

Statement from Pentagon, March 27, 2015:

Since 1997 the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies has been a trusted academic institution for advancing defense and security dialogue in the Western Hemisphere. Through educational courses, seminars, outreach, strategic dialogue and focused research, the Perry Center works with senior civilian and military security and defense officials from the region to build strong, sustainable networks of security and defense leaders and institutions. Since its creation, the center has used a combination of US and foreign faculty in its courses and other offerings, aiming to match experienced regional defense and security practitioners with highly qualified academics. Overwhelmingly, this hybrid approach has served both the US Government and the region well, enabling well over 6,000 security and defense practitioners from throughout the region to benefit from the center's cutting edge offerings. Of particular note, many Perry Center civilian attendees have gained the real world skills needed to go back to their home countries to assume substantive management and oversight positions in their defense and security sectors.

This approach carries with it an additional responsibility to continually review the backgrounds and status of our foreign faculty once they are hired. Allegations of human rights violations sometimes surface decades after the fact, underscoring the need for vetting, and for vetting to be a recurring process. To ensure all faculty are above reproach in their functions, the center is taking steps to update background checks and vet foreign nationals hired as instructors. Over the past two years, as part of a decision to exercise greater oversight of the Regional Centers, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy has undertaken a significant review of all Regional Center governance policies and standard operating procedures.

With the results of the review, the new Perry Center leadership and OSD-Policy have launched a significant restructuring which includes a stringent new process to scrutinize the background of new hires. This process includes thorough reference checks with the U.S. Embassy officials, consultation with the Department of State and Department of Homeland Security as well as government officials, human rights organizations and civilian academics in the home country of the visiting professor. To further support these checks, OSD-Policy has developed formal guidance that specifically states all future foreign hires will undergo ongoing human rights vetting for the duration of their employment.

The Department of Defense takes any accusation about an employee very

seriously and in consultation within the appropriate legal and human resources framework will seek further information to ascertain if administrative or disciplinary actions are warranted. In the future, when hiring foreign nationals, a job offer may be extended with the provision that it is the responsibility of the foreign national to obtain work authorization from the Department of Homeland Security to legally work in the United States, and the employee is vetted for human rights violations. If the position requires a security clearance, the prospective employee must be able to obtain and maintain the required level of clearance.