



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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MEMORANDUM

From: Capt Francisco Reyes, XXX XX 6711/0302
To: HQMC, Strategy and Plans Division (PLU)

Subj: BRAZIL TRIP REPORT

1. **Purpose.** To report on official travel to Brazil, from 20-28 July, by Captain Francisco J. Reyes, USMC, 8240 Latin America FAO in training.
2. **Summary.** As a self-taught Portuguese speaker, the combination of formal language classes and immersion was greatly instrumental in improving my speaking abilities. In addition to improving my vocabulary, listening, reading and speaking capability, I gained culture and interagency insights through engagement with the Military Liaison Office (MLO) and U.S. country team.
3. **Discussion.**
 - a. I chose Sao Paulo because it is one of Brazil's largest cities and hence one of its largest cultural centers. I stayed with friends in town in order to save money and force myself to speak Portuguese even after classes.
 - b. I took Portuguese classes at the Wizard Higienopolis institute in Sao Paulo. Portuguese classes lasted eight hours per day, Monday through Thursday. During the first four hours, the course focused on listening and reading skills. I spent the second part of the day engaging in conversation with an instructor to broaden vocabulary and speaking skills. The total cost of the course was \$1,224.41.
 - c. Outside of the classroom, I engaged in conversation with the local population on a wide variety of topics, which included popular culture, Brazil's perspectives on America, local economics and social issues. These conversations not only allowed me to exercise my language skills, but to stay up to date on the ideas, concerns, and opinions of the locals.

d. After four days of language sustainment training in Sao Paulo, I traveled to Brasilia for an MLO and Embassy Country Team orientation. During my orientation visit, I met with senior representatives from the Military Liaison Office, Defense Attaché Office, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Regional Security Office, and Marine Security Guard Detachment. This visit allowed me to gain a better understanding of the nature of the work and challenges that the Country Team faces.

4. Recommendations.

a. Since experience track FAOs do not receive formal language or cultural training, this training program is invaluable to experience-track FAOs in particular. I highly recommend its continued execution.

b. FAOs already possessing 3/3 DLPT scores in reading and listening, should focus on conversational/speaking classes. Reading and listening skills can be maintained through the diverse programs available to the FAO community. None of the programs, however, can duplicate the experience of conversing with a Portuguese instructor or native Brazilians. Thus, it would be worth to pay the additional cost for full eight hours of conversation with an instructor.

c. Recommend that FAOs planning to travel to Brasilia coordinate a detail visit program with the Military Liaison Office (MLO). Prior coordination with the MLO made the one-day visit extremely helpful in understanding the relationship with Brazil from the perspectives of the different agencies in the country team.

F.J. Reyes