

BLUE BERET

HISTORIC HANDOVER FOR THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND



Tuesday 29 September has marked a historic occasion for The Royal Regiment of Scotland with an operational handover between two of the Regiment's battalions. The Transfer of Authority parade at Ledra Palace Hotel, Nicosia saw The Black Watch (3 SCOTS) handing over Op TOSCA to The Royal Scots Borderers (1 SCOTS).

3 SCOTS deployed to Cyprus in March and are due to return to the UK having spent the last six months maintaining the integrity of the Buffer Zone, the area between the north and south. Britain has deployed troops to Cyprus with the UN since 1974 and they continue to support the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus.

Speaking of their time as part of UNFICYP, the Commanding Officer of 3 SCOTS Lt Col Steele, said "The last six months have been a momentous period in Cyprus, defined by the restarting of the stalled settlement talks. The Black Watch Battle Group has seen the momentum building first hand and there is a now a tangible sense of hope across the Island. The deployment has been consequently more interesting, as the battlegroup has mounted an increasing number of operations in support of the process. It has been a team effort, with 250 soldiers from 14 units, regular and reserve. Each and every individual has performed superbly. We leave here a far more mature, capable, and experienced battalion handing over you our sister battalion in the Royal Regiment of Scotland.

1 SCOTS have been preparing for several months for their role as part of UNFICYP. They have conducted public order training, conceptual understanding cadres and a mission rehearsal exercise replicating the peacekeeping role and tasks they will undertake during their deployment.

The 1 SCOTS battlegroup includes 50 Army Reservists which represents a major deployment of Army Reserve personnel in support of their Regular colleagues, a key component of the Army's adaptability.

Speaking of the deployment, Lt Col Wight-Boycott, Commanding Officer 1 SCOTS said, "1 SCOTS are now complete in Cyprus.

The Battalion is ready and prepared for its tour of duty with the United Nations in Sector 2. There is no doubt that we arrive at an interesting point in the political process towards a settlement. It is our job to ensure that we maintain the security of the Buffer Zone and ensure that there are no events that escalate to a point that trust between the two sides breaks down, which would have a subsequent impact on negotiations. Some soldiers in the Battalion have served on this mission before and both antecedent Regiments – The Royal Scots and Kings Own Scottish Borderers have had long and distinguished linkages with the Island.

1 SCOTS will from today take over operational responsibility for the section of the Buffer Zone that runs through the Cypriot capital, Nicosia and will monitor this area for the next six months. Several 1 SCOTS soldiers spoke of their impending peacekeeping role.

Cpl Morton, 44, a 2 R IRISH reservist from Belfast, Northern Ireland, said "I have deployed on two Op HERRICK tours to Afghanistan and I am looking forward to the challenges that being a UN peacekeeper will bring. As a junior commander my role will be different to my previous operational experience but these experiences will be of great benefit to me when operating in this complex and sensitive environment."

The ceremony, which was attended by UNFICYP Officers from neighbouring sectors, saw the Force Commander Major General Kristin Lund welcoming The Royal Scots Borderers to their new role. The ceremony finished with 1 SCOTS, led by the Pipes and Drums, marching past the Force Commander.

1 SCOTS take over at an interesting point in the political proceedings in Cyprus. Settlement talks are still ongoing between both sides and show no sign of slowing down as optimism grows towards a resolution to the 41 year old division of the island.



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