Visiting Scholar Teaches
International Justice at IUPUI’s New Center

While he is no costumed do-gooder, Herbert D. Bowman would be right at home with the likes of Superman, Batman, the Green Lantern, and Flash. Like the heroes of the Justice League cartoon series, Bowman fights for truth, justice, and freedom around the world. His “super-powers” are his knowledge of the law and his zeal for bringing the bad guys to justice—and training others to do the same.

Bowman is a visiting fellow with the IU School of Law—Indianapolis. While he isn’t quite sure where he’ll be called to duty next, Bowman—the architect of a February 24th UN indictment that charged eight top Indonesian military leaders with crimes against humanity—currently teaches criminal procedure to second- and third-year law students.

Just months before coming to IUPUI, Bowman was hired as lead prosecutor in the UN case that involved atrocities against the civilian population of East Timor. Working fast and furiously for three months, he wrote the indictment that the UN filed that charged the Indonesian military officers with cooperating in the creation and administration of militia groups responsible for violence across East Timor during 1999.

The indictment culminated in a two-year investigation into crimes against the civilian population of East Timor, which occupies part of an island in the Indonesian archipelago. Those charged with crimes against humanity for murder, deportation, and persecution included retired General Wiranto, former commander of the Armed Forces of Indonesia; six other senior military commanders; and Abilio Jose Osorio Soares, former governor of East Timor.

Documents in the UN indictment cover more than 280 murders in 10 separate attacks and are based on more than 1,500 witness statements and reports. The charges also stem from the deportation or forcible transport of approximately 200,000 people from East Timor to West Timor.

“The world has been waiting a long time for someone to hold these leaders responsible,” says Bowman, whose international exploits include educational assignments in Mongolia and Poland.

Before the UN hired him for the East Timor case, Bowman spent almost two years teaching continuing education for judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys in Mongolia as a legal training advisor for a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) legal development project. Earlier in Poland, he also conducted similar training for attorneys and judges.

Bowman’s semester-long stint at IU School of Law—Indianapolis is associated with the establishment of the Center for International and Comparative Law at the school. The new center will enhance opportunities for students to gain international experiences and will administer the school’s international programs, such as the Program in International Human Rights Law, the China Law Summer Program, the LL.M. Program in American Law for Foreign Lawyers, and new student and faculty exchange programs with universities in Romania and Australia.

“The students benefit enormously through having contact with faculty, full time and adjunct, who are able to share their experiences acquired in the United States and abroad,” says Anthony Tarr, dean of the IU School of Law—Indianapolis. “Herb Bowman’s international exposure to the laws, cultural differences, and problems in countries like East Timor and Mongolia equips him to make a major contribution to any comparative law study.”

Bowman, a graduate of the University of San Diego Law School, developed his legal muscles during 12 years as a San Diego County prosecutor. He hopes to continue in his role as international legal consultant once he completes his Indianapolis work. Until then, he’s training the next generation of prosecutors, judges, and attorneys with colleagues such as his brother, Frank Bowman, a professor at IUPUI’s law school.

—Diane Brown
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