

BLUE BERET



S1 and S2 Exchange Co-operation

Learning from each other topped the agenda for UNFICYP peacekeepers during a recent exchange of five Operation Company soldiers across the military Sectors. The task UNFICYP peacekeepers face in monitoring, liaising and maintaining peace is far from uniform across the Sectors area of responsibility.

UNFICYP's Argentinian, Brazilian, Chilean and Paraguayan troops in Sector 1 have to contend with hilly heavily forested terrain and often have to deal with the dangers of falling rocks whilst out on patrol. In Sector 4 our Slovakian, Hungarian, Serbian and Ukrainian peacekeepers are tasked with covering vast open plains dotted with farming plots and the unique bi-communal village of Pyla. Whilst our British troops in Sector 2 have to navigate the narrow streets of Nicosia's old town, along the green line, with dangerous dilapidated buildings, abandoned over 51 years ago.

Across the island, the hilly terrain of Sector 1 merges into the mixed urban area of Sector 2 and flattens out to the vast plains of Sector 4. Each of the sectors poses its own unique challenges. No two sectors of the buffer zone are the same. To see just how different the tasks of our peacekeepers are and the lessons that can be learnt, one Officer and an NCO from Sector 2 recently swapped places with their Argentinian counterparts from Sector 1 and a Slovakian Officer joined his Sector 2 BRITCON colleagues. Over five days the UNFICYP troops patrolled together, observing and monitoring the Buffer Zone in their host Sectors' Areas-of-Responsibility. They had the opportunity to share experiences and discuss the different approaches deployed in meeting the challenges they face. This was the first such exchange organized between UNFICYP's military contingents.

Speaking after the five day exchange Lt Rich Harris from Sector 2 said "It has been a fantastic experience seeing how

the Argentinian military operates, and how similar we are both personally and professionally. It has broken down barriers of ignorance and misconception and is a testament to the capacity and capability of the UN to not only solve problems and find lasting peace in specific missions like UNFICYP, but to help build trust and establish strong relationships between the nations that contribute to them.

"Now I understand much better the capabilities the Argentinians, and their fellow Latin American nations, and what they bring to the table. I can tell you I have a healthy respect for them through the experiences gained on the Officer Exchange."

"One thing I will never forget is the Argentinian national dish the 'asado', a wonderful mix of barbecued meats with salad and traditional drinks. Much like a normal BBQ but unique in every other way. Even the allocated roles of the griller and cook were taken very seriously. I will try my best to stay true to the Argentinian way of doing it when I try it back in the UK, in the wind and the rain, with a raised glass of Argentinian Malbec to the Argentinians and Chileans who introduced me to it." He added UNFICYP hopes this recent exchange will set an example of successful inter-Sector relations to boost cooperation between the Sectors and help forge new and lasting friendships across UNFICYP's military contingents. Judging by its success, the cooperation looks set to continue with future rotations of UNFICYP's military contingents.



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