

---

# **New International Course: “Legal Aspects of Military and Peacekeeping Operations”**

**By**

**Rita L. Verry  
Navy International Programs Office (IPO)**

The colorful flags of twenty-four nations stood immobile in the still air of the graduation hall. The image of the flags was reflected in the shiny instruments of the United States Navy Ceremonial Band as they struck their first chord. The uniformed Joint Color Guard—with its Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard service members—marched forward in crisp unison steps. The thirty international students representing the twenty-four nations stood quietly and proudly at attention. Thus began the graduation ceremony for the first international peacekeeping course, entitled “Legal Aspects of Military and Peacekeeping Operations.”



**Joint Color Guard at Graduation Ceremony**

That graduation ceremony held on Friday 7 November 1997 in Washington D.C. was hosted by RADM Robert Sutton, USN, Director Navy International Programs Office (IPO). The Graduation Ceremony culminated not just a five-week course, but represented a unique event in Security Assistance Training. The graduation ceremony tableau itself included: the 30 senior international military officers dressed in their various national uniforms; the distinguished official party representing every U.S. Military Service; an array of U.S. agency guests from the National Security Council, the State Department, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), and the Military Services; and representatives from the different international embassies in Washington D.C.

Many of the U.S. personnel in attendance that day had worked hard over a two-year period to put this course together, harnessing the resources of military personnel, civilians, and contractors. This significant new course development effort was rewarded during the unique graduation ceremony which drew Mr. Leonard Hawley, the Director of Global Affairs (U.N. Peacekeeping) of the National Security Council, as the graduation speaker.

---

With the increased emphasis on peacekeeping operations for both U.S. and international military forces, there has been a need for a broadened understanding and training in virtually every aspect of such operations. One very prominent facet of peacekeeping operations is the legal foundation and principles for conducting these operations. Peacekeeping personnel must conduct all operations in accordance with international, national, and local laws, and must at all times be seen by all sides and the world community as "operating within the law."

Since September of 1992, the Defense Institute for International Legal Studies (DIILS) (formerly the International Training Detachment, Naval Justice School) has been the lead DoD school for the United States in teaching Human Rights and Disciplined Military Operations to international military and governmental officials under the Expanded International Military Education and Training (E-IMET) Program. Mobile Education Teams (METs) from DIILS have visited and taught these and related subjects in over 60 countries in the past five years. Teams have also hosted delegations from over 50 countries at locations throughout the United States. These visits provide the delegates the opportunity to view the U.S. system of military and civil justice first-hand and offer delegates the opportunity to meet and interact with their U.S. contemporaries and counterparts.



### **International Officers Visit U.N. Peacekeeping Operations Center, New York**

While the METs have covered a wide variety of topics, the subject of peacekeeping operations has gained more and more prominence. The Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA) responded to this interest by authorizing the development of a five-week resident course to be taught at the Naval Justice School, Newport, Rhode Island, for senior military and defense department personnel. The Navy International Programs Office (Navy IPO), as Executive Agent, oversaw the course development. The new resident course is entitled "Legal Aspects of Military and Peacekeeping Operations" and had its pilot offering in session from 6 October through 7 November 1997, with a graduation ceremony at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. The class of 29 senior military officers and one civilian was informed on a broad range of topics through classroom discussions, interactive exercises and briefings by guest speakers, as well as field trips to New York and Washington, D.C.

---

Topics of discussion and briefings at the Naval Justice School included: the U.N. political process; intervention versus non-intervention; international interagency process; the role of the press in peace operations; rules of engagement for peacekeeping operations; status of forces agreements (SOFAs); human rights; war crimes; environment law; minority rights; and specific country case studies. The students were able to expand this classroom knowledge during their field visits to the United Nations in New York and Washington, D.C.

In Washington, D.C., they received briefings by a number of important guest speakers, including Ambassador Bob Oakley, who during his lengthy and distinguished government career was Ambassador to Zaire, Somalia, Pakistan, and was the Presidential-appointed Special Envoy to Somalia. The Director of International Security/Peacekeeping Operations from the Department of State, Mr. Dennis Skotz provided briefings, and the Principal Director of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Frank Jones also spoke, as did several of his key staff members.

The students were given a tour of the Pentagon, after which they attended a regular OSD Press Conference, and were surprised by an unscheduled briefing by Secretary of Defense William Cohen, in addition to the regularly scheduled daily briefing. After the OSD Press Conference, the students were briefed on the U.S. military public affairs process by a member of the OSD Public Affairs staff.

The students visited Congress and the Capital Building where they met with the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Foreign Operations (Appropriations Committee), Representative Sonny Callahan, and they also met with Staffers from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.



### International Students Visit Capitol Hill

These students will be able to return to their countries with a firm understanding of the role that forces from their country will play as part of a future U.N. or coalition force, and the legal obligations of those forces and the sending country as a result of their participation. With an understanding of the law and the legal foundations that bind peacekeeping personnel together as a force under international law, the students will be able to better train and prepare their own national forces for participation in a coalition peace mission and to make an even greater overall contribution to the success of that mission.

---

The new international course will be run again in Spring 1998, and plans are being discussed for permanent annual course offerings.



**Students at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial**  
*“More than an end to war, we want an end to the beginning of all wars.”*