Middle Eastern languages or Islamic studies." On page 415 the report states that the CIA Director should emphasize, "developing a stronger language program, with high standards and sufficient financial incentives." On page 426 the report states that the "FBI should fully implement a recruiting, hiring, and selection process for agents and analysts that enhances its ability to target and attract individuals with...language, technology, and other relevant skills." *The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington: GPO, 2004).

communications going unexploited, of difficulties in contacting potential human agents and in supporting deployed military forces.[3] The federal government has, in particular, acknowledged unfulfilled needs for persons qualified in Arabic, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Pashto/Dari, Persian, Russian, Turkish, and Urdu.

Government agencies have addressed requirements for linguists in several different ways. Persons with existing foreign language expertise can be hired on a full or part-time basis. Employees can be trained in a foreign language either in a government training program or by an academic or commercial institution. Language skills can be obtained by contract or by use of a linguist reserve corps. Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages. There are significant costs associated with each of them.

Taken together, these approaches have helped agencies react to the changing requirements of the past decade. Few observers believe, however, that they are adequate to what appears to be likely escalating requirements of coming years. In particular, greater human intelligence collection, widely advocated by intelligence specialists, creates a need for officials with near-perfect qualifications in local languages or dialects.

Persons with existing foreign language skills generally fall into two categories — those who have learned the foreign language at home and those who acquire foreign language skills in schools or colleges. Given growing requirements for skills in a wide variety of less commonly taught languages, federal agencies are increasingly turning to persons who have learned foreign languages at home. Foreign language instruction at U.S. academic institutions has tended to concentrate on a small number of languages, especially Spanish, French, other Romance languages, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian, along with classical languages. In general, there are far too few graduates who have acquired language skills currently needed by federal agencies and fewer still whose skills enable them to interpret or engage in complex conversations.

Federal efforts to encourage the study of foreign languages by students at U.S. schools fall into two categories. First, Title VI of the Higher Education Act (HEA) authorizes programs designed to encourage the study of foreign languages in general. Many of these programs date back to original passage of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (P.L. 85-864). While Title VI authorizes several distinct activities, approximately three-fifths of the funds are used for two programs — National Research Centers (NRC) and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships. The NRCs provide support for institutional programs of advanced instruction in FLAS at institutions of higher education. Centers are to maintain linkages with overseas institutions and organizations as well as specialized library collections. Funds may also be used for faculty/staff travel costs. The CRS Report RL31625, *Foreign Language and International Studies: Federal Aid under Title VI of the Higher Education Act*, explains these programs in greater detail. The FY2004 appropriation for Title VI was $90.8 million.

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[3] See Daniel Klaidman and Michael Isikoff, "Lost in Translation," *Newsweek*, Oct. 27, 2003.

Second, the National Security Education Program (NSEP) is designed to train students in specific languages needed by agencies involved in international affairs. Established by the David L. Boren National Security Education Act (Title VII of P.L. 102-183, the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1992), NSEP provides undergraduate scholarships and graduate school fellowships and related area studies based on surveys of language needs of federal agencies. Students who receive support from NSEP incur an obligation to subsequent periods of employment in agencies concerned with national and homeland security. NSEP is funded by a trust fund established in 1991, but currently funding is limited to some $8 million per year. Supporters note the program's success in placing students with language capabilities, especially including less commonly taught languages, in positions with federal agencies, including intelligence agencies. As of January 2003, 300 federal positions had been filled by NSEP scholars and fellows. Congress also mandated in the Intelligence Authorization Act for FY2003 (P.L. 107-306) the establishment of a National Flagship Language Initiative to develop programs in key universities designed to encourage proficiency in critical languages.

Language Training at Institutions of Higher Education

In the 2000-2001 academic year, 2,009 Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) conferred Bachelor's degrees, 1,508 IHE conferred Master's degrees, and 544 IHE conferred Doctor's degrees. The total number of Bachelor's degrees conferred in 2000-2001 was 1.3 million, compared to 839,730 in 1970-1971. According to the Department of Education (ED), "The pattern of bachelor's degrees [awarded] by field of study has shifted significantly in recent years. Declines are significant [as much as 10%-15%] in some fields such as engineering and mathematics....In contrast, some technical fields [such as computer science] have increased [70%]."[4]

Foreign languages and area studies were among the fields experiencing a decline between 1970-1971 and 2000-2001. IHEs conferred 21,109 foreign language Bachelor's degrees in 1970-1971 compared to 15,318 in 2000-2001 (see **Table 1** on page 8). In more recent years, some language fields have experienced renewed interest while others continued to decline. In the years between 1992-1993 and 2000-2001, the total number of foreign language degrees conferred annually increased by 1,000. During that period, three major fields of study added to that increase: Romance languages, Classics, and Linguistics. The major fields witnessing decline include East European and Germanic languages. **Figure 1** displays the cumulative number of language degrees conferred between 1992-1993 and 2000-2001. The dominance of Romance languages over all other fields is clearly apparent in this graphic.

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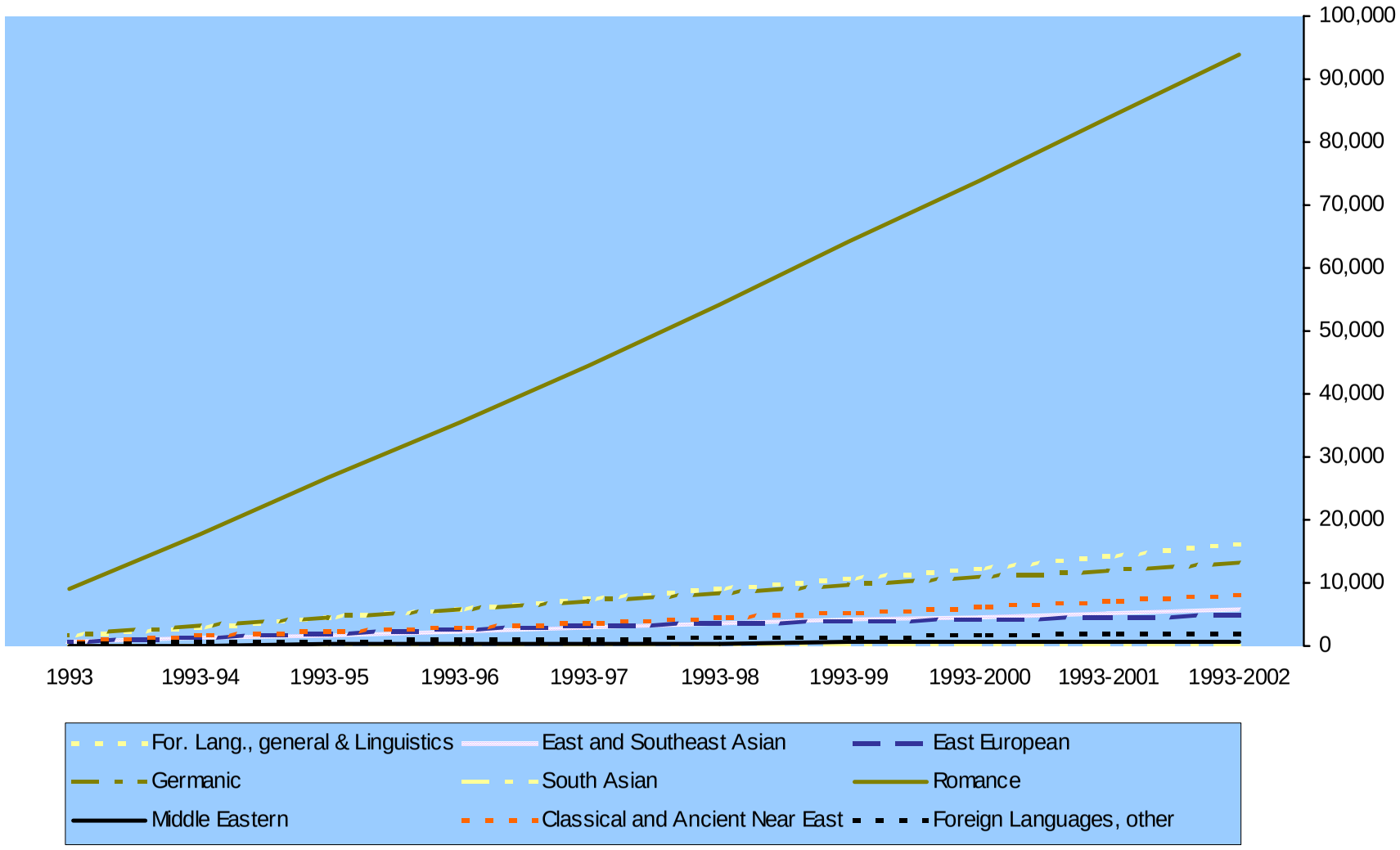
[4] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2002*, NCES 2003-060, by Thomas D. Snyder, Project Director and Charlene M. Hoffman, Production Manager (Washington, D.C. 2003), [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/].

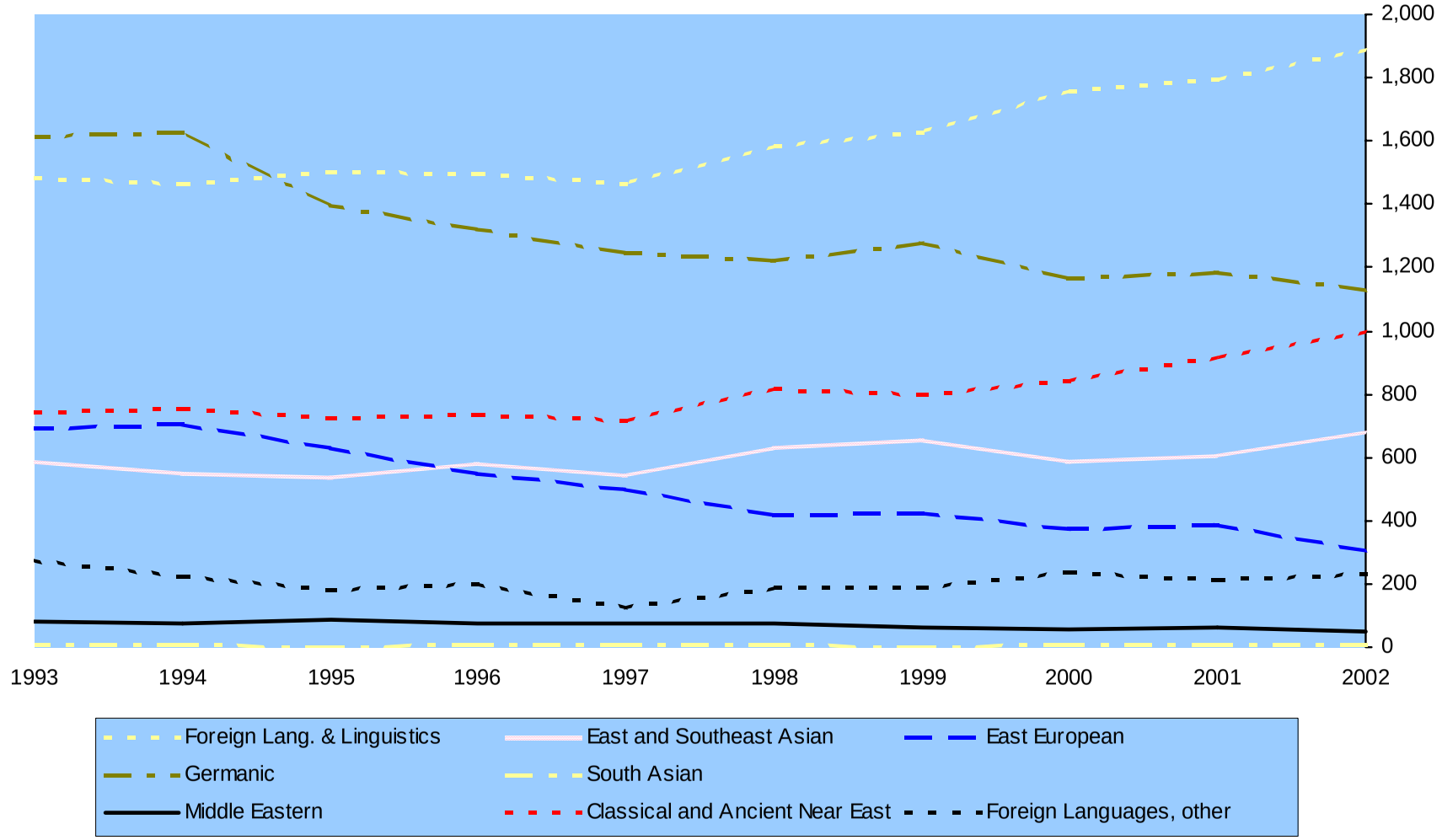
Figure 2 shows the trends in languages other than Romance languages between 1992-1993 and 2000-2001. This chart displays the percent of foreign language degrees conferred in each year for each field. The ascending lines show the increase in degrees awarded in Linguistics and Classics. The descending lines show the declines in degrees awarded in Germanic and East European languages. The remaining language fields show very little change over the past decade.

Figure 1. Cumulative Bachelor's Degrees Conferred in Foreign Languages, by Language, 1993 to 2002



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, various years.

Figure 2. Bachelor's Degrees Conferred in Foreign Languages, by Language, 1993 to 2002



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, various years.

Note: Romance languages have been omitted.

Some of the languages of particular interest in this analysis are those originating from Middle Eastern countries. In general, the number of degrees conferred in this major language area were in steep decline in the decade between 1970 and 1980 — from 258 degrees in 1969-1970 to 91 in 1979-1980. Falling interest in obtaining a degree in Hebrew accounts for all of this decline. The annual number of Arabic language degrees conferred has remained relatively stable at about nine per year between 1969-1970 and 2000-2001. The number of "other" Middle-Eastern language degrees conferred annually was zero up to the 1981-1982 academic year (when three were conferred) and has increased greatly in the past decade to as much as 28 in 2000-2001.

In broad terms, the trends just described with respect to Bachelor's degrees are mirrored by the trends in Master's and Doctor's degrees. **Table 2** presents the total number of (Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's) degrees conferred between 1992 and 2002. Out of the 183,990 foreign language degrees awarded during that time period, 110,518 (60.1%) were in Romance languages, 14,388 (7.8%) were in Linguistics, and 1,401 (0.7%) were in Middle Eastern languages. That is, (1) Romance languages (and Spanish in particular) and Linguistics are also dominant in the percent (and number) of Master's and Doctor's degrees conferred; (2) the number of Germanic degrees awarded has declined while the number of East European degrees awarded has stagnated; and (3) the number of Middle-Eastern language degrees awarded is very small — less than 1 percent of all foreign language degrees.

Table 3 displays the percent of area studies degrees conferred in each year between 1992 and 2002 by area of study. (Note that the categories for programs conferring degrees in area studies are somewhat different than in languages.) The decline or stagnation in interest in certain critical areas — such as Asia and the Middle East — is of note here. These data also may be used to refute the idea that demand for experts in critical languages might be filled with area studies degree recipients.

Table 1. Bachelor's Degrees Conferred by Institutions of Higher Education, 1970 to 2002

	Average	2002	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970
All fields	1,030,459	1,291,900	1,237,875	1,160,134	1,051,344	979,477	929,417	922,933	792,316
Foreign languages and literatures, total	14,311	15,318	14,968	13,775	12,386	10,827	12,089	18,521	21,109
— Foreign languages and literatures, general	1,324	1,888	1,760	1,504	1,299	1,150	1,241	1,339	450
- Foreign languages and literatures, general	792	1,041	1,044	940	785	660	689	905	236
- Linguistics	532	847	716	564	514	490	552	434	214
— East and Southeast Asian lang. and lit., total	365	677	588	536	402	263	187	258	151
- Chinese	123	189	183	107	144	97	79	141	81
- Japanese	194	390	321	314	193	116	108	117	70
- East and Southeast Asian languages, other	48	98	84	115	65	50	0	0	0
— East European languages and literatures, total	559	307	371	629	615	500	455	666	852
- Russian languages	496	277	340	572	549	432	402	598	768
- Slavic languages (other than Russian)	60	25	27	55	66	59	53	68	84
- East European languages, other	3	5	4	2	0	9	0	0	0
— Germanic languages and literatures, total	1,652	1,128	1,165	1,395	1,482	1,465	1,506	2,323	2,748
- German	1,607	1,092	1,125	1,352	1,437	1,411	1,466	2,289	2,652
- Scandinavian languages	30	25	27	27	33	29	40	34	0
- Germanic languages, other	15	11	13	16	12	25	0	0	96
— South Asian languages and literatures	4	8	8	3	2	0	0	7	0
— Romance languages and literatures, total	9,411	10,034	9,941	8,718	7,746	6,705	7,888	12,793	15,212
- French	3,760	2,396	2,514	2,764	3,259	2,991	3,285	5,745	7,624
- Italian	255	263	237	271	247	190	272	329	242
- Portuguese	20	31	33	25	30	29	0	0	35
- Spanish	5,328	7,243	7,031	5,602	4,176	3,415	4,331	6,719	7,226
- Romance languages, other	48	101	126	56	34	80	0	0	85
— Middle Eastern languages and literatures, total	95	47	55	88	60	82	91	163	258
- Arabic	9	13	6	10	4	8	13	13	0
- Hebrew	76	17	21	57	44	71	78	150	258
- Middle East languages, other	10	17	28	21	12	3	0	0	0
— Classical and ancient Near East lang. and lit., total	712	999	843	722	585	509	576	802	1,004
- Classics	492	855	738	595	457	383	404	481	0
- Greek (ancient and medieval)	92	33	26	35	38	50	77	113	1,004
- Latin (ancient and medieval)	129	111	79	92	90	76	95	208	0
— Foreign languages, other	189	230	237	180	195	153	145	170	434

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Integrated Survey and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

Table 2. Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's Degrees Conferred by Institutions of Higher Education, 1993 to 2002

	Percent of foreign language	Average	1993-2002	2002	2000	1995	1993
All fields		1,669,295	16,692,949	1,818,178	1,739,739	1,602,209	1,576,895
Foreign languages and literatures, total		18,399	183,990	19,022	18,663	17,816	18,415
— Foreign languages and literatures, general	14.73%	2,710	27,099	2,782	2,770	2,690	2,642
- Foreign languages and literatures, general	6.91%	1,271	12,711	1,263	1,300	1,330	1,299
- Linguistics	7.82%	1,439	14,388	1,519	1,470	1,360	1,343
— East and Southeast Asian lang. and lit., total	3.99%	735	7,346	805	726	679	747
- Chinese	1.08%	199	1,993	217	216	186	191
- Japanese	2.10%	387	3,865	431	364	348	386
- East and Southeast Asian languages, other	0.81%	149	1,488	157	146	145	170
— East European languages and literatures, total	3.58%	660	6,595	439	494	825	887
- Russian languages	2.72%	501	5,012	316	383	641	684
- Slavic languages (other than Russian)	0.78%	143	1,429	109	98	169	194
- East European languages, other	0.08%	15	154	14	13	15	9
— Germanic languages and literatures, total	9.13%	1,681	16,806	1,418	1,453	1,792	2,054
- German	8.76%	1,612	16,124	1,364	1,385	1,713	1,975
- Scandinavian languages	0.17%	31	312	35	32	38	29
- Germanic languages, other	0.20%	37	370	19	36	41	50
— South Asian languages and literatures	0.08%	15	153	17	15	10	10
— Romance languages and literatures, total	60.07%	11,052	110,518	11,730	11,550	10,449	10,557
- French	17.32%	3,188	31,875	2,841	2,986	3,352	3,891
- Italian	1.77%	325	3,253	324	298	371	337
- Portuguese	0.23%	42	417	43	43	36	51
- Spanish	39.33%	7,236	72,364	8,228	7,924	6,472	6,045
- Romance languages, other	1.42%	261	2,609	294	299	218	233
— Middle Eastern languages and literatures, total	0.76%	140	1,401	111	148	156	153
- Arabic	0.08%	14	140	17	15	12	13
- Hebrew	0.37%	68	683	34	65	94	94
- Middle East languages, other	0.31%	58	578	60	68	50	46
— Classical and ancient Near East lang. and lit., total	5.61%	1,031	10,313	1,237	1,058	945	945
- Classics	4.81%	886	8,858	1,076	934	796	784
- Greek (ancient and medieval)	0.22%	41	406	42	34	43	39
- Latin (ancient and medieval)	0.57%	105	1,049	119	90	106	122
— Foreign languages, other	2.04%	376	3,759	483	449	270	420

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Integrated Survey and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

Table 3. Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's Degrees in Area Studies Conferred by Institutions of Higher Education, 1993 to 2002

	Percent	Average	1993-2002	2002	2000	1995	1993
All Fields		1,669,295	16,692,949	1,818,178	1,739,739	1,602,209	1,576,895
— Area studies, general		5,050	50,495	4,921	4,974	5,138	5,296
— African studies	1.01%	1,876	511	53	69	60	59
— American studies/civilization	37.15%	666	18,757	1,934	1,813	1,911	1,896
— Latin American studies	13.18%	259	6,656	607	694	643	616
— Middle Eastern studies	3.89%	1,125	1,963	176	221	199	202
— Russian and Slavic studies	5.14%	270	2,594	169	172	332	420
— Asian studies	22.27%	88	11,245	994	1,144	1,130	1,269
— European studies	5.35%	164	2,700	266	205	312	318
— Area studies, other	12.02%	826	6,069	722	656	551	516

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Integrated Survey and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

Language Heritage Communities in the United States

In the 2000 census, as in the two previous censuses, the U.S. Census Bureau asked people if they spoke a language other than English at home. Among the 262.4 million people aged five and over, 47.0 million (18%) spoke a language other than English at home. Those who responded "yes" were asked what language they spoke at home. The write-in answers to this question were coded into about 380 categories of single languages or language families. These 380 categories were further distilled into the 39 major categories displayed in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Language Spoken at Home for the Population Aged Five Years and Over in the United States, 2000

Total	***262,375,152***
Speak only English	215,423,557
Spanish or Spanish Creole	28,101,052
French (including Patois, Cajun)	1,643,838
French Creole	453,368
Italian	1,008,370
Portuguese or Portuguese Creole	**564,630**
German	1,383,442
Yiddish	178,945
Other West Germanic languages	251,135
Scandinavian languages	162,252
Greek	365,436
Russian	**706,242**
Polish	**667,414**
Serbo-Croatian	**233,865**
Other Slavic languages	301,079
Armenian	202,708
Persian	312,085
Gujarati	235,988
Hindi	**317,057**
Urdu	**262,900**
Other Indic languages	439,289
Other Indo-European languages	327,946
Chinese	**2,022,143**
Japanese	**477,997**
Korean	**894,063**
Mon-Khmer, Cambodian	**181,889**
Miao, Hmong	168,063
Thai	120,464
Laotian	149,303
Vietnamese	**1,009,627**
Other Asian languages	398,434
Tagalog	**1,224,241**
Other Pacific Island languages	313,841
Navajo	178,014
Other Native North American languages	203,466
Hungarian	**117,973**
Arabic	**614,582**
Hebrew	**195,374**
African languages	418,505
Other and unspecified languages	144,575

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data.

The vast majority (28.1 million, 60%) of non-English speakers living in the United States. in 2000 speak Spanish. Six languages make up a second tier of the most commonly spoken non-English languages including French (1.6 million, 3.4%), Italian (1.0 million, 2.1%), German (1.4 million, 3.0%), Chinese (2.0 million, 4.2%), Vietnamese (1.0 million, 2.1%), and Tagalog (1.2 million, 2.6%). The remaining 32 languages are represented by populations between 120,000 and 900,000 (or 0.3% to 2% of the non-English speaking population in the United States).

According to a National Security Education Program (NSEP) survey, the languages shown in **Table 5** were considered areas of particular need in 1999-2000.[5] Those that match (or nearly match) one of the 39 categories used by the Census Bureau are in **bold**. These languages are also in **bold** in **Table 4**. The languages listed which are not in bold have typically been combined in some fashion into one of the Census Bureau's "other" categories.

Table 5. NSEP Languages of Emphasis, 1999-2000

Albanian	**Japanese**	**Serbo-Croatian**
Arabic	Kazakh	Sinhala
Armenian	**Khmer**	Swahili
Azeri	**Korean**	**Tagalog**
Belarusian	Kurdish	Tajik
Burmese	Lingala	Tamil
Cantonese	Madedonian	**Thai**
Czech	Malay	Turkmen
Farsi	**Mandarin**	Turkish
Georgian	Mongolian	Uighur
Hebrew	**Polish**	Ukrainian
Hindi	**Portuguese**	**Urdu**
Hungarian	Romanian	Uzbek
Indonesian	**Russian**	**Vietnamese**

The distinguishing characteristic of NSEP is its stated goal of supporting education in languages and area studies in response to requirements of agencies responsible for national security affairs, "to produce an increased pool of applicants for work in the departments and agencies of the United States government with national security responsibilities."[6] Some in the academic community, however, are highly critical of this linkage and have urged that government support of foreign language training be limited to Title VI programs.[7]

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[5] As reported in *National Security Education Program, Analysis of Federal Language Needs, 1999-2000*, available at [http://www.ndu.edu/nsep/federal_language_needs_2001.htm].

[6] 50 U.S.C. § 1901(c)(3).

[7] See, for example, Anne Marie Borrego, "Scholars Revive Boycott of U.S. Grants to Promote Language Training," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Aug. 16, 2002, p. 25.

The federal government has extensive experience in training civil servants and military personnel in foreign languages. The Defense Department operates the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California and the National Cryptologic School in Maryland; the State Department manages the Foreign Language Institute in the Washington area. (Instruction in certain rare foreign languages is purchased from commercial agencies when only a few students are involved; the Marine Corps recently contracted with Berlitz for month-long courses in Arabic for Marines en route to Iraq.) These institutions are known for the high quality of their instruction and dedication to supporting their parent agencies.

Nevertheless, it is widely recognized that language training is an expensive proposition, both in terms of the costs of instruction and administration and in the investment of the time of students on the government payroll. Bringing students to a limited working proficiency in foreign languages requires over a year of study; achieving a professional level would take considerably longer, a period that is considered excessive in terms of most assignments. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Army spends some $27,000 to train a cryptologic technician to reach a level 2 in one of the more difficult languages, but more than 45% of these linguists leave the service after completing their initial tour of duty. GAO has also reported that in FY2001, the Army spent $27.3 million on foreign language training while in FY2000 the State Department spent $23.1 million on language training and $13 million on contract translators and interpreters. In FY2001 the FBI had access to some 463 contract translators and interpreters and used them for an average of 16 hours per week at an annual cost of $15 million. Total DOD costs for its foreign language requirements reportedly approach $250 million annually. Although costs of language training for the CIA and NSA are not publicly available, it is likely that they are sizable.

In recent years, attention has been given to the possibility of hiring native speakers in order to avoid long periods of instruction. In many cases, however, personnel with responsibilities for assignments requiring foreign language skills must have security clearances that, in turn, require background investigations. GAO noted that, "According to FBI and State Department officials, conducting background investigations on native speakers can be particularly difficult, because many of these individuals have lived abroad, in some cases for years."[8]

In addition, language capabilities, once acquired, have to be maintained or they will gradually be forgotten. The Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency provide special incentive pay for their personnel to maintain foreign language proficiency (the CIA also has a Corporate Language Hiring Bonus Program for new employees with proficiency in a language that is critically needed).

During the Cold War, extensive requirements for linguists existed, but the principal countries of interest were largely finite and static. Few would have predicted the number of situations throughout the world in which U.S. military would become involved after the early 1990s. As a result, in the past decade increasing attention has been given to the employment of contract personnel, to greater reliance

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[8] *Foreign Languages: Human Capital Approach Needed*, p. 18.

on military reservists with language capabilities, and to consideration of the establishment of a Civilian Linguist Reserve Corps. In response to a provision in the FY2003 Intelligence Authorization Act, a report was prepared on behalf of the Secretary of Defense.[9] It concluded that such a corps is feasible and suggested a pilot study. Members of such a reserve component would be called up in times of emergency to work in either domestic or overseas roles serving as interpreters and translators and perhaps as analysts and area specialists.

The Intelligence Authorization Act for FY2003 (P.L. 107-306) also mandated the creation of a National Virtual Translation Center. The Center, established in February 2003, is intended to serve as a clearinghouse for using technology to permit translations to be made by linguists on a part-time, as-needed basis.

Issues and Questions before the Congress

To a large extent finding language-qualified personnel for government agencies is a responsibility of the Executive Branch, but Congress must appropriate funds for agency efforts and it conducts oversight of programs. In addition, federal funding for foreign language instruction in civilian institutions originates in legislation. At the present time, a number of issues in regard to foreign language capabilities appear to be receiving congressional attention.

General Questions: How important is the inadequate number of foreign linguists to the overall national security/counterterrorism effort? What is the relative importance of shortages of translators vs. shortages of officials who have a speaking knowledge of foreign languages? To what extent can the shortage of linguists be addressed by making better use of temporary employees (or of permanent employees with non-language related positions being temporarily assigned to language-related functions)? To what extent can this problem be addressed with foreign language training for newly hired and mid-career personnel? To what extent can the problem be alleviated by greater reliance on U.S. citizens/residents who are native speakers of the language needed? To what extent will the National Virtual Translation Center[10] address the problems? Are the steps currently being taken to obtain personnel with knowledge of less widely spoken languages effective?

- Federal language schools — the Defense Language Institute, the National Cryptologic School, the Foreign Service Institute. These schools are costly to operate, and students receive full pay and allowances while in attendance. Although credited with excellent instruction, they do not prepare candidates with genuine fluency over the course of instruction.

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[9] National Security Education Program, *United States Civilian Linguist Reserve Corps Feasibility Study*, report to Congress by the Civilian Linguist Reserve Corps Task Force, 2003.

[10] The National Virtual Translation Center (NVTC) was established by the Intelligence Authorization Act for FY2003, "for the purpose of providing timely and accurate translations of foreign intelligence for all elements of the Intelligence Community."

Questions: To what extent could language instruction be contracted out to non-governmental institutions? Is there overlap among the language programs of federal schools? Would it be possible to centralize elementary levels of study and then send students to separate courses for training appropriate to different disciplines? Is the problem of achieving higher levels of proficiency one of a need for harder work on the part of the students, the techniques being employed by teachers, or the inherent difficulties involved in mastering foreign languages?

- Employment of native speakers. Recruitment of native speakers to government positions saves major costs involved in foreign language instruction and provides personnel who have much better skills. Also, using native speakers under temporary contract provides qualified linguists for the periods necessary. However, background checks necessary for security clearances are sometimes difficult to conduct.

Questions: What have been the results of efforts to hire native speakers for permanent positions? Have costs in undertaking background investigations been significantly higher than for other applicants? Are their skills significantly higher than those of non-native speakers? Are a significant number likely to pursue careers in federal service?

- Title VI and the dominance of Romance language learning at U.S. institutions of higher education.

Questions: Should the federal government have a role in encouraging the academic community to undertake foreign language programs that apparently have little interest among educators and students? If expanded funding were made available to language programs across the board, what are the chances that graduates would seek employment with federal agencies? How could academic institutions be encouraged to emphasize languages and area studies likely to be of future national security interest?

- The NSEP. Questions arise about funding mechanisms and a need for expansion. Some in the academic community oppose links between NSEP and the Defense Department and intelligence agencies.

Questions: If funding for NSEP scholarships and fellowships was expanded significantly, would it encourage greater interest in foreign languages and government careers? Should NSEP funds be appropriated annually? Is there a need to designate additional flagship institutions? Do the ties between NSEP and DOD and the Intelligence Community hinder the reputation of the program within the academic community and hinder the program's effectiveness?

- Proficiency pay for government employees (including military personnel) maintaining foreign language proficiency. Considered useful, but costly in aggregate while not providing a substantial financial inducement for many to maintain high-level foreign language proficiency.

Questions: How many military personnel/civil servants currently receive proficiency pay for maintaining foreign language skills? Are means of evaluating their competencies reliable? How many individuals on these inventories have been utilized since 9/11?

- Proposals have been made to establish a Civilian Linguist Reserve Corps.

Questions: Would such a corps have a significant role in dealing with future eventualities? Has the Administration a position on the need for an intelligence reserve?