Force Commander
General Figoli
Departs in Style

The Blue Beret
January 2006

New SRSG Møller
Meets the Leaders
**SRSG Michael Møller Reports for Duty**

**New SRSG Michael Møller arrived in Cyprus on 3 January to take up his assignment. He was met at Larnaca Airport by Force Commander Maj.Gen. Hebert Figoli. Because of flight schedules, Mr. Møller also had the opportunity to confer briefly with outgoing Chief of Mission Zbigniew Wlosowicz, who departed Cyprus for Poland the same afternoon.**

Mr. Møller was greeted at UNFICYP headquarters next morning by a guard of honour before meeting with members of the senior staff group led by Senior Adviser Susan Allee, Chief of Staff Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell and Chief Administrative Officer Frank Clancy.

Having since called on the leaders of the two communities, Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat, SKSG Møller has been busily familiarizing himself with the different mission components and sectors. He has also called on various members of the United Nations family here on the island, including UNMIL/ACT, and UNDP/PFP, as well as UNMAC, where, after a briefing, he ventured off to a minefield area to meet the de-mining team.

Mr. Møller received his first VIP guest when Belgian Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht and his delegation visited the mission on 9 January.

In a widely appreciated gesture, our new Chief of Mission also took pains to meet all UNFICYP staff, national, international, civilian and uniformed alike, socially. The “meet and greet” he hosted at the Ledra Palace was the talk of the mission for days afterwards (photo coverage, next issue).
Michael Møller gives the impression of a low-key, straight-talking, matter-of-fact diplomat, who seeks to get to the point and not waste time. His vast experience in international politics spans a 27-year career in the United Nations. Before coming to Cyprus, he served on the 38th floor of the United Nations Secretariat in New York. There, he served as Director of Political, Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. A position he took up in June 2001. Holding both positions concurrently for a period of a year left Møller “more than busy”, as the UN had been going through difficult waters.

“I had approximately 50 subjects to deal with a day on average,” Møller says, adding that in reaction to our overwhelming number of issues on a single person’s plate, he is in stark contrast to what his duties require in Cyprus, where he will be focused on one subject in depth, rather than 50 on the surface. It also represents a good change, letting him go to the field after all those years in New York. “I have been in New York for over eight-and-a-half years, which is longer than I have lived anywhere since I was born,” Cyprus, he says, is an interesting problem substance that he intrinsically until now at least, interests him, he says.

Of course it is a challenge. It may sound cliché, but a good job for me is one in which I actually have to apply some of the things I learnt in the past, secondly, learn something new, and thirdly have a feeling that you are doing something meaningful useful. I have been asked to test that almost to everything I have done, and it is definitely the case with the post here. I have been in the field before, headed a mission before, set up a mission that I then co-headed, so this was a kind of natural evolution, if you want, in my career. It is one of the rare occasions where you can manage the personal and the personal into something that is very nice for me.

He says there is an added personal element to being in Cyprus in that the neighbourhood is an interesting one. “There is a whole half moon of countries that I don’t know very well. I have never been in Syria, I have never been to Jordan or Iraq, I never been to Lebanon for two decades, to Egypt for very many years, to Israel or to Cyprus, it was an interesting personal point of view, I look forward to travelling and visiting these places when I get a chance.”

His first impression of UNFICYP is that he has been handed “a well-run mission full of nice, competent people.” As for the Cypriots, Møller says they have been very welcoming and he has been well received by officials on both sides.

Responding to a question on what UNFICYP personifies, Møller says he has an open door policy and his management style is collegial. “I like to consult and I like to listen. It doesn’t mean that the SG is not involved in issues that he is very keen on, but certainly I am very open to advice and suggestions. There are many people here with a lot of experience. Sometimes I have been here a long time and with that kind of experience comes ideas, suggestions that are not necessarily within their own sphere of work, but that is what I like.”

“Open door means exactly that – the door is open to anybody who comes in, not that I expect it to be abused,” he says, indicating that he is involved in issues that can be dealt with between individuals and their immediate superior. Møller stresses that his door is open to authorized staff members with issues that can be dealt with on a personal level. “If people have problems that they want to express directly about, all I have to say is that I can help them, then I see it as my duty,” he says.

He is also particularly interested in helping with career development of staff. “I apply the same principles to others that I apply to myself, or at least try to, which means that as a matter of principle, I think it is very useful to keep longer than four or five years in one job. I want to ensure that my colleagues have opportunities to develop and hone skills. I want a clear direction and better dissemination of information concerning the UN’s role and its end goal. On a personal note, Møller says he entered the field of international politics as he didn’t think he could make a successful career out of film, which is a passion of his. “When I was 18 and had to decide what I was going to do, I was looking to be a film director and the other was to be a film director. In my youthful arrogance I, of course, wanted to be the film director. As a Dane, at the time, I realized I didn’t have much chance of the international film scene, so I opted for diplomacy.”

He says he has no regrets in this choice.

He says he is a very sociable person and barely survived living from his friends started to call to book time for their summer holidays here in Cyprus with him. A great art lover, he is particularly interested in exploring art scenes on the island and especially young and upcoming talent. Music is another passion of his where he enjoys jazz and other contemporary music, but concedes opera is not top of his list, although as he says, with age, it tends to grow on you.

Møller has an ear for languages. He speaks seven, including Arabic, Spanish and Greek, and he intends to add Turkish to this impressive list.

Focusing on a subject that is frequently politicized, GIFNET serves as a safe and independent place for policy analysis and testing to create practical policies for action with international and national support. Møller says GIFNET aims at “addressing critical issues, provide credible information and innovative solutions for our planet’s pressing biophysical needs through inexpensive, clean energy systems.”

Visit www.gifnet.org

Meet SRSG Michael Møller
An Interview with the new Chief of Mission

Erin Oztocyan, Nelly Krouzian and Anne Berube with the Blue Beret talk with Michael Møller
A deadly virus has spread through the bird flocks of Asia and Central Europe. The H5N1 strain of influenza has claimed close to 100 lives to date and threatens to mutate into a pathogen that could spread from human to human.

The History of Avian Influenza
Confirmed instances of Avian Influenza viruses infecting humans since 1997 include:

1997: In Hong Kong, Avian Influenza A(H5N1) infected both chickens and humans. This was the first time an avian influenza virus had ever been found to transmit directly from birds to humans. During this outbreak, 18 people were hospitalized and six died.

1999: In Hong Kong, cases of Avian Influenza A(H9N2) were confirmed in two children. Both patients recovered, and no additional cases were confirmed. The evidence suggested that poultry was the source of infection and the main mode of transmission was from bird to human.

2003: Two cases of Avian Influenza A(H5N1) infections occurred among members of a Hong Kong family that had travelled to China. One person recovered, the other died. How or where these two family members were infected was not determined. Another family member died of a respiratory illness in China, but no testing was carried out. No additional cases were reported.

2003: Avian Influenza A(H7N7) infections among poultry workers and their families were confirmed in the Netherlands during an outbreak of Avian Influenza A(H7N7) among poultry. More than 80 cases of H7N7 illness were reported (the symptoms were mostly confined to eye infections with some respiratory symptoms), and one patient died (a veterinarian who had visited an affected farm). There was evidence of some human-to-human transmission.

2003: H9N2 infection was confirmed in a child in Hong Kong. The child was hospitalized but recovered.

What is Avian Influenza?
Avian Influenza (AI) or Bird Flu is a disease of viral etiology that ranges from a mild or even a symptomatic infection to an acute, fatal disease of chickens, turkeys, guinea fowls, and other avian species, especially migratory waterfowl.

When and where did Avian Influenza first originate?
Fowl plague was described in 1878 as a serious disease of chickens in Italy. It was determined in 1955 that the fowl plague virus (FPV) virus is the most art of avian influenza viruses. All influenza viruses affecting domestic animals (equine, swine, avian) belong to Type A, and Type A influenza virus is the most type producing serious epidemics in humans. Types B and C do not affect domestic animals.

Signs and symptoms, transmission and incubation
Type A influenza virus causes Avian Influenza. It is a contagious disease. The main way influenza viruses spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing called “droplet spread.” The flu is different from a cold. Symptoms vary, with little or no mortality to a fatality. A rapid spreading epidemic (highly pathogenic Avian influenza), depending on the infecting virus strain, host factors, and environmental stressors. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion
- Body ache

Most people who get influenza recover in one to two weeks, but some can develop life-threatening complications (such as pneumonia). Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people), and varying degrees of flu severity, as well as serious complications can happen. People aged 65 years and older, people of any age with chronic medical conditions, and very young children are more likely to get complications from influenza. Waterfowl act as a reservoir of the Avian Influenza virus by carrying the virus in their intestinal tract and shedding it in their faeces. Avian influenza viruses are spread to susceptible birds through inhalation of influenza particles in nasal and respiratory secretions and from contact with the faeces of infected birds.

The incubation period is usually three-to-seven days. A person can spread the flu starting one day before he or she feels sick. Adults can continue to pass the flu virus to others for another three-to-seven days after symptoms start. Children can pass the virus for even longer. Symptoms start one-to-four days after the virus enters the body. Some persons can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons can still spread the virus to others.

Helpful health habits
Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

Clean your hands often, especially after using the toilet. This will help protect from germs.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

Vaccination of persons at high risk of exposure to infected poultry, using existing vaccines effective against currently circulating human influenza strains, can reduce risk of co-infection of humans with Avian and Influenza viruses.

What is an Influenza Pandemic?
An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of influenza and occurs when a new influenza virus emerges, spreads, and causes disease worldwide. There were three pandemics in the 20th century. None of them spread worldwide within one year of being detected. They were:

1918-19: “Spanish flu” [A(H1N1)]. This virus was first detected in Hong Kong in early 1957, the Asian flu spread to the United States by June 1957, causing about 70,000 deaths there.

1957-58: “Asian flu” [A(H2N2)]. First identified in China in late February 1957, the Asian flu spread to the United States by July 1957, causing about 34,000 deaths in the U.S. Type A(H1N1) viruses still circulate today.

The Current Situation
Two samples from a small domestic poultry farm in Incirli/Makryas were taken on 12 January and tested positive for H5N1. Both the EU and WHO are working with both communities in Cyprus under UN auspices to further refine the comprehensive response plans currently in place. A committee has been established with representatives from various authorities and meets regularly to coordinate measures to be taken and to supply information to the public about this issue.

EU experts reaffirmed that proper personal hygiene standards and combating poultry products and live birds against contracting Avian Influenza. They confirmed on 29 January that the probability of contracting the virus is remote. "Extremity biological or environmental conditions are required."

- Close physical contact with sick or dead birds.
- A depressed immune system.

How is UNIFCYP dealing with this threat?
There is a contingency plan in place to deal with any threat of an outbreak in humans:

- The mission is stockpiling all necessary medications and protective equipment.
- All UN staff (international, national, military, police and all authorised dependants) are included in planning processes, as well as prevention and treatment necessary through the application of Tamiiflu, if and when necessary.
- UNIFCYP Medical Centre and Sector Medical Stations will provide immediate support to all UN staff and authorised dependants. Local medical authorities are prepared to assist us, as required.

What to do if you find a dead bird in the BZ
- Cordon off the area to a distance of five metres, depending on the situation.
- Contact the JOC HQ and inform them on 22-61-4555. The JOC will call the FHO.
- Sectors are to phone their SCAT who will call the Department of Veterinary services to come and remove the animal(s).
- Inform the FHO of the outcome.
- If you must handle a dead bird, wear rubber gloves and facial mask. Double plastic bag the dead bird to minimise contact. Thoroughly wash clothing and self immediately.

For additional information about Avian Influenza, please contact your local physician or your Sector Medical Officer:

Sector 1: 99-43 4474 or 22-61 4079
Sector 2: 99-51 6597 or 22-61 4276
Sector 4: 99-66 5637 or 22-61 4879

United Nations Avian Influenza Update
No Need to be Alarmed

January 2006 - The Blue Beret

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A look back at the year 2005

On 31 January, UNFICYP military strength levels fell from 1,230 to just below 900 en route to the current 860 strength mandated by the Security Council. (Phase I of the project was completed in July 2005.) To date, under its new slogan “A step to the Future”, the renamed Mine Action Centre in Cyprus (MACC) had cleared 656,016 square metres of land in the buffer zone, and has detonated a total of 2,252 mines.

In September, UNFICYP was officially renamed UN Police (UNPOL) by New York. On 1 September, UNPOL took over responsibility for the SCAT (Social Civil Affairs Task) from the military component.

At the beginning of September, Senior Adviser Wlodek Cibor was posted to HQ New York on temporary assignment with the Asia & Middle East Division, Office of Operations, DPKO. The new Senior Adviser is Susan Allee, who arrived from UN HQ, New York.

On 15 September, Col. Jan Sinclair, UNFICYP Chief of Staff, handed over responsibility after two years in the post to incoming COS Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell.

On 16 September, 41.5 years after first stepping onto Cypriot soil, Finland’s Contingent folded its flag and officially concluded its historic role as a founder member of UNFICYP’s peacekeeping force. The first Finnish Contingent, consisting of 1,007 men, arrived in Cyprus in April 1964. Last man out was Capt. Juha Markus.

United Nations Day, 24 October, was celebrated in unique fashion in Cyprus – a rooftop performance by local musicians of an original work by Dutch composer Merlijn Twaalfhoven in the heart of old Nicosia. Musicians literally took to the rooftops to join forces playing on either side of the buffer zone divide separating north from south in the Ledra Street commercial section.

On 6 November, the first eight-member contingent of El Salvador joined UNPOL, giving UNPOL nine contingents and bringing numbers up to the approved strength of 69 from an initial 43 personnel at the beginning of the year.

Pyla was the site for the UNPOL medal parade on 17 November. Organised in a spirit of strengthening the link between the people of Pyla and UNPOL, this was achieved in no small measure and the event was a great success.

On 9 December, Pierre Guberan, Third Member i.a. of the Committee for Missing Persons (CMP), bade farewell after 20 years of service in Cyprus.


controlled explosions triggered after count-downs by SRSG Wlosowicz and Dr. Kezban Akansoy from the office of the European Commission Representation in Cyprus. (Phase II of the de-mining project was launched with
UNFICYP Mourns Slovak Forces Air Crash Victims

On 23 January, Slovak Ambassador to Cyprus, H.E. Jan Vario, signed the book of condolences at UNFICYP Headquarters in memory of the victims of a Slovak air force plane crash.

The crash claimed the lives of 42 Slovak soldiers returning home from peacekeeping duties with the NATO-led KFOR in Kosovo. It happened in Hungary just short of the Slovak border on the evening of 19 January.

UNFICYP Chief of Mission Michael Mallier, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Cyprus, and Acting Force Commander/UNFICYP Chief of Staff Colonel Peter Fraser-Hopewell offered sympathy and condolences on behalf of the mission to the Slovak Government.

Slovak forces have been serving with UNFICYP since 2001. There are 198 Slovak troops in the mission at present. Two of the air crash victims had served in Cyprus with UNFICYP in 2003-04.

Panicos – A Popular Man

UNFICYP was deeply saddened to learn of Panayiotis Loizou’s sudden death from a heart attack on New Year’s Day. The shock of his death is visibly and profoundly felt by all with whom he had daily contact and has filled our hearts with sorrow. It is difficult indeed to find words to express our regret at the death of this splendid and likeable man.

Panayiotis joined the United Nations on 7 August 1995, and served with distinction in the International Cafeteria, General Services and Integrated Support Services where he was assigned at the time of his death as an Inventory and Supply Assistant.

Panayiotis performed his duties with competence, diligence and an unselfish devotion to duty. He was a man of boundless enthusiasm for whatever task he took in hand, always ready to help in any enterprise and did so with good humour and a generosity of spirit that in all respects was worthy of the highest standards expected by the United Nations. He combined charm with unlimited energy and the highest integrity. His genial personality and charitable instincts will be missed by everyone. Truly, he was a highly valued member of the Organisation and the mission.

Panicos symbolised every positive aspect of being a member of the UN staff. Words such as loyal, honest, efficient and dedicated easily come to mind. But he was much more than that. In our conversations over the many Cypriot coffees we shared, he had a bad word to say about anyone. From the Chief of Mission to the most junior soldier, he treated everyone with the same respect. No one had too much trouble. Everything was done to the best of his ability without question. If I was away, he would say “Hey boss, no worries, I’ll keep the unit running”.

A young man of 36, Panicos lived for his lovely family, his passion for life and his love for his country. He had a talent for Grand Prix racing, a passion we shared, and we would often recall with laughter our trip to the Hungarian Grand Prix in July last year and discuss our trip to Silverstone in 2007.

A colleague much respected and loved by all forces where he was assigned at the time of his death as an Inventory and Supply Assistant.

For the Secretary-General said he was saddened to learn of the deaths, and extended his profound condolences to the Slovak Government and to the bereaved families while wishing a speedy recovery to the sole survivor.

Slovak Ambassador Varšo signing the book of condolences
Visitors to UNFICYP

During January, UNFICYP hosted a series of visitors to the mission, all of whom were welcomed by Acting Force Commander/Chief of Staff Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell before inspecting the customary guard of honour. They were then received by newly arrived Chief of Mission Michael Moller.

12 January – Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, KCB CBE MC, Commander in Chief Land Forces, is escorted into the Headquarters building by Acting Force Commander/Chief of Staff Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell

20 January – J. Hoogendoorn, Chief Constable of the Regional Police of Gelderland N/O, The Netherlands, is greeted by Senior Police Adviser Carla Van Maris

23 January – Director of East European Division Japanese Foreign Ministry, Mr. Akira Inamura, with UNFICYP Chief of Mission Michael Moller

Commander in Chief’s Commendation

During his brief visit to UNFICYP on 12 January, Commander in Chief of British Land Forces Gen. Sir Richard Dannatt took the opportunity to present Maj. Fred Reid, the British Contingent’s Property Manager, with the certificate for his Commander in Chief’s Commendation. This was awarded for Maj. Reid’s work as the Quartermaster and Officer Commanding HQ Squadron 9th/12th Royal Lancers from February 2003 to March 2005. During this period, the Regiment was tasked at short notice from Germany to the UK on emergency fire-fighting duties, and was also deployed on operations to Bosnia and Iraq.

In his citation, Maj. Reid was particularly commended for his energy, leadership, determination and management over a protracted period of time, qualities which were considered to be most worthy of public recognition.

9 January – H.E. Mr. Karel de Gucht, Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, meets members of the Mobile Force

10 January – Mr. Akira Inamura, Director of East European Division Japanese Foreign Ministry, with UNFICYP Chief of Mission Michael Moller

16 January – Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell greets H.E. Mr. Karel de Gucht, Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the UNFICYP headquarters

19 January – Maj. Fred Reid and colleagues from the PROM’s office

20 January – Maj. Fred Reid, the British Contingent’s Property Manager, receives his Commander in Chief’s Commendation

20 January – Nitsa Philippou, currently employed as the British Retained Site Property Management Clerk, was presented on 16 December with a Long Service Certificate by UNFICYP Chief of Staff Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell in his capacity as COMBRITCON. The award was made for over 36 years of loyal and dedicated service to the British Forces in Cyprus.

Mr. Nitsa Philippou, currently employed as the British Retained Site Property Management Clerk, was presented on 16 December with a Long Service Certificate by UNFICYP Chief of Staff Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell in his capacity as COMBRITCON. The award was made for over 36 years of loyal and dedicated service to the British Forces in Cyprus.

Nitsa started work for the British Ministry of Defence in 1965 as a teleprinter operator at Royal Air Force (RAF) Nicosia. In 1974, she was posted to the Cyprus Establishment and Pay Office (CEPO) in Dhekelia as a Records Clerk. In 1976, she resigned and was re-employed in 1978 as a Clerk II at the Quartermaster’s Dept, Support Regiment, UNFICYP in Nicosia. In 1991, she was promoted to Clerk I. On closure of the British Support Unit in 1994, she relocated to HQ BRITCON where she took up her present duties.

Nitsa deals on a daily basis with numerous contractors, civilians and military personnel. She is extremely hardworking and dedicated to her job. Added to this, she is always charming and helpful to everyone, much so that she has earned the respect and admiration of all ranks within Headquarters BRITCON, both military and civilian staff of Headquarters UNFICYP and the Command Support Secretariat of British Forces Cyprus.

Over all these years of service, Nitsa has been an exceptionally loyal employee, held in high esteem by all. She will retire on 31 March this year, and we take this opportunity to wish her a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Sport: Rugby in Sector 2

A trip down to Paphos Tigers was to be our hardest game of the month. The Tigers won last year, so a win was vital to our quest to top the league. The game was a bruising affair from the start, with the majority of the Tigers side having arms bigger than our legs. Although we didn’t play to our game plan, we dug in and came out 10-0 winners.

Episkopi Eagles and a rare home game was next. The Eagles, bolstered heavily from the Royal Highland Fusiliers, brought along 20 Fijians. The Eagles scored first. We soon replied, with some outstanding forward play as well as expansive moves in the backs; we came away 46-17 winners with braces of tries for Gnr. Sauliga, Gnr. Qarau and one each for Gnr. Dulomaloma and our Argentine export player Guidone.

The Ayios Nicolaos Stags rounded off the month’s fixtures with a hard but rewarding game. Once again it was the Stags who scored first, and it was at this point that we went up a gear; both up front and in the backs. Gnr. “Scobby Bear” Dulomaloma ran in an impressive four tries; winning himself the “man of the match”. A try each for Carter, Waller, Vodokinsladji, Kaumalotays and Kimmett sealed an impressive victory.

This marked half time for the league season, with the Stormers top of the table and hoping that the New Year will bring more of the same.

The end of December saw the Stormers head to Kyrenia to give the American University club a taste of how we train, and also to give the north’s only rugby club some match practice.

A two-hour mix of drills and skills gave the northern side a lot to add to their own sessions. At the end of the mixed sessions, we split down for the main event of the day, Nicosia Stormers vs American University. Once the Stormers got into the game, Scobby Bear ran in four tries. Big Jim added one as did countless others. Even LBdr. “Gun Boat” Gunn added to the score with a 30-yard conversion.

Afterwards, the home club proved to be excellent hosts. We returned to Nicosia, happy to have helped promote rugby in the north and to have brought on some promising new players.

We look forward to another visit soon.

Long Service Medal

On 16 December, Maj. Fred Reid was presented with the Long Service Medal and that of the Command Support Secretariat of British Forces Cyprus.

Over all these years of service, Nitsa has been an exceptionally loyal employee, held in high esteem by all. She will retire on 31 March this year, and we take this opportunity to wish her a long, happy and healthy retirement.
Xmas in the Sectors...

**Sector 1**

Argentinian Navy Deacon Father Germán Germinia, the Navy chaplain, visited UNFICYP’s Argentina Contingent from 20 December to 3 January.

During the holiday period visit, Father Germán travelled around Sector 1, visiting both camps and all the patrol bases. He also met with the Argentinian troops stationed at the UNPA. Father German celebrated Christmas Eve Mass at Camp San Martin, and stayed with the troops for New Year before returning to Argentina to continue his work in the Navy.

Mass was held in the small church in St. Martin Camp at 8.00 p.m. Then, as is customary back home, all soldiers and the families present congregated in the two Messes to bring in Christmas. Dinner was served at 9.00 p.m. with Christmas lunch accompanied by Christmas tunes of DJ Wegers (Sgt. Westerman).

On Christmas Day, mass was held at 10.00 a.m. On this occasion, Sector 1 personnel were joined by members of the Irish component of UNPOL, some accompanied by their families. The Irish had come, laden with gifts, and following mass, all gathered together to celebrate the festive season Irish fashion – with a good taste of Irish whiskey!

SNCOs and kids to sit on his knee and receive their presents.

Once Santa had completed his round of visits, everyone was left to enjoy their presents and relax over a few drinks to bring in Christmas.

**Sector 2**

Christmas Day celebrations in the Ledra Palace started with all Officers and SNCOs congregating in the WOs’ & Sgts’ Mess for a briefing on the day’s activities from WO2 Battersby.

First on the agenda was for Officers and SNCOs to serve a well-earned Christmas lunch to the troops, but this was not before the judging of the “best decorated troop table” by Mrs. RSM (Dawn). The result was a draw between Support Troop and East Troop.

Once the soldiers had been served, it was time for the Officers and SNCOs, as well as those families who had travelled over for the Christmas period to relax in the WOs’ & Sgts’ Mess for the day’s activities. This was kicked off with Christmas lunch accompanied by champagne. After a most enjoyable meal, Santa arrived for all WOs, WO2 Batterby, carving the turkey

**Sector 4**

As in all countries which celebrate the birth of Christ, Slovakia has many festive customs which have been handed down through generations. Sadly, some of these customs are dying out, so it was a very special occasion for members of Sector 4 to witness the performance of Slovak soldiers enacting one of these rituals on Christmas Eve in Camp General Štefánik.

It is the tradition for an “angel” to knock on the doors of village houses, carrying a nativity scene. This quin- tet is welcomed into homes and offered traditional refreshments before moving on to the next house.

And so it was in Sector 4! Organised by Padre Stanislav Lipka, this tradition was performed in all three Messes within the Sector by SLOVCON lads, and much welcomed by all their compatriots, some of whom had never seen this ritual before. As one said, “How strange that we spend this festive time so far from home, and witness this traditional custom for the very first time!”

**Force Commander Figoli’s Farewell**

The outgoing Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Hebert Figoli, left HQ UNFICYP for the last time on 5 January at exactly 3.00 p.m. Accompanied by the Chief of Staff, Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell, he moved first to the front door area of the HQ to sign an official handover certificate with the Chief of Staff who will act as Force Commander until Gen. Figoli’s successor arrives.

The FC then inspected an MFR Honour Guard before bidding farewell to senior military staff. This done, he said goodbye to civilian and police colleagues. The large turn-out was a measure of General Figoli’s universal popularity with all elements of the mission.

Gen. Figoli was then “arrested” by Police Chief Commr. van Maris and Cdr. Speedie from UNPOL and “loaded” onto the back of an L200 pick-up truck. The truck was pulled out by senior military (COS, COO, CPLO, CO CD S1, DCO, and CO S4) to an awaiting helicopter.

Before departing, Gen. Figoli, watched by family members including his wife Nelida Scarnes and by senior officers from his headquarters staff and Sector 1, lowered the Uruguayan flag outside his house for the last time.