Fires rage in the UN buffer zone
UNFICYP Assists in Pilgrimages

UNFICYP facilitated two religious pilgrimages in July, one in Dherinia (Sector 4’s area of responsibility) and the other in Ayia Marina Skylloura, on the outskirts of Nicosia. The first pilgrimage was on 17 July to the Agia Marina Orthodox Church located inside the buffer zone close to Dherinia. Sector 4’s SCAT, UNPOL and military worked together to assist in the organisation of transport for the safe passage of pilgrims to and from the church.

Working together with the local community, represented by Mr. Andreas Shiapanis, Mayor of Dherinia, the SCAT 4 team based in Pyla organised the logistical arrangements for the large number of pilgrims expected to enter the buffer zone.

UNFICYP supports this annual event, which is significant for the villagers of Agia Marina as it marks the feast day of their saint. Approximately 500 pilots, from the very old to the very young, arrived for the event, and were ferried to and from the church throughout the morning by UNFICYP peacekeepers. An UNFICYP medical team was constantly on standby.

Thanks to the support from UNFICYP’s combined elements, the pilgrimage was a great success.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Pilgrims inside the historic church of Prophet Elias during the ceremony}
\end{center}
The old Nicosia International Airport was once again the venue for the UNFICYP Integrated Medal Parade which took place on 5 July. UNFICYP soldiers stood to attention in the hot, afternoon sun as Chief of Mission Michael Møller, Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni, CO Sector 1 Lt. Col. Justo Francesco Triviránus, British High Commissioner Peter Millett, Slovak Ambassador Jan Varšo and Hungarian Ambassador Csaba Lovró presented medals to 210 peacekeepers.

An estimated 550 guests attended the parade, including Ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, staff and sector members, and families and friends of the medal recipients.

Welcoming all guests to the sixth integrated medal parade, SRSG Møller praised UNFICYP’s soldiers for their vigilance and dedication. As the Chief of Mission stated, “Sometimes you have to work in trying and difficult circumstances. Civilians who defy security considerations to promote their property rights and interests in sensitive buffer zone areas without due thought for the impact on safety and stability don’t make your peacekeeping task any easier.”

He added that UNFICYP, as stated in the Secretary-General’s recent report, will continue to support civilian activities in the buffer zone in keeping with ownership rights, but not at the expense of stability and security. “It is you, the peacekeepers, the mainstay of the international presence on this island, who help provide stability and calm along the cease-fire lines as you go about your business in a sustained demonstration of fairness, impartiality, tolerance, patience, cooperation, tact and diplomacy.”

The SRSG said that it was a matter of great pride for him to award the United Nations Peacekeeping Medal in the name of the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. “The medal honours your contribution, both individually and collectively, as peacekeepers. It has been well earned. You richly deserve it.”

A reception followed the ceremony with national delicacies offered by Sectors 1, 2 and 4. Thanks must also go to the MFR and Slovak Engineers for their assistance in the preparations for the event.
From a female soldier’s point of view....

Dawn Cairns, SSA Chief Clark in Sector 2, is married with three children: Michael 26, Yan 22 and Shay 17. Her husband, Gary, is also in the military and serves in the British Territorial Army.

From a male soldier’s point of view....

Capt. Tomas Pavlik (Slovak Air Force) is currently the Military Public Information Officer at HQ UNFICYP. He is married to Lenka, and they have two children, Nina (four) and Alexander (one).

St. Dawn Cairns, SSA Chief Clerk in Sector 2, is married with three children: Michael, Yan and Shay. Her husband, Gary, is also in the military and serves in the British Territorial Army.

Tomas says, “Lenka gave up her career temporarily for our family. However, she has left me in no doubt that she wishes to return to the world of economics as soon as she can. I will then have to deal with balancing my own career with hers, and I will do everything I can to help her.

So far, she has taken care of the basic family requirements, but I can see the day coming when I shall have to do my ‘fair share’ of the household chores, etc. This will not be hard when based in Slovakia, however there are times when the armed forces are deployed in missions abroad. That is when I can foresee problems. However, where there’s a will, there’s a way! Globally, more and more women are joining the regular work force and Slovakia is no exception. With both partners working, the quality of life improves. We have to move with the times”
Soaring temperatures of over 40°C and strong winds increase the risk of fires during the Cyprus summer.

This was the case on 29 June when one of the worst blazes the island has seen in decades destroyed 11.8 square kilometres in the Saltas area of the Troodos mountain range, of which 5.7 kilometres was state forest land. Around 370,000 trees were turned to ash in the blaze that also scorched 15 homes.

UN Flight received a request from CYPOL’s Deputy Police Chief, Mr. Michael Papageorgiou, to fly over the fire zone in the Troodos mountains to assess the course of the blaze and determine the best strategy for extinguishing the flames.

A Hughes 500 helicopter, piloted by Lt. Pablo Lopez and Lt. José Pio Cabrera, took off at 6.00 p.m. from the old Nicosia International Airport. They flew to the fire zone and reached a height of 2,300 metres, much higher than the normal air patrol. Flying above the fire, radio coordinates were used in conjunction with other aircraft in the area. Patterns of observation were conducted in order to identify possible access routes to battle the flames. After an exhaustive flight, the helicopter returned to Nicosia at sunset. Mr. Papageorgiou thanked UN Flight for their assistance in this arduous mission.

The island’s Fire Services report that although the number of fires has not increased in comparison to previous years, the area of land burnt is greater. On average, around 25 fires break out every day during July, many of which were in remote and hard-to-access locations.

According to UNFICYP Senior Fire Officer Paul Qadir, the same trend can be seen in the UN controlled buffer zone area where there have been 36 reported fires since January 2007. Fourteen were recorded between 14 June and 1

July alone, destroying approximately 10 square kilometres of trees and vegetation. Eighty-two soldiers spent approximately 132 hours fighting these fires, while three UN trucks and 43 civilian fire trucks assisted in extinguishing the blazes.

Seven fires broke out in Sector 2 (Nicosia area), six in Sector 1 (Mammari, Astronomitsi) and one in Sector 4 (Athinou area). The fire in Athienou on 9 July which started in the evening at around 8.20 p.m. was the biggest one so far with fire fighters working through the night to bring the blaze under control. The fire destroyed approximately 7 km of grass and bush land within the BZ, as well as a wooden sentry box at OP 115. According to reports, fire-fighters had difficulty bringing the blaze under control, due to the strong winds fanning the flames as it spread to minefields, resulting in explosions of landmines.

In all incidents, the cause of the fires is unknown.

The greatest fire hazard within the buffer zone at this time of the year is dry grass and vegetation. Attention to a few details can prevent fires, thereby saving lives and property.

Everyone should remember the following:

1. Place cigarettes/matches in ashtrays or proper containers – never throw them out of a window.
2. Avoid using plastic bins to put out cigarettes.
3. Don’t leave glass materials such as empty bottles or broken mirrors in dry grass areas, as they could act as magnifying glasses in high temperatures.
4. Never light a fire near any dry grass or vegetation – a hot vehicle engine can cause a disaster.
5. Always switch your vehicle engine off – never leave it running.
6. Always carry a fire extinguisher in your car.
7. Use only designated areas for barbecues – never anywhere else.
9. Never forget, when finished, to use water or sand/soil to damp down the fire.

Fire-fighting training courses are available for all UN personnel.

To sign up, contact the Engineering Section/Fire HQ (Ext. 44534).

Safety measures for UN personnel and civilians working in the buffer zone:

1. Designated smoking areas – NOT offices and accommodation buildings.
2. Always use dry powder/CO2 fire extinguishers.
3. Green tree branches if electricity poles are involved in a fire – not by the water.
4. UN patrol vehicles are required to carry at least four fire extinguishers.
5. Always attack any fire in groups – never fight buffer zone grass or forest fires alone.
6. Be mindful never to fight buffer zone grass fires up or down-wind but always from a cross-wind direction, being mindful of smoke and radiation heat.
7. When fighting fires, watch out for the fenced off minefield that remains within the buffer zone.
8. Wash your boots when you leave a fire area – otherwise you could easily help it spread.
9. Your life comes first – never risk your life to fight a fire. Take all safety measures possible, and contact the fire crew immediately.

Fire HQ ran the Fire Basic and Fire NCO courses as part of the Engineering Section/Fire HQ Integrated Fire Training Programme. Participants were not only from UNFICYP military and civilian personnel, but also from UNCMP and UNHCR.

A total of 685 UN personnel received fire training at Fire HQ during the year, of which 135 fire calls were received, 75 of which potentially threatened life or property.

Regular up-dating of policies and Standing Orders. During 2006, the Engineering Section/Fire HQ received 135 fire calls, 75 of which potentially threatened life or property.

Prevention is of the essence, therefore the following actions are taken:

- Prevention inspections;
- Checking/testing/maintenance of fire equipment;
- Fire drills/exercises;
- Regular up-dating of policies and Standing Orders.
- During 2006, the Engineering Section/Fire HQ received 135 fire calls, 75 of which potentially threatened life or property.

Chris of the Cyprus Fire Services, Andreas Nicolaou (centre), and his Deputy, Charalambos Charalambous, met with UNFICYP’s fire-fighting team on 25 July to discuss cooperation on fire fighting, prevention and safety as well as sharing information and resources in investigations on causes of fires.
Why the United Nations Matters Today and Tomorrow

The Secretary-General addressed the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, London on 11 July 2007 where he outlined the significant role the international organisation has to play in world affairs. Excerpts from his speech follow.

Today, when people look back on the early years of the United Nations, they think of the promise the Organisation held. They think of the idealism and unity that inspired the Charter and the signing of the Treaty. They think of the creation of landmark documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They think of the courageous pioneers who joined and shaped the Organisation in its fledgling years.

In my country, too, those early years were associated with a steadfast sense of faith in the UN. As I was growing up in a war-torn and destitute Korea, the United Nations gave us hope and sustenance. Its flag was a beacon of better days to come. And in the course of my own lifetime, with the assistance of the UN, the Re-public of Korea was able to rebuild itself from a country torn apart by war, with a non-existent economy, into a regional economic power and major contributor to the Organisation.

But if you are an optimist, as I am, you will paint the UN in brighter colours. You will know that our world of complex and global challenges is exactly the environment in which our United Nations should thrive – because these are challenges that no country can face alone.

In this, we need dialogue and patience, resources and reform – empowering us to serve the common good, equipping us to do what we do best, from peace-keeping to development, from humanitarian work to human rights.

Despite its universal outreach, the United Nations needs to see the successful establishment of a Special Tribunal to try the perpetrators of the Hariri assassination and ... In accordance with Security Council resolution 1757, I am taking the measures necessary for the Tribunal to be established.

In Lebanon, the UN is working to support the country in everything from its physical reconstruction, to its quest for a peaceful, democratic and fully independent future. ... security. We face an equal challenge in terrorism – one of the most difficult places in the world. We now have to deliver on our promise. To meet the target date, we have to take concerted action now.

I will ensure that the UN plays its role to the full. The Group of Eight agreed last month that the UN climate process is the appropriate forum for negotiating future global action. ... on the UN Framework Convention in December: business as usual is no longer an option; we must reach concrete agreements.

Throughout the region, and around the world, the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, remains an issue of deep concern. Yet I draw hope from recent developments. The Quartet has demonstrated leadership and invested itself in a process to achieve a number of key objectives. But they cannot stay there indefinitely. As the recent and deadly attack on our peacekeepers reminds us, we have only failed to achieve the number of objectives.

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1757, I am taking the measures necessary for the Tribunal to be established.

The Korean Peninsula. On the specific challenges of North Korea and Iran, the Security Council has acted by adopting important resolutions. Let us see the same commitment from Member States at the global level. We must muster moral and political effort to overcome the current stalemate in non-proliferation and disarmament.

We face an equal challenge in terrorism – one of the most difficult places in the world. We now have to deliver on our promise. To meet the target date, we have to take concerted action now.

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We have to make real progress on an issue I believe defines our collective future, more than any other: climate change. Friends, I am convinced that this challenge, and what we do about it, will define us, our era, and ultimately, our global legacy.

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The UN is engaged, in some form, in 18 peace-keeping operations in the most difficult places in the world. We now have a historic high of almost 100,000 personnel in the field. And we are leveraging that bigger UN role in other places – including and especially Darfur. I am heartened that the General Assembly has now approved resolutions to restructure the Secretariat, so as to strengthen our capacity to manage and sustain peace operations.

In this, we need dialogue and patience, resources and reform – empowering us to serve the common good, equipping us to do what we do best, from peace-keeping to development, from humanitarian work to human rights.
FMPU Supports Training in Hungary

July 2007 saw Maj. Iain Watt, Provost Marshal and Officer Commanding of the Force Military Police Unit (FMPU), together with the Sgt. Maj. Maj. FMPU, WO2 Mark Bent, provide training support to the Hungarian Peace Support Training Centre (PSTC), Szolnok, Hungary.

PSTC delivers the bulk of Hungary’s training for overseas missions in a modern, well-equipped facility. Maj. Watt and WO2 Bent were hosted extremely well by the PSTC training staff. In particular, Capt. Róbert Nagy and Capt. Gábor Balogh, both veterans of UNFICYP, ensured all necessary technical facilities and resources were provided.

At present, the Hungarian military does not have a professional cadre of military police from which to draw. This presents a significant training burden on UNFICYP when new personnel are posted to FMPU. The purpose of the visit was to conduct a “Train the Trainer” package, designed to give police-related training to Hungarian soldiers destined for employment with the FMPU prior to their arrival in Cyprus. Covering a range of topics from basic evidence awareness, jurisdiction and initial actions at a scene, the package was designed to supplement the existing training undertaken by all those deploying to UNFICYP. The training staff at PSTC were left a series of lesson plans to assist in the delivery of future police-related training. Additionally, Maj. Watt gave a central presentation to the 70 personnel currently undergoing training for UNFICYP on general discipline and differing roles of UNPOL and FMPU.

The three days of intense training were rewarding as well as extremely useful for students and trainers alike. The schedule was demanding, and the teaching was delivered in English with a view to lesson plans being translated into Hungarian at a later date. Whilst the technical policing knowledge of the students was understandably limited, the enthusiasm and receptiveness to policing subjects was encouraging. The training package culminated in a Major Incident Plan (MIP) exercise involving Crime Scene cordon and control and forensic evidence awareness. Whilst the exercise was aimed at a police response, the MIP procedures should be common practice to all military and UNPOL within the mission.

Training evaluation was conducted by the Commandant PSTC, Col. Zoltán Mátyus, Maj. Watt and a number of PSTC staff. All concluded the training was of great value and highlighted the need for such training at PSTC to continue. This evaluation also identified some minor additional training needs, most notably a requirement to conduct future policing training during the PSTC final exercise phase. This would involve delivering MIP and Major Crime Scene management, not only to the intended FMPU assets, but to all Hungarian peacekeepers destined for UNFICYP.

A Close Shave!

As a result of seeing posters in the Ledra Palace, Sen. Insp. Vito Durec and Garda Siobhan Campbell noticed that raffle tickets were on sale to raise funds for twin girls, born to LCpl. Craig Hudson of the British military based in Sector 2. The girls, Katie and Sophie, were born with “soft skull syndrome” and require specialised treatment with helmets to assist in the formation of their bones.

Siobhan had in mind organising a charity event. She also noticed Vito had excess hair. The idea was formed between the two to organise a charity night where we would find volunteers to participate in various hair-raising activities! This included having chest, bikini line, underarm and hair removal – on a man! One guy, Garda Paddy Guinan, agreed to a hair dye. Insp. Mick Cowley also consented to the removal of his moustache – something he has not done for 30 years. In fact, his wife has never seen him clean-shaven!

They decided to adopt Craig’s appeal for help as the charity for the night on 17 July. Close to 100 turned up for the event which was held at the UNPOL club house in the UNPA. The event kicked off at 8:00 p.m. with the appearance of Briana (Garda Brian Cruymme), Brenda (Sgt. Brendan Burke), Marthe (Insp. Marco Ciampini and Jezabel (Sgt. Jason MacArthur). The “girls” grand entrance generated a great response from the audience, putting all in the mood to part with their pennies, bidding on the scheduled activities.

Briana, the compare for the evening, started the proceedings with Paddy Guinan getting his hair dyed a yellow colour (should have been a blond). This was followed by Alex Cughoi, who volunteered to have his underarms (painfully) waxed by beauticians from the Hungarian military, who offered their services free of charge. Then came Siobhan, who sat quietly while Craig himself shaved away the first of her hair. Craig made a donation of £50, during the head shave, paid £20, the highest bid, to shave away the last shred of dignity. Once it was over, Siobhan said: “It was a small sacrifice for the cause. I’m glad it’s growing back thick and fast!”

Phil’s two sons, Daniel and Jack, play with Pyla’s schoolboy team and also received medals on the night. Phil’s contribution to the community in Pyla was significant, and as he leaves the mission this month, it is hoped that the good work he started in community relations will continue.

July 2007 – The Blue Beret

Visitors to UNFICYP

UNFICYP extended the usual courtesies when the Chief of Mission, Force Commander and Chief of Staff received the following visitors during the month of July:

6 July: Assistant Commissioner, Australian Federal Police, Mr. Paul Jevtovic (top left)
6 July: ETON College Military cadets (left)
9 July: Chief Operations Argentinean Armed Forces (right)
12 July: Deputy Director General of DG Enlarge-ment of the European Commission, Mr. Jan Truszczynski (top centre)

A sprodigy Pyla Football Club was founded in 1957, and this year, they celebrated their 50th anniversary by securing promotion to the senior divisions of the Cypriot League. To mark the occasion, an open-air function was held in the village square on 22 June where a presentation of the cup and medals was held. In the true spirit of community policing, local UNPOL members were invited, and the majority attended together with their families.

While membership of the club is predominantly Greek Cypriot, the bicultural nature of village life is reflected in the first team, which includes several Turkish Cypriots. The attendance on the night included members of both communities living in Pyla.

When the awards were made, special reference was made to “Aspis’s No. 1 supporter, Sgt. Phil van Dissel,” an Australian UNPOL member based in Pyla. Phil, together with his wife Viv, attended many of the team’s home and away games this season. Phil and Viv were presented by the club with special mementos of the occasion.

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Lastly, a number of bottles from a kind donor were auctioned off to the unsuspecting public, all in a good cause!

The UNPOL bar donated half their earnings that night, which brought the total money raised to £1,400. A cheque for the amount was handed over to Craig by Mick Cowley on 20 July at the UNPOL club house.

Other events are taking place to continue raising money for the twin girls’ treatment, including a raffle by Sector 2, a pool party at Ledra Palace and a parachute jump by one of Craig’s colleagues. Anyone wishing to donate to this worthy cause should contact UNPOL’s Garda Siobhan Campbell on 99239362.

Phil’s two sons, Daniel and Jack, play with Pyla’s schoolboy team and also received medals on the night. Phil’s contribution to the community in Pyla was significant, and as he leaves the mission this month, it is hoped that the good work he started in community relations will continue.

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A

ian Craven arrived in UNFICYP on 21 June 2007 to take up the position of Chief Communications and Information Technology Section, replacing Mr. Robert Walker.

Elan has worked with UNMOGIP and UNTSO in the capacity of Chief CITs prior to joining UNFICYP. He joined the UN in 1989 and has served in special missions including Namibia, Afghanistan, Somalia and Haiti.

Elan is British and previously served with UNFICYP many, many years ago (late 70's/early 80's) as a Blue Beret in the now defunct 254 Signals Squadron. He now works 50 meters from where he did 27 years ago – he’s come a long way!

He is accompanied by his wife, Eija, from Finland. They met in Kabul, Afghanistan in the early 90’s where Eija was serving as a Red Cross nurse. They have two children, James (five) and Ella (three).

Elan’s hobbies include squash and, more recently, golf. He is looking forward to the challenges of the job in UNFICYP, and the family hopes to take full advantage of the opportunities of living in Cyprus.

M

usa Hadzimemedi arrived in UNFICYP on 1 July 2007 to take up the position of Information Management Assistant in CES.

Musa, who was born in Djakovica, Kosovo, comes from Belgrade. He studied Civil Engineering at Pristina University, but switched to IT in 1994.

Musa joined the United Nations in 1999 and has so far worked with the 24-Hour Charity Swimathon

The 24-hour swimathon was not the immediate choice for the boys of 2 Section. Cpl. Paul King said: “We have one lad who can barely swim, although he is learning, so he tied a buoyancy aid around his waist like a sumo wrestler’s underpants and paddled himself along!”

Approximately 300 people attended the church ceremony, and 1,000 family, friends and colleagues arrived for the cocktail reception later in the evening. Many of the guests flew in from the UK, as well as Greece, Italy and Lebanon.

Recounting his “big day”, Jonathan says, “Every-thing was going according to plan, up until the time I was to leave for the church. Suddenly, I realised I couldn’t find... an emergency call to the Archbishop-ric explaining the situation and a sympathetic ear on the other end solved the problem.

Jonathan’s New Command!

Camp Command assistant Jonathan Vatsikiotis married his childhood sweetheart Niki Wilkinson at the Ayios Stylianos Orthodox church in Nicosia on 15 July.

Approximately 300 people attended the church ceremony, and 1,000 family, friends and colleagues arrived for the cocktail reception later in the evening. Many of the guests flew in from the UK, as well as Greece, Italy and Lebanon.

Recounting his “big day”, Jonathan says, “Everything was running according to plan, until the time I was to leave for the church. Suddenly, I realised I couldn’t find the marriage licence required for the ceremony to take place.” No amount of searching led to any result, so an emergency call to the Archbishopric explaining the situation and a sympathetic ear on the other end solved the problem – Niki and Jonathan received special licence to marry on the day, provided they submitted the licence within 24 hours. A day after the wedding party, Jonathan woke up and said: “I bet it’s in the basement!” Sure enough, it was. Strangely enough, it was Niki’s parents who put it there in the clean-up before the wedding.

The proud father-in-law, Chris Wilkinson, is a former UNFICYP staff member and is currently posted to UNIFIL, Lebanon.

Sport

24-Hour Charity Swimathon

Eight soldiers from Sector 2 participated in a 24-hour swim in the Ledra Palace pool on 30 July. Cpl. Alan Reid from 2 Section, West Troop, 8 Transport Regiment swim for a continuous 24 hours completing an impressive 2,207 lengths – the equivalent of 35.7 miles. In doing so, they raised approximately £500 for the Lindsey Lodge Hospice in the UK.

As Cpl. King explained: “When my grandfather was ill, he was cared for at the Lindsey Lodge, as is the case for terminally ill patients such as those with motor neurone disease and multiple sclerosis. They rely on donations of approximately £1.5 a year, so we thought that anything we could do to help would be worthwhile.”

The 24-hour swimathon was not the immediate choice for the boys of 2 Section. Cpl. King said: “We have one lad who can barely swim, although he is learning, so he tied a buoyancy aid around his waist like a sumo wrestler’s underpants and paddled himself along!”

All eight soldiers managed to get through the night, with a little support from the Regiment’s CO, Lt. Col. Keith Robinson, and the RSM WO1 Andy Simpson. One of the team, Pte. Rokotovitov said: “The hardest point was staying awake at around 4.00 a.m. when we were watching the person in the water for safety’s sake.”

The match was won by UNDP, who were awarded a trophy and medals for their efforts. All participants and spectators thoroughly enjoyed the competition, during which friendly sportmanship was demonstrated throughout.

From the Pampas to the Patagonia

The event was planned, organised and supported by Argentinian Contingent members, who provided medical assistance, water stations and air coverage along the entire route. Congratulations to all teams – everyone reached the finish line!
UNFICYP assists in pilgrimages