

COMMANDING OFFICER, AIR WING, ARMED FORCES OF MALTA DELIVERS KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT SYMPOSIUM ON MARITIME SEARCH AND RESCUE

A Symposium on “*Maritime Search and Rescue: The Ship and the Shipowner*” was held at the Institute’s premises prior to the reception to celebrate IMLI’s 26th annual Graduation Ceremony. The Symposium was organized by the Malta International Shipping Council (MISC) in collaboration with IMLI.

The welcoming address was delivered by both Professor David Attard (Director, IMLI) and Ms. Melina Travlos (President, Malta International Shipping Council). Mr. Frederick J. Kenney (Director, Legal Affairs and External Relations Division, IMO) was one of the distinguished panellists.



Lt. Colonel Clinton O'Neill (Commanding Officer, Air Wing, Armed Forces of Malta) delivering the Keynote Address

The Keynote Speaker at the Symposium was Lt. Colonel Clinton O'Neill (Commanding Officer, Air Wing, Armed Forces of Malta) who in 2010 had also received training in the Institute's Advance Diploma in International Maritime Law course.

Following the symposium, Lt. Colonel Clinton O'Neill was interviewed by the IMLI e-news Editor.

Lt. Colonel O'Neill welcome to IMLI! How does it feel to be back?

Well I have been to IMLI in the past year to visit but this is the first time in many years in the lecture hall. As I remarked to Professor Attard, it definitely felt good to be standing on the other side of the hall! It always feels good to be back.

You are Commanding Officer of the Air Wing in the Armed Forces of Malta. To what extent, has your training at IMLI helped in achieving your career goals and in particular in your current esteemed rank?

I underwent my training at IMLI when I was an Operations Officer working at Headquarters. In that capacity, I was dealing directly with maritime issues. So during the 2 to 3 years of posting wherein I served in that capacity, the training I received at the Institute helped me significantly. The training assisted me when attending meetings and participating in symposia, to better understand what was being discussed. There were a lot of other developments taking place at the time, especially as it was the first few years of Malta becoming a member of the European Union. A lot of things were coming our way, for which, thanks to IMLI, I was well prepared for.

At the end of my service as Operations Officer, I went back to my profession as a pilot. My training at IMLI also benefited me in this respect as I worked in the maritime environment, especially in maritime search and rescue matters. I was equipped with a good understanding of the way things should be done and this knowledge I also passed on to my colleagues and subordinates with regards to maritime law.

In military situations, the knowledge acquired at IMLI provided me with a deeper understanding about operational methods in maritime matters.

During your lecture, you used a very practical approach, especially by the showing of live footage of migrants in dire circumstances. In what ways in your opinion, can IMLI graduates contribute to curb this situation?

Awareness I believe. This is obviously theory, but we must ensure to put these theories in action. I believe graduates from IMLI, especially those coming from certain countries from Africa and Asia, which have huge migration issues, to educate their peoples on the dangers and effect of such migration. For example, the public should be made aware of the fact that it is not all gold and glistening on the other side. There are many risks involved. I have been to countries where people leave to cross over from and it is all propaganda. All the publicity given about the destination countries only highlights the positive side of things (nice roads, houses, flowers, trees and other things) and rarely refers to the dangers and risks involved. Unfortunately, that is always kept a secret to these people trying to find a better life. My suggestion is, since the Institute has trained many lawyers from different parts of the globe (some of these countries may be a State of departure or a transit State), is for the IMLI graduates to raise awareness on the dark side of such migration. It must be made known that there is not always greener pastures on the other side. Further, were

possible, to influence the State machinery to provide the right environment so as to keep their citizens adequately provided for.

Do you think that a lot of changes have taken place in the Institute since your last visit?

I haven't seen any major changes since last year, the boardroom looks the same, except for a couple of new pictures. But IMLI is IMLI you know. It's an establishment. I think what make IMLI is the students. Coming from different countries, everyone is diverse. That is what makes IMLI special. It's not the stone that makes IMLI, it's the people who come to IMLI.

Do you wish to comment on anything in your opinion that can contribute further to the growth and development of the Institute in the coming years?

I still receive e-news letters from IMLI, which I must say always keeps me in touch with the visiting lecturers who are coming and events that are taking place. We understand that IMLI is targeted for the students following the course, but there are instances where you have some eminent people coming to give lectures on certain area of expertise, which might be of interest to past students. I suggest (some of my colleagues have expressed this view as well) that when such experts are coming, it would be nice if an invitation is extended to past students as well. Being an ex-student myself, I would love to come to some of these lectures which are of relevance to my line of work. Take maritime security for example. I know that the law develops from one year to another, such as the adoption of new laws and regulations. And through the e-news letters that were sent to me, I found that there were very interesting lectures being given by world experts in this field. I know that this is a huge demand on the Institute, but I do remember that there was a time, before I came to be trained at IMLI, when the Armed Forces of Malta were regular visitors to IMLI to attend certain lectures. Unfortunately, for some reason, this has also grounded to a halt. Maybe that relationship could be revived once again, which I am sure would be of immense benefit to us. This is my suggestion.

Thank you very much Lt. Colonel O'Neill for your time and hope you enjoy the rest of the evening with us.

Thank you too. It's always a pleasure to be at IMLI and I am sure I will enjoy myself.

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