

# **ICE Improves Training and Identifies Efficiencies with FLETA Accreditation**

*By Tony Putnam, Unit Chief, ICE Academy Charleston*

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Academy achieved accreditation for the ICE D Field Operations Training Program (DFOTP) on November 17, 2011. The ICE D Field Operations Training Program trains ICE personnel, with emphasis on fugitive operations teams enforcing immigration law consistent with applicable laws, policies, and procedures. There were a number of positive and significant changes in regard to curriculum development, instructor development/certification, and administration. The following are just a few of the examples:

Whereas the predecessor program tested constitutional protections, such as 4<sup>th</sup> amendment, at the end of the 3 week program, the DFOTP tests the same information on day one of the training program, by using a computer based training program. Not only did this cut housing costs by 33% by shortening the training program, but also provided training to all personnel in the field, which would have cost tens of millions of dollars for residential training. In addition, the average scores for our DFOTP students exceed those student scores of the predecessor program. From there, the students practice these constitutional protections with other skill sets in a hands-on environment that culminates in a series of practical exercises that are assessed by experts in the field, including seasoned federal attorneys. The revamped program, built to meet the stringent FLETA standards, ensures that the student is provided the knowledge and practical application ability through this training, reducing agency liability and ensuring the rights of the accused, while improving the efficiency and productivity of our agents.

Instructors of the DFOTP are required to be certified in the disciplines they instruct ensuring the safest and most efficient manner of instruction provided to the students. Measures are in place that guarantees the instructors presenting the material have experience in Title 8 enforcement. In addition, instructors are now required to participate in developmental activities to support currency in their topical areas of expertise. Instructors participate in policy development; operational activities (fugitive operations, jail surges, etc.) attend seminars and shadowing activities to improve their expertise. Instructors are subject to rotation, safeguarding against instructors remaining at the Academy for the balance of their careers. Regular instructor rotation ensures that the most recent techniques and authorized practices/processes are instructed. This approach provides receiving field offices with officers commanding a wealth of knowledge and experience.



ICE staff receiving the certificate of Accreditation on November 17, 2011. Pictured left to right: Tony Putnam (ICE Academy Charleston), Gary Mitchell (FLETA OA), Robert Helwig (ICE ERO), Donald Webb (FLETA Board Chairman), Joe Augeri (ICE OTD), and Bob Slama (ICE OTD).

The DFOTP accreditation initiative was originally undertaken in response to direction from the Office of Training and Development (OTD). Since OTD began supporting adoption of the FLETA process, the ICE Academy has been the beneficiary of set processes that cover program administration, staff qualification, training development and training delivery. Training records now meet federal record standards. Curriculum design, development, and implementation are covered by clear policy and are consistent, and no longer dependent on a single instructor's experience, which might not meet required federal guidelines and procedures. Evaluation procedures coincide with the requirements of the OPM Training Evaluation Field Guide and 5 CFR 250. Cut scores and remediation procedures are now part of policy and not subject to the whim of the coordinators of the program in question. Risk assessment and safety procedures are now active parts of the operation, and no longer dependent on other entities whose safety ideals may differ considerably from current written guidelines.

The accreditation process has greatly improved the training we provide to ICE personnel. These benefits will positively affect the safety of our officers and of the public in general increasing our efficacy and efficiency, while minimizing exposure of our officers and our agency to adverse litigation. Positive change would have likely occurred as an evolutionary process; FLETA provides proven standards and guidelines that make training programs more responsible to its stakeholders and to the public they serve.