

THE IFEL YEARS

According to the official Yale account of the institute's history http://www.yale.edu/fep/about_fep.html, what later became the Institute of Far Eastern Languages was established in 1943. However, the institute didn't enter its most productive years, insofar as the number of linguists trained is concerned, until 1952 when the first class of Air Force personnel destined to serve as voice intercept processing specialists with the Air Force Security Service command arrived.

Prior to 1952 practically all training of Air Force Far Eastern language specialists was done at the Army Language School In Monterey, California. The Air Force recognized that as a separate branch of the service, its needs were different from those of the Army both in regard to the language training and to the military lifestyle of the students.

In 1951, as the result of extensive groundwork laid down by a young Air Force captain by the name of Delmar C. Lang, a contract was awarded to the institute to serve as the training school for Air Force Far Eastern language specialists

The program ran continuously at Yale for approximately fifteen years and turned out approximately 3,400 graduates. The primary language was Mandarin Chinese. The Mandarin program trained nearly 2,800 linguists. The next largest program trained 364 Japanese linguists. Next in size was the Korean program that trained 170 linguists.

There were also programs in Indonesian and Burmese but those programs trained less than a dozen students between them.

In the mid 1960s, the Army Language School's mission was expanded to provide language training for all agencies of the Department of Defense. The school was renamed the Defense Language institute. The establishment of a department-wide language school spelled the end of the separate Air Force program at Yale. In recognition of the quality of the program, most key IFEL staff and faculty members were picked up by DLI and the program continued essentially as it was back at Yale.

Among these were also several civilian students, primarily people preparing for missionary work and civilian personnel from various government agencies. One such student was a "Department of State" employee by the name of Jim Lilly. Jim graduated in May 1958 and went on to a highly successful foreign service career which included serving as the United States Ambassador to China.