Religious Leaders’ Historic Meeting
SG outlines plans for restructuring peacekeeping work

Faced with an "explosive growth" in demand for United Nations peacekeepers around the world, coupled with a "dramatically strained and over-paced system," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has proposed to split the current peacekeeping office into two to provide better planning, faster deployment and a more responsive process.

The recommendations, detailed in a letter the SG sent to the General Assembly as part of his ongoing consultations on his restructuring initiative, call for splitting the current DPKO into a Department of Peace Operations and a Department of Field Support, both headed by an Under-Secretary-General, the managerial level of the current DPKO chief.

"The number of peace operations is at an all-time high with almost 100,000 personnel in the field. It appears that the figure will rise still further in 2007," the SG said, noting that reforms in 2000 had aimed to equip DPKO with sufficient capacity to launch new multi-disciplinary missions per year. "Yet, the past 36 months alone have seen the start-up of or expansion of nine field missions, with three additional missions currently in active start-up. Over the course of the next year, the number of personnel in UN peace operations could increase by as much as 40%," he added.

The SG stressed that the new arrangement would be resource-neutral and that the new departments would consolidate operations that are now spread among various offices and departments.

Under the plan, the new Department of Peace Operations would consolidate all factors dealing with strategy, planning and deployment while the Department of Field Support would take on the responsibility of the current "impossibly overstretched" management.

More and more, people look to the buffer zone’s developmental potential. Understandably, they want to capitalize on the appreciation of land and property values after 33 years! More and more, people look to the buffer zone’s developmental potential. Understandably, they want to capitalize on the appreciation of land and property values after 33 years! More and more, people look to the buffer zone’s developmental potential. Understandably, they want to capitalize on the appreciation of land and property values after 33 years!
Civil Affairs –
Care and Responsibility

Shiotani notes that in recent years, the Turkish Cypriot community living in the south has seen an increase in immigration issues. "Turkish Cypriots who have married mainland Turks who obviously have no diplomatic ties and representation often fall under the illegal immigrant category and are deported. We try to intervene in those instances but we are not always successful. There are also third nationals, like Sri Lankans and others, married to Turkish Cypriots, who get caught up in this web and are also deported. Normally, it wouldn’t come to us as it’s not a UN issue, but by virtue of the fact that they are married to a Turkish Cypriot, we become involved and the government accepts this.”

In the north, humanitarian deliveries and home visits adjusted and adapted over the years as the community aged and individual needs changed.

A priority right now is to establish a better delivery system for essential transfers from the south to the elderly Greek Cypriot community in the villages of the Karpas. In the past, the military component used to have humanitarian officers dedicated to civilian activities in the buffer zone. They were responsible, by and large, for the part in the UNFICYP mandate dealing with a “return to normal conditions”. In doing so, they dealt primarily with farmers, either brokering agreements or unilaterally agreeing to allow farming in certain areas. The present farming situation derives from those agreements, mostly made on an ad hoc, case-by-case basis.

However, the CCAO notes that since 2004, when Cyprus joined the EU and the Annan plan was rejected, followed by the first UNFICYP review and the reduction in troops, there has been a change in mentality and perception as far as the buffer zone is concerned. The opening of the crossings in 2003 was another major contributing factor.

"It is UNFICYP’s task to maintain peace and stability in the buffer zone and to ensure that there is no alteration of the status quo along the two ceasefire lines drawn up on 16 August 1974. The UN-patrolled buffer zone is 180 km long, and covers around 3% of the island’s surface area. It varies in width from less than four metres in old Nicosia to some seven kilometres near Athienou.

Far from being a dead zone, which is the literal translation of the Greek “nekri zona” used to describe the buffer zone or simply the “expansion of territory” between the two ceasefire lines as the Turkish “Arabgoll” suggests, it is alive with activity from farming to light industry, a mainstay for members of the community who work and reside in it. There are six inhabited villages, and around 8,000 people who live and work in the buffer zone.

UNFICYP’s Civil Affairs Branch is charged with providing humanitarian support to these buffer zone residents, as well as to Greek Cypriots living in the north and Turkish Cypriots living in the south. With just 28 members on its team, Civil Affairs deals with issues as diverse as farming, community and environmental concerns. Civil Affairs, the only mission component truly integrated in structure, draws on military, police and civilian personnel to carry out these tasks.

Chief Civil Affairs Officer (CCAO) Kyoko Shiotani notes that Civil Affairs evolved as the mission evolved from 1974 when there were real humanitarian needs in the buffer zone, but primarily in assisting communities left behind or those who chose to stay behind in the north and south. "The UN was supposed to be there to help them return to normalcy to the extent possible," Shiotani says.

Outside the buffer zone, this entails scheduled humanitarian deliveries and home visits to Greek Cypriots living in the north. In the south, we make contact with the Turkish Cypriots and facilitate their integration into the community by, e.g., making sure their documents are in order if they can’t speak or read Greek.

One of the areas of responsibility that Shiotani notes is the function of the UN in a new light. No longer was it perceived as a purely a protective buffer between two armed forces. The normalcy and familiarity induced by frequent crossings meant that people increasingly began to view it for its developmental potential.

Shiotani notes that UNFICYP was unprepared for the greater demand by Cypriots to claim and use their property. "All the operational military tools used up until now to manage the buffer zone were suddenly being called into question because of the critical issue of property. Everything we do, every OP we have and every farming security line we draw cuts across someone’s property. People were starting to see that there are rights. I am an EU citizen, we are legitimate, so why am I being punished for something that the international community cannot solve?"

The CCAO concedes that it is natural that people should want to access and use their property after 32 years. The paradox is that however peaceful the buffer zone may be, it exists for a specific reason which, until it is resolved, precludes a return to the normal conditions envisaged in the mandate. "We can’t have an unresolved Cyprus problem and the normal conditions in the buffer zone," Shiotani says.

Three principles determine the role of Civil Affairs in the buffer zone. "First and foremost is security – the belief that even civilian activities can elicit a military response. Second is property rights – making sure the people who want to use the property are the legitimate owners. Third is our own operational effectiveness – ensuring that what a civilian wants to do does not obstruct our operations, or in carrying out our mandate."

The recurring problem arises from the interpretation of UNFICYP’s mandate, particularly the part that says “... and as necessary restore to normal conditions”. The CCAO notes that this could be more normal than an individual wanting to build an hotel or a school in the buffer zone. Ever since the buffer zone was drawn up in 1974, UNFICYP has asked to restore normal conditions, by assisting farmers and shop-owners to get back to their lives as quickly as possible.

However, the CCAO notes that that was 1974 and now it’s 2007. So what is wrong with interpreting it in the modern way? Building a school is normal. However, as Shiotani points out, the UN was explicitly about authority and what authority the UN has.

"We have no administrative authority. When we talk about UNFICYP’s authority, we talk about it in a mandated sense, which is to make sure there is no recurrence of fighting, and that there is no heightening of tensions between the two sides. And one of the ways that we do that is to ensure that civilian activities are verifiable civilian. So if someone starts to build something that could be cowshed, but could also be used to hide a military installation, we are able to say we have seen the plans for this we have made an assessment and can verify that it is, in fact, a cowshed.

The other reason we look at the details of what someone wants to build is to verify property deeds. We also make sure it’s not going to cause tension. A school, however, innocuous, built too close to the northern cease-fire line, can cause tension. We control access to the buffer zone for the same reason through a permit system whereby civilians are given access to farm in the buffer zone. At any given time, we have 2,000 permits active throughout the buffer zone and this has never really been challenged.

"People who have been born and raised in the buffer zone don’t even question this system. It’s those who have acquired land recently who want to come in and use it. They have no real sense of the buffer zone or living in it, so they tend to question these things and the government understandably has to protect its people’s interests. However, this really shouldn’t be at the expense of the UN carrying out its mandate. This tends to lead to discussions about authority and what authority the UN has."

"The UN has no legal authority, but we do have a legal basis for our presence here which resides in SC resolutions and the fact that we are here at the invitation and with the consent of the government of Cyprus. We also have a mandate which spells out what we should be doing. So this is the legal basis and what we mean when we talk about ‘authority’. We don’t have any claim to land – it is the people’s land and when the UN says sorry, it is not a good idea to build that here right now, what we mean is at the present time, as long as the Cyprus problem remains unresolved. Once the Cyprus problem is resolved, then we will back up and leave. I don’t think that there is anyone here who doesn’t hope for the day when we can return the buffer zone to real normal conditions – to become an integrated part of the island, and not a yellow line across the map."

Shiotani notes a tendency on the part of the authorities to see the UN in a negative light. "It’s not this because they only engage with one another when problematic cases become contentious, since most are resolved by Civil Affairs without difficulty following long-established routine procedures. “So we see unnecessarily obstructionist to them. I point out that there are many other civilians who whom we deal with on a day-to-day basis whose lives and projects we facilitate – actions that occur in an obscure fashion, but which don’t raise interest because they take place without a fuss.”

Netha Kreouzos
Mr. Nejdet Ermel, the Turkish Cypriot Muhtar of Netha Kreouzos, had been on duty at OP 126 and OP 129 at the time, said they heard the blast and immediately went to the scene. They were there within a matter of minutes and could see from a distance that a car was on fire. Assessing the situation and possible sources of danger, the UNPOL officers spotted two seriously injured men. One was almost completely naked, his clothes having been blown off by the force of the blast. The other, they could see, had him burning at 80% of his body. The soldiers immediately reported about the situation on the second patrol arrived to help secure the area. The soldiers provided first aid assistance to the injured men – trying to stabilize their condition and prevent them from going into shock. They also kept civilians away from the scene.

A UN patrol from OP 126 was the first to arrive at the scene and alerted the emergency services that a four-year-old boy had been on the farm at the time of the explosion and was missing. Subsequently, they searched outside the farm and the back of a burnt-out vehicle. Four-year-old Dogay Kizil was pronounced dead by Dr. Maj. Burley, MRSD Dhekelia.

Before leaving the scene, Mr. Elagor informed the UNPOL officers who then took over to investigate the circumstances of the explosion also did a great job with the assistance of the SBA. The circumstances surrounding the explosion have raised a number of issues regarding health and safety hazards on farms and businesses within the buffer zone. Of special concern is whether safety standards are being adhered to. It is vital to prevent and issue of third party liability insurance to cover such accidents and whether farms and businesses operating in the buffer zone have such coverage. These issues would be taken up together with the relevant UNPOL communities, Speedie said.

The UNPOL officers who then took over to investigate the explosion could have been a result of inadequate venting in the fuel tank and that the ensuing pressure build-up caused the fuel to explode, spilling onto the hot generator.

Deputy SPA Col Speedie said the cooperation between all the components was exemplary. "Often, people are not trained for such situations which will take themselves away from a scene of such trauma. However, the soldiers' training kicked in and they did an outstanding job."

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"The people need to cooperate to prevent tragic accidents like this happening in the future, for their own and their families' safety." Senior Police Adviser Carla van Maris praised the efforts of all concerned, saying it was a good example of cooperation across the board. "From the first moment when the incident occurred, people of different disciplines were seen working together, cooperating as if they had done so for a long time, regardless of who they were, where they came from or their background."

UNFICYP officers who arrived at the scene of the incident first and who provided immediate support to the victims, UNPOL officers, who undertook to safeguard the scene of the incident, the PMU, who concluded an excellent forensic investigation, the interpreter from the PIO, who offered her day off to come to Pyla, and the liaison officer, who had to coordinate all parties involved. Also, non-UNFICYP staff like the SBA police, the ambulance service and the Dhekelia Defence Fire Brigade worked tirelessly, many throughout the night, to render support.

Mr. Nejdet Ermel, the Turkish Cypriot Muhtar of Pyla, said a letter of appreciation to UNFICYP on behalf of the grieving families of the victims killed in the explosion. “I sincerely write to thank you and all UN personnel, especially Sgts. Kevin O’Negan and Comd. Col. Speedie, for the support given during the搭配 incident at 26 January 2007,” he wrote.
As every member of UNFICYP is aware, the success of our mission here depends upon cooperation between the three main pillars - the military component, UNPOL and Civil Affairs. This system was introduced several months ago, but it is only recently that the results are beginning to show through in Sector 1.

The integration process included the organisation of weekly briefings, attended by members of the three pillars. These take place every Monday at San Martín Camp, and are a very useful tool in the exchange of information and analysis of common problems. CO Sector 1, Lt. Col. Justo Treviranus, chairs these meetings and is mainly responsible for the integration process.

One of the improvements made by Sector 1 is the addition of one SCAT and one UNPOL member on daily patrols monitoring the most sensitive and problematic areas. These joint patrols have resulted in many daily incidents being solved more quickly and efficiently, particularly those involving civilians inside the buffer zone.

Sector 1’s military component, SCAT 1 and UNPOL 1 have taken part in joint field training exercises and “sand table” rehearsals, a scenario which envisages possible violent and hostile demonstrations by large numbers of civilians. This training was developed as a result of the situation which arose last November in Avlona near OPT 38.

This integrated three-pillar cooperation has also proved very effective during the hunting season. Sector 1’s military, along with SCAT 1 and UNPOL 1, deployed twice a week on Wednesdays and Sundays (hunting days). The expertise and knowledge of the handling procedures during difficult situations involving civilians in the buffer zone was invaluable to Sector 1’s military component.

Mission tasks have been significantly eased through the integration process. Sector 1 personnel have had the opportunity to form great personal relationships with policemen and policewomen from Australia, Bosnia, Croatia, India, Ireland, El Salvador, the Netherlands and more.

Apart from completing a successful mission, surely the most valuable and important experience that we gained from our time with UNFICYP was meeting with comrades from all over the globe, teaching each other about ourselves and learning our strengths and capabilities.

Capt. Mauricio Silvestre

Island’s two religious leaders’ historic meeting in Ledra Palace

Ledra Palace Hotel was the site of an historic meeting between the two religious representatives on the island on 21 February 2007. Archbishop of Nova Justiniana and All Cyprus, Chrysostomos II, and Mr. Ahmet Yonluer, Turkish Cypriot Director of Religious Affairs, met under the auspices of the President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly René van der Linden as part of a series of bicommunal meetings the PACE President participated in during his visit to the island.

A PACE statement issued following the Ledra Palace meeting noted that the two religious representatives were delighted to meet for the first time, and warmly welcomed Mr. van der Linden’s initiative in bringing them together. There was goodwill on both sides, and the exchange of views had been positive and sincere.

According to the statement, the two leaders discussed ways that they could contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of trust and tolerance, to set an example to the people and politicians of Cyprus. They agreed to meet again soon as well as take practical steps to promote respect for places of worship in all parts of the island, including efforts to ensure their restoration. As a first step, they planned to work towards the goal of enabling worship at the Hala Sultan Tekke Mosque in Larnaca and the Apostolos Andreas Monastery in the Karpas Peninsula. The religious leaders hoped this would mark the beginning of a long relationship of mutual trust, which would contribute to a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem. Speaking at the end of the meeting, PACE President van der Linden emphasised that inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue was a priority of his Presidency, and stressed that this historic first meeting had been an excellent example.

Earlier, the Secretary General’s Special Representative in Cyprus, UNFICYP Chief of Mission Michael Møller, received Mr. van der Linden in his office in the UNPA. The PACE delegation was greeted on arrival by the Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni and the Chief of Staff Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell.

Afterwards, Mr. van der Linden was escorted on a tour of the Nicosia buffer zone area by UNFICYP peacekeepers.

Party Leaders’ Meeting

On 2 February, Chief of Mission SRSG Michael Møller addressed the bicommunal meeting of political party leaders held at Ledra Palace each month under the auspices of the Slovak Ambassador, H.E. Mr. Ján Varšo.

On 2 February, Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael José Barni conducted a formal visit to the Force Military Police Unit. This was FC’s first visit this small but diverse UNFICYP sub unit. Comprising personnel from each of the Sectors, FMPU is not subject to the criminal law procedures of the Republic of Cyprus. It does, however, follow UN regulations for all nationalities, as well as specific legislation in relation to the contributing nations.

The FC was given an initial brief by the Force Provost Marshal, Maj. Iain Watt, Royal Military Police on the operational capability of the unit. Afterwards, the FC carried out a tour of the unit including police display stands on the vehicles and equipment used.
Indian Peacekeepers (mostly women) arriving in Liberia

The new Unit joins 82 female UN police officers serving with the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to help strengthen the rule of law and maintain peace in the West African country.

Ms. Dhundiya was optimistic that her officers could make a difference. "We hope that the presence of this all-female contingent will serve as an incentive and an attraction to encourage young Liberian women to join the Liberian National Police," said UNMIL Police Commissioner Mohammed Alhassan.

UN spokesman Ben Dotsei Malor emphasized that the Indian Unit, which consists of 103 women performing operational tasks and 22 men doing logistics work, is well-prepared to meet the challenges ahead. "Our contingent has been carved out from a paramilitary force and as far as training is concerned, it is almost on the same line of what army recruits get."

She emphasized that the Indian Unit, which consists of 103 women serving with operational and 22 men doing logistics work, would help the Liberian National Police (LNP) while supporting the work of the UN in the country. "We hope that the presence of this all-female contingent will serve as an incentive and an attraction to encourage young Liberian women to join the Liberian National Police," said UNMIL Police Commissioner Mohammed Alhassan.

Ms. Dhundiya was optimistic that her officers could function as role models. "I think the Liberian people are going to welcome us with open arms and more of the local population will get motivated to join the UN police officers, especially the girls."

The new Unit joins 82 female UN police officers serving with UNMIL in various capacities.

The Blue Beret – February 2007

The Blue Beret

Indian Peacekeepers (mostly women) arriving in Liberia

The new Unit joins 82 female UN police officers serving with UNMIL in various capacities.
All participants embraced the competition with a very enthusiastic and determined approach. Many teams were seen on the weekend prior to the exercise practising driving and reversing skills in the UNPAs. The first day of the event was opened at the HQ BRITCON Warrant Officers’ and Sergeants’ Mess. This is where the Exercise Control (EX-CON) was established for the duration. At the EX-CON, teams were subjected to a colourful road safety poster campaign and video presentations on driver skills. This generated a lot of interest among all contingents who seemed to absorb the information, discussing between themselves their own driving standards.

During the competition, it was evident that teams were serious about winning as they progressed through the stands. By the end of each day, the results and scores reflected on those teams who had practised. It was refreshing to see that there was an underlying, yet healthy, competition between Sectors 1 and 4, both of whom believed they would be the eventual victor. Only on the final day would the true winner be revealed.

Results of Exercise February 2007 are listed below:

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<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Sector 1 (C)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>UNPOL (B)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>WO2 Goldsmith (C)</td>
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The Master Driver would like to thank all the directing staff for the support and running of the competition which contributed to the success of the event. Finally, congratulations to Sector 1 (C) for their excellent performance. They have clearly laid the gauntlet for the next Exercise Blue Drive.

The Blue Beret

UNFICYP is committed to the improvement of driving standards and a reduction in the total number of traffic accidents (RTAs) in the mission. Statistics show that RTAs remain the greatest cause of accidental death and injury in the mission. It is, therefore, paramount that a proactive approach be taken to reduce the RTAs.

This year’s Exercise Blue Drive, held between 26 and 28 February, was part of this initiative. Organised in the UNPA, six stands were set up to challenge the teams on their driving skills and road safety knowledge.

All were demanding, but seemed to pose no problem for LCpl. Ľudovit Vereš from the Slovakian Contingent, who won the day with a respectable score of 89 points, followed in second place by 2/Lt. Tom Jamieson with 79 points AND MCpl. Molnár Antal in third place with 77 points. All competitors gave a 100% performance, and competitors and spectators alike enjoyed the competition thoroughly. Next up, many are already in training for the UNFICYP Strongman Competition, scheduled for 9 March.

MFR Strongman Competition

On 9 February, LBrdr. Stuart Spencer of the Mobile Force Reserve organised an MFR strongman competition at the UNPA. The day turned out well with 15 peacekeepers ready to compete. There were six events in all, including the farmer’s walk; vehicle push; tyre flip; loading and squats. All were demanding, but seemed to pose no problem for LCpl. Ludovít Vereš from the Slovakian Contingent, who won the day with a respectable score of 89 points, followed in second place by 2/Lt. Tom Jamieson with 79 points AND MCpl. Molnár Antal in third place with 77 points. All competitors gave a 100% performance, and competitors and spectators alike enjoyed the competition thoroughly. Next up, many are already in training for the UNFICYP Strongman Competition, scheduled for 9 March.

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Maria Sharapova, the top-ranked woman tennis player in the world, has been officially appointed as a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador. The appointment was announced on 14 February during a Press Conference held in the headquarters of UNDP in New York.

Maria Sharapova’s main mission is to rally global support for the fight against poverty. She has already donated $100,000 for UNDP’s community-based projects in Chernobyl-affected areas, including projects in Gomel, Belarus, where her family comes from.

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On 25 January, UNFICYP bade farewell to Mr. Gianfranco Longo, Chief Integrated Support Services, who retired on 31 January after 35 years of service with the United Nations. Gianni arrived in Nicosia from Sarajevo in 2001 as UNFICYP Chief Information and Technology Section. Quickly he managed to turn around the whole communications network, converting the CITS into a most efficient and productive integrated section within UNFICYP.

Appointed Chief Integrated Support Services in June 2004, Gianni successfully managed to engage military and civilian personnel in ISS’ planning and decision making, through team spirit, cooperation and dedication. No task was too challenging for Gianni to achieve, from creating high quality presentations, to producing outstanding diagrams, to writing ACABQ justifications, or leading complex logistics projects.

Every time Gianni served as Officer-in-Charge, Administration, for one reason or another, unforeseen incidents occurred, most recently the Lebanon Evacuation. Gianni’s calm demeanor and wise approach were instrumental in the successful completion of such a complex operation.

Sharapova – UNDP Goodwill Ambassador

Visitors to UNFICYP

O n 21 February, 26 police officers from Australia, Bosnia, Croatia, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands arrived at HQ UNFICYP for an induction course, facilitated by UNPOL’s Training Officers, Garda Michael Hickey and Federal Agent David Batch.

The new UNPOL officers were from Australia, Bosnia, Croatia, Italy and the Netherlands. They are undergoing an induction course at HQ UNFICYP, facilitated by UNPOL’s Training Officers, Garda Michael Hickey and Federal Agent David Batch.

The week-long induction course covered in the course including UN Flight and helicopter safety training, Gender and SEA policy awareness and police powers and functions in the buffer zone. Also included in the course were presentations from representatives of the island’s police authorities.

Mr. Ad Melker, UNDP Associate Administrator presenting Maria Sharapova with her letter of appointment.
Slovak Soldiers Commended