

BLUE BERET

Spring/Summer 2019



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS

Bicycle Patrols

Visits

Women's Walks

PLUS

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

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BLUE BERET
Spring/Summer 2019

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Submissions from all members of the military, police and civilian components are welcome.

We are pleased to introduce the Spring-Summer 2019 edition of **Blue Beret**, which contains news, short features and interviews regarding UNFICYP's efforts to facilitate sustainable peace across Cyprus, as well as key Mission events and activities.

One of the highlights of this issue is interview-format showcases with select military, police and civilian peacekeepers. In these short exchanges, our colleagues speak about their role within the Mission, their experiences and the challenges faced as peacekeepers and why, they believe, United Nations peacekeeping is an apt career choice for them.

This issue is a special one because UNFICYP recently welcomed a new Force Commander – Major-General Cheryl Pearce from Australia. With Major-General Pearce joining the Mission's ranks in January, UNFICYP became the only United Nations peace operation in history to not only be led by a female Special Representative of the Secretary-

General (SRSG), but to also have female leadership in both uniformed components. For more on this, read our feature on SRSG Elizabeth Spehar, Force Commander Pearce and former Senior Police Adviser, Ann-Kristin Kvilekval who, in the lead up to International Women's Day, participated in a panel discussion on being women leaders.

Other events contained include the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers; the Mission's activities marking World Environment Day; recent UN medal presentations; and the launch of bicycle patrols by the Mission's Police component.

Finally, as always, we introduce you briefly to our new arrivals in the Mission. **Blue Beret** continues to evolve as UNFICYP's flagship publication and we welcome your feedback. To send comments by email, please put "Letters to the Editor/Blue Beret" in the subject line and send the email to: unficy-public-information-office@un.org.

ON THE COVER



On 17 April 2019, UNPOL officers deployed to UNFICYP organized the first bicycle patrol in the UN-administered Buffer Zone. The four-cyclist patrol, which included Dongxu Su, Acting Senior Police Adviser, started from Ledra Palace Hotel in the Mission's Sector Two and ended at the Ledra Street crossing point. Photo by Katarina Zahorska, UNFICYP.



On 12 June 2019, the UNFICYP Environmental Committee organized numerous activities to commemorate World Environment Day. The event included outdoor activities such as bicycle orienteering and a safety ride as well as a walk around the UN Protected Area in Nicosia, Cyprus. Photo by Katarina Zahorska, UNFICYP.



The **BLUE BERET** is UNFICYP's in-house journal. Views expressed are of the authors concerned and do not necessarily conform with official policy.



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VISITS

Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča visits UNFICYP

On 12 March 2019, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Department of Political and Peace building Affairs and Department of Peace Operations, Mr. Miroslav Jenča, began a four-day familiarization visit to Cyprus. Mr. Jenča was received at the Mission headquarters by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Head of Mission and Deputy Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar.

During his visit ASG Jenča met with the Good Offices Mission to Cyprus, UNFICYP peacekeepers, members of the diplomatic community, the Committee on Missing Persons and the UN Country Team in Cyprus.



SRSG Spehar and FC Pearce conduct joint visits to UNFICYP Sectors

On 8 May 2019, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of UNFICYP Elizabeth Spehar and UNFICYP Force Commander Major-General Cheryl Pearce visited the Mission's Sector Two headquarters. Sector Two is the responsibility of the British Contingent since 1993 when the Canadian Contingent withdrew its major unit from UNFICYP.

The unit is tasked with patrolling and monitoring military activity over 30 kilometers along the Buffer Zone, beginning at the east end of Mammari village and ending at the village of Kaimakli to the east of Nicosia.

SRSG Spehar and Force Commander Pearce conducted similar visits to Sectors One and Four on 11 April and 10 May respectively.

Sector One, which covers a distance of approximately 90 kilometers from Kokkina village on the western coast of Cyprus to the village of Mammari, west of Nicosia, has been the responsibility of the Argentinean contingent since 16 October 1993. Sector One Headquarters and Command Company are located in San Martin Camp, which is near Skouriotissa village.

Sector Four is the responsibility of the Mission's Slovak peacekeepers who patrol and monitor military activity over 65 kilometers along the Buffer Zone, beginning at the east end of Kaimakli village and ending at the village of Deryneia/Derinya on the east coast of the island. The Sector Headquarters is located in Famagusta, at Camp General Stefanik.



New Chief of Regional Conduct and Discipline Section visits UNFICYP



From 25-29 March 2019, Adama Ndao, Chief, Regional Conduct and Discipline Section, UNIFIL, visited UNFICYP. Ms. Ndao was accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Aboagye, Force Conduct and Discipline Officer. During her time at UNFICYP, Ms. Ndao addressed conduct and discipline issues arising in the Mission. Additionally, she held meetings with UNFICYP senior leadership, including the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of Mission Elizabeth Spehar as well as Force Commander Major-General Cheryl Pearce, and interacted with civilian, military and police peacekeepers serving in all locations in Cyprus to present the state of conduct and discipline in UNFICYP. Additionally, Ms. Ndao and Lieutenant-Colonel Aboagye facilitated mandatory refresher trainings on ST/SGB/2003/13 and ST/SGB/2008/5 to civilian staff and to the Mission's senior

management group. Other trainings delivered by them to incoming uniformed personnel included modules on conduct and discipline and prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Ms. Ndao and Lieutenant-Colonel Aboagye also helmed training-of-trainers as well as commanding officers' courses during their four-day visit.

Furthermore, Ms. Ndao addressed concerns raised by individual staff members on current policies and recent developments in the area of prohibited conduct during training sessions as well as the roles and responsibilities of staff members and senior management in this regard.

For their part, the Mission's 'Inside the Blue' team, comprised of staff volunteers, presented UNFICYP's initiatives in fostering a harmonious workplace environment through different joint activities and a Quiet Room to Ms. Ndao.

PeacePlayers Event for International Women's Day



On 2 March 2019, in connection with International Women's Day, PeacePlayers International-Cyprus, supported by the Cyprus Olympic Committee, the Nicosia Municipality and UNFICYP, organized an event encouraging Cypriots from both sides of the island, especially women and girls, to join sporting activities. Numerous sports federations took part providing more than 200 people the opportunity to try their hand at basketball, volleyball, gymnastics, fencing, badminton, hockey, cycling and football.

For their part, PeacePlayers International-Cyprus expressed their appreciation for UNFICYP's financial and logistical support to the occasion. "We are grateful to UNFICYP for their contribution in making this event a success. Additionally, we thank all community members who attended for their positive feedback and participation," said Stephanie Nicolas, Programme Manager.

The event, which took place in Nicosia, also demonstrated the value of sport as a trust-building tool.



UNFICYP Leadership on Women in Peacekeeping



In the lead up to International Women's Day, UNFICYP's Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) Elizabeth Spehar, Force Commander Major General Cheryl Pearce and Senior Police Adviser Ann-Kristen Kvilekval participated in a panel discussion organized by the Embassy of Norway and the High Commissions of Australia and Canada in Cyprus.

The event was held on 27 February 2019 in Nicosia and was attended by some 120 people, including political party representatives, members of the diplomatic community and civil society organizations, academics as well as university students.

The discussion aimed at highlighting the challenges faced by women in peacekeeping operations as well the operational benefits to ensuring equal representation of men and women in peacekeeping missions.

Several themes emerged in the course of the event—broadened ideas about what constitutes good leadership; barriers faced by women working in “non-traditional” sectors and ways to reduce them; challenges of balancing professional and family obligations as well as their disproportionate impact on women throughout their career, as well as the importance of mentorship to help support younger women in the workplace.

Furthermore, the discussion also highlighted the personal experiences of SRSG Spehar, Force Commander Pearce and SPA Kvilekval in their journey to leadership positions.

In January 2019, UNFICYP became the only UN peacekeeping mission in history to be led by a female SRSG and have women leading both uniformed components.

Summer's Last Civil Society Networking Meeting in the UN Buffer Zone

On 11 June 2019, the last regular meeting of the NGO Networking Group was held at the Ledra Palace Hotel in the UN Buffer Zone, Nicosia. Junior Achievement-Cyprus, a nongovernmental organisation, presented their work at the forum which was followed by a discussion among participants on the challenges faced in ensuring their ability to address the needs of all communities on the island.

The NGO Networking Group was initially convened under the auspices of UNFICYP's Civil Affairs Section in July 2017 with the objective of facilitating connections between nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), academics and other like-minded groups committed to promoting confidence and trust on the island.

Since its inception, members of the Group have been holding monthly meetings at the Ledra Palace Hotel, a location enabling ‘easier’ contact and dialogue between the communities. The sessions are open to the public and include presentations on upcoming initiatives as well as open discussions on the trials faced by individuals or organisations in their quest for a shared future in Cyprus.

In this context, efforts have been made to reach out to civil society beyond Nicosia in the last nine months. Of note is a visit



by Nicosia-based NGOs to meet counterparts in Deryneia/Derinya and Famagusta, which focused on issues ranging from culture, arts, youth engagement, elderly engagement and sport. A similar activity is being planned for the Lefka/Lefke area.

As mandated, UNFICYP continues to support Cypriot civil society organisations who have dedicatedly taken the lead in ongoing cross-community collaborations across the island in past years.

The new schedule of similar meetings shall be announced in September.

Intercommunal Women's Walks and Discussions Continue in Cyprus



Two intercommunal Women's Walks have taken place in Cyprus so far this year. The first event was held on 12 January 2019; more than 100 men and women joined a walking tour of north Nicosia followed by a presentation by guest speakers Androulla Vassiliou and Didem Erel at the Centre for Visual Arts and Research on 'Women as the Vanguards of the Peace Process in Cyprus'.

The second walk and discussion on 16 March moved beyond Nicosia to Skarinou. The guest speakers on this occasion, George Vassiliou, former President of the Republic of Cyprus, and Erhan Erçin, former member of the Turkish Cypriot negotiating team, spoke about the benefits and the disadvantages of a solution to the Cyprus problem versus a non-solution. Participants were hosted by the Women's Association of Rural Larnaka who arranged a tour of Skarinou, a handicrafts exhibition by local crafts women and served local Cypriot delicacies.

Since 2013, a group of Cypriot women have been coming together, initially with the aim of enabling experienced women in a range of fields to mentor other women and provide a forum for increased

interaction and collaboration. The activities over the years have taken the form of nature walks and guided city tours, often accompanied by sessions of open discussion led by guest speakers.

The group has recently formed a consensus on working together in order to increase women's participation in the political field in general and at the negotiating table in particular by, inter alia, exhorting the leaders of both communities and of the respective political parties, to engage more women in the peace process and in political life, reminding them of their obligations emanating from UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions; increase activity and contacts between the different communities in cities and in rural areas to explore areas of collaboration, by organizing events involving women from all strata of society and promoting friendships and cooperation.

Above all, the objective is to create an impact on the foundations of society, thereby encouraging and supporting a culture conducive to a peaceful and sustainable solution to the Cyprus problem, based on mutual respect and tolerance.



INTERNATIONAL DAYS

UNFICYP Commemorates World Environment Day

On 12 June 2019, the UNFICYP Environmental Committee organized numerous activities to commemorate World Environment Day. The event included outdoor activities such as bicycle orienteering and a safety ride as well as a walk around the UN Protected Area in Nicosia, Cyprus.

More than 100 UNFICYP peacekeepers — civilian, military and police — participated in these activities.

This was followed by a briefing to Mission personnel attended by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of Mission, Elizabeth Spehar; UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Cheryl Pearce; Acting Senior Police Adviser, Dongxu Su; the Chief of Mission Support (CMS), Joel Cohen, as well as UNFICYP personnel.

In her opening remarks, SRSG Spehar highlighted UNFICYP's consistent efforts to comply with United Nations' environmental policies and management strategies; she stated that the Mission remains deeply committed to this cause. She made special mention of the Mission's focus on minimizing the impact of its operations on the environment, promoting environmental protection awareness and identifying ways of engaging with local communities

in connection with environmental activities and projects. "The environment is germane to our peace efforts here in Cyprus. The concept of environmental peace-building is close to my heart and one of my priority areas for our inter-communal work going forward," said SRSG Spehar, adding that environmental challenges are a non-political, cross-cutting topic that knows no borders, concerning everyone equally.

For his part, Joel Cohen, CMS, spoke about this year's theme — Beat Air Pollution — and urged everyone to consider making small changes in their everyday lives to reduce air pollution. In this context, he touched upon UNFICYP initiatives that specifically target air pollution, such as acquisition of 'clean' generators, hybrid vehicles and using bicycles within sectors and for patrolling. "This morning's activities provided an opportunity for us to roll up our sleeves and do our share in promoting a healthier way of life — something that both we and our planet will benefit from," said Mr. Cohen in closing.

The briefing concluded with a presentation on air pollution in Cyprus and innovative approaches to control it by Theodoros Christoudias from the Cyprus Institute.

World Environment Day is annually celebrated worldwide on 5 June.





PROTECTING CIVILIANS, PROTECTING PEACE

29 MAY

INTERNATIONAL DAY of UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS



Peacekeeper Profile: Adnan Al-Sinawi

Adnan Al-Sinawi has served in numerous United Nations peace operations including Afghanistan, Sudan and Iraq since he joined the Organization in 2001. Originally from Iraq, he is currently based in Nicosia where he leads application support for UNFICYP's Field Technology Services Unit. In this short interview, Adnan tells us why, despite all the challenges it entails, peacekeeping continues to be a relevant and fulfilling career choice for him.

BLUE BERET: Tell us a bit about your work with UNFICYP.

ADNAN: At UNFICYP, I supervise colleagues within the Application Support Unit. This is a critical function because my team handles any problem that may arise with end users of the various IT applications in the Mission. What we do every day as a team is guarantee that colleagues within the Mission can perform their duties without any major technical issues. It is a demanding role requiring a unique combination of technical know-how as well as people skills.

BB: What, do you feel, are some of your biggest achievements in your career with UN peacekeeping?

ADNAN: I have come across people who think that working in the tech sector is somehow separated from the substantive work done by the UN across the world. However, in UN peace operations, especially deep field missions, we work extremely closely across all three components – civilian, military and police – to ensure that the Mission is a step closer to fulfilling its mandated aims.

In this regard, most of my professional achievements center around developing IT-based tools that contribute to maximizing efficiency in field locations. For example, I rolled out an application that enabled more than 6,000 military personnel to be deployed in merely five days to remote locations across West Darfur, Sudan. I've created similar, cost-effective interfaces that have helped missions demonstrate greater financial accountability.

“Peacekeepers from multicultural backgrounds convert difference of opinions and beliefs into opportunities rather than crises.”

Personally, having survived the attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad which killed and injured dozens of my colleagues, I reported in to work as soon as I was medically cleared. I consider this one of my biggest accomplishments because, I believe, it was the most impactful way for me as an individual staff member to send a clear message to the perpetrators that the UN won't give up its quest to bring succour to vulnerable populations...it never gives up.

BB: Could you tell us a bit about the challenges faced and sacrifices made by peacekeepers across the globe?

ADNAN: In my opinion, working for long periods time away from family, friends, and loved ones for a long time is the biggest challenge peacekeepers face every day. The enforced distance can negatively influence both individual peacekeepers and their families. While advances in communication technology and the Organization's leave policies for staff members serving in difficult locations ameliorate separations to a large extent, it remains difficult.

BB: Would you encourage more people to join peace operations worldwide? If yes, why?

ADNAN: Most definitely yes because it helps bridge cultural differences. Working in different duty stations with peacekeepers from multicultural backgrounds is a wonderful way to accept and appreciate difference of opinions and beliefs, converting such differences into opportunities rather than crises. I can say it has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.



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Peacekeeper Profile: Susana Yagualca

Susana Yagualca from Argentina joined the Marine Corps in her country's navy in 1995; two years after enlisting, she became a nurse. This is Susana's fourth tour of duty at UNFICYP where she wears the dual hats of Force Medical Assistant and Deputy Hygiene Officer. Here, she tells us about her work and what motivates her to serve as a United Nations peacekeeper.

BLUE BERET: Tell us a bit about your work with UNFICYP.

SUSANA: My job at UNFICYP's Medical Section requires me to primarily provide medical care to my colleagues when the requirement arises. I also manage an extensive inventory of medical supplies and equipment. There are aspects of my daily routine that require administrative expertise – I liaise with external care providers in Cyprus, UN Headquarters and other relevant organisations. Furthermore, I am responsible for handling all confidential medical documents of UN personnel. Given that we are peacekeepers serving in conditions very different from our own countries, my role as a care provider requires sensitivity and developed communication skills.

BB: What, do you feel, are some of your biggest achievements in your career with UN peacekeeping?

SUSANA: For me, my biggest achievement was to be selected by my country to serve in a UN peace operation. I still distinctly remember attending my first briefing from the Peacekeeping Department in Argentina in 2009 when I got to know the qualifications required to be chosen to serve with the UN. The prospect captured my imagination and I went through two years of an intensive English language course to improve my communication skills. I didn't make the cut in my first application in 2011 because my language abilities were not up to par. However, I didn't give up and in 2012 I

passed with flying colours. I am very proud to be on my fourth tour of duty at UNFICYP and I do my best every single day.

BB: Could you tell us a bit about the challenges faced and sacrifices made by peacekeepers across the globe?

SUSANA: The distance between a peacekeeper and their familiar world, especially in hardship missions, is one of the most difficult things we deal with daily. So many of us have given our lives as well for the cause of sustainable peace. For me personally, I have dealt with the loss of my father last year, I wasn't present in Argentina to support my husband when he lost his mother...However, despite all the trials, what motivates me is the fact that by being a peacekeeper, I am actually contributing to a higher purpose. As peacekeepers we dedicate ourselves to making the world a better place.

BB: Would you encourage more people to join peace operations worldwide? If yes, why?

SUSANA: Absolutely. The multicultural, diverse environment in a peace operation is the biggest teacher one can find. We learn from our colleagues, we share best practices from different countries and continents, we learn about different belief systems...I have been gifted to make wonderful connections across the world in my four years with the UN. The fact that we benefit so much from the experience while contributing as individuals to help some of the world's most vulnerable populations is an amazing thing!

“As peacekeepers we dedicate ourselves to making the world a better place.”



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Peacekeeper Profile: Cathal McGeoghan

Cathal McGeoghan hails from Ireland and started his policing career with An Garda Síochána (The Irish National Police Service) in 2004. He has held several roles in the past 15 years is currently assigned to uniformed patrol duties in Dublin. UNFICYP is Cathal's first deployment with the United Nations; in this interview, he speaks about his work in Cyprus as well as why, he believes, more people should join peace operations.

BLUE BERET: Tell us a bit about your work with UNFICYP

CATHAL: I am currently assigned to Pyla Station in UNFICYP's Sector Four where I am the Assistant Sector Civil Affairs Police Liaison Officer. As an UNPOL officer deployed with the Civil Affairs team I work alongside civilian and military colleagues for issuing of farming, job and construction permits to local residents. Other tasks that we undertake collaboratively include coordinating the Mission's response to certain activities within the UN-administered Buffer Zone such as religious pilgrimages and intercommunal events.

I interact regularly with members of both communities on the island to help resolve any problems that they face and facilitate the continued development of both the community in Pyla and in the wider Sector Four area.

BB: What do you feel are some of your biggest achievements in your career with UN peacekeeping?

CATHAL: Personally, I believe that seeing the results of the continued efforts made by my colleagues in UNFICYP to contribute to a return to normal conditions in Cyprus has been the most rewarding and fulfilling achievement of my career with UN peacekeeping to date. I have had the chance to meet people from all sections of the local community through UNPOL's role in policing community events in the Buffer Zone.

I believe that the presence of UNPOL in the Buffer Zone, and the good working relationship they enjoy with the local communities has helped make a positive difference to people's lives by breaking down barriers and helped build up trust amongst both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. I have a

great sense of pride in seeing members of both communities continue to interact positively with UN staff and each other as a result of our initiatives.

BB: Could you tell us a bit about the challenges faced and sacrifices made by peacekeepers across the globe?

CATHAL: I believe that all peacekeepers, regardless of where they serve, face challenges when they participate in UN missions. On a personal level every peacekeeper makes a sacrifice by virtue of being separated from their family, friends and loved ones at home for what can be prolonged periods of time during their service. Sadly, as has been seen on numerous occasions in the past, and indeed, several times this year, some peacekeepers make the ultimate sacrifice with their lives in order to protect others and to preserve peace.

BB: Would you encourage more people to join peace operations worldwide? If yes, why?

CATHAL: I would definitely encourage more people to participate in peace operations worldwide. The UN allows people from differing countries and diverse backgrounds to make efforts to achieve what is perhaps the most noble and worthwhile of causes – the pursuit of peace.

I believe peacekeeping offers a tremendous opportunity to develop oneself on both a professional and personal level. Personally, I have experienced new cultures by working with, and making friends with people that I would have never had the opportunity to meet otherwise.

“
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Peacekeeper Profile: Katarina Zahorska

Platoon Sergeant Katarina Zahorska from Slovakia is UNFICYP's first female photographer since the Mission's inception in 1964. Here Katarina, a former school teacher, single mother and talented pianist, takes a minute to stand in front of the lens to speak about her love for the military and why, she believes, United Nations peacekeeping works.

BLUE BERET: Tell us a bit about your work with UNFICYP.

KATARINA: UNFICYP is my first deployment with UN peacekeeping and as the Mission's only photographer I document the day-to-day efforts made by our military, police and civilian peacekeepers to achieve the goals set out in the mandate. It is a challenging role since I have to keep in mind the complex political nuances of the Cyprus problem while being an authentic storyteller. Additionally, I had no previous experience in photography, so I basically had to acquire an entirely new skillset while moving to a new country and adjusting to different operational requirements. However, I'm always up for a challenge and I have found my deployment with the UN to be exceptionally rewarding.

BB: What, do you feel, are some of your biggest achievements in your career with UN peacekeeping?

KATARINA: My experience with UNFICYP is, in my opinion, a pinnacle in my career. I have previously also served with international organisations such as NATO. I consider the opportunity to represent my country at the UN a massive honor. My biggest achievement so far has been to integrate seamlessly with the civilian and police peacekeepers in the Mission and make them comfortable enough to share their stories with me. Documenting UNFICYP's ongoing commitment to supporting a return to normal conditions in Cyprus has been an incredible journey. Also being the first woman photographer in the Mission is something I'm very proud of.

BB: Could you tell us a bit about the challenges faced and sacrifices made by peacekeepers across the globe?

**“ Female peacekeepers
are role models for the
communities they serve. ”**

KATARINA: I don't come from a military family, but I was always fascinated by the life of soldiers. Initially, it seemed an unachievable dream because in my hometown Prešov the presence of female military personnel was very limited. I, therefore, started working as a teacher. Finally, in 2003, I joined the Slovak Armed Forces; I am a Non-Commissioned officer (NCO) and currently, am a Platoon Sergeant, a position that was traditionally filled only by men because it is extremely demanding. In my opinion, the challenges faced by women in the military are numerous. Similarly, the challenges faced by every peacekeeper deployed are numerous. As peacekeepers we consistently take on extended periods of separation from family, friends and loved ones. We consistently need to find a balance in working with people from diverse, multicultural backgrounds to ensure that we keep the best interests of the UN in mind all the time. These are not easy things to straddle. Peacekeeping requires great fortitude and commitment.

BB: Would you encourage more people to join peace operations worldwide? If yes, why?

KATARINA: Yes, I would. I believe UN peacekeeping is the one of the most effective tools to respond to current challenges of global peace and security. Every day, women and men serving in far flung locations under the UN flag protect millions of civilians at risk and work to bring about sustainable peace. For me personally, being a Blue Beret supersedes any individual soldiering loyalty. I would like to encourage more women to join peacekeeping – female peacekeepers have a huge role to play when it comes to awareness-raising about the importance of peace and become role models for the communities they serve.



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Peacekeeper Profile: Major Maarten Magee

Major Maarten Magee, from the United Kingdom, joined the British Army in 2006 to undertake the Regular Commissioning Course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 2007. While Maarten has served in Afghanistan and been deployed to various international trainings, UNFICYP is his first experience with United Nations peacekeeping. Here, he speaks about what it means to serve for a cause that is designed to improve the lot of humanity.

BLUE BERET: Tell us a bit about your work with UNFICYP.

MAARTEN: I am Officer Commanding of the Mobile Force Reserve (MFR) for UNFICYP headquarters. We form the Force Commander's primary contingency military element and have various tasks and responsibilities. This includes being able to respond rapidly to any emergency situation on the island in support of the UN. As a result, we are held at a state of very high readiness and training to ensure that we can quickly respond to any crisis ranging from public order issues, to fire and disaster relief and everything in between.

BB: What, do you feel, are some of your biggest achievements in your career with UN peacekeeping?

MAARTEN: Since UNFICYP is my first deployment with the UN, I have only been in the role for two months. But even in this short span of time, being able to reorientate my team to deliver a role with which they are not familiar has been significant. Every member of the MFR has embraced the challenge and gained some invaluable experience from it. We have worked exceptionally hard to understand what it means to be a peacekeeper in a complex, politically sensitive area of operations such as Cyprus. This has been the highlight of my time so far.

BB: Could you tell us a bit about the challenges faced and sacrifices made by peacekeepers across the globe?

MAARTEN: We tend to join the British Army to work and deploy on operations in a specific role. In the case of my Battery, we are Gunners and so would generally expect to deploy in a more conventional operation, in our primary role. The requirement

to retrain, adjust to the requirements of the UN, and learn a completely new set of skills has been challenging. That said, we also joined the Army to make a difference and will go anywhere to do what is required of us; whichever mission we are deployed on we will always embrace the opportunity it affords.

In terms of the sacrifices involved, deploying as a UN peacekeeper comes with the usual disadvantages of any long-term deployment. Many of us have partners, are married, have children. It is never easy to leave loved ones and life at home for months on end. In many ways, it is our friends and family who suffer the most while we have these remarkable experiences.

BB: Would you encourage more people to join peace operations worldwide? If yes, why?

MAARTEN: Working with the UN provides a tangible sense of doing something worthwhile that genuinely benefits many. I am delighted to be part of the fascinating and important mission in Cyprus, and certainly feel the significance of the responsibility we hold as peacekeepers in the Buffer Zone.

If one wishes to do something meaningful which is, in theory, elevated above national or regional political agendas, and specifically designed to improve the lives of many, then peacekeeping missions should be considered.

For my Battery and I, the benefits of integrating with our UN colleagues, changing our role, understanding what peacekeeping is about and investing in the Mission are obvious. We have acquired new capabilities and sharpened old ones, improved our understanding of other nations and militaries, as well as been exposed to the work of our police and civilian colleagues. This deployment is a broadening experience. Being part of something greater than ourselves is something we can all be proud of.

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Peacekeeper Profile: Vildana Sedo

Vildana Sedo from Bosnia and Herzegovina has more than 22 years of policing experience in her country. She has served in several United Nations peace operations, including Liberia, Afghanistan and Libya. In her current role as Sector Commander, United Nations Police (UNPOL), for UNFICYP's Sector Two, Vildana capitalizes on a wealth of experience in international conflict contexts during her daily efforts in support of the Mission's mandate. Here, she speaks about the overarching issues she has dealt with as an UNPOL officer in field locations and why she is proud to serve under the UN flag.

BLUE BERET: Tell us a bit about your work with UNFICYP.

VILDANA: I was deployed to UNFICYP in May 2018, initially as a patrol officer at Ledra Station in Sector Two and have subsequently been promoted to UNPOL Sector Commander in 2019. As one of the key United Nations Police officers in the sector, I work with my military and civilian counterparts every day to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order in the UN-administered Buffer Zone, monitor civilian activity in our area of operations and, overall, assist in the return to normal conditions within the Buffer Zone.

I also interact with my local counterparts on both sides of the island. Peacekeeping in Cyprus is a tough job, given the political sensitivities, but immensely rewarding.

BB: What, do you feel, are some of your biggest achievements in your career with UN peacekeeping?

VILDANA: I have been fortunate to work in peace operations in Africa and Europe; in my various tours of duty with the UN, I've worked in different capacities – I was the Child Protection team leader and the Gender Advisor in Liberia; a Police Adviser for the Criminal Investigation Department in Libya and frequently deputized for the Senior Police Adviser in Afghanistan. By filling in for my seniors, I learned the enormous responsibility that lies with all peacekeepers as we work for some of the most disadvantaged people in the world. It can be daunting, especially given the magnitude of conflicts in the world we live in today.

One of my achievements that gives me great personal satisfaction was working with the Liberian National Police to successfully process cases of gender-based violence. My team in Liberia contributed greatly in changing societal attitudes

towards women through outreach among local communities as well as community policing initiatives.

BB: Could you tell us a bit about the challenges faced and sacrifices made by peacekeepers across the globe?

VILDANA: All peacekeepers sacrifice hugely while serving in remote locations – we consistently miss important moments in the lives of our friends and family. We leave ourselves open to security and health risks.

However, whenever I weigh the benefits of serving for peace against the sacrifices required, I feel that devoting myself to a

larger cause through peace operations is perhaps the best thing I have ever done.

I am exceedingly proud of being a UN peacekeeper. It has been my greatest privilege to serve for the cause of peace across the world.

BB: Would you encourage more people to join peace operations worldwide? If yes, why?

VILDANA: My father was a career police officer and he taught me that as uniformed personnel our role is to protect and serve. Being from Bosnia and Herzegovina, my childhood was spent in the midst of active conflict. I witnessed and benefited from, firsthand, the support given by the UN to my country.

As an UNPOL officer, I am now able to repay that debt in some small measure.

I will always encourage people to join peace operations because peace is the only sustainable legacy we can leave for future generations. My experiences with the UN will always hold a very special place in my heart.

UNFICYP Peacekeepers Participate in Medal Parades



On 28 February 2019, UNFICYP peacekeepers participated in the Mission's Winter Medal Parade which took place at its headquarters in Nicosia. Speaking at the occasion, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of UNFICYP Elizabeth Spehar commended military peacekeepers for their dedication and commitment to deescalating tensions in the 180-kilometer UN-administered Buffer Zone. "Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with your colleagues, you embody the very best of your national armed forces," stated SRSG Spehar.

In the same month, UNFICYP Force Commander Major General Cheryl Pearce presented medals to peacekeepers from the Mission's Sector One for successfully completing their tour of duty in Cyprus. "Your performance in operations, camaraderie, as well as daily duties demonstrated your professional abilities. Furthermore, you

have developed and maintained an effective working relationship with all the relevant actors within your area of responsibility which is vital for moving towards a lasting solution to the Cyprus problem," said the Force Commander.

On 2 May 2019, the Mission's Police component also held its bi-annual medal presentation at the UNFICYP headquarters. Currently 66 UNPOL officers serve at UNFICYP from an authorized total of 69, 23 of whom are women, giving the Mission a ratio of 33 per cent female police officers.

UNPOL contributes to the maintenance and restoration of law and order in the Buffer Zone and cooperates with the Mission's military and civilian peacekeepers regarding civilian activity in the Buffer Zone, humanitarian matters and assists in a return to normal conditions within the Buffer Zone.





UNFICYP's Police Component begin Bicycle Patrols in the Buffer Zone

On 17 April 2019, UNPOL officers deployed to UNFICYP organized the component's first bicycle patrol in the UN-administered Buffer Zone. The four-cyclist patrol, which included Dongxu Su, Acting Senior Police Adviser, started from Ledra Palace Hotel in the Mission's Sector Two and ended at the Ledra Street crossing point.

These patrols are intended to boost the capacity of UNPOL in making its regular rounds within the city of Nicosia with its narrow streets and old buildings. On account of the dense vegetation and narrow tracks, UNPOL was monitoring these areas through foot patrols so far.

The objective is to ensure greater flexibility for UNPOL officers and enable them to have greater access to the Buffer Zone and patrol larger expanses. "This is an essential operational requirement," said Mr. Dongxu, Acting Senior Police Adviser. "Additionally, it is hoped that bicycle patrols will enable community members on both sides to have greater interaction with UNPOL officers as required. This is part of an approach that relies on community-oriented policing practices," he stated.

The launch of bicycle patrols marks a significant expansion of an already busy station in the Mission's Sector Two with UNPOL officers providing support to air, vehicle and foot patrols across the Buffer Zone.



Peacekeepers Mark World Blood Donor Day



United Nations peacekeepers often go beyond their mandate: 14 June was a proud day for Slovakia as 29 Slovak peacekeepers marked World Blood Donor Day through a personal initiative by donating blood at a hospital in Deryneia/ Derinya. Blood donation has become a regular undertaking for every rotation of UNFICYP's Slovak contingent, in addition to the operational responsibilities of their deployment as United Nations peacekeepers to Cyprus.

New Accommodation for UNFICYP Peacekeepers from Sector Two

The Ledra Palace Hotel has been used by the United Nations since 1974 to accommodate UNFICYP military personnel and constitutes the headquarters for the Mission's Sector Two. The building was constructed in the late 40s; wear and tear over seven decades necessitated evaluations by the host government as well as a Strategic Review Team from United Nations Headquarters in 2017. It was found that due to outdated health and safety measures it was essential for UNFICYP military peacekeepers to vacate the upper floors of the Hotel.

To ensure continuity in the day-to-day operations of Sector Two peacekeepers and their physical safety, the Mission's senior management decided to build prefabricated accommodation for them at Wolseley Barracks, a location almost directly opposite the Hotel.

The project commenced on 29 November 2018 and was initially slated for completion by 31 January 2019. However, unusually bad weather conditions caused unforeseen delays; the new camp for 151 troops in Wolseley Barracks was handed over to Sector Two on 15 March and accommodation for 24 officers next to the Commanding Officer's House in April 2019.

With 15 three-module accommodation prefabricated buildings, eight prefabricated ablution units and seven laundry containers, the Wolseley Barracks camp consists of 1,326 square meters of living space designed to be resource-efficient through its life cycle, thereby giving due consideration to the environment.

The construction of these housing facilities was undertaken by the Mission's Engineering & Facility Management personnel which included the Force Engineers, Life Support, the Field Technology Section and the Department of Safety & Security.

"These new amenities ensure that Sector Two military personnel have easily accessible and secure accommodation designed and completed in full compliance with health and safety aspects as per UN rules and regulations," stated Joel Cohen, Chief, Mission Support, UNFICYP. Mr. Cohen commended UNFICYP staff involved with the project for their commitment despite having to work in inclement weather conditions and with limited resources. "I am also happy to report that this project is the first successful undertaking by UNFICYP under the Supply Chain Management Strategy which resulted in cost-effective, deadline-oriented and rapid execution," he added.



Anzac Day Commemorated at UN Buffer Zone in Nicosia

On 25 April 2019, a commemorative dawn service marking Anzac Day was held at 'Wayne's Keep' in the UN Buffer Zone, Nicosia. The event was attended by numerous members of the diplomatic community, including Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, Poland, the Netherlands and India, as well as senior UNFICYP personnel. All those gathered honored the sacrifice of the Anzacs and the generations of men, women and children who have died in the cause of liberty and peace.

Additionally, H.E. Sam Beever, the Australian High Commissioner, spoke about the service of the Anzacs and urged everyone present to remember their sacrifices.

Following a blessing by the Major Reverend G. Barry, Padre, the national anthems of Australia and New Zealand marked the closing of the official ceremony.

A national day of remembrance in Australia and New Zealand, Anzac Day broadly commemorates all Australians and New Zealanders who served and died in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations while acknowledging the contribution and sacrifices of all those who have served or continue to serve the cause of peace.

The date itself is historically significant as it marks the anniversary of the landing of Australian and New Zealand soldiers – the Anzacs – on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915 with the aim to capture the Dardanelles, the gateway to the Bosphorus and the Black Sea.



SECTOR ONE



Lieutenant Cintia Soledad Zarate - Chief, EP 02

Lieutenant Cintia Soledad Zarate from Paraguay joined at the Military Academy Mariscal Francisco Solano Lopez in 2010 and graduated in November 2013. She has served in the Direction of the Service of Intendancy, in the the Military Forces, in the Command of the Army and in the School of Infantry.



First Lieutenant Ariel Gastón Quintana - Chief, OP 08

First Lieutenant Ariel Gastón Quintana from Buenos Aires, Argentina, joined the Argentinian Navy in 2007 and graduated in 2011 as Marines Officer. His first duty station was in Puerto Belgrano at the 1st Field Artillery Battalion as Forward Artillery Observer and Battery Officer. He went on to serve with the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) as Infantry Platoon Commander in 2014. UNFICYP is his second deployment with the United Nations.



Sergeant Rodrigo Pérez Castillo - Patrol Leader, PB 03

Sergeant Rodrigo Pérez Castillo joined the Chilean Army in 2002 and graduated in 2004 as an infantry soldier. He completed the mountain instructor's course in 2006 and was deployed to the Brigada de Operaciones Especiales "Lautaro" in 2007. He is proud to serve with UNFICYP and represent his country.

SECTOR TWO



Lieutenant-Colonel C. Hakes - Commanding Officer

Lieutenant-Colonel Chris Hakes commissioned into the Royal Artillery in April 2000. As a junior officer, he served in the United Kingdom as a Troop Commander and in Germany as a Forward Observation Officer with the 26th Regiment Royal Artillery. Early tours included Northern Ireland, Iraq and Cyprus – the latter as the Regimental Operations Officer as part of the United Nations Force on Operation TOSCA. Between 2008-2016 he deployed four times to Afghanistan. He completed the Advanced Command and Staff Course 20 (ACSC 20) in 2017 and was appointed Military Assistant to the Director General Joint Force Development, within the Joint Forces Command. He assumed command of the 4th Regiment Royal Artillery in August 2018. Lieutenant Colonel Hakes is married and has a son.



Major A. M. Fewster-Neale-Deputy Commander/Chief MOLO

Major Ange Fewster-Neale joined the Army Apprenticeship College in 1998. Her early service as a Royal Signals soldier was spent in Germany, Bosnia and Northern Ireland. She was selected to attend the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 2007 shortly after promoting to Sergeant. She commissioned into the Royal Regiment of Artillery in 2008 and served in Germany and the UK as a Troop Commander. She deployed to Afghanistan as a Gun Area Commander and supported the female engagement efforts in Helmand Province. On promotion to Major, she enjoyed a short posting to provide Joint Fires instruction to the BG training exercises in Canada, before attending the Intermediate Command and Staff College (ICSC) in 2016. She holds a Master's degree in Military and Security studies from King's College, London, and is married.



Captain Jordan Willey RA - Adjutant S2 URR

Captain Willey joined the Regular British Army in 2012 and commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 2013, from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. He was educated at the University of Northumbria and graduated with a B.Sc. in Human Anatomy and Physiology. He promoted to Captain in 2016 and posted onto the Fire Support Team Commanders Course at the Royal School of Artillery in Larkhill. He was deployed on numerous exercises commanding the Fires Direction Cell for the Regiment. For Captain Willey, a career highlight to date is the deployment on Operation TOSCA 30, under the command of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

SECTOR FOUR



Lieutenant-Colonel Vladimír Smolej - Commanding Officer

Lieutenant-Colonel Vladimír Smolej joined the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in 1996 and graduated from the military academy – Faculty of Logistics – in 2001. His initial posting within the helicopter base in Prešov included several staff and command positions. Following this, Lieutenant-Colonel Smolej redeployed to the Slovak Air Force headquarters in Zvolen as an Officer of Source Capabilities Development Department. His long term military deployments abroad are connected to UNFICYP. This is his third deployment to the Mission. Lieutenant-Colonel Smolej is married with two children.



Major Peter Porac - Deputy Commanding Officer

Major Peter Porac joined military grammar school in Banská Bystrica in 1986. Major Porac graduated as an engineer from the Military Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš in 1995, majoring in Radiolocation and Automatized Command Systems for the Air Defence. His first military appointment was an officer for radar data processing, followed by a position as a Senior Surveillance Officer at the Slovak Air Force Command Post, a Master Controller of Command and Control Centre at the Air Command Control and Surveillance Wing in Zvolen. This is his first deployment with the United Nations. Major Porac is married with two children.



Captain Stanislav Vaník - Senior Operations Officer

Captain Stanislav Vaník attended the Military Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš and graduated in 2003 as a second lieutenant of the Air Defence. He started his military career as a Platoon Leader in Viničné and went on to serve as Platoon Leader in Zvolen. As a lower officer, he was then redeployed to the Intelligence Cell of the Air Surveillance Battalion. From 2011, he has been serving as a Senior Officer at the Intelligence and EW Department of the Slovak Air Force. This is his second deployment to UNFICYP. He is married with two children.

Headquarters



Lieutenant-Colonel Frias Barrera - DCOS Operations

Lieutenant-Colonel Frias Barrera graduated from the Argentinian Army Academy in December 1994 as an Engineering Officer. As Junior Officer he served at several appointments in Argentina, Cyprus, United States and Germany. As a Senior Officer he served at Army War School and the Joint War School. He has also commanded the 601st CBRN Company, the 6th Mountain Engineer Company and the 1st Armored Engineer Company. He has a degree in International Affairs, Strategy and Organization and is a specialist in operational strategy and joint military planning. He is married and has two daughters.



Lieutenant-Colonel Mauricio Silvestre - U7 Chief Military

Lieutenant-Colonel Mauricio Silvestre from Argentina graduated from Colegio Militar de la Nación in 1995 as a 2nd Lieutenant of Artillery and was immediately assigned to the Airborne Artillery Group 4 in Córdoba for six years. He also served at the Armoured Artillery Group 11 in Argentine Patagonia and at the Historical Artillery Regiment 1. Lieutenant-Colonel Silvestre served as an Instructing Officer of cadets and attended War College in 2011-12. His last assignment was at the Argentine Peacekeeping Joint Training Centre (CAECOPAZ). He has served with the United Nations in Kuwait, Kosovo, Cyprus and Lebanon. Lieutenant-Colonel Silvestre is married with two children.



Major Nikola Peric - S02 Operations

Major Nikola Peric graduated from the Military Academy in September 2004 as an Air Defense Officer. During his 14 years of service, he was posted on duties from Team Leader and Platoon Commander in the Counter Terrorist Parachute Company of the Counter Terrorist Battalion; Deputy Company Commander in Military Police Battalion for special operation "Cobras" as well as Staff Officer in S-3 and Chief of S-4 section of the same battalion. Additionally, he was a G-3 Operations-Staff Officer in UNIFIL in 2014. Major Peric is married with a child.



Major Fozia Perveen - Military Public Information Officer

Major Fozia Perveen graduated from the Pakistan Military Academy in 2007 as a Captain. She is a Public Affairs officer and has served as a Staff Officer within different divisions of the Inter Services Public Relations Department. Additionally, Major Perveen has completed courses in psychological operations, several international public affairs workshops and successfully graduated from the Young Officers Basic Course and Junior Staff Course. Major Perveen completed her Public Affairs qualification course from the Defense Information School, Maryland in 2014 and was promoted to Major in the same year. This is her first deployment with United Nations peace operations. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Media and Communication Studies and is married.



Major Uzma Saeed - Force Signal Officer

Major Uzma Saeed from Pakistan graduated from the Army Academy in April 2011 as a Signal Officer. During her eight years of service, she has held appointments as Company Commander in the Signal Battalion and as an instructor in the Signal Military College. Additionally, she has been the Officer in Command of the Signal Regiment. Major Saeed has completed her special arms military courses and holds a degree in Telecommunications Engineering. Major Saeed is married with one child.



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