

The Blue Beret

January 2004



New Force Commander

THE BLUE BERET

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Dear Peoples of the United Nations,

Your Organisation, which I have the honour to serve, has just been through one of the hardest years in its history.

We have seen war in Iraq, and deep divisions among nations, about grave issues of war and peace. On 19 August, in a bomb attack on our head-quarters in Baghdad, we lost some of our best and most beloved colleagues.

These events have distracted the world's leaders from dealing with other threats – threats which, to most people, are more immediate, and more real. I mean the threats of extreme poverty and hunger, unsafe drinking water, environmental degradation, and endemic or infectious disease.

These dangers stalk large parts of our planet.
They kill millions and millions of people every year.
They destroy societies.
They fuel division and desperation.

After a year of war and division, it's time to focus more of our energy on people's health and welfare. It's time to make sure that poor countries have a real opportunity to develop. And it's time we took decisive action to save the resources of our planet.

Yes, we have to fight terrorism. Yes, we must prevent the spread of deadly weapons. But let's also say Yes to development. Let's bring hope into the lives of those who suffer. Without development and hope, there will be no peace.

Just over three years ago, at the Millennium Summit, leaders of all nations pledged to provide that hope. They set themselves precise, time-bound targets – the Millennium Development Goals. To meet these Goals would cost only a fraction of what our world spends on weapons of war. Yet it would bring hope to billions, and greater security to us all.

But in 2003 we did not live up to these promises. We let ourselves be swept along by the tide of war and division.

2004 must be different. It must be the year when we begin to turn the tide.

We can turn the tide against HIV/AIDS, if we act on the "three-by-five" initiative – the World Health Organisation's plan to get three million people on anti-retroviral treatment by 2005.

It's a bold target, but it can be met – if rich countries, poor and afflicted countries, governments, civil society, the private sector, and the United Nations system all pull together – and if the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is fully funded.

We can turn the tide against hunger, if we all work together to make existing food stocks available to hungry people everywhere, and to help Africa produce the extra food it needs. And we can turn the tide in world trade, if governments do as they promised, and make the current round of negotiations a true "development round".

We don't need any more promises. We need to start keeping the promises we already made.

Secretary-General's New Year Message - 2004

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SG Meets With Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan in Davos

The Secretary-General met with Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan in Davos, Switzerland, on 24 January. Afterwards, the SG's Spokesman made this announcement:

"The Secretary-General was encouraged by the constructive exchange he had today with the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on the subject of Cyprus, in which the Prime Minister indicated his government's strong desire for the Turkish Cypriots to resume talks with the Greek Cypriots with a view to resolving outstanding issues by 1 May.

"The Secretary-General told the Prime Minister he would study his position carefully. He also indicated that his good offices were still open if the parties were to demonstrate the will to conclude, with UN assistance, an agreement, including the holding of referenda, by 1 May."

In a subsequent Q&A with the media, the Secretary-General responded as follows:

Q: "Can you comment on the meeting this morning with the Turkish Prime Minister?"

SG: "Yes, I had a very good and constructive discussion with Prime Minister Erdogan about the possibility of resuming talks between the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots. He indicated to me that Turkey would want to see the talks resumed. They would want to see it sustained and would want us to try and do everything possible to conclude the process by the beginning of May.

"I indicated to him that I was very encouraged by the message he had brought me and that I will study very carefully what he has put before me. Obviously, if we are going to have talks, all parties concerned – the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, the motherlands, Turkey and Greece – must be committed to the talks and everyone must show a willingness to sustain the effort and to seek a settlement. And I have indicated that my good offices are still open if the parties were to declare the will and to demonstrate



Prime Minister Erdogan with the Secretary-General

UN/DPI Photo: Sergey Bermeiev

the will to want to settle. Because I think a settlement would not only be in the interests of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, it would also be in the interests of Turkey and Greece and improve considerably Turkish relations with the European Union."

Q: "And what about the mediator, the high level mediator?"

SG: "I've always had a very good facilitator working with me. We have been assisted in the past by representatives of several governments, notably the United Kingdom and the United States. And, of course, if we were to resume the efforts, I would want to continue with a good facilitator and accept support from all countries that are interested in the process."

Q: "Do you think there is a commitment then on the Turkish side for you to resume talks? Do you think what you have heard today from the Turkish side is enough to convince you that the Turkish side has this will?"

SG: "As I said, I've been very encouraged by what I heard and the Prime Minister assured me that there is a will on the Turkish part to move forward. Obviously, there are other parties and we need to hear from them as well."

[As the *Blue Beret* went to press, the SG was meeting on 29 January in Brussels with the Greek Cypriot leader, Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos. The day before, in Strasbourg, Mr. Papadopoulos said: "If the SG tomorrow asks for talks, I will be there. No conditions, no terms, nothing."]

AIDS Outreach

Island-based organisations actively involved in and working on the HIV/AIDS issue met on 28 November in an effort to share information and discuss future joint efforts. It was an ideal opportunity for representatives to meet with each other and talk about their proposals for 2004.

The UNFICYP-hosted conference took place on the UNPA and included representatives from UNFICYP, the Ministry of Health, the AIDS department from the Larnaca General Hospital, UNHCR, NGOs in the south and UNOPs (see photo, right). Unfortunately, the representative from the NGO based in the north was unable to attend.



January 2004 - The Blue Beret



Year 2003 - In Review

The year started off with renewed hopes for progress in settlement negotiations between the two leaders. With the New Year barely three weeks old, Mr. Clerides and Mr. Denktash called on the United Nations to organise an open public competition for a new Cyprus flag and anthem, in keeping with the proposal for a comprehensive settlement put to them by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on 10 December 2002.

Special Adviser Alvaro de Soto held a press conference at Ledra Palace on 13 January where he reviewed developments on the progress of the talks following the submission of the SG's revised plan. He noted that after several months' delay, the two ad hoc technical committees had started to meet on 7 January. Referring to the tight time-frames for an agreement and subsequent referendum before Cyprus signed the EU Accession Treaty, de Soto said: "...the choice between the leaders and the people on each side is not between this plan and a substantially different one; the choice is between this plan, perhaps with balanced refinements here and there as needed, and no agreement at all.

"The issues at stake are very clear. Will Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots reunite as equals in the European Union, or will the division of the island be further entrenched?"

Two days later, direct talks between the two leaders resumed.

February saw the change in the Greek Cypriot negotiator with the election of Tassos Papadopoulos who succeeded Glafcos Clerides. The Secretary-General visited the island to push forward his solution plan, presenting a third version for the two leaders to respond to by March 10 at The Hague.

On 28 February, Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Denktash accepted the Secretary-General's invitation to meet in The Hague.

The crucial meeting of **10 March** in The Hague ended with the Secretary-General announcing the collapse of the talks. After 20 hours of negotiations with the two sides and the guarantor powers, Rauf Denktash had refused to put the plan to a referendum in the north. The SG said: "We have reached the end of the road," but added: "my plan remains on the table ready for the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots to pick up and carry it forward to a solution, if they summon the will to do so."

Thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots joined forces in March to collect blood samples to find a compatible bone marrow donor for a five-year-old Turkish Cypriot leukaemia sufferer – Jale Sakaoglu. The bi-communal campaign, conducted at the Ledra Palace, ran for 11 days and managed to collect 13,500 blood samples.

April saw the closure of the office of the SG's good offices in Cyprus on 16 April. On the same day, Cyprus secured its European path when it signed the accession treaty in Athens.

Unprecedented steps towards the future were taken on 23 April when the Turkish Cypriot side announced the easing of freedom of movement restrictions, leading to the opening of checkpoints. Greek and Turkish Cypriots could cross over the Green Line for the first time since 1974. The initial trickle soon turned into a stream as tens of thousands made the crossing in the days that followed. Acting SRSG and UNFICYP Chief of Mission Zbigniew Wlosowicz welcomed the crossings while speaking with reporters in the buffer zone between the Ledra checkpoints. "This is a very important day for Cyprus. For many years, Cypriots were not able to move freely throughout the island. We hope that it will be followed by more good things and that it will contribute towards reconciliation," he said.

UNFICYP Chief of Mission Zbigniew Wlosowicz represented the Secretary-General in special ceremonies in the Slovak Republic celebrating the first international day of UN peacekeepers on **29 May**. The SG in his special video-message said: "... More than 1,800 peacekeepers have paid the ultimate sacrifice in this first half century of peacekeeping. On this day, we pay tribute to each one of them."

The two principal officials of the divided city of Nicosia, Michael Zampellas and Kutlay Erk, toured the Green Line on **26 June**. Escorted by UNFICYP peacekeepers and the Chief of Mission, they and US Ambassador Klosson inspected some of the work of a team of eight Greek and Turkish Cypriot architects and engineers which had surveyed 238 buildings of architectural or historical significance within the walls (and an additional 27 outside). The team of men and women worked for two and a half years on the UNOPs project funded by UNDP

and USAID, classifying the buildings according to their architectural value as well as their structural condition.

In **July**, the Force Commander, Lt. Gen. Jin Ha Hwang, paid an official visit to Hungary, where he personally conveyed his appreciation for the Hungarian Contingent's contribution to UNFICYP.

Argentinian Minister of Defence, Dr. José Pampuro, paid his first official visit to Cyprus in order to familiarise himself with the Argentinian soldiers stationed at HQ UNFICYP and in Sector 1.

UNFICYP reopened its Liaison Office in Limassol after four years to handle a resurgence of demand among Turkish Cypriots for assistance in the area since the opening of the crossing points in April. Most families seeking the office's assistance face serious humanitarian difficulties.

Football history was made on the playing fields of the UNPA on 9 July when an all-island team of Greek and Turkish Cypriots took on an international selection of diplomats and UNFICYP soldiers after a series of coaching sessions run by top professionals from the Italian premier league club Lazio FC. The bicomunal event organised by the Italian embassy raised money for local charities.

On **22 August**, members of the UN family of agencies on the island joined UNFICYP's military, civilian and police personnel at the peacekeeping forces headquarters in Nicosia for a memorial service for the victims of the Baghdad bombing. Under the UN flag at half mast, UNFICYP Chief of Mission Zbigniew Wlosowicz paid tribute to the victims of the 19 August attack and offered condolences to their families and relatives.

A high-level US delegation, led by US Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham, visited the Green Line with the Chief of Mission on 25 August. The delegation stopped off in Cyprus after a fact-finding visit to Iraq.

In **September**, ARGCON marked ten years since Argentinian peacekeepers were first deployed to Cyprus. Over 7,500 soldiers have served with ARGCON since then.

Sector 4's return to the Salamis amphitheatre for their medal parade for the first time since the Austrians departed in 2001 saw the combined Slovak and Hungarian Contingents put on a sparkling display.

October brought the Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende and Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to Cyprus. They visited UNFICYP Headquarters where they were received by Chief of Mission Zbigniew Wlosowicz and taken on a Green Line tour through old Nicosia.

UN day was celebrated on 19 October at Ledra Palace with a five-hour concert featuring musicians from all over the island and a special guest appearance by the Ross Daly trio. The Force Commander welcomed the 3,500 Greek and Turkish Cypriots who attended.

The Force Commander, accompanied by the Chief Personnel & Logistics Officer, Lt. Col. Chris Kilmister, visited Argentina in **November** at the invitation of the Chief of the Army General Staff, Maj. Gen. Roberto Fernando Bendini. The FC visited a number of military institutions during his ten-day tour and participated in staff talks.

DPKO Assistant Secretary-General Jane Holl Lute visited UNFICYP where she was briefed by senior staff on the mission's activities and also met with administration.

In **December**, just two weeks before Christmas, two peacekeepers from the Argentinian Contingent lost their lives in a buffer zone accident. Sgt. Oscar Alfredo Chocobar and Pte. Juan Manuel Escalante were killed when their vehicle crashed while on a delivery run in Sector 1 on 12 December. Cpl. Nestor Fabian Ledesma was seriously injured and hospitalized. A memorial service attended by the Chief of Mission, the Force Commander and UNFICYP staff, was held at Camp St. Martin. After the Last Post was sounded and the blessing given, the flag-draped coffins were given an honour escort before beginning the long journey home for burial in Argentina.



A Round Up Of Santa's Little Helpers

On Christmas Day 2003, while Santa was taking a break, the officers of Blue Beret Camp served and waited on their soldiers. COS Col. Ian Sinclair, CPLO, Lt. Col. Chris Kilmister, and OC MFR, Maj. Mike Weymouth, expertly carved roast turkey and ham for over 150 soldiers.

Meanwhile, over in Dhenia, members of UNCIVPOL briefly traded in their blue berets to help out Santa.

At the Dhenia primary school, UN OP 40 peacekeepers and members of UNCIVPOL Dhenia joined the Christmas festivities with gifts for the children. Everybody received UN notebooks, pencils and the UNFICYP brochure for children. The children's beautiful singing and costumes were impressive. For the members of UNFICYP, far from their homes and families, it made for a warm and unforgettable evening.

In Troulli, Sector 4, Santa traded in reindeer power for horsepower when he visited junior and nursery school students. He arrived on the back of UN Mitsubishi L200 instead of a sleigh!



It's in the bag!

Santa's helpers were Garda Declan J. Egan and Sgt. David Cherry of UNCIVPOL Pyla. Santa gave out gifts donated by UNFICYP, the Irish and Australian CIVPOL Commanders, and the Troulli Village Council.

The bundles of presents on the back of the truck eased any doubts the children had about Santa's true identity, and they welcomed Mr. Claus with great enthusiasm. So much so, that the big red bag full of sweets caused a stampede, the likes of which had not been seen since the crossings opened on 23 April (and maybe by those soldiers waiting for officer service on Christmas Day)!



What a carve up!



Night of a thousand stars in Dhenia



Troulli Yuletide!

UNCIVPOL New Year's Day Swim at Dhekelia

Only a few New Year hangovers were evident at the CESSAC beach in Dhekelia on the morning of 1 January when the "UN IRISH" competed in the annual New Year's Day swim. The "dip" was in aid of the British Forces Animal Welfare Society (BFAWS).

A group of Irish UNCIVPOL members and two of their wives entered the team event. The only requirement for entry was an ability to swim and (as stated on the application form) to be under 99 years of age. After producing his birth certificate, Sgt. David Cherry, UNCIVPOL, Pyla, eventually convinced the organisers that he was within the age bracket!

The team was made up of Sgt. David Cherry, Garda Declan J. Egan, Garda Denise Shaw, Garda Aidan Leahy, Mrs. Niamh Egan and Mrs. Una Cherry.

The local entrants complained that the Mediterra-



nean was icy cold, but the Irish found it balmy compared to the Irish Sea. The team event required the team to swim out to a buoy and back in again. Having competed gallantly, the Irish were beaten into second place by none other than the "Rugby Remnants".

All this was only a warm-up for the real race of the day – the "Wreath Swim". This involved a Christmas wreath being thrown into the sea and a swim to retrieve it. Sgt. David Cherry and his wife Una braved the icy waters again in this event. It was a worthwhile effort for David, as he emerged from the Mediterranean in victory, clutching the wreath.

Caroline Goldsmith, President of the BFAWS, presented silver medals to the UN IRISH and David Cherry was presented with the perpetual Wreath Cup. Overall it was a great day's fun. Can you think of any better way of spending New Year's Day?



Farewell Geoff Hazel

By Supt. Sandy Allan

On 2 February, the Australian UNCIVPOL Commander will bid farewell to this fair island. Commander Hazel, or Geoff to most of us, has just completed six months at the helm of UNCIVPOL preceded by six months as Deputy Commander.



During his Cyprus tour, Geoff has been accompanied by his lovely wife Margaret (see photo above), known and revered by all who have had the pleasure of attending one of the many dinner parties or wine, wine, wine and cheese nights at the Hazel residence. In this instance, to say that behind every good man is a good woman is an understatement. In the case of Margaret Hazel, I would have to say that *beside* every good man is a *great* woman.

Margaret has supported Geoff throughout his lustrous career with both the Australian Army and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Australian Federal Police. In 1967, no – that's not a misprint – Geoff took part in the first of two tours of duty in Vietnam with the Australian Army. The second tour was in 1969, the same year his only son, Leigh, was born.

In 1970, Geoff received the "calling" and joined the ACT Police. (In 1979 the ACT Police became the Australian Federal Police.) However, Geoff has spent much time abroad on various peacekeeping/monitoring missions in places as diverse as Cyprus, Mozambique, East Timor and the Solomon Islands.

Commander Hazel will be remembered throughout this mission for being the producer and director of an UNCIVPOL Medal Parade that resembled a scene from Beverly Hills Cop. Geoff's creative qualities helping him to think "outside the square" make him a resourceful and effective police officer.

Have a safe trip home Margaret and Geoff. You both will be missed.

On 26 January Commander Hazel's replacement, AUSTCIVPOL Commander Trevor Clarke, arrived in Cyprus to assume the position of Deputy Commander of UNCIVPOL. Trevor Clarke will be accompanied by his wife Jan for the duration of his 12-month posting.

Now the reins of UNCIVPOL are in the capable hands of Chief Supt. John McLoughlin, whom I am looking forward to working with for the next six months.

The Cultural Heritage of Cyprus — Part XX

Abbey of Peace: Bellapais Abbey

Bellapais Abbey

The breathtaking 14th-century Abbey of Bellapais, built on the edge of a cliff in the Kyrenia Mountains, is the latest destination for the Blue Beret's series on the island's cultural heritage.

Considered to be the finest Gothic monument in the Levant, Bellapais Abbey lies approximately four kilometres southeast of Kyrenia, in the village of Bellapais.

The two Roman sarcophagi used by the monks for ablutions

The Abbey's Names

The site of both an abbey and a monastery, the Abbey in its early days was commonly known as Episcopia or Piscopia (from the Greek "Episkopi" meaning Bishopric). This suggests that the monastery may have been erected on the side of the residence of the Greek Bishop of Kyrenia. During the Lusignan period on the island, the monastery took the name of "Abbaie de la Pais" (the old French spelling for "Abbaye de la Paix", meaning Abbey of Peace). The Venetians later corrupted this into Bella Paise, from which the Abbey acquired its modern name.

The white habits of the Norbertines gave the Abbey still another name, that of "White Abbey", by which it is referred to in documents of the 15th and 16th centuries. Ever since the church was taken over by the Orthodox community, it has been called "Panayia Asprophoroussa", or Blessed Virgin Mary of the White Robes.

The Abbey's History

Bellapais Abbey was first heard of as a house of Augustinian canons, founded by the king of Jerusalem (probably Aimery de Lusignan, who held that title from 1198 to 1205). The Augustinians came from Palestine, where their order had held custody of the church of the Holy Sepulchre. The monks of St. Norbert also arrived from Palestine, after losing two monasteries there. The Abbey adopted the canons of the Norbertines (or the Prémonstratensians) at the time of Thierry (1206 to 1211), the second Latin Archbishop of Nicosia.

The Abbey grew rapidly in importance. Pious benefactions increased its wealth, and included a piece of the "True Cross", bequeathed in 1246 by a knight from Paphos. Royal patronage was granted on a generous scale by Hugh III (1267 to 1284), who was regarded as the Abbey's leading benefactor. Hugh also granted the abbots the privileges of wearing the pontifical mitre during services, and of bearing a sword and gilt spurs when riding.

At the time of the Venetian occupation, the abbacy of Bellapais remained a rich prize, judging by the fact that at one time there were three claimants to the role: one supported by the Republic of Venice, one by the Pope and a third actually installed in the Abbey. With the decline of the Latin period in Cyprus, however, the Catholic Church on the island also declined. The Order of Premontre was no exception, particularly as the morals of the monks had lapsed toward the end of the Venetian occupation.

In 1570, during the Ottoman invasion of Cyprus, the Abbey was largely destroyed. What was left was handed over by the Ottomans to the Orthodox clergy.

What You'll See Today

The Abbey, a surviving monument of monastic architecture in the Gothic style, is built on a natural rock escarpment, the edge of which drops vertically for more than 30 metres on the north side, providing excellent protection. On the south side, toward the hill and on the west, an artificial ditch seems to have been cut outside a defensive wall that enclosed the Abbey precinct.

The gateway was originally a simple archway, carried on elaborate corbels, and was flanked by smaller wicket gates that remain in their original form. A massive tower was raised over the doorway, probably in the 14th century, housing the mechanism

of a drawbridge, and joined to the enclosure wall. The square forecourt east of the gateway is also an original feature of the Abbey.

The church, preceded by a simple porch and surmounted by a substantial belfry, is the earliest surviving part of the Abbey, and dates from the 13th century. Except for the modern iconostasis, it remains in its original form. The pillar capitals are of the 13th-century French style. The clerestory rises directly above the main arcades, since the aisles have flat terrace roofs, giving a somewhat squatter proportion to the interior than is usually seen in Gothic buildings in Europe.

On the south wall of the chancel are the remains of a square painted medallion showing the bust of James the Apostle. Like the paintings in the porch, it is Italian in style, and dates from the 14th century.

The full magnificence of the Abbey is found in the cloister, which has survived mainly intact, with the exception of the west wing. Built in the 14th century, the cloister features carvings that include foliage and the heads of people and animals. The decorative mouldings are circular and carved, usually with rosettes, although those found in the two angle bays of the west wing carry the Lusignan coat of arms.

In the arches, some fragments of tracery in the flamboyant style have survived. At the northwest corner stands a 2nd-century marble sarcophagus that has been turned into a lavabo, for the monks' ablutions prior to entering the refectory.

On the marble lintel of the refectory (dining hall) are carvings of the arms of Lusignan (right), the arms of Jerusalem (centre) and the royal quarterings of Cyprus (left). The refectory itself is a magnificent vaulted chamber of six bays, in almost perfect condition, and probably the work of Hugh IV (1324 to 1359).

Returning to the cloister, the first building adjoining it on the east side is the undercroft of the dormitory, probably the workroom of the community. Adjoining the undercroft to the south is the square chapter house, where the canons took their places every morning on the stone benches against the walls. The central marble column and capital were probably taken from the ruins of some early Byzantine church.

The night stair is located on the south side of the cloister. Continuing straight on through a vaulted loggia is what survives of the dormitory. Only the west wall remains, showing what a spacious and lofty chamber it once was.

Passing onto the roof of the cloister, there are traces on the north side of a staircase leading to the refectory, where another staircase (of which a good part survives) led to the roof of the dormitory. Below this, a traceried window commands a fine view of the coastal plain that stretches out into the distance.

On the south side of the cloister roof, a modern opening leads to the treasury over the north side of the church. Two staircases descend near the treasury, leading to the area west of the cloister, where excavation has determined the layout of buildings that have disappeared. These included a long cellarium, a two-storey building dedicated to the Abbey's domestic economy. Beyond it, to the west, was a kitchen-court, reached by a separate entrance from the forecourt, while the kitchen buildings themselves were at the extreme north end.

Below the kitchen door to the refectory, a stone staircase leads down to the crypt from the north end of the cellarium. The crypt is a vaulted undercroft below the refectory, divided into two spacious rooms, each featuring two aisles, where the oil and other produce of the Abbey's lands were stored.

Looking out from the cloisters

Senior Staff Visit Sectors 1 and 4



Senior Staff line up in the hills of Sector 1....

Last December 10th, the UNFICYP Senior Staff group visited Sector 1. The tour began at San Martin Camp where the group was received by Lt. Col. Motta, Commanding Officer of the Argentinian Task Force and his senior staff.

After a briefing and a walk around the camp, the party set out along the track to OP 22 from where they could observe the oldest mine in Cyprus (the Hellenic Copper Mine), the villages of Agios Georgios and Agios Nicolaos, and the minefields. At the OP, the party was briefed by 2/Lt. Verna, following which the party inspected the facilities of the Post.

From OP 22, the party continued on its way to OP 17, seeing for themselves the rough and difficult terrain with its high, steep slopes and narrow mountainous tracks.

At OP 17, 1/Lt. Correa, B Company Commander, and personnel of the post, showed the group some of the anti-hunting devices it uses at this time of the year.

Support Coy Comd, Maj. Mosto, invited the Chief of Mission and senior staff on a walking inspection of the area before entertaining them to a lunch of typical empanadas and Argentine barbecue.

After lunch, the party proceeded on to their last tour stop at Camp Brown where they were met by the C Coy

Comd, Lt. (Navy) Gordillo. After a briefing and camp facility inspection, the group ended up with coffee in the "Piratas" cabin of the C Coy Officer.

So, in six hours of travelling the switchback trails and tracks of Sector 1, the Senior Staff group got a fair idea of the day-to-day challenges the sector's peacekeepers face in observing, patrolling and reporting as they contribute to the UNFICYP mission.

Sector 4 set the standard when it put the Senior Staff through its paces in November escorting the senior management group on a tour of installations at Dherinia (CP 10), Pyla and Camp Athienou.

Everyone emerged wiser about the sector contingent's activities and responsibilities, impressed by the dedication of the peacekeeping and UNCIVPOL personnel encountered along the way.



..... and align themselves with Sector 4's compass points

Skier to the Fore as Horse Gunners Arrive

Warrant Officer Class 2, Battery Sergeant Major David Belam has recently arrived in Cyprus as Battery Sergeant Major of J (Sidi Rezegh) Battery, 3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery. The Battery is currently fulfilling the role of patrolling Sector 2 East as part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

Having joined the British Army in 1984, BSM Belam, 35, has spent the majority of his military career either in the Regiment or away representing the Army and Great Britain at cross-country skiing.

BSM Belam was selected in 1988 to train with the British

National Skiing Team. He subsequently represented Great Britain in the World Cup event in 1989 and went on to compete for Great Britain in the World Cup in 1990. He has represented Great Britain in two Olympic Games – 1992 in France and 1994 in Norway.

Having attended the Gunnery Career's Course in 1999, he returned to the Regiment in 2002, and assumed the appointment of BSM in 2003. Earlier this year, he deployed with the Regiment to Iraq, returning in July. He is married and has five children.

BSM Belam celebrated the festive season in Cyprus with the rest of the Regiment.



Slovak Republic - Nation of Diversity

By Maj. Ingrid Tomeková, MPIO

Although the history of the Slovak people as expressed in the nation state is less than a decade old, Slovaks have existed as a unique entity for over 1,500 years.

The Slovak Republic came into existence on January 1, 1993. Except for a brief period during the Second World War, during which Slovakia was a "protectorate state" of Germany, the Slovak people have been subjected to domination by stronger political entities, such as the Czechs of the Czechoslovak federation, the Magyars of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the rulers of the Habsburg Empire.

The people of Slovakia are descended from the Slavic peoples who settled the Danube river basin in the 6th and 7th centuries B.C. Traditionally, the Slovak people have had strong links to the soil. Under communism, some industrialisation was undertaken. The political transformations of 1989 brought new freedoms that have considerably widened the societal outlook of the population.



One of the wooden churches which has been preserved and registered as a national cultural monument

The Slovak Republic consists of about 85% ethnic Slovaks and 11% ethnic Hungarians, mainly concentrated on the border with Hungary, especially in the south west. Minorities including Czechs, Romanies, Ruthenians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles make up the remaining 4% of the population.

At the time of its independence, some aspects of Slovakia's society already had a unique national character, namely the language, many of the customs, laws and conventions. Indeed, many of the deep traditions date back hundreds of years.

Folk arts and crafts, which include wood carving, fabric weaving, and glass painting, have a long and popular tradition in Slovakia, especially in rural areas. Examples of folk architecture, such as wooden churches and brightly painted houses, are found throughout the country, particularly in Eastern Slovakia. Among the well-known pieces of Slovak art is the Venus of Morava dating from the Palaeolithic era, art forms from the



Located within the Tatra National Park (TANAP), the Belian Cave is 1,752m in length and it is one of the Slovak caves on the UNESCO list of world heritage sites.

The cave boasts calcite waterfalls, pagoda-like stalagmites and lakes. The cave is home to eight kinds of bat.

It also contains a naturally-formed "music auditorium" where concerts are held.

stone and bronze ages, as well as religious architecture from the Great Moravian Empire.

Traditional Slovak music is one of the most original of Slavic and European folklore. In its oldest form, the music is liturgical, dating from between the time of Great Moravia (9th century) and the 15th and 16th centuries. Slovak music has been heavily influenced by liturgical and chamber music. Despite the political restrictions of the Communist period, Slovak filmmakers such as Ján Kadár, Dušan Hanák, Štefan Uher, and Juraj Jakubisko, gained international recognition for their work.



The High Tatras mountains offer exceptionally clean air and a unique climate, leaving every visitor feeling better, especially those who take advantage of the many health spa treatments available

UN 2003 Prizes for Human Rights

Secretary-General's Human Rights Day Message
10 December 2003



Ms. Enriqueta Estela Barnes de Carlotta – President of the Association of Plaza de Mayo Grandmothers of Argentina



Mr. Deng Pufang – Founder and Director of the China Disabled Persons Federation



Ms. Shulamith Koenig – Executive Director of the People's Movement for Human Rights of the USA



Mu'min Hadidi – Jordan's representative of the the Family Protection Project Management Team



Annie Vieira De Mello, widow of the late Sergio Vieira De Mello



Sarah Daraba Kaba, representative of the Mano River Women's Peace Work in West Africa

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has served as a beacon of hope for our world for 55 years. So have the brave men and women who defend human rights in every country. Today, I wish to pay tribute to their commitment and their courage.

I do so less than four months after the United Nations lost its chief human rights defender – Sergio Vieira de Mello, the High Commissioner for Human Rights – who died along with 21 other dedicated servants of peace and human rights in the attack on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. His death was a bitter blow to the cause of human rights.

Human rights defenders stand in the front lines of protection, casting the bright light of human rights into the darkest corners of tyranny and abuse. They work to safeguard the rule of law, to reduce violence, poverty and discrimination, and to build structures for freer, more equitable and more democratic societies. It is to them that many victims of human rights violations turn in their hour of need.

A few human rights defenders receive recognition – for instance, the outstanding individuals and organizations who today will receive the 2003 United Nations Prizes in the Field of Human Rights; and Ms. Shirin Ebadi, who today will receive the Nobel Peace Prize for her courageous efforts to promote human rights. Yet most defenders of human rights receive little recognition or appreciation – and many continue to be attacked, harassed, or persecuted for doing their vital work.

The defence of human rights is not simply the responsibility of such brave people. It is the responsibility of us all. We must all be human rights defenders. And a good place to start is to defend those who champion human rights.

I therefore salute each and every human rights defender, wherever you are. You each play an important role in building a world that lives up to the promise of the Universal Declaration – a world that respects the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. Your work is an inspiration to us all. And you are not alone.

Human Rights Championed Around the Globe

Civil liberties and fundamental freedoms are all too fragile. Whether we live in a developed or developing nation, we should all be aware of how to defend our civil liberties and speak up for those who cannot. In this spirit, the UN Human Rights prize is awarded every five years for outstanding promotion and protection of human rights. Defending the basic human rights of women and of other minorities, including the right to an education for everyone, is essential, locally and globally. The 2003 award recipients include grassroots and international organisers. The following people and organizations recognised in 2003 set examples of the many different ways we can work to defend our rights:

The Family Protection Project Management Team promotes open discussions of domestic violence and gender equality in Jordan.

In Argentina Ms. Enriqueta Barnes de Carlotta won a prize for her work as the president of the Asociación de Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Association of Plaza de Mayo Grandmothers).

Mr. Deng, a paraplegic, who injured his spine while being attacked by some members of the Red Guard during China's Cultural Revolution, is the founder-director of the 15-year-old China Disabled Persons' Federation.

Africa's Mano River Women's Peace Network helped bring the Heads of States of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea back to the negotiating table in 2001 and was a signatory to the Liberian peace talks in August 2003.

Ms Shulamith Koenig of the United States, was awarded a prize for cultivating a global human rights culture as the founder of the People's Movement for Human Rights Education. The group has organised workshops in more than 60 countries.

Ms. Annie Vieira de Mello of Brazil accepted a special posthumous award on behalf of her husband, the late High Commissioner of Human Rights, Sergio Vieira de Mello. Mr. De Mello was killed while on duty as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq. He served the United Nations cause for over 30 years.



Bruce



Maxine



Andreas



Michael

New Faces

In addition to the new Force Commander, *The Blue Beret* extends a warm welcome to all new civilian staff members.

The Civil Affairs Branch has enlisted four new additional Information Assistants to back Derya Bicer and Neofytos Evdokiou in translating the daily influx of articles and media coverage.

Two of the new translators, Loukia Vassiliou and Yasa Yesilada, had previously participated in bicomunal meetings organised by the Cyprus Fullbright Commission.

The two other new translators, Netha Kreouzos and Ersin Oztoycan, remind us of the range of the Cypriot diaspora, having lived in Johannesburg and London respectively.

Andreas Alexandrou is learning the ropes as a new Draughting Assistant in the Engineering Unit of the Support Services Section.

New Procurement Assistant, Maxine Chia, is originally from Singapore. She is married to a Cypriot and moved to the island in September 2003.

Joining the Electronic Services Section as a Telecommunications Technician is Bruce Larsen. An avid scuba diver from New Zealand, Bruce comes to us via East Timor, where he worked at UNTAET.

For Australian Michael Selby, Sector 4's new Administrative Officer (General Services Section), UNFICYP is his sixth UN mission. Michael arrived with his spouse, Jan, and two children, Jacob and Tatiana.

Finally, in the Public Information Office, yours truly, Aldo Henriquez, arrived in December 2003. After four years of working at UN Headquarters, it was time to venture outside of the Secretariat maze and face a peacekeeping challenge. What better place than UNFICYP for an introduction to the complex diplomatic and military responsibilities of a peacekeeping operation?

For the record, we added five Cypriots, one New Zealander, one Australian, one Singaporean and one American (of Honduran extract).



Netha



Loukia



Yasa



Ersin

Lt. Gen. Hwang Ends UNFICYP Tour of Duty

As Lt. Gen. Jin Ha Hwang approached the end of his two-year assignment as Force Commander, he had to face the onslaught of a series of well-intended and well attended farewells ranging from departing line tours to special luncheons and dinners, all culminating in a moving military farewell ceremony in the UN Flight hangar on 24 December when he officially relinquished his post.

It was, as the Chief of Mission said, an occasion "to marvel yet again at the military tradition's capacity to mark change in a changeless way, doing honour to the man who is leaving while asserting a continuing commitment to the Force's mandated peacekeeping responsibilities".

General Hwang presided over UNFICYP's peacekeepers during one of the most interesting periods

in the force's four-decade history. With the UN peace effort in full play during his military stewardship, the situation along the ceasefire lines remained generally calm, allowing for undistracted focus on peace-building.

Morale remained high throughout his tour. The Chief of Mission noted that from the moment he first arrived, the General made a point of getting to know his peacekeepers, eating with them in the international cafeteria, visiting with them along the line and enthusiastically supporting them at their sporting and athletic activities.

Paying tribute to the FC's sportsmanship, the CM pointed out how he had sat alongside General Hwang at UNFICYP headquarters to watch the match when Poland played Korea in the last World Cup. "Like any good host, General Hwang showed great restraint and diplomatic sensitivity when Poland, sadly, lost."

The General, he said, "represented both authority and compassion and throughout his tour endeared himself to his UNFICYP soldiers of all ranks". His quiet yet strong presence will be missed around UNFICYP.



Lt. Gen. Hwang and his wife B taking their leave of UNFICYP

The Chief of Mission said he personally would miss a partner and friend, just as their many friends "will miss Bo, the gentle wife of the General".

Similar tributes were paid to the General and his family when he was the guest at a Senior Staff group farewell luncheon and again when the officers of UNFICYP gathered to honour him (in full military uniformed splendour) at a special dinner.



Senior Staff entertain Gen. Hwang at an informal luncheon outside Nicosia



UNFICYP's New FC, General Hebert Figoli

On 30 December, Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the appointment of Major-General Hebert Joaquin Figoli Almandos of Uruguay as Force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to succeed Lieutenant-

General Jin Ha Hwang who relinquished his post on 24 December 2003.

General Figoli, a veteran of four previous UN assignments, arrived on post on 7 January, and was greeted to his new duties with an honour guard on 8 January.

Since his arrival, the new Force Commander has been busy familiarising himself with the mission's personnel and terrain. He has visited all the sectors and units and has traversed the length and breadth of the buffer zone.

General Figoli enlisted as a cadet in the Army of Uruguay in 1965. He is a graduate of the Uruguay Military Academy, Army Staff College and the National Superior Studies Centre. He has held various military appointments in his country including command of an infantry battalion and at a higher level, commander of the Army Administrative Support Command.

In 1984, he joined the United Nations Observation Mission in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) as a military observer. In 1993, he served as Chief of Military Personnel Office in the United Nations Mission in Cambodia (UNTAC) and in October of the same year, he was assigned to the United Nations Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) as a commanding officer of

the demilitarized zone (DMZ). From 1997 to 1998 he was assigned to the United Nations Military Observer Group in Tajikistan (UNMOT) as a Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff. He is at present serving as the Director of the National Superior Studies Centre and President of the Uruguayan Antarctic Institute.

Born in Montevideo on 29 July 1948, General Figoli is married to Nélida Ethel Scarone Di Leone, and they have one son.



Gen. Figoli "signs on" (ceremonially, of course)



CM and FC



Inspecting an UNFICYP honour guard



Being briefed by Sector 4

Secretary-General Saddened By Peacekeepers' Deaths

The Secretary-General was deeply saddened by two recent tragedies. 15 United Nations peacekeepers from Bangladesh died on 25 December 2003 in an air crash near Cotonou, Benin. In a separate air accident, UN Official Richard Conroy died in Uzbekistan, on 13 January 2004.

The Secretary-General extended his condolences to the bereaved families of all the victims. He also expressed his great appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for its outstanding contribution to UN peacekeeping operations of the United Nations. The Secretary-General paid tribute to the support and expertise provided by Mr. Conroy during the SG's visit to Uzbekistan in October 2002.

Richard Conroy was the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Tashkent. He began his service in Uzbekistan two weeks before 11 September 2001, and was immediately plunged into one of the most challenging periods in the history of the region. It was his steadfast efforts that led to the opening of the Friendship Bridge to Afghanistan, allowing for crucial provisions to flow in from the Uzbek border town of Termez – the town he was returning from when his plane crashed on landing in Tashkent. Throughout Mr. Conroy's mission in Uzbekistan, and during his other highly demanding assignments in India, Sri Lanka and China, Mr. Conroy displayed unwavering integrity, professionalism, judgement and courage.

Endangered Species



Early one January morning, an inquisitive fox ventured forth inside the UNPA, only to end up caught in the barbed wire surrounds.

UNFICYP came to the rescue. Senior Fire Officer Nadeem P. Qadir, members of the pest control unit and Force Hygiene Officer, Maj. Jozef Ragan MD, combined to free the fox, treat its (thankfully minor) injuries, and send it on its way.

When last seen, the fox was heading towards Foxtrot Gate!



Photos by Maj. Jozef Ragan, MD