



GLOBAL HEALTH ENGAGEMENT QUARTERLY

United States Air Force Global Health Engagement Newsletter

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to postpone global health engagement activities that International Health Specialist teams planned. The postponement of the physical interaction with partner nations' counterparts presents opportunities for IHS teams to innovate and adapt for continuing the USAF security cooperation mission. As an example, Air Forces Southern IHS team recently hosted a virtual seminar with the Southern Cone Air Forces that proved successful. There were more than 85 participants, crossing three geographic combatant commands and four time zones, representing six partner nations, joint and combined forces, the Air Reserve Component and Air National Guard. The seminar focused on sharing tactics, techniques, and procedures for aeromedical evacuation of highly infectious disease patients. Additionally, the virtual forum raised awareness of the capabilities and promoted interoperability among the air forces in the region. Based on the beneficial value this virtual format offers, the Air Forces Southern IHS team plans to host short, quarterly meetings and a multi-day seminar annually. Our continuous presence and dialogue with allies and partners is especially relevant and necessary now, to collectively mitigate and respond to the global pandemic. IHS teams can maintain the effectiveness of global health engagement operations through virtual collaboration in a travel restricted environment. This edition shares several examples that demonstrate how the work of IHS through global health engagement provides value to the United States and partner nations.

WESLEY D. PALMER, Colonel, USAF, MC, FS
Director, International Health Specialist Program

AIR FORCE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS NEEDED FOR WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS

by Master Sgt. Mouhamed Gadiaga, International Health Specialist Program Manager

U.S. Air Force International Health Specialists are known for our geopolitical expertise and health diplomacy, but we are also skilled in facilitating whole-of-government operations.

I began my Air Force career as a bioenvironmental engineer technician. Transitioning to an International Health Specialist gave me a better understanding of how the Air Force Medical Service fits into the larger Air Force and Department of Defense missions. I went from performing industrial hygiene and occupational health surveys for a local commander to supporting my combatant commander's strategy in Africa.

My first assignment as an International Health Specialist was as a team member at United States Air Forces in Europe - Air Forces Africa at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. I began each day with an open-ended team discussion to brainstorm how world events might impact or inform our collaboration with partner nations. Many of our discussions led to projects of different kinds and shapes. We were empowered to create projects and initiatives and build programs from the ground up, sometimes with very little precedent and no benchmark to model. We worked to overcome funding requirements, coordinate challenges within the joint and interagency community, and decide who should be on what team.

A background image showing several individuals in full-body blue protective suits and masks, standing behind a chain-link fence. One person on the right is wearing a yellow hard hat and a clear face shield. The scene appears to be an outdoor setting, possibly a field or a secure area.

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I developed five-year plans with West African partner nations to increase their military and civilian medical capabilities. For this activity, systems thinking was important to identify and evaluate all variables that might impact outcomes. Creating policy and concepts of operations were critical steps in establishing new programs that were components of this long-term engagement. Through all of this, I learned to be flexible and willing to adjust my plans.

As an International Health Specialist, I engaged with a variety of professionals of different backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. I often found myself at a conference table full of Surgeons General and Ministry of Health leaders from partner nations in the region. I regularly coordinated with Security Cooperation Office high-ranking personnel at U.S. embassies and learned my expertise was valued and more important than my branch of service or rank.

To be successful, I learned how to shift perspectives so I could “speak their language,” and communicate in a way to meet the needs of my counterparts around that conference table. I learned to recognize my own biases and not let them get in the way of progress. Understanding how to meet people where they are is as important in a multinational context as it is in a joint and interagency context.

International Health Specialists master several core competencies essential to their job, such as health diplomacy, joint operational planning, and interagency coordination. However, these core competencies are a valuable component of professional development for any Air Force medic. Being an International Health Specialist requires adaptability, open-mindedness, resourcefulness, and big-picture thinking. Through big-picture thinking, we can develop whole-of-government solutions when unexpected global crises strike.

One such crisis was the Ebola pandemic in West Africa. I collaborated with the U.S. Army, U.S. embassies, the African Union, non-government organizations, and sister services of partner nations to develop a program and build a capability that did not yet exist. In Accra, Ghana, we used the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center as a platform to launch the West African Disaster Response Initiative. This program enabled West African nations to effectively respond to the Ebola pandemic as well as future pandemics. My experience as an International Health Specialist was critical to my success in this role.

Similarly, I witnessed my colleagues facilitate a whole-of-government response when they were called to support Task Force-Southeast, which was set up to coordinate domestic COVID-19 pandemic response activities. They worked in support of U.S. Army North and the Federal Emergency Management Agency filling positions at headquarters, to include deputy surgeon of the task force. They used their joint operational planning and civil-military operations expertise to facilitate a total force response to the crisis. They were able to provide support because of the preparation and training they received as International Health Specialists.

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us the next global crisis could be novel and unexpected. I am confident the DoD and the world can rely on Air Force International Health Specialists to provide whole-of-government capabilities in support of national security objectives. ■

IHS SPOTLIGHT: SMSGT MELVIN MORENA



Since 2018, SMSgt Melvin Morena has led several engagements with the Croatian Armed Forces and Kosovo Security Forces that enabled both partner nations to respond effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic. "We planned and conducted engagements with Croatia to assess and build its expeditionary Role Two medical treatment facility logistics, mass casualty response, and base operating support capabilities," he said. This engagement enabled the Croatian Armed Forces to rapidly deploy self-sustaining, Alaska-type tents in front of their main hospital and expand their Role Two treatment capability within 72 hours in support of COVID-19 response. The Croatian Armed Forces deployed this new capability in record-breaking time, as it normally takes seven days to run at full operational capacity. The Kosovo Security Forces had similar success setting up multiple Role One medical response teams throughout the country to treat and/or test potential COVID-19 patients. Read the full article: <https://bit.ly/3hT5Zmm>

2020 Q3 IHS SEI AWARDEES

Capt Ruslan Garrey (H8A, H8B)
Capt Sharon Laughter (H8A)
Capt Rocco Mazzei (H8A, H8B)
Capt Jose Velascosoltero (H8A)
Capt Desbah Yazzie (H8A)
Lt Aliaksei Krasouski (H8A)
Maj Bashir Elkhoury (H8A)
Maj Katie Jeon (H8A)
MSgt Amilia Almosara (451)
MSgt Kerim Kodal (451)
MSgt Jeremy Rhodus (451)
TSgt Ryan Kainrath (451)
SSgt Matthew Kodad (451)
SSgt Ruvim Martynovich (451)

The next IHS SEI application package is due 6 November 2020. Click here (CAC login required) for details: <https://tinyurl.com/yyb6prw2>

CAREER BROADENING, EDUCATION & TRAINING

Are you an Air Force medical officer interested in broadening your regional expertise to support security cooperation and health diplomacy missions? If so, the Air Force offers tuition assistance for a second Master's degree in International Affairs. The academic program associated with the Master's degree will prepare Airmen for an increasingly globalized world as well as provide insight into regional and geopolitical context. It also gives medical Airmen opportunities to demonstrate not only regional and geopolitical expertise, but also possesses cross-cultural competency, which is one of the IHS requirements.

For more information about the tuition assistance program, visit (CAC login required): <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/docs/DOC-322612>.



IN THE NEWS

Thracian Summer 2020: Saving Lives Together [[Photos](#)] [[Article](#)]

U.S. and Bulgarian air force aeromedical evacuation teams practice lifting and transporting a litter during Thracian Summer 2020 at Plovdiv Airport, Bulgaria.

[JTF-Bravo Aeromedical Evacuation Teams Save Three Lives in Four Weeks \[SOUTHCOM\]](#)

[AF technology could help fight virus, disease spread in buildings \[AFMS\]](#)

[From Tech School to COVID-19, an Airman's Journey \[Air Nat'l Guard\]](#)

[Exercises with Allies, Partners Strengthen USEUCOM's Readiness \[EUCOM\]](#)

[US, Japan Build on 60 Years of Regional Cooperation \[PACOM\]](#)

IHS CORE COMPETENCY CORNER

Gobal Health and Health Systems

Knowledgeable of public health principles, to include individual and population preventive health. Understands the growing discipline of global health that applies public health principles in a multidisciplinary and cooperative manner to address health threats that transcend international borders. This also includes knowledge of the geopolitical context for a country/region and the role of the health sector for both military/security and civilian impact. This is one of ten competencies that IHS must master and maintain to be fully capable. Read about the others here: <https://go.usa.gov/xpyY9>

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Engage with Air Force Medical Service:



Engage with the IHS program and learn how to apply:



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