



# Peace Operations Training Institute®

*Study peace and humanitarian relief any place, any time*



## April 2022 Newsletter

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UN Photo by Leonel Grothe Tossela.

### Incoming POTI Executive Director: Ms. Ramona Taheri

Ms. Ramona Taheri will become the Peace Operations Training Institute's second Executive Director following the retirement of the incumbent, Dr. Harvey Langholtz, in July 2022. (See Dr. Langholtz's letter covering his storied tenure at POTI on [page 5](#).)

Ms. Taheri has been with POTI for over eight years and has been responsible for managing the Institute in keeping with its mission and establishing new

partnerships. She previously worked as a Research Assistant for Columbia University's Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy studying civil conflicts. She has worked and volunteered in various capacities for Amnesty International USA, the Red Cross, the Rebuild Afghanistan Summit, and ReEstablish Richmond. She received a BA in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia and an MA in Political Science with a concentration in International Relations from Columbia University.

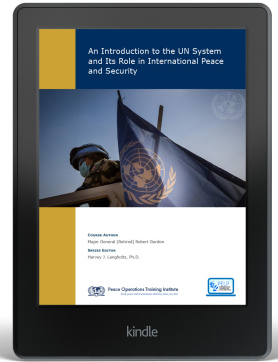
With Ms. Taheri at the helm, the Institute will continue striving to support those serving on peace operations around the globe through 2022 and beyond.

## Recent POTI Course Releases

POTI is pleased to announce the release of the French translation of the course [\*Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Africa\*](#), released in partnership with UN Women. This course addresses the evolving challenges and priorities in implementing the women, peace, and security agenda in Africa, acknowledging the dynamic and multi-faceted contributions of women at all levels. View an introductory video to the course from UN Women Deputy Executive Director Åsa Regnér [here](#), available with French subtitles.

The Institute has also released an audiobook edition of its newest updated course, [\*An Introduction to the UN System and Its Role in International Peace and Security\*](#) by Major General (retired) Robert Gordon. The audiobook version of the course is intended to assist students on the go.

An e-publication version of this course is also now available. E-publications adapt to screen size and allow readers to customize their reading experience based on their device. Students can customize font sizes and view content comfortably without zooming. Furthermore, POTI has launched Kindle (MOBI) editions for all courses currently available as e-publications, including [\*Ethics in Peace Operations\*](#), [\*International Humanitarian Law and the Law of Armed Conflict\*](#), and [\*Peacekeeping and International Conflict Resolution\*](#). The aim is to give students the broadest range of possibilities to access POTI courses anywhere, anytime by adapting the latest publication formats and technologies.



## Introducing Dr. Whitney Grespin, POTI African Programmes-UN Missions Coordinator



Dr. Whitney Grespin

The Institute would like to welcome aboard its newest colleague, Dr. Whitney Grespin, who has joined the POTI team as the African Programmes-UN Missions Coordinator.

Dr. Grespin has worked in contingency contracting, professional military education, and international development on five continents. She became acquainted with POTI through her work as a Peace Operations Analyst at the US Army War College's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) and shared training resources widely during her subsequent work as an embedded adviser to the Somali Ministry of Defense. Dr. Grespin received her PhD in 2021 from King's College London's Defence Studies Department, during which time she was appointed as an instructor at the UK Joint Services Command and Staff College. She led revisions for the POTI course [\*Ethics in Peace Operations\*](#) through her affiliation with the King's College London Centre for Military Ethics.

As the Institute's African Programmes-UN Missions Coordinator, Dr. Grespin looks forward to continuing to share POTI resources across her engagements with African and United Nations stakeholders to build peace operations capacity.



# POTI Partnerships: The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)

*On 1 April 2022, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) replaced the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in line with United Nations Security Council resolution 2628 and Communiqué 1068 of the African Union Peace and Security Council.*

*As a follow-on mission from the 15 years of experience and lessons from AMISOM, ATMIS is in response to the evolving security situation in Somalia. ATMIS is designed to be more agile, mobile, and flexible, prioritizing quick reaction forces and corresponding force enablers and multipliers to respond effectively to emerging and evolving security threats. This transition will facilitate mission response to the asymmetric threat of Al Shabaab, which has changed shape since its earlier incarnation as a traditional threat controlling large swathes of territory and engaging in large set-piece battles.*

*Through ATMIS, the African Union will also realign its mission components and deployments across Somalia to prepare the Somali Security Forces to take over the country's security responsibilities by 31 December 2024, as guided by the Somalia Transition Plan. This will allow for the exit of ATMIS as a peace support operation. This process will prioritize force generation, mobilization, and integration, as well as enhanced operational competence of the Somali National Armed Forces and Police Force.*

*In this interview with POTI, the ATMIS Learning and Development Team shares insights on training practices and mission transition more broadly.*



An ATMIS Protection Officer facilitates training on protection of civilians in Kismayo, Somalia. 18 April 2022.

## **POTI: How does AMISOM (ATMIS) incorporate e-learning into its training?**

**ATMIS:** As a mission, our training programmes are in two phases — there is what we do for our own components to upgrade our knowledge and stay on top in terms of compliance requirements, and then there is the training that we deliver to our Somali counterparts.

The COVID pandemic brought a lot of changes to how we deliver learning and development as a mission. The social distance restrictions led to us incorporating e-learning — some trainings were fully online and others hybrid. For our military and police components in the regions and sectors where internet connectivity is limited, we had to limit participants and reduce contact hours for some of our training programmes.

As part of our own training needs, we usually broadcast the availability of training programmes from POTI and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to colleagues, who then sign up.

## **POTI: Which topics in your training curriculum do you feel are the most needed/valuable?**

**ATMIS:** Curriculum for military/police is benchmarked to most UN courses and the realities on the ground. For civilians, the curriculum is based on gaps identified by either supervisors or personal needs.

## **POTI: What changes should we expect to see with the transition from AMISOM to ATMIS?**

**ATMIS:** In terms of training, it will be pretty much the same due to the frequent rotation of uniformed personnel. It is important that each contingent rotating in understands the Rules of Engagement and priorities of the mission.

## **POTI: What should POTI students who are not serving on a mission know about the world of peacekeeping?**

**ATMIS:** There is a lot to learn about peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions. AMISOM/ATMIS as a peace-enforcement mission is very different from the regular UN peacekeeping missions. As a war-fighting mission, we work in a very stressful environment within the direct line of fire, and to survive, staff must have high levels of resilience. Being confined to the “green zone” of the mission base is also very stressful, as there are no avenues to escape and explore.<sup>1</sup>



## POTI: Are any POTI courses recommended for study at your mission or available in your mission's intranet?

Our training needs are enormous. As mentioned before, there is specific training for our troops so they can understand and appreciate the relevant Standard Operating Procedures, Rules of Engagement, and priorities as a mission. There is also what we do to support our Somali colleagues and counterparts. Our police component undertakes a lot of training and mentoring to support their Somali counterparts. Similarly, our civilian teams include experts who, among other tasks, deliver training to our troops, police, and Somali colleagues, including on such critical issues as human rights and international humanitarian law. Depending on the needs and modules, we also bring in other experts to support the training.

ATMIS/AMISOM trainings are supported by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). Staff enrol via links shared by the UN. Other partners, like UNMAS and the UK Mission Support Team, also offer specific training for our troops based on identified group needs. Some of the trainings include Countering Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), Civil-Military Cooperation, Human Rights and Civilian Protection, Logistics Planning, Medical Emergency Response during Combat, and Operating Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (drones), to mention a few. POTI e-learning resources are also available to AMISOM/ATMIS staff.

<sup>1</sup> The green zone includes the mission's Halane Base Camp, various diplomatic missions, and an airport. Al Shabaab has previously launched attacks against the green zone.



A UK United Nations Mission Support Team Officer facilitates training on improvised explosive device threat mitigation for AMISOM and Somali National Army soldiers in Mogadishu, Somalia. 3 October 2021.

*POTI thanks the ATMIS Learning and Development Team for their time, wisdom, and work in the service of peace in Somalia.*



An AMISOM Police Election Security Adviser facilitates a three-day training for senior commanders of the Somali Police Force on running Joint Operation Centres to enhance election security. The training was held in Mogadishu, Somalia. 25 November 2021.

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

It has been my honour and privilege to serve as the Executive Director of the Peace Operations Training Institute. I have enjoyed many years collaborating with a team of dedicated colleagues here at POTI and also collaborating with men and women around the world whom I will never meet but who are fully dedicated and devoted to the service of peace.

The time for a transition in leadership at an organization is when all is well and when a new and younger team is ready to take over. Ms. Ramona Taheri has been with POTI for eight years and served as Chief of Content and currently as Deputy Director. Following my retirement announcement, the POTI Board of Directors voted unanimously that Ms. Taheri would be the Executive Director, effective 1 July 2022. She is one of the next cohort of POTI staff who I know will continue to provide e-learning on peacekeeping into the future. I look forward to continuing to play a supporting role as Special Adviser to the Board of Directors.

It gives me personal satisfaction to see that I can step down knowing that the organization is in good hands and also in good form. We offer a rich curriculum of 30 self-paced e-learning courses in English, with courses also available in French, Portuguese, and Spanish. Several of these courses are sourced from the United Nations Peacekeeping Resource Hub and distributed under a licence. Other courses have been developed in collaboration with UNESCO, UNMAS, UN Women, and WHO. POTI e-learning is used by 47 national training centres worldwide through the National Training Centre E-Learning Platform and is also available to all AU, EU, UN, and other missions through the E-Learning for Mission Staff programme. Member States of the UN provide aegis and oversight through the Partnership for E-Learning on Peace Operations. It is our honour to meet the demand for 100,000 enrolments each year — over 300 every day, 24/7/365. So, all is well here.



Rear Admiral Gboribiogha Johah, former President of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC), presents Dr. Langholtz with the IAPTC Training and Education Award.

There are, of course, many to whom I owe gratitude. My thanks to the ministries of foreign affairs that fund e-learning on peacekeeping — recently or currently, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. My thanks to our POTI Board Chairs past and present, Major General (retired) Tim Ford of Australia and Major General (retired) Robert Gordon of the UK. My thanks also to the other board members who have donated their time and professional support. My thanks to the rest of the POTI staff who work hard behind the scenes to ensure we provide an up-to-date curriculum and reliable service to each institution and individual student who uses POTI e-learning. My thanks to our faculty of course authors — experienced peacekeepers and well-known authorities in their respective fields. And most of all, my thanks to the dedicated men and women who serve under difficult and dangerous conditions on peacekeeping missions. It has been my privilege to contribute to our shared goals.

Our thanks to the following United Nations Member States for providing the support that makes e-learning on peace operations possible:



Australia



Canada



Denmark



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Switzerland



United Kingdom

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