

Testimonial

“Why I Come Back to National Security Again and Again”

An interview with Marty Hare, NASA’s ‘counterintelligence’ guy

By Jessica Lipnack

Jessica Lipnack: What does a “counterintelligence guy” at NASA do?

Marty Hare: I believe that counterintelligence threat and awareness training is the foundation of any effective counterintelligence program. As you can imagine, this mindset is unfamiliar to the current NASA culture. So, to begin to protect some of our nation’s most advanced space-related technologies, we need to make people aware of foreign technology collection efforts that target NASA. At the very least, we need NASA folks to think about what we’re sharing and evaluate whether it makes sense to give it away to other countries.

JL: What did you do before this?

MH: I’m career DoD. I spent 20 years in Army counterintelligence.

JL: Why did you originally sign up for a course on national security?

MH: In my job, I need to be as current as possible on our national priorities—national security, foreign policy and domestic policy. Without understanding our national priorities, I might find myself moving in a direction that’s not in line with our national leadership. And I don’t want to be stupid.

JL: Why did you choose the Brookings U.S. National Security Policy Issues course?

MH: I receive all kinds of intelligence and homeland security updates from within DoD and the U.S. intelligence community, read all kinds of things, follow media reporting, etc. But when I considered the various, available professional development sources, I thought Brookings would be the best—that I’d have the chance to network with folks who are responsible for establishing global policies and so better understand global issues. The quality of the instructors is superb, pre-eminent thinkers with fresh ideas. They’re not just thinkers, not just policy implementers, but real scholars.

JL: Why did you take the National Security program a second time?

MH: The face of geopolitics has changed so dramatically in the last three years that if I run off of information that was in vogue even a few years ago, I'll be off track. With the global war on terror, the national security focus has shifted from traditional counterintelligence fare in the interest of protecting the American homeland against terrorists. I also went back because the speakers were different from three years ago, especially when the program has Newt Gingrich and Wes Clark talking back-to-back.

JL: What really stood out to you from the 2007 program?

MH: The biggest issues concerned Iraq. It was very refreshing to find that no one was throwing rocks at the current administration or taking cheap shots. The speakers highlighted strengths and weaknesses and proposed the best road forward. The hardest point Newt hit was our education system. Whether you agree with him or not, he's carrying a banner for revamping U.S. education. If we don't change how we're teaching math and science, if we don't increase enrollment by American students in those areas, the United States will cease to be globally relevant.

JL: And what about the other participants?

MH: I had some really interesting conversations. I learned more from a couple of international classmates about Islam and Pakistan in fifteen minutes than I could ever have imagined. The expressions on people's faces when they talk about their cultures tell you more than anything. That's instructive; that's where learning becomes personal—as opposed to simply reading a book or some report from the FBI or CIA. You learn about people when you can see what they've felt in their hearts. And that's a level of understanding you can only get this way. You learn more by exposure than simply reading.

JL: If the circumstances were right for your job, would you take the course again?

MH: You bet. I hope that things work out such that it makes sense for me to return in a couple of years for the latest insights.