

USAWC honors 70 years of peacekeeping

By Curt Keester 01 June 2018



U.S. Army War College students and faculty, all former U.N. Peacekeepers, stand vigil during a ceremony held in honor of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers in Bliss Hall, May 31, 2018.



Col. Todd Ashurst, Australian Fellow, steps forward to ring a bell three times for the past, present, and future of U.N. peacekeepers in Bliss Hall, May 31, 2018. Ashurst was promoted to the rank of Brigadier at a ceremony later that day.

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CARLISLE, Pa. (May 31, 2018) – A formation of 20 U.S. Army War College students and faculty, all former U.N. peacekeepers, representing years of peacekeeping experience and multiple missions around the globe, stood in silent vigil to honor United Nations Peacekeepers, May 31, 2018. Currently U.N. peacekeeping deploys more than 100,000 military, police and civilian personnel to 14 ongoing operations around the world.

As part of the War College's ceremony dedicated to the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers in Bliss Hall, Col. Todd Ashurst, Australian Fellow, stepped forward and rang a bell three times for the past, present, and future of U.N. peacekeepers. Ashurst was a peacekeeper in the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization mission to the Middle East.

"We gather here to pay tribute to the professionalism, the dedication, and

the courage of the men and women who served in peacekeeping operations throughout these many years, and also to honor the memory of those who lost their lives,” said Commandant Maj. Gen. John Kem, who opened the event.

Brig. Gen. Abu Noman Md Shibbir Ahmed, Bangladeshi Fellow, followed Kem’s remarks and spoke about his time as a peacekeeper in the U.N. Iraq–Kuwait Observation Mission and the U.N. Operation in Ivory Coast. He recounted the suffering he witnessed and the devastation caused by conflict in once-prosperous countries.

Future peacekeeping will likely become more difficult, said Shibbir Ahmed, addressing the increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) character of conflict in an environment of technology change and contest across all domains.

“In order to promote peace and keep peace in the world we need to prepare ourselves accordingly,” said Shibbir Ahmed. “The learnings of the U.S. Army War College will surely help us to prepare for undertaking our future challenges in United Nations missions.”

Lt. Col. Yakhya Diop, Senegalese Fellow, spoke of the dangers of peacekeeping as he referred to his experiences from the U.N. Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

In 2005, his company landed in a small village in the Democratic Republic of Congo on a mission to secure an airfield and register voters for an upcoming election, he said. As the company stepped off their helicopters, they came under fire from an armed militia. The ensuing battle lasted for three days before they were able to repel the aggressors.

In another incident, in Mali in 2014, that same company from the DRC airfield lost two soldiers when a terrorist suicide bomb exploded during their support to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

“As we prepare to graduate from the U.S. Army War College, I invite all my fellow classmates to reflect on how we can better make the sacrifice of our fallen peacekeepers matter,” said Diop. “I think that we should take all possible measures to make sure that our peacekeepers return safely to their families. I believe that this institution has equipped us with numerous

resources to face the myriad of challenges of the current peacekeeping environment.”

Col. Michael Rauhut offered background about peacekeeping today. The director of the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute here, Rauhut previously served as the Chief of Staff for the Military Staff Committee at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. While with the U.N. Military Staff Committee, he was a part of the U.N. Mission in the Central African Republic and U.N. Mission in South Sudan.

“For 70 years, more than a million women and men from over 125 countries have answered their nations’ call to serve in U.N. peacekeeping missions, for some, it was their last mission,” said Col. Rauhut. “Of the troop, police and civilian peacekeepers who have died while serving in these missions, about a third have died from malicious acts.”

More than 3,700 U.N. peacekeepers have lost their lives since 1948, when the U.N. first established its peacekeeping mission. On May 29, 1948, the Security Council authorized military observers to deploy and form the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in the Middle East. The ongoing UNTSO mission is to monitor the armistice agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors.