

Paz: Good afternoon, welcome to “A Better Peace,” the podcast of the War Room Magazine.

My name is Andres Paz, and I am a civilian student at the Army’s War College (AWC), academic year 2020.

From September 15th to October 15th we celebrate the Hispanic Heritage month in the United States. It is an important celebration, as it evokes Hispanic’s achievements and contributions to the United States culture, economy and society at large.

The Army War College joins the rest of society to commemorate the long tradition and considerable contribution made by Hispanics to defend our nation.

As part of this recognition, we are recording today the first “A better Peace” podcast, entirely in Spanish. In today’s episode, we will have a conversation with two AWC from Spanish speaking countries to tell us about their experience in the AWC.

The AWC has a long tradition of cooperating with allied nations. In addition to the presence of invited instructors, the school includes a vast number of international students. In this present academic year, we are joined by the presence of students from 76 different countries, including various Spanish speaking countries.

Today, we are accompanied by Colonel Alfredo Pozzo from the Argentine Army, and Lieutenant Colonel Fernando Prada from the Spanish Army. Welcome to the studio and the AWC.

Colonel Pozzo graduated from the National Military College as an Infantry Second Lieutenant in 1988. He served as Senior Operations Officer nationally and internationally. He was Deputy Commander and Commander of Mechanized Infantry Regiment, and Aide-de-Camp to the Argentine Army Commander. After his promotion to Colonel, he served as Head of the Military Peacekeeping Operations Department and later as Head of the Organization Department of the Army. In addition to the Argentine Army Staff Officer degree, he has both Business Administration and Strategy degrees, an International Humanitarian Law postgraduate diploma and a Master’s degree in Business Administration. Coronel Pozzo is married and has five children.

Lieutenant Colonel Prada. Married, with 3 children, joined the General Military Academy in 1988, where he emerged as artillery lieutenant in 1993. His assignments as lieutenant and captain were in artillery units. He later served as an instructor at the Spanish Army's War College. As a Lieutenant Colonel, Prada was commander of a Logistics Battalion of an Armored Brigade. He completed international assignments to Afghanistan, Bosnia and the United States.

Questions

Paz: To begin our conversation, I would like to ask Alfredo if you could tell us about the selection process for this assignment. What did you know about the program? Did you know other officials who attended in the past?

Pozzo: I could say that, in general, it is a very rigorous process and is based principally in the performance and overall professional profile of the applicant. Another aspect I would like to highlight is that officers who are selected to conduct studies in a foreign country, in a language other than Spanish, are sent to the Argentine Army's Language School to take English classes before departing.

In regard to the course, I had a basic knowledge of the program, based on a professional relationship with an Argentine Colonel who had studied at the AWC in the past.

Paz: Fernando, could you tell us about your experience at the international level, whether it be in the United States or other places, and how those experiences prepared you for this challenge? What was the process to get ready for this assignment?

Prada: My first course abroad was in 2002, when I had the opportunity to assist the Artillery Captains Career Course, in Fort Sill Oklahoma. Since then, I have assisted other courses in the US, as well as in Germany, Turkey, and Belgium.

Personally, I would consider that international courses gives you the background to prepare you be it professionally based on the knowledge acquired, and personally based on the cultural knowledge acquired.

With regard to the AWC course, an important advantage is that it has the possibility of bringing our families, which allows for deeper integration with and a better understanding of the American culture.

Paz: How have you been received by the Army, the school, and the Carlisle community?

In this specific area I should highlight the professional and personal caliber of all the AWC staff, who in a way or another, have contributed and assisted with our adaptation process. In particular, I would like to highlight the work by the Office of International Students, which since our arrival, have been guiding and assisting us constantly.

Similarly, I would like to mention the friendship and collaboration from my sponsor, Bobby Mundell and his wife Nadia, who are helping us constantly.

With respect to the community, the kindness and predisposition to provide a helping hand, has been always there. Not only for our everyday needs (purchases, bank transactions, medical assistance, etc.), but also to help my daughters register in the school system. Similarly, the community's effort to help us feel at home and to integrate better has been always present.

Paz: How have you adapted to the AWC's education approach, and particularly not being in the Spanish language? How has been your integration within the AWC and with the rest of the students?

It has been a progressive adaptation. It is one thing is to have the capacity to speak and understand a language, but it is another thing making others understand you, especially be able to understand the complex concepts in the readings.

In terms to the integration in the AWC, thanks to the laudable effort by the International Fellows Program and the help from the designated sponsors, I am able to say that it has been magnificent.

Carlisle is a city that is prepared to receive annually a large number of families, whether they are American or international. In respect to integration with the internationals, it has been impeccable. The fact of being handicapped by the language makes relationships between us simpler.

Paz: Even though we have only been in class for two months, what are your initial reactions about the course and which of the additional activities have you found most interesting?

I find the AWC's approach to teaching and learning extremely productive. The ample academic freedom to research and express one's views regarding topics being discussed, based on a diverse and pluralistic environment and interactive discussion, is without a doubt an element of academic excellence.

With respect to the complimentary activities, the noon time lectures related to the class coursework given by specialists as well as the Gettysburg Staff ride are without a doubt of notable value.

Beyond the academic realm, the softball tournament, the boatyard wars and the Air Shipwreck Social have been extra-curricular activities, that have been extremely valuable to the students and their families' integration and enjoyment.

Paz: One of the AWC objectives is to prepare its students to conduct joint operations and in the art of strategy. Did you have such experience in Spain?

Prada: I have had experience at the operational level, but not at the strategic level yet. I was assigned for three and half years at the Headquarters of the joint operations command. The principal mission was the conduction of national operations at the operational level and the monitoring of operations in which Spanish forces participate at the international level. It was a very intense position with high-level responsibility.

It was a great experience that allowed me to familiarize myself with the Navy and the Air force, working side by side, and having my first contacts at the strategic level.

Paz: Is there a similar institute in Argentina that prepares the future leaders? If so, could you mention some of the differences between the Army War College and said school.

Pozzo: In Argentina the training courses and master's programs for mid-and senior ranking officers are given at the Army's Superior College and the National Defense College. One of the main differences, however, is that these masters are offered only to a small and selected group of officers. That said, those who are not selected, and would like to pursue master's programs at those institutions could do it but on their own time (evenings).

Another difference regarding the teaching method is that the dialogue and group participation is not used with the same degree of intensity that is used here at AWC. In Argentina individual presentations are more frequent.

Paz: To end, I would like to ask both of you what do you wish to obtain from this experience and how do you think it would allow you to become better strategic leaders?

Prada: Personally, I believe that the course will instill in me the necessary skills to be able to fulfill high responsibility roles at the strategic level as well as enhance my organizational and leadership knowledge. At the same time, I consider the course to be a great opportunity to get to know first-hand the future American strategic leaders, encounter this great nation's customs and develop lasting friendships with the professors and students of the AWC.

Pozzo: I could summarize my objectives in the following two ideas: increase my knowledge and ability to lead at the strategic level as well as learn the international strategic reality, from the US perspective. Undoubtedly, educational experiences of such magnitude allow not only to strengthen or increase knowledge, but also validate or not our own opinions biased by our national culture, by contrasting them with those offered by American and International students.

Paz: To conclude, I would like to thank you for your time and to share with us your experiences about your adaptation to the AWC and to life in the United States. I would like to invite you to a second conversation towards the end of the academic year, to delve deeper in regard to the topic of leadership at the strategic level.

On behalf of “A Better Peace” we would like to thank the audience and we would like to invite you to listen to the podcasts in English of “A Better Peace,” which cover a great number of topics of interest related to defense and national security. Thank you.