



# BECOMING AN INTERNATIONAL HEALTH SPECIALIST

**AIR FORCE GLOBAL HEALTH ENGAGEMENT**



"When the Secretary, Chief of Staff and I laid out the Air Force's priorities, security cooperation was high on the list. Security cooperation helps us build relationships with international partners and helps them build airpower capabilities and capacity. This is one way we support the national defense strategy and the strength of the nation...We rely on Airmen—officers, enlisted, and civilians—with language skills, cultural awareness, and keen political-military understanding to build relationships and represent us."

***Kaleth O. Wright,  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force***

# GLOBAL HEALTH ENGAGEMENT

Global Health Engagement (GHE) is part of a Geographic Combatant Commander's operational plans across all phases, and provides an opportunity for medical personnel to move from support to a direct operational role. GHE builds partnerships to collaborate and positively impact health capabilities and capacities of the Department of Defense (DoD) and Partner Nation (PN) personnel. The U.S. military is committed to protect citizens and interests, enhance readiness and

operational skills of U.S. and PN personnel, improve interoperability, and promote and preserve regional and PN stability and security. Healthy and resilient populations are more likely to be productive, prosperous, and peaceful communities that make positive contributions to regional and local stability. These efforts focus on proactive capacity building rather than reactive assistance to support global health security challenges.



## **PREVENT**

*war and disease*



## **PROTECT**

*national security*



## **RESPOND**

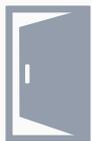
*to international crises*

# GHE STRATEGIC VALUE



## **FORCE DEVELOPMENT & MEDICAL FORCE READINESS**

GHE activities support DoD's Joint Mission Essential Task List (JMETL) **Strategic National Task Seven (SN 7): Conduct Force Development.** Through interoperability exercises, U.S. Department of Defense medical personnel are better able to work with PN medical personnel and infrastructure. In combination with increasing capacity and capability of the United States and PNs, GHE activities enable U.S. military forces to deploy fully capable with the fewest resources necessary. GHE also contributes to force readiness by ensuring that U.S. military medical personnel maintain skillsets necessary to operate in various foreign environments.



## **A GATEWAY TO COOPERATION**

GHE activities coordinate engagement with PNs as well as with international organizations and civilian government agencies, fulfilling JMETL **Strategic National**

## **Task Eight (SN 8): Coordinate Military Engagement Activities.**

Successful military-military and military-civilian capacity building engagements and exercises can be structured to build trust, gain, and maintain access to strategic areas of interest. By attracting and fortifying new and existing relationships, GHE supports the National Defense Strategy goal to create a robust constellation of allies and partners.



## **PROACTIVE REGIONAL STABILITY**

DoD GHE plays a role in DoD's mission to conduct stability operations throughout all phases of conflict and across the range of military operations, including in combat and non-combat environments. GHE supports JMETL **Strategic Theater Task Eight (ST 8): Perform Military Engagement** by helping to establish civil security, restore essential services, fortify healthcare infrastructure, and deliver humanitarian assistance.

# UNITED STATES AIR FORCE GHE

Three entities provide support to United States Air Force (USAF) GHE capabilities. These are the International Health Specialists (IHS), the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), and the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine (USAFSAM).

The USAF aims to be the DoD's primary GHE resource. The entities cover the full spectrum of GHE including related scientific and medical research, GHE methodology and best practice development, workforce development for both the United States and PNs, exercises and exchanges to enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and planning and implementation of GHE activities. USAF GHE execution focuses on activities within Air Force Medical Service (AFMS) core competencies: aerospace medicine, aeromedical evacuation, force health protection, expeditionary medical support, and preparedness for all hazards and disaster response operations.



## IHS PROGRAM

IHS personnel have cross-cultural competencies that enable them to forge meaningful working relationships with their PN counterparts. IHS teams are located at USAF Air Component Commands and DoD Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs) for operational and strategic-level planning and coordination.



## USU

The AFMS sponsors officers from all corps to participate in a "non-traditional" opportunity to obtain a Master of Public Health with a Global Health concentration to prepare them to support and lead GHE activities.



## USAFSAM

The premier research, consultation, and education institute that trains DoD, international, and civilian students in Aerospace Medicine. USAFSAM courses are open to international military students and one of its renowned program is the Advanced Aerospace Medicine for International Medical Officers (AAMIMO). USAFSAM also oversees the Defense Institute for Medical Operations (DIMO), which fields medical Mobile Training Teams to facilitate professional development, instruction, and exchange with U.S. partner countries.



# INTERNATIONAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS



## **REGIONAL & CULTURAL EXPERTS**

IHS personnel apply regional expertise, cross-cultural competencies, and foreign language proficiency to conduct GHE operations. This skillset enhances their ability to operate at the tactical level in GHE exercises and exchanges as well as at the operational and strategic level in coordinating GHE activities.



## **DYNAMIC PROFESSIONALS**

IHS personnel are Enlisted and Officer Corps members who have attained expertise in their primary specialties, have familiarization with AFMS capabilities, and possess international health-related engagement or operational experience.



## **STRATEGIC & OPERATIONAL PARTNERS**

IHS personnel collaborate and corroborate with PN medical professionals to identify areas of mutual interest and benefit. In turn, IHS personnel develop health engagement programs -- in alignment with GCCs' Campaign Plan -- to achieve security cooperation objectives for the United States and the PN.



## **TRUSTED COLLABORATORS**

IHS personnel know they have as much to learn as to share with PN professionals. Maintaining a collaborative approach is critical to successfully developing trusted partnerships. Learning from PN professionals how to operate in the context of the PN also increases medical force readiness at the individual and unit level.

# IHS & GHE OPPORTUNITIES

01

## DEPLOYMENT

02

## OPERATIONAL EXERCISE & SUPPORT

03

## SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT EXCHANGE (SMEE)

These types of opportunities could be unexpected and occurrence is difficult to forecast. Duration of these opportunities varies from one to three weeks and may be up to six months. Members with the IHS special experience identifier (SEI) are eligible to volunteer, will be given priority, or will be the first to be tasked/requested for missions such as health service support to humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations, SMEE events, or other security cooperation activities. Members without the IHS SEI also have opportunities to participate in a mission or SMEE event that requires a number of different clinical specialties or skill sets. Additionally, the Defense Institute for Medical Operations (DIMO) provides another avenue for AFMS personnel to participate in medical security cooperation activities and engage with U.S. allies and partners. For specific information on DIMO, visit [www.dimo.af.mil](http://www.dimo.af.mil).

### **ACTION TO TAKE:**

Communicate your interest to your local chain of command and Medical Readiness Office.

# IHS ASSIGNMENTS

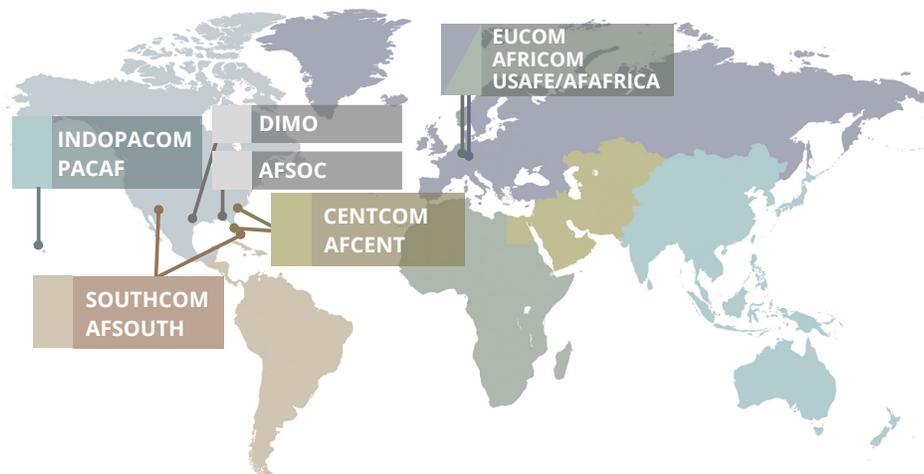
## FULL-TIME, SPECIAL DUTY TOUR

These are located in the Office of the Surgeon General (SG) at Air Components and Combatant Commands (see map). Duties focus on the operational and/or strategic GHE objectives that directly support the GCC's Commander Campaign Plan along with its Security Cooperation Plan and ultimately the National Defense Strategy and National Security Strategy.

IHS team members work with medical readiness planners to conceptualize, develop, and operationalize international health engagement activities. They also plan and program -- and coordinate joint, bi-lateral/multi-lateral, interagency -- security cooperation activities to support Phase 0 operations (including exercises) with emphasis on force readiness and interoperability amongst U.S. allies and partners.

### REQUIREMENTS:

- Officer: O-3 to O-6/  
Enlisted: E-5 to E-8
- IHS SEI: Enlisted (451)  
or Officer (H8A) or  
potential to acquire  
within 12 months
- Security Clearance:  
SECRET or higher
- Completion of  
Professional Military  
Education (PME)  
commensurate with rank
- Worldwide qualified
- Demonstrated cross-cultural  
awareness and competency
- Motivated, driven, and  
independent
- Highly developed interpersonal  
and organizational skills



### ACTIONS TO TAKE:

1. Conduct a self-assessment (see next page).
2. Communicate desire to mentor, supervisor, commander, functional manager, specialty consultant, and/or associate chief.
3. Ensure developmental plan (or assignment preference) is up-to-date in appropriate Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) Personnel System.
4. Look for vacancy advertisement and apply.

# INTERESTED IN AN IHS ASSIGNMENT?

## DO AN HONEST SELF-ASSESSMENT

01

### **Can I work independently to problem-solve using broad guidance?**

Duties involve minimal usage of your primary specialty (e.g. food inspection, direct patient care). Instead, they involve planning, developing, coordinating, and/or executing engagement activities. IHS team members also support functions within the SG Directorate on various operational tasks.

02

### **Can I work easily with culturally diverse military/civilian personnel?**

Full-time IHS team members interact and communicate frequently with others who may not have the same culture or belief system. It is critical to be open-minded, patient, diplomatic, courteous, and professional.

03

### **Do I have the flexibility and the willingness to adapt quickly?**

Knowing our capabilities and methods is essential, but it is unrealistic to expect our PNs to match our standards and practices in every way. IHS team members must be able to learn, assess, and quickly adapt existing capability and capacity of PNs to achieve a mutually beneficial end state.

04

### **Can I balance competing life priorities in an ambiguous environment?**

The engagement schedule with our PNs is projected, but it is fluid. Operational priorities can change internally or externally. Short-notice change is constant and requires flexibility. An IHS can spend extensive time away from his or her primary duty location and family. The ability to maintain a balance between professional and personal demands is critical.

05

### **Can I see myself as an excellent ambassador to represent the AFMS, USAF, DoD, and the United States?**

We are all Airmen! You must not think "I'm only a nurse," "I'm only an engineer," "I'm only a medical technician," etc. IHS personnel use every opportunity to "role model" and highlight to our allies and partners how each of us contributes to the Profession of Arms in the United States. As an example, some PNs are only beginning to consider starting a Nurse Corps or investing in their Enlisted Force. We use every opportunity to showcase the diversity of our institution.

# OBTAINING THE IHS SEI



PERUSE THE  
KX-IHS FOR  
RESOURCES



COMMUNICATE  
TO YOUR CHAIN  
OF COMMAND



COMPLETE &  
SUBMIT THE  
APPLICATION



SEND TO  
IHS PROGRAM  
OFFICE

## ENGAGE WITH US

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### VISIT:

Public: <https://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil>, search: "Global Health Engagement"

CAC: <https://kx2.health.mil>, keyword: "International Health Specialist"

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