

United Nations Peacekeepers Day: honoring professionalism, dedication, courage @ArmyWarCollege

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May 29, 2015 -- It's no coincidence that the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute of the US Army War College sponsored UN Peacekeepers Day today with the students, staff, faculty and leadership in attendance. PKSOI is the Army's lead for joint stability operations; their relationships and expertise with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Peacekeeping Training Centers around the world runs deep.

Japanese Col. Akitsugu Kimura, Spanish Col. Fernando Moron-Ruiz, Lithuanian Lt. Col. Arturas Jasinskas, Brazilian Col. Rober Oliveira, and Nepalese Col. Surya Khanal represented those in the class with peacekeeping experience, and the more than one million who have participated in UN *peacekeeping operations -- 125,000 people serving today across 16 UN peacekeeping missions: W. Sahara, Central African Rep, Mali, Haiti, DR Congo, Sudan-Darfur, Syria, Cyprus, Lebanon, Sudan-Abyei, Sudan-South, Cote d'Ivoire, Kosovo, Liberia, India/Pakistan and Middle East.*

Bangladesh Brig. Gen. Amin Akbar, USAWC class of 2015, raises hand in salute after three tolls of the bell -- for peacekeepers past, present and future (below, right). He shared his reflections on personal peacekeeping experience over three decades as he addressed fellow students, staff, faculty and War College leadership to honor International Peacekeepers Day.



More than 3,000 heroes have given their lives in the cause of peace in the past 70 years of UN peace-keeping, and



this month the figure grew by one, Akbar began. Nilkantha Hajong, a young soldier from Bangladesh Army was killed by militants in an ambush in Mali, leaving behind his pregnant wife – gone, without ever seeing his baby, he said.

“Peacekeeping isn’t easy and it’s getting even more challenging in today’s VUCA world.... I, at times, feel that we do not fully appreciate its significance and potentials,” said Akbar, who shared two insights from his experience and reflection.



“From the global security point of view, I think peacekeeping operations will gradually assume greater importance. Because of trans-border, hybrid and asymmetric nature of threats, nation states are more likely to gravitate toward an inclusive, broad-based and networked set of security solutions,” said Akbar. “This, in turn, will require greater collaboration between post-modern militaries across the globe, be it big or small. The UN model and its peacekeeping idea resonate very well with such a notion and trending.”

“From a development point of view, the blue helmets have been making huge contributions in support of troubled nations as they stride to make a turn around,” said Akbar. “It is heartening to see how some of these nations are now reaching out to others and returning the same service that once helped them stand steady.”

I think our collective wisdom and willpower will not let this blue planet that we call our only home to perish. “In that human endeavor, our blue helmets will always shine bright,” he said.