

## U.S. Engagement in Uruguay: Training U.N. Peacekeepers

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Ituri Province, Democratic Republic of Congo. Acting Force Commander conferring with Uruguayan and Guatemalan units, 2016/  
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Uruguay has a remarkable history of support for U.N. peacekeeping missions; since 1952, more than 45,000 Uruguayans have served in 34 different peacekeeping missions. Today, Uruguay is one of the largest per capita contributors to U.N. missions, with around 1,000 troops deployed abroad, the large majority of which serve in the U.N. Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Uruguay has also established a groundbreaking school for peace operations training, the National Peace Operations Training Institute (*Escuela Nacional de Operaciones de Paz de Uruguay*, ENOPU), one of the world's leading peacekeeping training institutions, which provides instruction to both Uruguayan and international students (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

Support from the U.S. has played an essential role in enabling Uruguay's success as a leader in the peacekeeping field. Support for Uruguayan peacekeeping goes back at least to the Enhanced International Peacekeeping Capabilities (EIPC) program, a peacekeeping training program established in 1998 in response to the dramatic expansion of peace operations in the 1990s. Uruguay participated as a partner country; State Department records document that following EIPC training, Uruguayan peacekeepers took on command of the Eastern sector of U.N. peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – an area larger than Uruguay itself – and were able to deploy their first-ever naval riverine peacekeeping patrols (*Military Assistance*, 2003).

In 2005, the U.S. State Department consolidated its peacekeeping support programs under the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). Since then, Uruguay, particularly through its peacekeeping school ENOPU, has maintained a close working relationship with GPOI as an official partner country; every branch of the Uruguayan military appoints a delegate to GPOI to ensure regular communication.<sup>1</sup>

Through the GPOI, the United States supports Uruguayan peacekeeping through material aid and training. Since 2008, the U.S. has offered over \$50 million to provide the Uruguayan military with equipment, including communications gear, vehicles, night-vision devices and aviation equipment (Congressional Research Service, 2019). In 2021, the U.S. embassy delivered \$2.6 million worth of radio frequency jammers, used to prevent attacks from explosive devices with remote triggers. The jammers come as part of a broader delivery of military aid in support of Uruguay's peacekeeping mission, set to include interceptor boats, vehicles, aircraft spare parts and a Bell 212 Twin Huey helicopter (Delgado, 2021).

U.S. expertise and training also has served as a resource in advancing Uruguayan peacekeeping practice. Luis Viñas, director of ENOPU, recalls that the relationship with GPOI began with student and teacher exchanges, which continue to be one of the main avenues by which GPOI supports the school.<sup>2</sup> GPOI furthermore supports instructional exchanges between ENOPU and other countries, primarily in Latin America. As head of ENOPU, Viñas received visiting teachers funded by GPOI, and himself received funding to serve as a teacher in Canada and Chile.<sup>3</sup>

Areas of emphasis in training provided by GPOI include sexual abuse prevention, gender mainstreaming and threat identification in the field. In 2015, GPOI funded an international seminar at ENOPU on Women, Peace and Security; personnel from the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) were among the instructors. The program focused on women's participation in peacekeeping missions, as well as gender issues more broadly. The course was repeated twice more in 2018 and continues to run. An ongoing course conducted by GPOI in conjunction with the U.N. offers training for national investigation officers, who are responsible for ensuring accountability for sexual abuse and misconduct among international peacekeepers (*U.S. and U.N. Enhance Accountability*, 2018). The Naval Research Laboratory and the Office of Defense Cooperation of the U.S. embassy partner with the school to hold on an ongoing basis the course, "Identification of Threats in Peacekeeping Missions," which supports mission leadership in identifying and responding to different sources of possible attacks to the mission, including mines, attacks on convoys and fixed targets. GPOI also offers support to a course on V.I.P. Protection in mission areas; embassy staff offer instruction on topics including protective measures against IEDs, evasive management and tactical medicine (*National Peace Operations Training Institute of Uruguay*).

Uruguayan peacekeeping also receives support from American civil society: in 2013, the non-profit Peace Operations Training Institute (POTI) partnered with the ENOPU, granting Uruguayan

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<sup>1</sup> Luis Viñas, Personal Communication, 9/1/2021.

<sup>2</sup> Luis Viñas, Personal Communication, 9/1/2021.

<sup>3</sup> Luis Viñas, Personal Communication, 9/1/2021.

peacekeeping students access to the POTI's online curriculum, offering instruction in topics ranging from logistics to the history of U.N. peacekeeping, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), and international humanitarian law. Thus far, over 120 Uruguayan students have enrolled in courses (*Peace Operations Training Institute*). ENOPU also partnered with the New York-based NGO Auschwitz Institute, which provided training to Uruguayan peacekeepers on genocide prevention. The institute continues to hold meetings in partnership with ENOPU at the school in Montevideo, bringing in a wide range of government partners both in Uruguay and from around Latin America for training and seminars on atrocity prevention and strengthening protections for human rights (*Auschwitz Institute*).

Since the return to democracy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Uruguay has consistently pursued a strong presence in international peacekeeping, both as a strategy to build Uruguay's image internationally and to stabilize civil-military relations domestically. U.S. support has been vital, providing resources and training to allow Uruguay to build one of the largest and highly trained peacekeeping forces globally. Its contributions to international peacekeeping have gained it acclaim from the U.N. and the U.S., among other global players, and served as a centerpiece in its successful campaign to gain a seat on the U.N. Security Council for 2016-17 (González Guyer & Jenne, 2021).

Domestically, the long-term consequences of peacekeeping are more uncertain. The peacekeeping strategy sought to stabilize the civil-military relationship after the return to democracy, by offering the military a new strategic vision and source of funding. In the longer term, both politicians and academics hoped that peacekeeping might deepen democracy, civilian control over the military and social trust in the military. While peacekeeping has brought purpose, professionalization and economic benefits, there is very limited evidence that it has strengthened civilian control over or civil trust in the military. Notably, a significant segment of the population questions the need or rationale for a military in Uruguay more generally (González Guyer & Jenne, 2021, Esparza et al., 2020). Whether U.S. support for an outward oriented armed forces, prioritizing peace-keeping roles overcomes this skepticism, remains to be determined.

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