

The Blue Beret

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UNFICYP military skills competition
They thought it would never happen
UN Flight takes no risks



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editorial

Peacekeepers in a mission focus on the skills required in their particular operation. But they must also prepare for future missions in a different environment. For this reason, the UNFICYP Military Skills competition is held twice a year to test the military abilities of each unit within the Force. With dedication and determination, the teams practise weeks in advance and there is a sense of pride and achievement on the day. It is a credit to them all that, even though they come from different armies and from many nations, their disciplined training enables them to compete, sometimes in mixed teams, in a spirit of goodwill and competitiveness. Our front cover records the presence of the Australian civilian police element of UNCIVPOL, but this time in a military role.

A spirit of teamwork is also covered on page 3 in our report about Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot teenagers who showed their desire to meet each other and spend a day together in Pyla on 5 February. The crowd of approximately 150 planted trees, played football and enjoyed each other's music. And many exchanged e-mail addresses. The internet is a widely used means of improving dialogue between individuals spread around the globe, and this kind of communication creates awareness. One of the benefits offered by cyberspace is that it helps to sow the seeds of understanding.

Yet another combined function took place on 16 February, when two members of the Irish Armed Forces stood with members of the Australian Civilian Police at the Ledra Palace Hotel to receive their peacekeeping medals. A medal parade is always a memorable event, matched in turn by the hospitality with which guests are received and entertained. And no less so on this occasion.

The editorial team

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Front Cover: Australian Sergeant Mark Yarrow in the Military Skills competition

They thought it would never happen. Two teenage girls from Cyprus, a small island in the Mediterranean, travelled last October to the other side of the world to another small island in the Pacific, Hawaii. The chances of Lena Anastasiades, from the south side of the buffer zone, and Defne Cizakla, from the northern side, meeting up were rather slim, considering there were 2,000 young people attending the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) conference. But they ended up sitting side by side, and this is where a very firm friendship began to develop.

On their return home, the two girls kept in contact through the internet. As Lena says: "It took a trip to Hawaii to make me realise that a mere friendship was and is the most important step in developing such a trust and one that I hope will last a lifetime. I was fortunate to meet Defne, who is one of the best friends I have ever had. Together, we realised that so many people were mistaken when they said that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots cannot live together. Defne and I decided in Hawaii that when we went back to Cyprus, we would do everything we could to get people (mainly the youth) to concentrate on what we have in common instead of our differences."

They talked to their friends and soon, the youth in the south formed a society called "Y2P" (Youth Promoting Peace). And they decided to meet. Pyla was the venue, and Sunday 6 February was the date. The teenagers took it upon themselves to organise a programme which included the planting of 50 trees (donated by the Mayor of Nicosia), a soccer match in the ground of the Greek Cypriot school, lunch at Piliavs Restaurant (located just inside the buffer zone), and finally music and song provided by members from the two groups.

Another girl from Y2P, Monica, was also present on the day. When asked why she joined Y2P, she said: "It wasn't until a friend of mine from Limassol came to spend the weekend with me and I took her to the UN Day (24 October at the Ledra Palace) that I actually came to terms with



Many helping hands

the fact that I didn't know Nicosia like the back of my hand as I thought. There was another part of the city behind the barbed wire that I was not familiar with. It brought home to me that my Turkish Cypriot friends (I speak with many on the internet) live, in fact, much closer to me than my friends in Limassol. And I want to get to know them."

What did she think of the football match? "It was great fun! I was a goalkeeper. The game was organised after the tree planting to get all of us not only to work together but to play together in a light-hearted way and to work up an appetite! We were split up into mixed teams - girls and boys from both communities - no sexism, no racism. We all played in a spirit of competitiveness. The idea

wasn't so much to win, but to show sportsmanship and just enjoy ourselves."

Lunch was sponsored by both communities - the food from the north and the drinks from the south. The event ended with musicians from both sides playing anything from traditional songs to jazz and international pop music with the audience joining in the singing.

UNCIVPOL Officers Paul Whittaker and Karen Parker, along with a Sector Four military patrol, were present throughout the day, which passed without incident. The whole programme was completed in an air of good humour and infectious friendship.

As Defne said, "This peace project is just a small step towards our goal. I do believe that we, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, can live together in friendship and equality on this island, who knows, without the green line, maybe... one day. SOON."



Who's on my team?

They thought it would never happen



Master Corporal László Hangia and Captain Attila Rábai taking notes at the operational reporting station

Twice a year, the military skills competition tests the abilities of UNFICYP personnel in a series of events, ranging from map reading and weapon assembly to an obstacle course and pistol shoot. The following is an account of the competition held this month.

To all stations, this is control..... Three, two, one, start now!" As soon as the voice on the radio dims, all nine station leaders call the team captains and explain what the next task will be.

Superintendent Andy Bassett and his Headquarters team had just arrived at the stores close to the go-kart track. "We're in a hurry", he jokes, while he wipes the sweat from his forehead. "I have to be back in Linou in time for my siesta." Slovenian Staff Sergeant Matej Pralnik takes a bottle of water and makes up for lost fluids when Austrian station leader First Lieutenant Stefan Rakowsky calls in the team leader.

"First you must assemble the radios, then you have to open your net and send or relay some messages," instructs Stefan. He hands over some written information and concentrates on his checklist, while Bassett and one of his team members screw on the antennas, attach the batteries and select channel

15, the instructed frequency.

Using a radio is common practice for both soldiers and policemen. In a true team effort, all members of the UNCIVPOL team focus on the colour printed photographs. On the right hand side of each photo is a list of badges, armoured vehicles or weapon systems and a choice is given with several options. When the applicable name for a tank has to be given, one of the police officers asks: "Are you sure it's not a Volkswagen Beetle?" Everyone laughs but quickly concentrates again. One thing is sure, maybe this team won't make the gold, but they are certainly enjoying this military skills competition.

had been practised. Everyone knows exactly what to do. While half of the team ties the inflated inner tubes to the planks, the other half attaches the equipment to the uniforms in an effort to ensure that it will all arrive dry at the other side of the pool. A referee has to point out that the team can't go aboard before they all wear their life jackets. Then quickly, after a few strokes of the paddles, the Austrians set feet ashore and stop the clocks. It's not the fastest time, but it scores well.

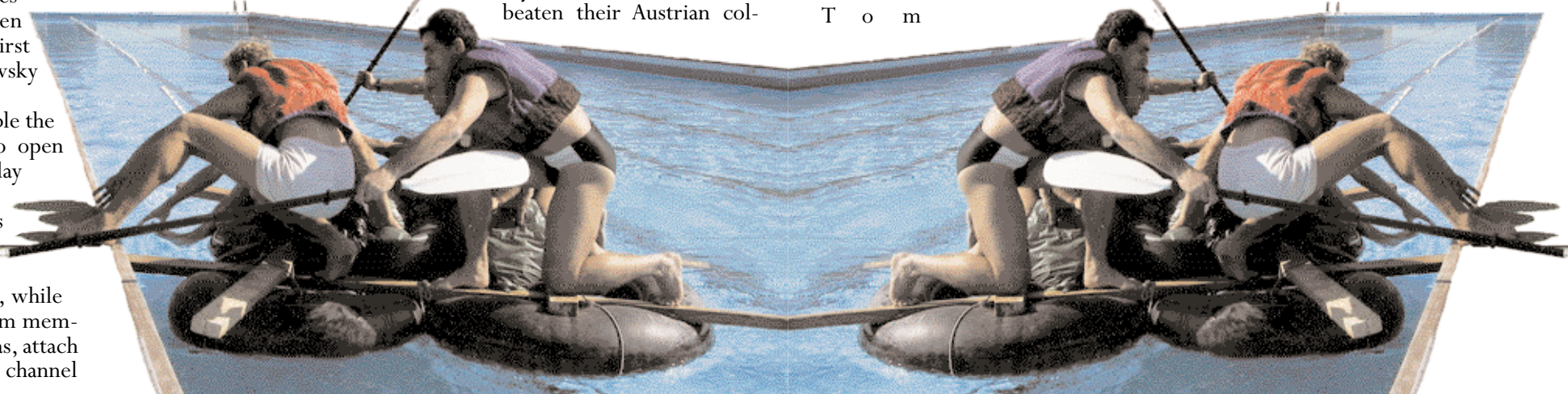
Not only skills and knowledge score in this competition. It's also discipline and preparation. At seven in the morning, all teams were inspected before starting



The Slovenian team on the runway, approaching the driving skills station

At the swimming pool, an oiled machine seems to be working. At first sight it can't be established which team is striving here, as their uniforms are already stuck away in polythene bags. The short instructions issued make clear this must be the Austrian team. Obviously, raft-building

off. Amongst other articles, all team members had to have a note book, a pencil and a cleaning kit for their personal weapon. At the end of the day, it became clear that even if each member of the Argentinian team had had such a cleaning kit, instead of just one kit for the whole team, they still would not have beaten their Austrian col-



results

	Inspection	Map reading	First aid	Obstacle course	Weapon assembly	Water obstacle	Pistol shoot	Ops Info	Driving skills	Signals	Observation + reporting	Forced march	Total score	Ranking
Argentina (1A)	-35	83	97	85	100	95	65	42.5	90.58	70	74	100	867	2
Argentina (1B)	-40	54.5	97	74	62	55	67	49.2	7.5	68	80	90	744	5
United Kingdom	-20	84.5	76	81	74	70	65	39.5	63.75	83	82	98	796	4
UK/NL	-20	67	67	81	18	95	76	35.7	78	93	71	53	714	6
Austria	-0	92.5	88	100	96	75	78	46.7	85	98	90	92	941	1
Slovenia	-35	82.5	79	78	50	40	62	52.5	80.5	93	31	35	648	8
Hungary	-10	53.5	61	0	64	20	42	50	66.25	83	98	0	527	9
MFR	-0	74.5	82	81	68	70	64	47.5	86.35	80	94	78	825	3
UNCIVPOL	-90	94.5	73	36	0	40	51	44.2	82.85	86	73	0	490	10
HQ/UN Fit/FMPU	-15	78	73	34	0	20	55	57.7	86.35	85	88	0	562	7

leagues.

The Sector One team also lost points for using a folded piece of paper instead of proper note pads. This decision was protested and points were regained.

"S---", answers Warrant Officer 2 Pete Baker, in charge of the pistol shooting station, when asked how the Mobile Force Reserve team performed at the range. Then he says diplomatically, "But you'd better not write that down. Let's just say they didn't do as well as they could have done." Point taken.

The MFR departs for the next station with 285 points scored, whereas one of the two teams before them scored 348 points.

Going from one station to another, several soldiers in fluorescent gear could be observed, located at junctions, roundabouts and crossroads. Private Tom



"Are you sure it's not a Volkswagen Beetle?"

Kinson is one of them. His commanding officer and BSM just visit him briefly to check if everything is alright and to announce that lunch will be delivered at eleven. Tom has got the unenviable task of spending the day, from six in the morning until late after-

noon, to direct teams and visitors in the right direction, and to contribute to safety by warning car drivers that competitors are on the roads.

Tom's Dutch colleague, Dewie Tebeest, admits his job is "a bit boring". He secures the junction near the NAAFI. Once every hour a team passes by to attempt the obstacle course. Probably this is the hardest of all stations. A 15-kilo ammo-box has to be taken all along the course. Teamwork is the key, especially to conquer the

higher obstacles. Something can be said for the remark that the team starting fit and fresh at this location early in the morning, probably had a slight advantage.

The Headquarters team, now struggling on the course, suffers from the fatigue of all the previous, physically less demanding stations. But on the other hand, it's all in the game. After all, only one, the best, can win.



Private Tom Kinson: "That way, please."

On the right track

Sector One is the only sector with an engineering team dedicated to road repairs. The worst tracks in the buffer zone are in the western part of the island, however the team still finds time to help out with grading certain areas of the track in Sector 2.

This can be seen right, when between 20-30 January, Warrant Officer 4 Carlos Diaz Velez, Warrant Officer 3 (Marines) Blas Miguel Morinigo, Sergeant Carlos Raúl Nieto, 1st Lieutenant Ramiro Piorno and his 2nd in Command, Lieutenant Mario Humbert, completed grading the tracks in the Ledra Palace Hotel area.

"We feel quite proud of ourselves," says Ramiro. "Not only have we left the patrol track in perfect condition, but we have also made many new friends. Working with the British engineers, we have learned a lot too."

These men, who have the power to modify the terrain, know how to relax off duty. "We



Levelling the track in hazardous areas of Sector Two near the Ledra Palace Hotel

invited our British colleagues to share an "asado" (Argentinian barbecue) with us," says Ramiro. "We also played pool and a few games of soccer. We didn't care who won - what really mattered was team work."

**Starring
Sergio Castillio
in:**

"The English Teacher"

To improve the social, cultural and professional integration of the members of the Argentinian contingent. That's the ambitious aim of Argentinian Staff Sergeant Sergio Castillio.

"In November, I started with a group of Argentinian soldiers working with the MFR," he says. "This course will last until the first week of May. In December, Major Salinas, the Commanding Officer of Roca Camp, set up classes at his location too. Not only a large number of well motivated NCOs and officers joined in, but also wives and children accompanying their husbands and fathers took part. I can safely say that both groups are as excited about studying English as I am about teaching it."

"I follow the syllabus and the rules for the examination of the Argentinian English Language Department, where I was a



Special guest stars: the students

teacher before coming to Cyprus. This way, all students can try to pass this exam once they have returned to Argentina."

Sergio concludes by complimenting his students. "I am very proud of them. After all, most

are subject to daily military duties. After that, they sacrifice leisure time by attending my classes. And they are really doing well. Studying is an investment which will pay off for the rest of your life."

A THRUSH IN ROCA CAMP

By Captain Luis Cormick

Being thousands of kilometres away from home brings many of us in Sector 1, particularly those who have never been away before, right down to earth. It makes us realise the distance between the place we are now working in and the families we have left behind - and how we value our comradeship. Meeting after an evening meal, a birthday party or just a group of us getting together to drink and share a "mate" (a typical Argentinian hot drink) provides just the right atmosphere for someone to get out his guitar and sing some typical Argentinian songs. This is a traditional pastime that accompanies our soldiers wherever they may be.

There is nearly always one soldier within the ranks who can play the guitar, and he generally becomes the "master of ceremonies". It is he who manages to get us all to join in a singsong, even though we may not all be good at it. Our country has a wide variety of birds, one of which is the thrush. This bird has the ability to make other birds sing, and that is why we call a singer who has the same ability (to make other people sing) a thrush.

In Roca Camp, our thrush is WO III Roque Gaetan. He plays the guitar every night, and manages to get everyone around him to join in. Maybe we start off singing our typical Argentinian songs in a shy manner, but with Roque's friendly smile and spirit, it doesn't take long for us to work up a lot of



Moments of relaxation - a mate and a song

enthusiasm.

Roque, who is in charge of the JOC in Roca Camp, says: "I was born in 1963 in La Rioja, a north western state in Argentina. I am married with a son and a daughter. I taught myself to play the guitar. I think that playing and singing with others make time and distance no obstacle to being close to my family. It also puts me in a better frame of mind to perform my duties."

Estando a miles de kilómetros de nuestro país, cuando la distancia se hace grande y es inevitable el recuerdo de nuestras familias, es en esos momentos cuando la camaradería se hace importante. Reuniones después de la cena, una fiesta de cumpleaños o sólo un grupo de nosotros que se reúne a tomar y compartir unos mates, crean el clima propicio para las guitarreadas.

Guitarrear y entonar populares temas folk-lóricos es una vieja tradición que ha acompañado y aun acompaña a nuestros soldados.

En nuestras filas siempre hay alguien que posee la habilidad de rasgar una guitarra y sin querer se convierte en un maestro de ceremonias. El logra reunirnos y con sus acordes nos invita a cantar aunque no seamos muy buenos en el arte de entonar.

Nuestro país tiene una gran variedad de aves cantoras. Una de esas aves es el Zorzal que tiene la

particularidad de que, con su canto, hace que otras aves se le unan en el canto. Esta es la razón por la que llamamos Zorzal a todo aquel que con su canto motive el canto de otros.

En el Campo Roca, nuestro Zorzal es el Sargento Ayudante Roque Gaetan. Con una sonrisa franca, cada noche de guitarreada nos va acercando a su silla, al principio tímidamente pero a medida que pasa el tiempo el entusiasmo se va apoderando de los improvisados cantores.

El Sargento Ayudante Gaetan nació en 1963 en la Provincia de La Rioja. Aprendió a tocar la guitarra de niño y solo, de "oido". Está casado y tiene un hijo y una hija. Sostiene que tocar la guitarra y cantar junto a otros hacen que la distancia y el tiempo no sean obstáculos para estar junto a nuestras familias y, por supuesto, lo ayuda a cumplir su misión como encargado del JOC del Campo Roca.

Promotions

By Captain Luis Cormick

A new year, a new millennium and a new rank. Traditionally, promotions for Argentinian soldiers become effective the first day of a new year. Being based in Cyprus doesn't make any difference. So, for many members of Sector 1, the start of this new era was a good one.

On 3 January, the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Catuzzi, personally congratula-

ted each newly promoted officer and NCO, and presented each one with his new rank markings. Of course, the extra money to go with a promotion is welcome, but more important is the recognition of service by the individual branch of the armed forces - the Army, Navy or Air Force.

New tasks lie ahead, new responsibilities too. The newly promoted face them with confidence.



The wind speedometer at UN Flight reads 35 knots. Today, the windssock is flying horizontally. Those who haven't already put their blue beret safely in their pocket might have to search for it at the end of the runway of the abandoned old Nicosia International Airport. For the peacekeeping mission the weather doesn't make any difference: business is as usual.

But this doesn't apply to the pilots of this Argentinian unit. Although the limit to fly either the Bell or the Hughes helicopter is 40 knots, the limit to start up and take off is 20 knots. This means, for the time being, that it's no-flying weather. Safety first is the creed for all personnel in this field.

As soon as I push down the doorhandle, the storm blows it open and I'm dragged in. Captain Eric Ortiz welcomes me and offers a cup of Cypriot coffee, or, even better, a genuine Argentinian maté.

Captain Néstor Rivero, second in command, explains that going for a heli-trip isn't anything like taking a taxi. "The Air Liaison Officer of each sector has to send in his request for a helicopter flight 48 hours in advance. This allows us to plan and prepare for the flight."

Then what does this preparation include?

"First of all," Néstor continues, "we need to inform not only our own Headquarters in the UNPA, but also, through the two UNFI-CYP liaison officers, the air transport officials on both sides of the buffer zone."

Depending on the

By Major Paul Kolken

and

1st Lieutenant Adrian Ferrari



Before take off, Sergeant Gustavo Filippini inspects the main rotor of the Bell 212

request, we decide which helicopter is best suited for the task. To transport a VIP or carry out a buffer zone patrol, we normally take the Hughes 500. But to transport a greater number of soldiers, the larger Bell helicopter is normally used. We have to establish how many pounds of petrol are needed for the trip, and in what configuration we need to fly, whether we will carry cargo, seated passengers or if we will transport a casualty on a stretcher."

Do you need 48 hours' notice to transport a casualty?

"No, of course not," Captain Rivero replies. "If there is an emergency during normal working hours, we must be airborne within half an hour. At night we have to warn the duty crew by mobile phone. Then it should not take more than 45 minutes. In practice, for instance when the shooting incident took place north of the buffer zone a while ago, we were airborne within seven or

eight minutes after receiving orders from the Joint Operations Centre."

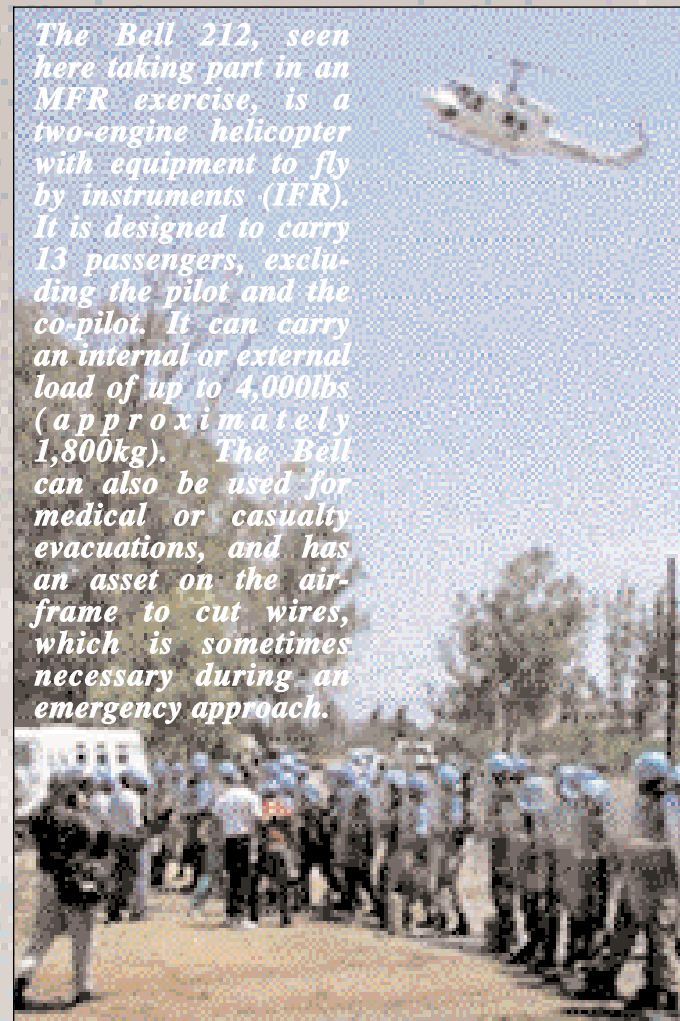
The Air Safety Officer, Captain Fernando Valentich, joins in and stresses the importance of the Crew Resource Management course each crew member attended in Argentina before deployment to Cyprus. "If a pilot has a health problem or any other matter which is constantly on his mind, he should feel free to approach his Operations Officer to discuss whatever difficulty he is in. Sometimes it might be necessary to task another pilot with the mission, one who can fully concentrate on flying and all the safety procedures involved."

And what does your role as Safety Officer include?

"Oh, a lot. I'm a very busy man," Fernando laughs. "No seriously, it's up to me to keep all landing platforms, not only in the UNPA but also in the sectors, at the required safety level. It's a bit like fashion. It changes constantly. Each flying incident is evaluated thoroughly, and sometimes results in new safety measures. This can mean that even better procedures will be introduced. If this involves new equipment, I inform my colleague, First Lieutenant Gustavo Fernandez, the Logistics Officer, who in turn makes out the order. It can be anything from fire fighting equipment to wind-socks, fluorescent clothing for marshalls, etc."

One of the major elements of the whole safety policy is the main inspection of the helicopters after every 100 flying hours. Chief Maintenance Officer, First Lieutenant Rodolfo Degiovanni, says: "My team of technicians will spend between two and five days in the hangar, inspecting the airframe, the engine, the transmission and the hydraulic and electrical system. Every part of the helicopter has to be cleaned to detect cracks or losses in

The Bell 212, seen here taking part in an MFR exercise, is a two-engine helicopter with equipment to fly by instruments (IFR). It is designed to carry 13 passengers, excluding the pilot and the co-pilot. It can carry an internal or external load of up to 4,000lbs (approximately 1,800kg). The Bell can also be used for medical or casualty evacuations, and has an asset on the airframe to cut wires, which is sometimes necessary during an emergency approach.



general. As when you service your car, oil filters need to be changed. We follow strictly the checklists provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (F.A.A.). When everything has been done, an official of the F.A.A. oversees our work and certifies that the required standards have been met. During the final part of the inspection, all parameters have to be examined in full flight."

As a final comment, he adds: "I know the dedication and professionalism of my team. That's why I can safely wish all our passengers a happy landing."



Warrant Officer 3 Sergio Griatzky and Warrant Officer 2 Hector Fagios in charge of the ground floor traffic control tower

MFR Corporal Richard Watson: "past differences are swept aside"

With the build-up and training in Tern Hill, prior to deploying to Cyprus, we still had a few hurdles to cross. At that point of deployment, we had only worked with the Dutch element of Britcon. Once we were deployed and in theatre, we still had to meet the three other nationalities we would be working with. One of the main problems I envisaged as a section commander, was obviously going to be the language barrier. But my Commanding Officer, Major Andrew Williams, had arranged a Spanish teacher to give my colleagues and me a four-day course. This was to prove a great help.

So the day arrived. We landed in Cyprus and moved up to the United Nations Protected Area. The first two weeks were a torrent of information on routes, gates, OPs and different locations, as well as information on potential troublespots of the three sectors. All of this had to be learned before our predecessors left Cyprus.

At the same time I had to meet my new section. They included not only English and Dutch, but also Argentinians, Austrians and Hungarians. I had to try and establish how all five nations would live and work together. My advantage was that some of



Richard Watson: "UNFICYP has a lot to offer soldiers from all walks of life."

the soldiers of the different nationalities had already been working with UNFICYP. They were a very useful source of information for my forthcoming tour.

Now I am settled in. Every day I learn something new and gain information and ideas from my fellow soldiers in the Mobile Force Reserve. The main advantage is having the chance to train with different nationalities, as well as to operate with them.

In my opinion, UNFICYP has a lot to offer soldiers from all walks of life. Past differences are swept aside and all contingents can bond together, whether on or off duty.

I look forward to the remaining four months that we will all be working together.

Liri Corporal Alan Maxwell: "tact and persuasion rather than a show of power"

This tour is the first time that I have worked under the auspices of the United Nations. It is also my first time in Cyprus, and I found both experiences very different from what I have been used to in the past. Being on a peacekeeping tour, I have had to go about things in a different manner and adopt a different mental approach to what I am used to. For example, we as the UN are here by consent, and in dealing with the OPFORs, we try to solve problems and bring incidents to a close more by way of tact and persuasion, rather than by a show of power.

My job deals with the daily running of the Ops room, running the stag rotas for the towers and tasking the patrols on mountain bike, by foot or by vehicle. I also find myself the first port of call for incidents in the BZ and thus try to resolve problems over the phone with the OPFORs or, indeed, on the ground, in the absence of the Platoon Commander.

So far I have had dealings with both sides, and have usually found them to be both polite and courteous. But getting anything done quickly seems very hard to achieve, and I assume that this is due to the far-reaching political ramifications any action may have. However, the fact that the United Nations is a political animal, rather than a military one, makes life particularly interesting for a soldier.

The training that we conducted before deployment was very intense and led me to believe that we would find ourselves resolving far more inci-



Alan Maxwell: "Life here is particularly interesting for a soldier."

dents than we actually have done. The training was geared very much towards the private soldier and tested their ability to deal with incidents at their level. Having now had the opportunity to put it into practice on more than one occasion, it's clear to me that the training was realistic. That's why the soldiers have all been able to handle situations with confidence.

I have drawn many parallels between Nicosia and what I am used to at home. Many of the shops and stores are similar and the local population is pleasant enough, although I would bet my mother that not all of them have passed their driving test. Having now thoroughly explored the buffer zone, I am looking forward to discovering the rest that Cyprus has to offer.

An Austrian invitation

Lieutenant Peter Posh, troop commander of the multinational Mobile Force Reserve, calls it the last oasis, the Austrian Club at the UNPA. "It was founded in April 1994 with the aim of bringing the Austrian contingent and other contingents' soldiers closer together," he says.

Of course, running a bar requires a lot of commitment. "That's no problem," replies Peter. "First of all, the Austrian Club is only opened on Wednesday and Friday evenings. Second, we carry the burden of running the bar on four pairs of shoulders. And one of these belongs to Christian Chmela, who came third in the world championship power lifting. Need I say more...?"

"But seriously, we work together well, and aim to pro-



Four friendly bartenders offer Austrian hospitality

vide a cosy environment where all ranks can feel welcome. Occasionally we organise a barbeque or some other entertainment. The Dutch soldiers in particular appreciate our bar, but it's also visited by other nationalities from

UNFICYP and the diplomatic community in Nicosia. We only try to cover expenses, which means the drinks are cheap. And the bartender always offers a warm welcome - and a free smile."

CO visits S2W

The Commanding Officer of the Dutch 103 Armoured Recce Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Sybren van Klaarbergen, visited the Trakehner soldiers of Sector Two West.

He took the opportunity to observe A Squadron's Area of Responsibility from the air and from the ground.

Besides spending time with his own soldiers, he also met with the British soldiers of Irish Bridge platoon, who, during their six months in Cyprus, serve under the command of Dutch Major Robbert Verbrugh.

During his visit, he also observed the MFR conducting their crowd riot control training.

Well informed, and with taped greetings for the home front, he returned safely to The Netherlands.

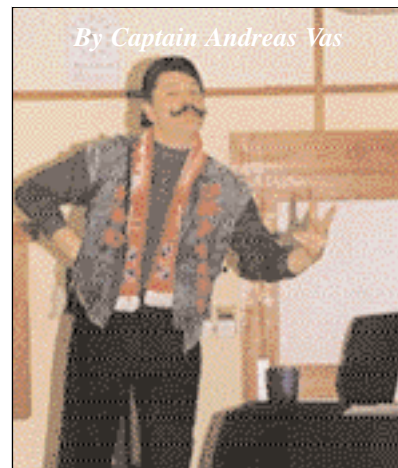


Lieutenant Colonel Sybren Klaarbergen shakes hands with Irish Bridge platoon commander 1/Lieutenant Andy Thornton



MFR Lieutenant Roelen was an excellent goalkeeper....., cyclist, runner, swimmer.....!!

Austrian humour



By Captain Andreas Vas

"Sapperlot"

Helmut Hüller, a wellknown Austrian satirist, has been a welcome guest at UN missions ever since 1989.

That's when he first visited Austrian soldiers based at the Golan Heights, followed one year later by a visit to UNFICYP.

To enable all Austrian soldiers to enjoy the extracts of Hüller's programmes "Sapperlot" and "Postfach 30", he performed in Camp Pyla as well as in OP 142 and in Camp Duke Leopold V.

Cyprus is the first stop on this Ministry of Defence sponsored welfare tour. The next stations are Kosovo and, once again, the Golan Heights.

It goes without saying that Helmut Hüller will always find a warm welcome whenever he returns to Austrian soldiers serving in Cyprus.

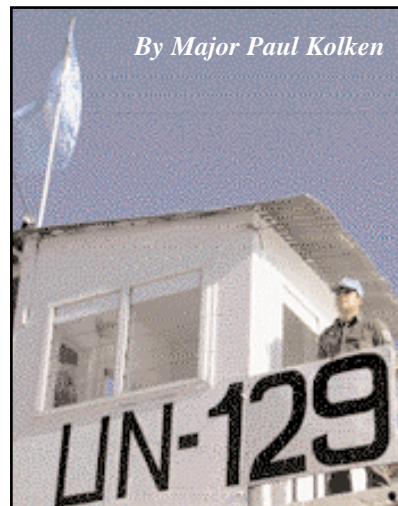
Me and my OP

G rüß Gott. My name is Corporal Thomas Fiegl. I am from the Tirol, Austria, where I live with my parents, my two sisters and my brother. By trade I am a bricklayer, which proved to be very useful when Camp Pyla, my base station, needed refurbishing. I have twice signed up with the Austrian Defence Forces, the first time to be sent on a mission with the UN Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights, and now with UNFICYP.

UN observation post 129 is the OP where I spend about six hours a day in two-hour shifts. We man this OP from 6:00am until the closing time of the coffee shops late in the evening. It's quite good fun to work here. I look down on to the Pyla village square and



Thomas Fiegl observes life on the Pyla city square, whilst (a picture of) his commanding officer observes him.



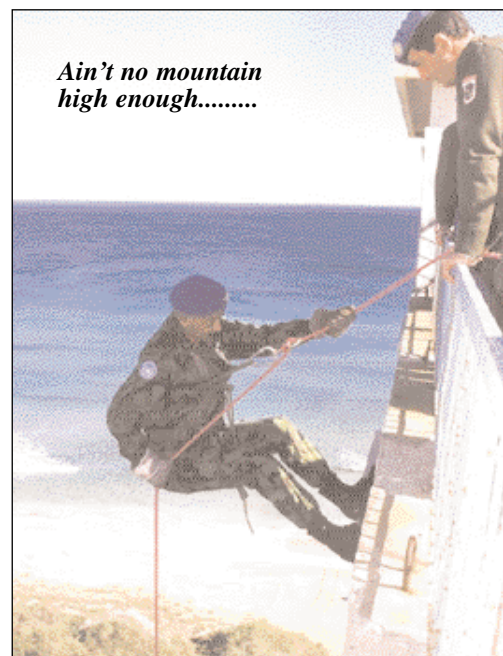
By Major Paul Kolken

"It's good to see the two communities mixing."

the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot coffee shops. It's good to see both communities mixing. Visitors of one coffee shop pop out to buy nuts in the other coffee shop and then go back.

From my rooftop I talk a lot with the people in the square. On my right hand side I can observe the edge of the Pyla plateau. Every time I notice an over-manning or see uniformed soldiers coming down to the village, I have to act upon it. Especially in the tourist season, this is a lively place. On a busy day, up to 1,600 tourists visit this mixed village.

In March I shall leave Cyprus. I am having a good time, but at the end of my tour, I shall be happy to return to the Tirol, back to 'mein Heimat'.



Ain't no mountain high enough.....

OP 152, a roof with a view

By Captain Andreas Vas

I t's nothing like the Alps of course. But serving on top of a 12-storey abandoned apartment building might give one a sensation of height. It definitely provides any visitor with a spectacular view of the Mediterranean, the coastline of the south eastern part of Cyprus, and the fenced off area of the pre-war holiday resort Varosha.

Austrian soldiers have six permanent or temporary observation posts to observe the status quo and report violations which

occur.

It has almost become a tradition to offer incoming Force Commanders the opportunity to experience an Alpine sensation to conclude a visit to OP 152, by avoiding the 189 steps down and descend using a rope instead. Supervised by experienced Alpine training staff, Major General Rana faced the challenge without any problem.

After all, coming from Nepal, the Force Commander recognizes a mountain when he sees one.

Four cultures under one roof



Peter Ham, a satisfied station commander

Sergeants Steve Smith and Fernando Perez are on their way back from Famagusta. Three times a week, their team sends somebody to Camp Duke Leopold V to get fresh supplies. Station Commander WO2 Peter Ham has just come back from his weekly meeting at the Force Military Police Unit in the UNPA, while Master Sergeant Miklós Tormási has ensured that none of the phone calls remained unanswered.

Just after noon, all four are home again, ready to talk about work and life in a multi-cultural team. 'Home' is a spacious house on the southern edge of Dherinia.

To find it, you do need some guidelines. "That's because our signs are so popular," explains Steve Smith. "Even though we nail them up quite high, somebody manages to pinch them all the time."

Miklós 'Jack of all trades' Tormási removes the tape from a new sign he painted the day before. This afternoon he will make a new attempt to signpost their Military Police station.

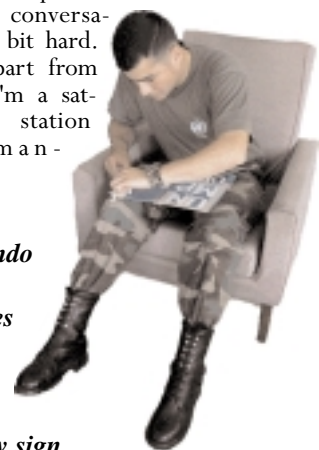
"We are lucky to have such a balanced team," says Peter Ham. "Between the four of us we have to run our station, our household and our leisure time. If characters didn't match, life would be much more difficult. Everyone has to do his bit, like taking turns in cooking."

Fernando Perez has the reputation of being the best cook in the house. "My mother taught me. I often cooked for my 13 brothers. Yes, 13. My mother is a strong woman. She gave birth to three sets of twins," assures Fernando proudly, adding "Tonight, chicken breast is on the menu."

Peter takes over again: "Duty-wise, we run a scheme of three days on and one day off duty. We deal mostly with traffic accidents in Sector Four. But we also patrol in Ayia Napa and Larnaca. We meet with bar owners, give them our contact numbers and invite them to call us whenever they need our assistance."

"I'm happy to say we've established good relations in our sector. This also applies to both the police forces north and south of the buffer zone. One problem we do face, is the difficult communication across the buffer zone. All calls have to go through Camp Duke Leopold, and this can make direct conversation a bit hard. But apart from that, I'm a satisfied station commander."

Fernando Perez removes the tape from his new sign



UNCIVPOL hosts premier of South Australia



Only a week before the end of his service with UNFICYP, Chief Superintendent Graham Taylor (above, left) hosted Mr John Olsen, the Premier of the State of South Australia. The Premier visited the UNPA where he met with the Chief of Mission. After that, Captain Neil Richardson briefed him about the Green Line in the old centre of Nicosia. In a friendly atmosphere, and covered by an Australian TV crew, Mr Olsen met with members of UNCIVPOL and learned about the way they contribute to fulfilling UNFICYP's mandate.

Australia Day

By Sergeant Michelle Lomas-Travers

Australia's national day is 26th January. It is celebrated by all Australians, marking the beginning of modern Australia. Australia was "discovered" in 1770 when English sailor, Captain James Cook, landed and claimed "the great south" for Britain.

17 years later, Britain sent a small group of settlers who arrived off the east coast of Australia just south of present day Sydney. As the landing site was inadequate for settlement, the group sailed north to what we now call Sydney harbour where the fleet landed and a

flag was unfurled on 26th January.

Today in Australia, the national day is marked as a public holiday and celebrations are conducted throughout the country.

The Australian UNCIVPOL contingent celebrated the day with a reception at the Australian High Commission in Nicosia, hosted by the High Commissioner, Mr Howard Brown.

In true Australian style, celebrations continued with a typical Aussie BBQ and a taste of Australian hospitality.



Current members of the Australian civilian police

Storm over Cyprus



Above: Engineers Sergeant Jim Stewart and Lance Corporal Neil van Driel trim the shrub just enough to let a patrol car go through

A stone wall crushes two soldiers on patrol - that could easily have been the result of the storm which battered Nicosia on Thursday 20 January. But the patrolling Privates Shean Armstrong and Sinjin Cooper were lucky. The eight-foot high wall came down minutes before the City Platoon soldiers reached the spot. The debris covered most of the patrol route, and would certainly have struck a passer-by.

City Platoon Commander, Captain John James, comments on his actions taken: "The risk to continue patrolling was too high. For the duration of the storm I had to cancel all scheduled patrols.

"It wasn't only this wall that came down. Near Ayios Kassianos school, a high bush was uprooted, blocking the patrol track. The regiment's engineers made sure we can use that road again. We have to remain constantly aware that, during the rainy season and especially during a storm like last Thursday, the deteriorated buildings may collapse."

Walking encyclopaedias

By Lieutenant Dave Jones, OC Liri

We really prepared well for the Military Skills competition. First we concentrated on building our level of fitness, in particular running with boots. Sergeant Hart, our team controller and resident Ops Info expert, taught and

assessed our knowledge of Cyprus history, key political and military figures in the Cyprus problem, recognition of uniforms and insignia and OPFOR military hardware. Come the actual day, we were walking encyclopaedias.

Although very alien to us, we very quickly got to grips with the AK-47, FN, AR-16, Steyr, Glock, Makarov, Beretta, SA-80 and Browning. The team practised stripping and assembling each one, sometimes using methods that I imagine would not be found in any military manual.

Training for the other stands, however, required outside help, and a training day for all Sector 2 teams and the MFR was laid on at the Ledra Palace. The driving stand consisted of a tick test, fault-finding and a tricky obstacle course.

First Aid and signals were revised and our ability to assemble a raft and cross the swimming pool was practised.

The two other stands we practised for were map reading and pistol shooting; both these activities require high degrees of accuracy. We managed to achieve this on at least one of them, although it involved compasses and protractors, rather than pistols.

Thursday 3 February came around quickly and we were at our first stand by 0615 hrs. The forced march section got harder as the day progressed; we practically sprinted every leg in order to make the fastest time and therefore pick up the maximum number of points.

At the end of the day, in a rapidly darkening sky and to the backdrop of the MFR's Tactics, the Force Commander reminded us of the aim and the spirit of the competition. He then proceeded to announce the results. Despite our hard work and commitment, we were disappointed we didn't quite make the top three.



A heavy box of books...

RAF drew vs Staffords

By Captain John James

When the Staffords played against RAF Cyprus at the UNPA, the home advantage was with the Staffords. This, though, was soon forgotten, as the strong cross-wind meant that playing any quality football was going to be difficult.

As much as both sides tried, it was a case of who wanted it more on the day. The physical battle that ensued was not pretty by any stretch of the imagination, but it was the Staffords who did all of the early running and who were constantly battling for every loose ball.

The RAF took a different approach. On occasion, they put together some nice passing moves, but yet again, the wind put an end to most of their attacking options. Both Corporals Hack and Warburton saw sight of the goal in the first half, only to see their efforts go agonisingly wide. The RAF did not sit back and some good play nearly broke the deadlock, but at the interval, it was all square.

The second half began with the Staffords having the best of it early on. The team talk at half time had an effect as they moved the ball to both flanks and set up some good attacks. As the game ebbed and flowed, the RAF dragged themselves back into contention and will probably think themselves unlucky not to have gone ahead on the hour. Again, the Staffords battled for everything, with Captain James and Sergeant Bennett going agonisingly close.

A defensive lapse after 80 minutes

gave Toby Longman of the RAF the chance to slot home and break the deadlock. His shot bobbled passed Lance Corporal Godfrey in the Staffords goal. All he could do was look on in despair. This led to a fierce fight back by the home side and a couple of enforced substitutions.

Instrumental in the equaliser was Private Montgomery who, after beating three players, knocked the ball into the path of Corporal Steve Hack who did well to stay on his feet and belt it into the RAF goal. With time running out, the whistle blew and a 1-1 draw was probably a fair result.



UNCIVPOL/ ARGCON play Dhenia population



As a result of a dinner table challenge, a joint UNCIVPOL/ ARGCON team played football against a team of the population of Dhenia.

The final score was 8-1 in favour of the UN team. This was rather a good indication of the skills of the UNCIVPOL and ARGCON members, and not a reflection of the determination and ability of the Dhenia team.

After the match, the community liaison continued at the local coffee shop and at UNCIVPOL's Dhenia station, where the match and all lessons learned were discussed in depth.

Stags deserved to win rugby match

By Captain John James

An audience doesn't visit a rugby field because it's a bright, sunny day. A good game of fast, running rugby, that's what they want.

Well, fortunately neither the Stags (the Ayios Nicolaos team) nor the Staffords (the Sector 2 team) were out to disappoint them, although with 20 minutes on the clock, it was obvious who was going to fare better.

The Stags attacked from the off and after five minutes, they got over the try line for the first score. A penalty soon followed. The Staffords were 8-0 down and things were not looking good. After this initial setback, the Staffords got their game

together and started to run the ball, putting pressure on the Stags' three quarter line. This pressure paid off and some good support play by the forwards led to the scrum half, Captain John James, dispossessing his opposite number and bagging 5 points for the visitors. Corporal Dave Travis did the business with the boot and after 20 minutes, the Staffords were looking good at 8-7.

The Stags had obviously not read the script, and with some good running and clever tactical kicking, poured pressure onto the visitors' back-line. Some good interplay by the two Stags centres led to a flurry of scores and at half time, the home

side were comfortable at 23 -7.

The second half continued where the first had ended. A catalogue of errors killed any chance the Staffords had to fight back and the Stags were in no mood to let them off the hook. Some fine and spirited individual performances could not make up for the lack of match practice and rugby knowhow. The Stags took full advantage of this. They continued to pile on the points and at the close it finished 50-7.

The Staffords learned a lot of lessons the hard way, but also observed many encouraging signs to build on for the future. The Stags fully deserved their win.

