

The Blue Beret

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Irish Defence
Minister's Visit



THE BLUE BERET

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LEADERSHIP AND HIV/AIDS

The AIDS crisis is global. It knows no frontiers. It is everyone's problem. The urgency is self-evident – the futures of entire societies hang in the balance.

Speaking at the Bangkok International AIDS Conference (see article page 4) earlier this month, the SG called on leaders around the world to speak out, and to put many more resources into what he call "this fight we have to win."

Leadership, he noted, means showing the way by example, breaking the deadly wall of silence that surrounds the epidemic, achieving the cultural shift needed to fight it effectively, and providing treatment to all who need it.

Leaders everywhere should demonstrate that speaking up about AIDS is "a point of pride, not a source of shame", he said. And not just national leaders.

Leadership also comes from partners who make sure they always use a condom; from fathers, husbands, sons and uncles who support and affirm the rights of women; from teachers who nurture the dreams and aspirations of girls; from doctors, nurses and counselors who listen and provide care without judgment; and from the media who bring HIV/AIDS out of the shadows, and encourage people to make responsible choices.

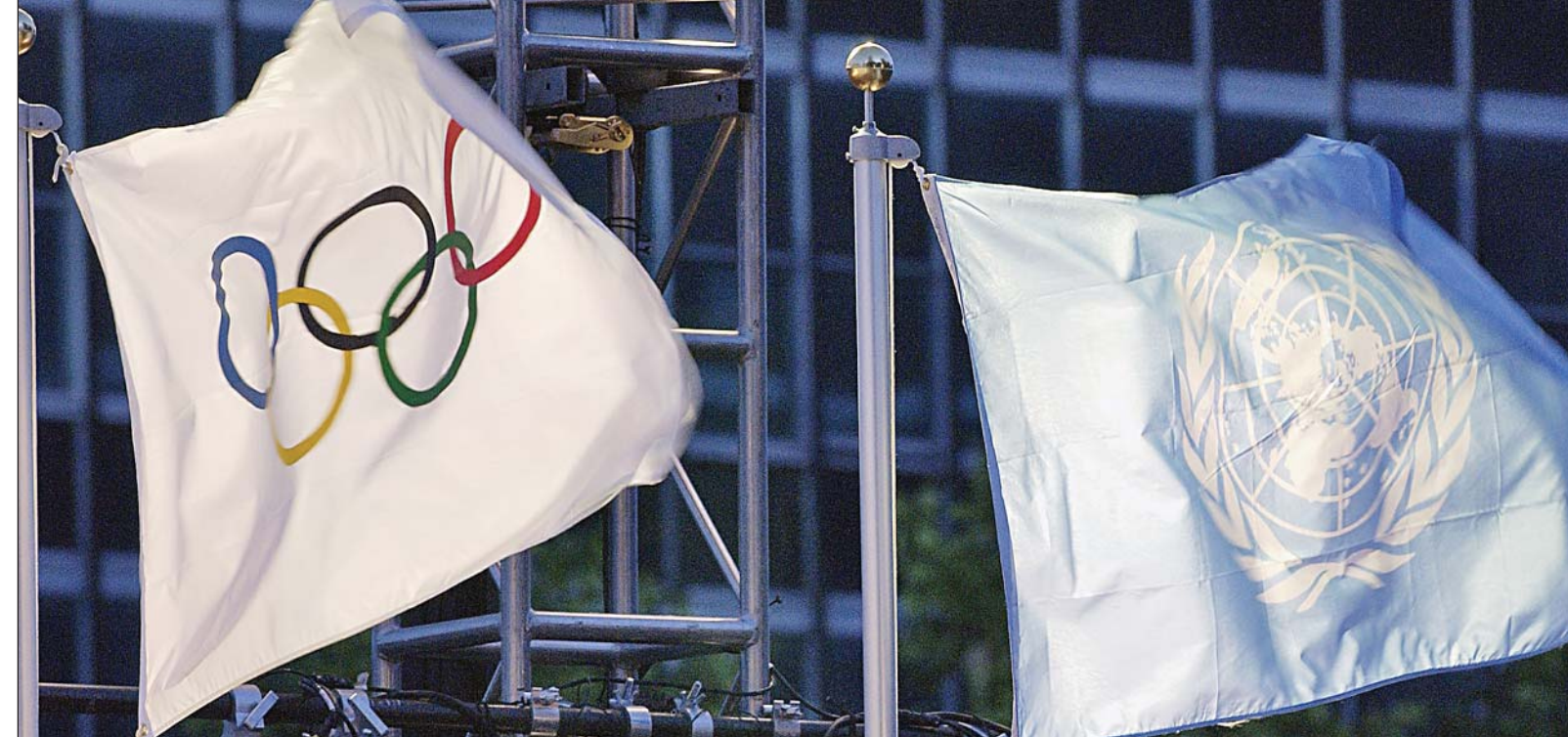
Leadership means respecting and upholding the human rights of all who are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, including their right to treatment, if they are infected. As the SG said in Bangkok: "Leadership means daring to do things differently, because you understand that AIDS is a different kind of disease. It stands alone in human experience, and it requires us to stand united against it."

Editorial

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Pass the Flame – Unite the World



For the first time ever, the Olympic torch, that universal flame of hope, made a stop at United Nations Headquarters on its global circuit while pausing briefly towards the end of a day-long 34-mile run through all of New York City's five boroughs on 19 June last.

As the last gleam of sunset streamed down Manhattan's midtown canyons to bounce off the glass of the UN Secretariat building, the flame shone brightly outside UN HQ where Secretary-General Kofi Annan and General Assembly President Julian R. Hunte of St. Lucia presided at a special ceremony invoking the ancient Greek tradition of an "Olympic Truce" for the duration of the Games. Also present were Greece's Alternate Minister of Culture, Fanny Palli-Petralia and Athens 2004 President Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, as well as 1,000 UN staff members, diplomats and dignitaries, among them New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Lighting a symbolic cauldron with the torch to keep the flame alive outside the UN, the SG voiced hope that during the 2004 Athens Olympics, "the serenity of the Olympic flame [will] silence the sound of warfare". The Truce should be seen as more than a symbol, since "it can offer a point of consensus, a pause to open dialogue, a chance to provide relief to a suffering population". It offered "a window of hope", he said.

"Tonight, I call on all those engaged in armed conflict of any kind to observe the Olympic Truce, and to use that opportunity to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation", Mr. Annan said.

GA President Hunte called for "a time-out from conflict, violence and war". Greek Minister Palli-Petralia described the Olympic Truce as "man's first attempt in history to apply peace between nations" and, as such, "the ancient predecessor of the UN's peacekeeping role".

The flag of the Olympic Truce was also raised as a children's choir sang the Olympic Hymn. "The Olympic Games are a time of peace for people of all cultures, religious and ethnic backgrounds," declared Stavros Lambrinidis, director of the International Olympic Truce Centre.




Thanks to UNICEF, two young people, themselves victims of conflict, carried the torch to and from the UN complex. Toni Jones, who fled the conflict in Liberia a decade ago and has since fought to free child soldiers, passed the torch to the SG when he lit the cauldron. Daniel Mejia, whose uncle was the victim of political assassination in Colombia, then carried the torch from the UN to its last NY stop in Times Square. By their presence, both epitomized the theme of the 2004 Olympic Torch Relay – "Pass the Flame, Unite the World".

The Athens 2004 Olympic Torch Relay marks the first-ever global journey of the Olympic Torch Relay, spanning 34 cities and 27 countries over 35 days. It passed through Cyprus on 8-9 July, sadly only in the south.

A Call for Solidarity

The UN co-sponsored 15th International AIDS Conference took place in Bangkok, Thailand, from 11 to 16 July. Experts from all areas of HIV/AIDS (research, treatment and prevention), political leaders, AIDS activists, and celebrities gathered with people living with HIV to discuss the global fight against the pandemic. The theme of this year's conference was "access for all", emphasizing that treatment, prevention, and information needs to be made available to all communities.

About 14,000 new HIV infections a day in 2003

-  More than 95% are low and middle income countries
-  Almost 2,000 are children under 15 years of age
-  About 12,000 are persons aged 15 to 49 years, of whom:
 - almost 50% are women
 - about 50% are 15- to 24-year-olds

The number of people living with HIV continues to grow worldwide – from 35 million in 2001 to 38 million in 2003. In 2001, Cyprus reported 377 HIV cases. It is reported that in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the number of people living with HIV is 1.3 million, but more significant is the age of those infected. More than 80% are under 30. By contrast, in North America and Western Europe, only 30% of infected people are under 30. Condom use among this age group is generally low. Recently asked by the BBC about whether policies should focus on abstinence or condom use, the Secretary-General replied: "I think it's a false debate. Frankly, you need both".

Nearly one million people in the US are living with HIV. In Western Europe, approximately 600,000 are infected. In Latin America, there are 1.6 million HIV cases. In some countries, conditions of social and economic crisis create a context for higher transmission of HIV. When coupled with stigma and a weak infrastructure, access to care and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS is seriously jeopardized.

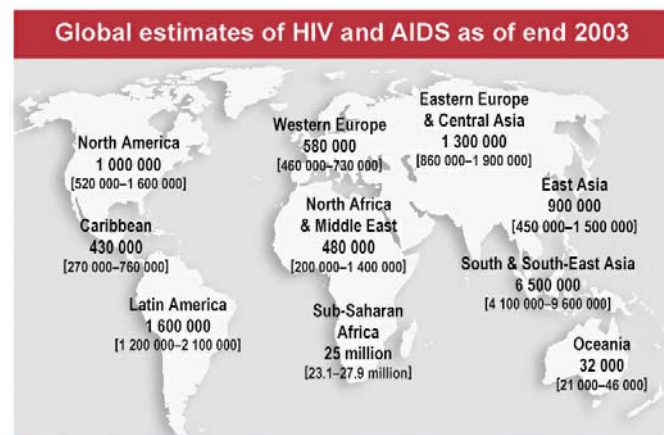
Holding the conference in Bangkok drew attention to Thailand's success in the dramatic reduction of new HIV infections. In 1990, approximately 140,000 new HIV infections were reported in Thailand. By 2002, new infections were reduced to just over 20,000 annually. Although prevention programmes in Thailand have shown success, over one million of the country's population of 62 million are infected with HIV, making AIDS the leading cause of death.

Holding the conference in Bangkok also focussed attention on the threat of AIDS in Asia and the Pacific in

general. The region now has the fastest growing AIDS epidemic in the world. Already, with an estimated 7.4 million people living in the region with HIV/AIDS, numbers are quickly rising. The SG stressed that if left unchecked, the disease would devastate millions of lives and also impose huge burdens on the region's health systems and soak up the resources needed for social and economic development.

In sub-Saharan Africa, there are 25 million people living with HIV/AIDS. Currently, there are 10 million young people infected worldwide, of whom 6.2 million live in sub-Saharan Africa. Of that number, 75% are young women. The region has more than 10% of the world's population but has 70% of HIV cases. South Africa remains the world's worst affected region.

AIDS has left "millions of orphans, children taking care of families, schools without teachers, States without fiscal revenues, fields without farmers, and rising numbers of people living in extreme poverty", said Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UN AIDS). Dr. Piot stated: "Despite increased funding, political commitment and progress in expanding access to HIV treatment, the AIDS epidemic continues to outpace the global response". Experience has shown us that prevention efforts cannot be reduced. When prevention efforts targeting a specific community are decreased, the number of HIV infections increases.



Total number of adults and children living with HIV: 38 million [35-42 million]

At a recent press conference, the SG said: "This is a global problem without frontiers of any kind. It's everyone's problem and it's urgent. The future of entire societies hangs in the balance." In a call for solidarity, the SG sent a message to leaders around the world that "this is a fight we have to win".



Big Turn-out for Breakfast Roll Call

It all started with a trip to Dhekelia. Tracey Murray, the Information Officer of the Nicosia HIVE (Help Information Voluntary Exchange) located in UNPA, visited the Eastern Sovereign Base Area for a charity function run by "Open Arms", The Princess Mary's Hospital Cancer Patients' Support Group. Realising that it was too late for the Nicosia HIVE to participate, Tracey contacted Daphne Hammond-Doutré, the Open Arms coordinator, to tell her that the "Global Trotters", the ladies who run the Thursday morning coffee sessions in the Community Centre in the HIVE building, would organise a charity benefit breakfast.

Working closely with Tracey, Amina Ravenhill and Jane Wyse started planning the event for 8 July. As Amina said, "Cancer always touches somebody, and it was closer to us because one of our Global Trotter ladies had been diagnosed with breast cancer and had in fact received an enormous amount of support from the Open Arms association". *[To everyone's delight, the Global Trotter concerned was pronounced cancer-free at the time of writing!]*

The day before, Jane was on site, setting the scene for the day. On the morning, she was back again, bright and early behind the counter, charming smile in place, making sure that all were welcomed with a nice cup of tea or coffee. Amina, well-known for her managerial finesse, made sure all deliveries arrived on time. She also ensured that all Global Trotter husbands – regardless of rank –

were in attendance for the breakfast roll and role call (or else!). Tracey was her usual low-key self behind the scenes. She made sure that all the advertising was taken care of – including interviews with BFBS.

A big "thank you" goes to the newly arrived Sector 2 Regiment, 40 Regt RA, The Lowland Gunners, who supplied the bacon, sausages and rolls and – most importantly – "Steph the chef", who provided invaluable support. Special thanks go to 40 Regt's Quartermaster, Maj. Tony Kilpatrick. The Regt's pipers provided a selection of music throughout the morning. And the UNFICYP contingents were well represented on the distaff side, with wives contributing a fantastic variety of desserts from 14 different nations.

Well over 150 people turned up throughout the morning, including Chief of Mission Zbigniew Wlosowicz, Force Commander Maj. Gen. Hebert Figoli and his wife Nelida, plus many of the senior staff from HQ and the Sectors. COS Col. Ian Sinclair was seen to breakfast with gusto under the approving eye of his wife Keeley, who worked hard and long behind the service counter all morning.

But the buzz wasn't just in the HIVE. WRVS Jill Smith visited soldiers down the line, giving them the chance to sample the cooking in exchange for a donation.

All told, £720 was raised. The money will go to the Open Arms organisation and, because the HIVE in Nicosia is a United Nations facility, to local charities (north and south).



UNFICYP's Force Medical Staff offers voluntary confidential counselling, HIV testing, free condoms and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) for all personnel.
UNFICYP is committed to creating an environment free of stigmas, discrimination and prejudice.

The Cultural Heritage of Cyprus — Part XXV

Tavli or Tavla, It's the Only Game in Town!

From village coffee shops to cosmopolitan city cafes, there is one Cypriot tradition that thrives whatever the surroundings. Dina Wilde explains further.

Keep your ears open and you'll hear it everywhere... it begins with a reasonably controlled clatter, which quickly becomes faster and more urgent... suddenly, a bang and a crash... then comes the shouting. The noise level increases to a crescendo, there's a final, mighty crash... a shout of elation followed by a groan of despair and then... because those who do it can definitely be described as addicts, it starts all over again.

It's OK... no need to panic. That character you just saw walking into the coffee shop is not trying to murder his wife – or anyone else, for that matter. He just popped in for a coffee and a friendly game of “tavli”!

The Greek word “tavli” actually means a large board-like table such as a trestle-table, but when you hear the word used in Cyprus, you can be 99% sure the subject being discussed is the popular board game of backgammon.

It's hard to imagine any other popular form of entertainment that has been so enduring. Backgammon is probably the oldest recorded game of its kind. Although its difficult to say for sure, it's believed to have originated in Mesopotamia – present day Iraq, Iran and Syria. Certainly its origins there can be traced back almost 5,000 years. Early versions of the game were found in the Royal Tomb of the Ur of Chaldees (dated around 2600 BC). Of course, it didn't look at all like the modern-day backgammon board and dice had not yet been invented. Instead, they used the ankle-

bones of sheep, or astragals, to determine the players' next move.

Later versions of the game dating back to 1500 BC were found amongst the magnificent treasures discovered in the Tomb of Tutankhamun. Wall paintings in other Egyptian tombs show people playing a game very like backgammon, suggesting it was a popular pastime of the era.

The game was introduced to Cyprus when the island was an Egyptian colony in 1500 BC. In excavations at the ancient site of Engomi in 1896, a British archaeologist found a “tavli” table, carved in ivory. The carved picture depicted a hunter in a chariot chasing wild animals.

The Egyptian version of the game was different from the backgammon we know today. For example, they had a cheat-proof mechanical box that was used for shaking the dice. Like almost all games of chance, there was money on the table... and where there's money, there's always a cheat!

A thousand years later, the Greeks were playing their version of the game. References to it can be found in the writings of Plato, Sophocles, Homer and Herodotus. When the early Greeks rolled a lucky six, they called it an “Aphrodite”, but when the dice turned up with a lowly one or two, they called it a “skylaki” (little dog). These terms are still used today.

The Romans left a version of a game they called “The Game of Twelve Lines”. It was played on elaborate boards with sets of 15 ebony and 15 ivory markers. The game was the craze of the Roman Empire. Tables were carved in almost every courtyard in Pompeii, and a wall painting discovered there shows two players arguing over the game – a second painting next to it shows the innkeeper throwing the two players out of his establishment. There is no evidence that the Emperor Julius Caesar was a game-player but it is known that the Emperor Caligula was a cheat, that Claudius had one of the first-known travelling boards mounted in his imperial carriage, and that Nero appropriated large sums from the imperial treasury to settle his gaming debts.

Apart from being called “The Game of Twelve Lines” (because of the 12 points on either side of the board) the Romans also called it “alea” (dice), or “tabulae” (tables). The game, which was played with three dice was, at first, regarded as the sport of emperors but soon turned into the mania of the people. Gambling on the outcome of the game became so popular that it was declared illegal by the Republic. The fine for gambling at any time, other than the Saturnalia, was four times the stakes.

The Roman legions must have brought their game of tabulae with them when they marched across Europe to England. This is certainly implied by the fact that early references to the game in England refer to it as “tables”. But it seems that its rise in popularity in England and Europe really came about with the return of the Crusaders from their stints in the Holy Land, where the game of backgammon, known there as “nard” and played with two dice instead of the Roman three, was already well established as a pastime.

It is well documented that backgammon was played extensively in England during the Middle Ages. In Geoffrey Chaucer's “The Parson's Tale”, reference to the game of “tables” being played is made. James I of England found it a “favourite pastime” and spent the eve and night of his assassination playing it. In 1479, Albany, the brother of King James III, played against his jailor, “such was his destruction of the wretched man that Albany slew him and made good his escape from Edinburgh Castle”. Sir Miles Partridge played King Henry VIII for the bells of St. Paul's Cathedral... and won! Whilst in his famous diary, Samuel Pepys wrote, “lost a crown at tables before walking home”. The game was extremely popular, especially in English taverns. However, because of its prevalent gambling nature, it was blamed for inciting rowdiness and fighting and was banned for a while – until firmly re-instated once again by Queen Elizabeth I. The game was eventually exceeded in popularity in England by chess.

The name “backgammon” is believed to have originated from either the Saxon “baec” (back) “gamen” (game), or from the Welsh “bac” (little) “gammon” (battle). But every country has its own name. In France it's called “tric trac”, in Germany “puff”, in Turkey “tavla”, in Italy “tavola reale”, in Spain “tables reales”, and in China “swan-liu”.

In Cyprus, it's called “tavli” among Greek Cypriots and “tavla” among Turkish Cypriots, and it is as popular today as it was all those centuries ago when it first arrived here with the Egyptians.

Every Cypriot throughout the island knows of the game, and it's probably fair to say that at least 75% of the population can play it, at least, fairly well. Tavli boards exist in almost every Cypriot home and are brought out on a regular basis when friends or family come to visit. Every taverna and coffee shop has at least one board available for its customers (usually older men with time on their hands), and it's not unusual for the establishment's “regulars” to challenge visiting strangers if they happen show an interest in the ongoing match. Unlike the smart European casinos, the old men in the coffee shops rarely play for stakes, but merely for rounds of coffee, possibly a beer, or maybe even lunch!

Until a few years ago, tavli was played mostly by the menfolk but today, more and more women are taking up the challenge and beating the men at their own game! Young people too have taken up the challenge and it's not at all unusual to see children as young as eight or nine years old pitting their wits against the older generation. Experience still counts for something it seems, and they may win a game or two, but rarely the match.

Tavli boards can be found in most souvenir shops on the island. These are usually simple, low cost, authentic wooden boards – not at all like the expensive designer boards found in the big department stores of Europe. However, if you are looking for something a little more unusual, look out for the beautifully decorated wooden inlaid sets such as the one shown in this feature. These are made by Syrian craftsmen, whose talents have been handed down from generation to generation – just like the game itself.

Article and photographs reproduced courtesy of “Sunjet”, Cyprus Airways in-flight magazine

Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot youths playing backgammon on UN Day celebrations at the Ledra Palace



Photo: UNFCYP



A game for all ages – for the older,

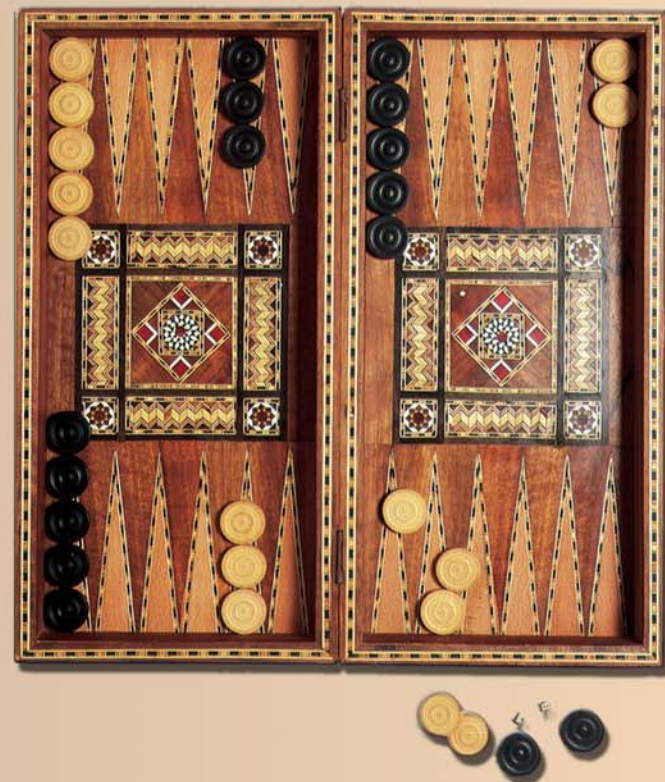


..... not so old,



..... and the young

Photo: Nicoletta Michael



Peddalling from Dawn to Dusk

By MSgt. Guido Ertl



A warm welcome at the UNPA!

Start OP 08
0600



Camp San Martin

OP 18
0815



OP 09

OP 25
0930



Lymbia

Temperature
above 42oC



The Green Line

Karavous
Pass 1800



The Pyla Plateau

Pyla
1850

Finish OP
146 2000



Lymbia 1520
Break - 1630



OP 146 - the Finish Line!

Having travelled more than 4,000 km on my bike in the Troodos Mountains on the Akamas Peninsula, I needed a new challenge. In early June, not far from the Baths of Aphrodite looking down to Polis and towards the Troodos silhouette and Kato Pyrgos, the idea of cycling from one end of the buffer zone to the other crossed my mind. Only five weeks later, after a successful test ride over 95 km through Sector 1 to the UNPA, I felt ready to face the challenge.

At 0300 hours on 13 July, MCpl. Franz Rogelj and I left for Kato Pyrgos - an early departure was essential to reach the start at OP 08 at sunrise. Well prepared and encouraged by the picturesque scenery at dawn, even the steepest and most demanding ascents in Sector 1 seemed to flatten. Watched by astonished moufflons, and stopped only twice by a flat tyre, OP 18 was within sight at 0815 hours. After a short pitstop, refuelling with bananas, power gel, cereal bars, etc (the consumption of water and dehydration drinks was already frighteningly high), any shade was left far behind and the so-called "easy" part began. Only a "ridiculous" 60 km to Nicosia!

Upon reaching the climax around Lymbia, the drinks were boiling and motivation melting... A break was essential to regain strength - loads of carbohydrates were required to be able to climb the

Karavous Pass in the Athienou area and final ascent up to the Pyla plateau. The ultimate 12 km to OP 146 were a bonus.

Crossing the finish line couldn't have been achieved without the invaluable support of Franz, who was also responsible for all photos taken, and WO1 Michael Hoeblinger. Many thanks also for the live coverage of "The BZ in A Day" by Lt. Col. Hans Tomaschitz.

Athienou's Champion Weight Lifter

By Maj. Szilárd Várvolgyi

The gym in Athienou is never empty. Just like the MFR here in the UNPA, the Hungarian soldiers train hard after duty hours. There is one small difference, and her name is Cpl. Magdolna Petróczki. Magdolna, a signaller working in the Comcen in Athienou, is also a European power lifting champion, having twice won the Bronze medal. Sociable by nature, she readily agreed to talk about her ambitions.

Why power lifting?

"I've always liked challenges", she said. "I enjoy working hard and try to obtain above average results. I have also always liked the so-called male "tough" sports, which is why I started parachuting. I have so far carried out 48 jumps. During that time, I joined the Army and was attached to the 34th "Bercsényi László" Reconnaissance Battalion. Since most soldiers visited the gym regularly, I started doing the same. I improved quickly, and results came easily. A weight-lifting trainer suggested I try it competitively. I took part in the power lifting events as well, which I preferred. Since 1993, I have concentrated mainly on power lifting."

What about the basic rules?

"A competition consists of three events – squats, bench press and dead lifts. Naturally the proper technique and weight of the competitor are significant factors. The champion is the one who can lift the most combined weight in the three events. Officially, only the combined result is considered. Twice, in 1999 and 2002, I was placed third, and won the dead lift event in 2002."

Is it true that you hold the record for winning the Hungarian National Championship the most times?

"Yes, on 12 occasions. The Championship began 15 years ago."

What is your record?

"170 kg for squats, bench presses 87 kg, and 178 kg



for dead lifts, making a total of 435 kg. I would like to improve my record by another 30-40 kg to bring the total up to over 450 kg."

Amidst all these successes, have you had any disappointments?

"In 2002 at the World Championships, I was placed seventh. I had overestimated my capabilities during the dead lift event. I began with too heavy a weight, and couldn't manage the attempt. As a result, I was disqualified. I have since learned that the first lift is always a safety attempt, and I now begin with a weight that I know I can achieve every time."

What are your plans for the future?

"After my mission, at the end of September, I will be returning to my battalion. I would like to continue my service, and naturally to get into top condition for the next European Championship which will take place in Trencin (Slovakia) in the autumn. I will leave Cyprus with a heavy heart. I love being here, and would definitely come back, given the chance."

Meantime, she hopes to continue her career as a professional soldier with the Hungarian military, preferably with an army parachuting unit.

All the best Magdolna, and good luck in the future. We look forward to reading about you!

SG announces key appointments

The SG announced a series of high level appointments in July. Pakistan's Ambassador to the US, **Ashraf Jehangir Qazi** (62), succeeds the late Sergio Vieira de Mello as the **SG's Special Representative for Iraq**. Mr. Qazi previously served as Pakistan's High Commissioner to India, and as Ambassador to China, Russia, East Germany and Syria. Circumstances permitting, once adequate security arrangements have been made, the new SRS and a small staff are expected to go to Baghdad sometime in August.

Louise Arbour, a Canadian Supreme Court Justice and former prosecutor of



United Nations war crimes tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, assumed duty as **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** in succession to Sergio Vieira de Mello on 1 July.

The SG also announced the appointment of **Juan E. Méndez** (59) of Argentina as his first **Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide**. The new Adviser is tasked with keeping an eye on potential situations that could develop into genocide, and to make recommendations on how the UN can prevent these events. A human rights advocate, lawyer and former political prisoner, Mr. Méndez moved to the US on his release, where he has since worked with Human Rights Watch.



Not Quite An Olympics!

Recently, Sector 4 arranged several sport events and invited all units of UNFICYP to participate.

A basketball tournament was held on 28 May at Famagusta University. Six teams had the luxury of competing in an air-conditioned sports hall. Sector 1 came in first place, while Sectors 4 and 2 came in second and third respectively. MFR, UN Flight and HQ UNFICYP were also well represented by their teams. Force Commander Maj. Gen. Hebert Figoli and CO Sector 4 Lt. Col. Martin Baëko awarded diplomas to the winning teams.

On 19 June, CO Sector 4 staged a hockey tournament, in part a memorial named after Miroslav Hruška who died recently in a tragic accident. The teams were made up of officers, warrant officers



HQ UNCIVPOL and HQ UNFICYP also sent their best swimmers. The competition had four divisions: breast-stroke, butterfly, freestyle and freestyle in team. Distinguished spectators included Chief of Mission Zbigniew Wlosowicz and some buoyant senior staffers!

Maj. Gen. Figoli and Lt. Col. Baëko awarded the winning teams with diplomas. First place went to the Sector 2 team, with HQ UNFICYP in second and Sector 4 in third place.



and privates. The officers' team had a padre as a goalkeeper, but his prayers didn't help much since his team lost to the warrant officers. The matches were played on a wire-fenced concrete playground. Unavoidably, the wire fence became a factor in the games. The excitement was great throughout the tournament and attracted many members of Sector 4, who watched with great interest and enthusiasm.

The most recent sporting activity organised by Sector 4 was the swimming competition held at the UNPA's Dolphin swimming pool on 9 July. A relaxed and joyful atmosphere marked the whole contest. Considering that the thermometer outside registered 38°C, a dip in the pool was the best remedy. In addition to the three sector teams, MFR,

Olympic Pact

In this, the year of the Athens Olympics, UN AIDS and the International Olympic Committee have agreed to work together:

- To promote HIV/AIDS awareness, particularly among the sport community, in support of HIV prevention for all;
- To promote activities to mitigate the health, social and economic impact of the epidemic on sports institutions, individuals, households, and communities;
- To work to eliminate all forms of discrimination and stigmatization of persons most affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly sports people living with HIV/AIDS.

The Lowland Gunners get "Hung, Drawn and Quartered"

By WO2 (TSM) Hodges

During the Op TOSCA handover period from 3 RHA, we were told that a "make-over" team would be coming to check out "Camp Liri" (Nicosia) in order to transform one of the camp buildings into an interior decorator's vision of colour-coordinated correctness for an episode of the BFBS TV programme "Hung, Drawn and Quartered"!

Because the Regiment has been residing in Topcliffe, North Yorkshire, and not Germany, we were unfamiliar with the BFBS TV personality line-up, but that only added to the excitement. The prospect of stars from the small screen arriving in our midst with a load of MDF fibre board and pots of paint ready to turn the new home of Liri Troop from 137 (Java) Bty, 40th Regiment RA (The Lowland Gunners) into a very model of imaginative décor had everyone abuzz.

Under the QM's guidance, a new Corrimex kitchen was installed and then the decision was taken that the old cookhouse dining room would be the room to get the "make-over" and that it would be converted to a TV room/bar.

It wasn't long before we learned the identities of the "make-over artistes" – BFBS's Wob Eeles and Craig Phillips (of "Big Brother" fame!). So, they arrived for an initial recce and assessment on the evening of 21 June, with one day set aside for finding and buying materials and then two allocated to the main task of turning the dingy old cookhouse in to a modern Yates' style bar!

On Day 1, Sgt. Greenhalgh set out with two female members of the make-over team on a tour of the Nicosia area's various DIY shops. They came back loaded down with paint [colour me "controversial"] and other "fashion" items.

On Day 2, the real work began with the arrival of the complete team led by Wob and Craig, the "designers/presenters", plus a director, cameraman and a sound recorder. More members of 137 Bty and the RE Detachment from 32 Regt Royal Engineers lent a willing hand.

But, first off, this being show business, I, as Troop Commander, had to open the proceedings by telling Craig and Wob how I wanted the room "done". Actually, since the show was mostly planned back in the UK, my remarks were pre-scripted but I still managed to stumble through my lines in one take! It didn't take long to introduce Gnr. Taff Price, known for his handiness with power tools, to Craig and before we knew what had happened, Taff had become "Craig Jnr" and remained so for the next two days.



The painters and decorators!

As Craig, Taff and the Engineers began work amidst piles of MDF materials, the rest of the troop were tasked to work with Wob, removing the old chairs and other furniture from the cookhouse so that a start could be made to painting the walls. So on went the paint, a UN blue and a Korma coloured yellow. It reminded me of painting the nursery for my unborn (sex unknown) child. At least we were brightening the place up!

The main effort for Craig and his team was to produce two big seating areas using the MDF supplies. The challenge for Wob and her team was to paint and decorate the room as well as make seat cushions and curtains.

On the first working day, the two seating areas were, in fact, completed, as was most of the wall painting. Still, there was a lot of work and filming left to be done on the second and final day. So, with the production deadline rushing towards us, there was no let-up on day two. Curtains and cushions still had to be made and the new seats had to be painted and we still hadn't constructed the most important installation of all – the bar. But everything was falling into place by late afternoon, with Wob running furiously around putting the finishing touches to the room.

At precisely 1800 hours, troop and make-over team gathered together in the freshly decorated room for the final filming sequence. With seating, curtains, cushions, painting and the bar finished and in place, including an outstanding Java badge on laminated MDF, there was only one thing left to do. No one needed prompting to address the final task. Soon the new bar had been well and truly inaugurated!

Slovak Engineers Get Cracking

An industrious team of Slovak engineers from Sector 4 have been working on maintenance projects throughout the Buffer Zone in accordance with UNFICYP's long-term plan. The remarkable transformation of the toilets and showers in General Stefanik camp is a striking example of their work. These basic facilities were in deplorable conditions. The platoon works under harsh weather conditions building bridges, repairing roads, and renovating the camp.

The platoon leader, Capt. Jaroslav Schönvičský, stresses that their work is a group effort. "We utilize the vehicles and heavy equipment from the HQ garage. All the engineering work in the Mission is coordinated by the Force Engineer", explained Capt. Schönvičský. "We all cooperate with our Hungarian colleagues on the OP maintenance to refurbish dilapidated buildings so our soldiers don't have to live in unhealthy conditions." Capt. Schönvičský has 18 years of experience in international environments. His wide-ranging UN career includes working as the Second-in-Command at UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia.



MSgt. Rastislav Ochotnický, the 32-year-old deputy platoon leader, is on his third UN mission. When asked to compare his previous work at UNTAES with his UNFICYP experience, Ochotnický says: "The most notable difference is the contrast in climate conditions while we work on building and dismantling the containers and maintenance of the patrol track".

The platoon of 23 engineers came together at the UN training base in Slovakia. However, Cyprus is where they are getting to know each other as members of a proud team, working together, meeting the day-to-day challenges that come their way!



Before and after: Wash basins in the soldiers' quarters



Shower units in the soldiers' quarters



Adieu Roland!

On 17 July, colleagues and friends of Roland Ramrattan gave him a warm farewell at the International Mess. After two years as the Mission's Radio Technician, Roland is moving to MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) where he will take on duties as the Chief Communications Officer. Good luck Roland!

Dulie and Roland Ramrattan with Contract Management Assistant Sonia Dohman (far right)



In response to the “Hats Off to the Blue Beret Blues”...

UNCIVPOL Insp. Satwinder Singh Lally (see below) offers an alternative (with due regard to women's rights):

1. It is seven metres long, 2 lbs in weight and made of cotton.
2. It keeps your hair safe and intact.
3. You cannot fold it and keep it in your trouser pockets or shoulder epaulettes (the place of this headgear is on the head, nowhere else!).
4. As a bonus, you are also exempted from wearing the blue helmet.
5. The CM & FC don't need to issue instructions “Always wear your blue beret” (as you cannot take it off every now and then).

Millions are using it without any complaints.

Guess what it is..... ???



Men With Hats Riddle

Mike, Tim, and Sam were caught stealing so the king sent them to the dungeon.

But the king decided to give them a chance. He made them stand in a line and put hats on their heads. He told them that if they answer a riddle, they could go free. The king explains the riddle.

“Each of you has a hat on your head. You do not know the colour of the hat on your own head. If one of you can guess the colour of the hat on your head, I will set you free. But before you answer, you must keep standing in this line. You cannot turn around.

“Here are my only hints:

There are only black hats and white hats. At least one hat is black. At least one hat is white.

Mike was wearing a white hat, but could not see anybody else's hat. Tim could see Mike's hat but not his own. Sam could see Mike's hat and Tim's hat but not his own.

After one minute, nobody had solved the riddle. But then a short while later, one of them came up with the answer. Who was it, and how did he reach his conclusion?”

Well done Blue Beret readers! The answer to our riddle “Who Keeps The Fish?” is “the German”. We got loads of correct answers. The first three out of the hat were Cranley Hudson (Ops Branch, HQ UNFICYP), Aidan Leahy (UNCIVPOL Dhenia) and Stephanos Evripidou (Cyprus Mail). Please contact the Public Information Office (Ext 4550 or 4409) to collect your prize.

A Mike, Tim, y Sam se les encontró robando y por eso, el rey los mandó al calabozo.

Pero el rey decidió darles una oportunidad. Les ordenó que hicieran una fila y que se pusieran un sombrero en la cabeza. Les dijo que si encontraban la respuesta a la adivinanza, podrían ser libres. El rey explicó la adivinanza:

“Cada uno de ustedes tiene un sombrero puesto en la cabeza. No saben cuál es el color del sombrero que llevan puesto. Si alguno de ustedes puede adivinar el color de su respectivo sombrero, los dejaré libres. Sin embargo, antes de responder tienen que mantenerse en fila y ninguno puede mirar hacia atrás.

“Aquí están las únicas claves:

Solamente hay sombreros negros y blancos. Por lo menos un sombrero es negro y por lo menos un sombrero es blanco.

Mike no puede ver ninguno de los sombreros. Tim puede ver el sombrero de Mike pero no el suyo. Sam puede ver el sombrero de Mike y el de Tim pero no puede el que lleva puesto.

Pasó más de un minuto sin que nadie adivinara la respuesta. Un poco más tarde, uno de ellos tenía la respuesta. ¿Quién fue y cómo llegó a la conclusión?”

Visitors to UNFICYP



Rear Adm. Philip Wilcocks, Deputy Chief of Joint Operations (Operational Support) at the Permanent Joint HQ, UK, visited UNFICYP on 8 June.

After inspecting an honour guard, he signed the visitor's book and paid a courtesy call on the Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Hebert Figoli.

He is seen here exchanging plaques with the Force Commander.



The new Finnish Ambassador to Cyprus, H.E. Mr. Risto Piipponen, visited UNFICYP on 13 July.

On arrival he inspected an honour guard, signed the visitor's book and paid a courtesy call on Chief of Mission Zbigniew Wlosowicz.

He was then introduced to members of the Finnish Contingent, and received a briefing from CO FINCON, Lt. Col. Jouko Hongisto.



Air Comd. Mark Leakey, Assistant Chief of Staff, J5 APJHQ (Permanent Joint HQ) visited UNFICYP on 1 July. Piloting his own helicopter, he arrived at UN Flight where he was greeted by Chief of Staff Col. Ian Sinclair and escorted to HQ UNFICYP.

After inspecting the honour guard and signing the visitor's book, Air Comd. Leakey met with the Chief of Mission and the Force Commander. He left in the same manner he arrived – flying off in his own helicopter back to the British Bases.



Ireland's Defence Minister Michael Smith stopped off in Cyprus as part of a tour of Irish contingents serving in peacekeeping missions in the region.

He came to UNFICYP from UNIFIL in the Lebanon on 15 July. On arrival at HQ, he inspected an honour guard and signed the visitor's book.

After meeting with the Chief of Mission and Force Commander, he was introduced to members of the Irish military and police contingents.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Ambassador Laura E. Kennedy, made her first visit to Cyprus in her new capacity in July.

She visited HQ UNFICYP on 22 July after an early morning Green Line tour and briefing conducted by the Chief of Staff, Col. Ian Sinclair.

On arrival at HQ, Ambassador Kennedy was extended the usual courtesies – from guard of honour to presentation plaque – and met with the Force Commander and Senior Adviser Wlodek Cibor.



Ambassador Kennedy (front right) being escorted into HQ by the Senior Adviser

Light the Flame - Unite the World

