



Peace Operations Training Institute

Study peace and humanitarian relief any place, any time

Newsletter October 2020

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The Peace Operations Training Institute (POTI) is an independent non-governmental organization (NGO) recognized by the United States Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt not-for-profit public charity based in Williamsburg, Virginia, USA.

Interview with new history course author Paul Williams

Paul Williams, Ph.D., is a Professor at the Elliott School of International Affairs — The George Washington University and is the Associate Director of the Elliott School's M.A. Security Policy Studies programme. He has written books and articles on conflict resolution and specializes in UN peace operations in Africa. He wrote the POTI course History of Peacekeeping from 2000–2020, which the Institute intends to release in the fourth quarter of 2020. This course provides a fascinating history of peacekeeping operations in the past two decades and includes an engaging description of the ways UN peace operations have adapted to meet the challenges of the new millennium. To learn more about his work, please visit his website <<https://www.profpaulwilliams.com>>. We thank Professor Williams for taking the time to speak with us.

POTI: You are a prominent scholar in UN peace operations and warfare in Africa. Would you mind sharing with us what inspired you to pursue this line of research?

Paul Williams (PW): Basically, it was down to the time and place I did my undergraduate degree and some good advice from one of my professors. I started studying international relations at [Aberystwyth University](#) in 1993. What was in the news at the time? Peace operations! In the Balkans, Somalia, Angola, Rwanda, etc. I found the idea of deploying soldiers to help make peace fascinating. I became particularly interested in several missions in Africa and the debates that led to the establishment of the new African Union at the turn of the 21st century. At Aberystwyth, my Ph.D. supervisor, [Professor Ken Booth](#), offered two pieces of good advice, which I took onboard: If you're going to be academic about anything, it may as well be something important; and academic research should focus on "real people in real places". Studying peace operations fits both.

POTI: You were also a co-manager of [Providing for Peacekeeping Project](#) (PPP), an independent research project that "analyzes the factors that encourage or discourage states from contributing to UN peacekeeping operations". What are some of the trends you have seen emerge in peace operations?

PW: Between 2012 and 2019, I ran this project in partnership with [Professor Alex Bellamy](#) at the

University of Queensland and several directors of the [Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations](#) at the International Peace Institute. We produced over 70 profiles of why and how countries provide peacekeepers to the UN and other international organizations, 18 thematic reports analyzing key issues related to force generation, and maintained a comprehensive database on UN peacekeeping personnel contributions since November 1990. Some of the most notable trends during that time have been the massive rise in police peacekeepers, a significant increase in women peacekeepers since the early 2000s, considerable growth in States from the local neighbourhood providing peacekeepers, and the UN's shift from thinking about force generation in terms of numbers to delivering capabilities.

POTI: As a professor at the Elliott School of International Affairs — The George Washington University, you have many of your classes in person. However, POTI courses are all done asynchronously and online. What are some of the similarities and differences you find in teaching in person and online?

PW: True, although during 2020, COVID-19 and US politics have worked to change that. I think both online and face-to-face teaching are ultimately about delivering thoughtful content in a way that engages students. You must clearly present the crucial issues, highlight the major areas of controversy, and give students the analytical tools to make their own informed assessment. But online and face-to-face environments require some different skills and approaches; hence, teachers and students need to adjust accordingly. Teachers need to deliver information a bit differently online, and students need to adjust their learning techniques and schedule.

POTI: Before you started writing *History of Peacekeeping from 2000–2020*, you asked your 14.2k followers on Twitter about what they think should be included in the course. What was crowdsourcing ideas for your course like? What were some of the proposed topics that you found most interesting or didn't initially consider including?

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Interview with new history course author (continued)

PW: I reached out on Twitter because a lot of smart people follow me, and I wanted to hear their ideas. There are lots of ways to approach a history of two decades of peacekeeping, and I often find Twitter's hivemind helpful for providing confirmation and/or new directions. Quite a few people wanted the course to include UN partnerships with other organizations and actors; specific dramatic events, especially involving the use of force; scandals and challenges as well as relative successes; and relatively obscure operations (I decided to devote space to all the UN's peacekeeping operations that were active during this period, not just the largest or most well-known).

POTI: Did you encounter any challenges while writing *History of Peacekeeping from 2000–2020*?

PW: When there is such an enormous amount of potential material to work with, there are two main challenges. First, what to include (and hence, what to exclude) in terms of events, processes, and different perspectives. Second, how to organize the selected material and present it in such a way that it is reasonably concise and clear but not overly simplistic. In the end, I opted to organize the course using some thematic, general issues, but mainly taking individual operations as the focus of analysis. I felt this would be easiest for most students to quickly orient themselves to the material and navigate to particular areas of interest.

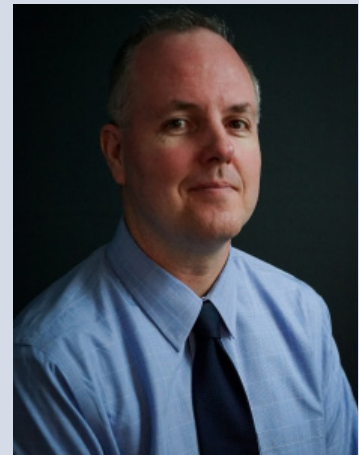
POTI: What are some of the big ideas or key takeaways that you want POTI students enrolled in your course to leave with after they complete it?

PW: Peacekeeping is important! It is often a matter of life and death, and we need to figure out how to do it better.

Peacekeeping is complicated! It can involve a huge number of partnerships that often reflect a truly globalized effort and a huge range of issues, none of which are simple or easy to resolve.

Peacekeeping is usually worthwhile! If most key belligerents are genuine about resolving their wars, then peacekeepers really can make the difference in delivering stable peace.

Peacekeeping is political! The [HIPPO Report](#) [Report of the Independent High-Level Panel on Peace Operations] was correct when it pointed to "the primacy of politics" in ensuring the success of



Professor Paul Williams

contemporary peace operations. Everyone involved in peace operations needs to remember this.

POTI: What are some common misconceptions that you find people have about the UN or peace operations? What are some things you wish people knew more about?

PW: Peace operations are what the world's governments make them — neither more nor less. At the heart of "the UN" are its Member States, and they need to give peace a chance by investing in it. If the UN's Member States won't provide the right tools and necessary resources, we shouldn't solely blame the peacekeepers they send into the field. Peacekeepers cannot deliver peace alone. Unless the main belligerents are willing to end the war, it's very difficult for peacekeepers to help build a genuinely stable peace.

Finally, I think [UNMAS](#) deserves to be a household name around the world. Clearing [mines and explosive hazards](#), providing education to reduce risk from mines, and assisting victims are crucial but rarely feature in the international or media spotlight.

New course translations

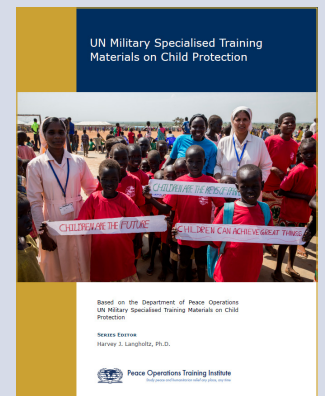
The Institute published the French and Spanish translations of *Ethics in Peace Operations*, a course developed by the Centre for Military Ethics at King's College London. *Ethics in Peace Operations* presents a general introduction to the basic ethical aspects of peace operations. The UN Core Values — integrity, professionalism, and respect for diversity — form the basis for this course. Through the use of the case studies and practical examples, this compilation aims to be a guideline for peace support personnel in the field. POTI is excited to offer this common core course to our Spanish- and French-speaking students. You can access the English, French, and Spanish versions of this course at: <<https://www.peaceopstraining.org/courses/ethics-in-peace-operations-english-2019/>>.

As always, the Institute welcomes feedback from its students on new and updated courses.



New course on the protection of children

The Institute released a new course, *UN Military Specialised Training Materials on Child Protection*, in late August 2020. These training modules aim at introducing child protection concepts and providing child protection mission-specific tactical situations to military and police contingent leaders and staff. The materials intend to promote a better understanding of the missions' child protection mandate, actors in the mission and outside of the mission who contribute to the protection of children, and actors integral to the coordination of child protection. These course materials have been sourced directly from the United Nations Peacekeeping Resource Hub under a revocable licence issued by the Integrated Training Service. This course is free for everyone and is available at: <<https://www.peaceopstraining.org/courses/child-protection-english-2020/>>.



POTI partners with UNESCO

We are thrilled to announce the Institute's new partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The forthcoming course *Protection of Cultural Property: Online Course for the Military, Police, and Law Enforcement* was developed in concert with UNESCO to educate peace operations personnel on the international rules governing the treatment of valuable cultural objects in times of conflict.

The history of armed conflict is constituted not only by attacks on persons and groups but also by accidental and intentional attacks on cultural heritage. Recent years have seen many instances of "identity warfare", or the deliberate targeting of cultural property representing a specific group by armed forces as a means of ethnic or cultural "cleansing". For this and many other reasons, the protection of cultural property continues to be of great importance to the conduct of peace operations at all levels on the ground.

Protection of Cultural Property, based on the *UNESCO Manual on the Protection of Cultural Property*, enlightens students on topics ranging from the identification of cultural property in peace operations to the necessity of civilian-military cooperation in its protection. It does so by presenting case studies, quizzes, and doctrine reflecting best practice and the overall importance of preserving cultural heritage in times of political and social upheaval.

We look forward to introducing this new area of study into the POTI curriculum.



An Afghan National Police officer stands guard in front of the remains of one of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Afghanistan, which was built during the sixth century and destroyed under Taliban rule. 23 July 2009. UN Photo # 05816 by Eric Kanalestein.

Students show commitment to learning by earning POST Certificates

The Institute provides the Peace Operations Specialized Training (POST) Certificate programme as an opportunity for students to specialize in one or more professional areas by successfully passing a prescribed set of courses and a Comprehensive Examination. Students deepen their knowledge base and improve their professional competency by earning one or more of the six certificates available. The areas of speciality are Military Studies, Police Studies, Civilian Service, Gender Awareness, Logistical Support, and Human Rights.

Completing self-paced online courses requires dedication and commitment. These qualities are found in abundance among POTI students, especially in those who earn POST Certificates. During the first eight months of 2020, POTI students earned more than 200 POST Certificates. Some of these men and women were studying while serving in the field; others earned their certificates while preparing for deployment. Many completed their coursework while working full time.

Students may enrol in courses to earn a POST Certificate through any POTI programme for which they are eligible. For more information, visit the POST Certificate page at: <<https://www.peaceopstraining.org/specialized-training-certificates/>>. If you have any questions not addressed on the website, please contact the Institute through the Help Desk at: <<https://www.peaceopstraining.org/users/help-desk/>>.



New study aide: POTI Quizlet

In an effort to provide students with more resources, POTI has begun incorporating interactive elements into its courses. As part of this initiative, POTI is happy to announce the launch of its Quizlet profile as a study tool for students to practice vocabulary and concepts found in their courses.

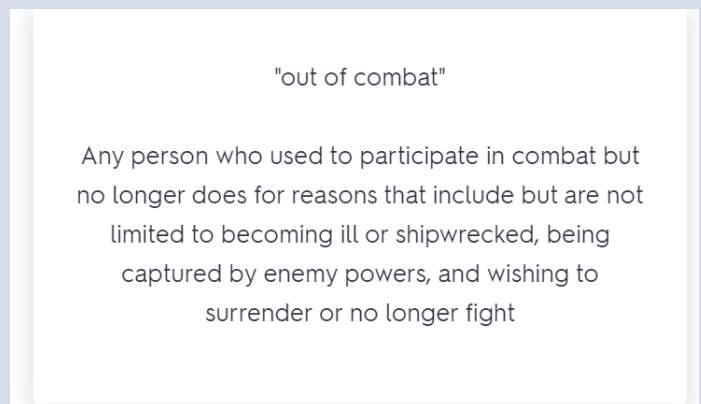
Quizlet is an online learning tool that allows students to study through flashcards, games, and tests. Students can review key concepts through Quizlet's "study sets", or virtual study guides. There are currently 12 total study sets: one based on the *International Humanitarian Law and the Law of Armed Conflict* course and others related to UN peace operations and to the UN system. The Institute plans on expanding the study sets to include other course-related materials and general information about the UN and its peace operations.

If you are enrolled in *International Humanitarian Law and the Law of Armed Conflict*, you can find a link to the course's study set in your classroom under "Additional Resources". Otherwise, you can search for "PeaceOpsTraining" on the Quizlet website or click this link: <<https://quizlet.com/PeaceOpsTraining>>. To access the full content, you must create a free Quizlet account at: <<https://quizlet.com/>>.

As always, we are open to suggestions and feedback from our students on how to make studying easier.



Front of Quizlet Card



Back of Quizlet Card

POTI partnerships: NPOTC

The Brazilian Naval Peace Operations Training Centre (NPOTC — in Portuguese, COpPazNav) is one of the Institute's valued National Training Centre E-Learning Platform (NTCELP) partners. NPOTC primarily provides training on peace operations to members of the Brazilian navy and serves a wide range of Brazilian and international audiences. The centre has a long history of success since its founding in 2008 for the purpose of preparing individuals who would serve in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to now training individuals for the mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL). NPOTC is also a leader in gender issues and provides specialized courses to train and encourage women to participate in peace operations.

POTI and NPOTC cooperate through NTCELP as POTI provides an online platform for NPOTC students and staff to access online courses for free. Commander (Marines) Carlos Maia, Officer-in-Charge at NPOTC, also liaises frequently with POTI to deepen cooperation and improve services for students. Currently, NPOTC is working with POTI to provide a Portuguese translation of our course *International Humanitarian Law and the Law of Armed Conflict* by Antoine Bouvier, which we hope to offer to students in the near future.

Commander Maia himself is also dedicated to peace, having completed 28 continuous years of active military service in the Brazilian marines. During this time, he has completed assignments at MINUSTAH as an instructor on international humanitarian law and as an Exchange Officer, among his many other accomplishments. On collaboration with POTI, Commander Maia noted, "We had the chance to improve our partnership with POTI during the global pandemic, and we are very happy with the results. The National Training Centre E-Learning Platform (NTCELP) is a great idea and helps us to supplement our courses, especially in this unprecedented moment". POTI is honoured to serve national peacekeeping training centres like NPOTC and looks forward to working with them towards a more peaceful world.



Carlos Eduardo G. da Silva Maia, Commander (Marines) and Officer-in-Charge at the Naval Peace Operations Training Centre

"We had the chance to improve our partnership with POTI during the global pandemic, and we are very happy with the results. The National Training Centre E-Learning Platform (NTCELP) is a great idea and helps us to supplement our courses, especially in this unprecedented moment."

Commander Carlos Eduardo G. da Silva Maia

From the desk of the Executive Director, Dr. Harvey Langholtz



Dr. Langholtz

As I write this entry to the POTI quarterly newsletter, the world has just recently marked the six-month anniversary of the wider onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen rapid and unprecedented changes in so many things — unemployment, travel bans, school closings, and of course, the direct impact of the coronavirus itself that has resulted in 30 million cases and almost one million deaths. Unfortunately, the ongoing conflicts continue unabated, and the resulting need for trained peacekeepers is as strong as ever. Here at POTI, it is our honour to meet the increased demand for an e-learning alternative used by national peacekeeping training centres as a partial substitute for the classroom training that had to be cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this past quarter, we have continued to expand our course offerings. Our most recent new release is *UN Military Specialized Training Materials on Child Protection*, which received 200 enrolments during the first three weeks of availability. We have also released the French and Spanish versions of *Ethics in Peace Operations*, a course developed in partnership with the Centre for Military Ethics at King's College London.

The peacekeeping mission is never easy. It is our pleasure here at POTI to serve the peacekeeping community both during routine times and also during times made difficult by the current pandemic.