The Blue Beret

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The Secretary-General and President Papadopoulos met in Paris on 28 February to review the Cyprus situation and look for ways to move the process forward. For the first time, they agreed that the resumption of the negotiating process, within the Good Offices framework, should be both timely and carefully prepared. The SG welcomed the fact that the leaders of both communities had agreed to bi-communal, technical-level discussions on a range of issues. He and President Papadopoulos were hopeful these would help “restore trust” between the two communities and be a first step in preparing the way towards a comprehensive settlement. The SG noted that the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Talat, had assured him he too shared this aspiration. 

The SG and Mr. Papadopoulos also agreed that all concerned would benefit, and the prospects for further talks would be improved if progress could be achieved on further disengagement of forces and demilitarization on the island, on the complete de-mining of Cyprus, and on the issue of Famagusta.

SG Meets Mr. Papadopoulos in Paris

Mr. SG: What do you think of the recent Turkish proposals and, second, are you going to appoint a new Cyprus envoy?

Mr. TP: I agree with the Secretary-General. Our position is that of action and, today, we looked at a whole series of initiatives, of the process of settlement of the Cyprus problem. We are going to take a look at a whole series of issues and process, of the exercise of my Good Offices and I would expect [them] to work with me in that spirit. Besides, they have a direct interest in the settlement of this issue.

TP: I agree with the Secretary-General. Our position is very clear. We want the European Union to have a more active role in the process. I have assurances that they are prepared to do that. The Cyprus problem remains under the aegis of the United Nations and the Secretary-General.

SG: As I said, the EU has always been supportive and I expect them to continue to be supportive. There is no problem about it.

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Q: Do you consider the efforts of the SG’s Good Offices over the years, we have cooperated very effectively with the European Union and we intended to cooperate with them. In some situations, they have provided projects and they have provided other assistance. In some cases, we exchanged ideas on some of the technical issues and process, of the exercise of my Good Offices and I would expect [them] to work with me in that spirit. Besides, they have a direct interest in the settlement of this issue.

TG: I agree with the Secretary-General. Our position is very clear. We want the European Union to have a more active role in the process. I have assurances that they are prepared to do that. The Cyprus problem remains under the aegis of the United Nations and the Secretary-General.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, what do you think of the Turkish initiatives and are you going to pick up the initiative of Mr. Talat for the same meeting and are you going to appoint a new Cyprus envoy?

TG: First of all, we just wished Mr. Talat well. Be patient and be merciful. Let him get well first. Once he’s back on his feet, it is not excluded that we will have an opportunity to meet in New York some time in the future. As I said, we took stock of the negotiations, of the process of settlement of the Cyprus issue and we also touched on the Turkish initiative. We are going to take a look at a whole series of actions and Turkey does admit that it has an obligation, under the EU requirement, to undertake certain steps which it will take. But, of course, there were other steps in their plan of action and, today, we looked at a whole series of others and it is the EU that will undertake them.

TP: I am talking of the Turkish Cypriot side and [the Greek Cypriot side] and we will see what proposals we can make for the parties to act on. On the question of appointment of an envoy, yes, in the application of my Good Offices I am usually to have an envoy and, at the right time, I will appoint an envoy, but that does not mean that we are not doing any work on the question. First of all, I have a very competent Special Representative on the ground, Mr. Michael Maller, whom I hope most of you have met, and he is going to work closely with the parties on certain steps and certain actions that they will need to take. We will be back-stopping and preparing for these things in New York with my Under-Secretary-General, Ibrahim Gamberi and his staff, and when the time is ripe I will appoint an envoy.

Q: Did you also discuss the issue of the missing people?

TG: Yes, we are just about to appoint a third member of [the Committee] and they will begin their work very soon and I do expect the two communities to work very expeditiously on this and move forward. There will be a full-time member [of the Committee] on the island.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, has there been any fresh discussion on agreeing to new Cyprus envoy?

TG: In negotiations, sometimes people say that as long as you are talking you are making progress. But what I have indicated is that we want to see is a much narrower gap between our words and our actions. In the next couple of months, we are going to do whatever we can to narrow that gap as we move ahead with the process.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, can you see any further progress that you would like to see and any potential ways we can produce?

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RGCON celebrated its medal parade on 10 February at Camp San Martín. The ceremony was presided over by SRSG Michael Møller, his first ever medal ceremony. Medals were presented to CO ATF, Lt. Col. Claudio Javier Piedra-Buena, and members of ATF and UN Flt who have completed 90 days of peacekeeping service.

Later, a reception was held at the Officers’ Mess, where guests tasted different typical Argentinian dishes and watched an exhilarating display of how the tango should be danced.

Less than a month after starting his assignment, SRSG Michael Møller invited all staff from HQ UNFICYP – national and international civilians, military and police – to a “get-to-meet” you reception at Ledra Palace. All turned out in their finery for a relaxed and convivial evening. Apart from meeting with the new CM, it was one of those rare occasions when colleagues got a chance to mingle in an off-duty setting.

Five days later, on 31 January, the CM was again at Ledra Palace, this time to meet with Cyprus media from both sides of the buffer zone. Again, it proved to be a very cordial event, with all leaving very happy to have been given the opportunity to meet UNFICYP’s new chief.

UNFICYP Force Commander – Maj.Gen. Rafael José Barni


Maj.Gen. Barni served as the Commanding Officer of the Argentinian Army Logistic Command from 2004 to 2005. Between 2003 and 2004, he was the chief of the Planning Department of the Argentinian Army, and from 2000 to 2003, he served as the Assistant Military Attaché to the Argentinian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and later as Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies at the Argentinian Army General Staff from 2002 to 2003.

As a Lieutenant Colonel, he was the Commanding Officer of the 15th Infantry Regiment from 1993 to 1994. He served in UNFICYP as the Commanding Officer of the Argentinian Battalion in 1997. He had previously served as a military observer in the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) from 1989 to 1990. He also organised and participated in the preparation of combat teams for the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) in 1996 and for the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) in 1995.

Maj.Gen. Barni has a university degree in strategy and organisation from the Command and General Staff College in Buenos Aires. He also holds post-graduate degrees in military strategic planning and strategy from the Command and General Staff College in Buenos Aires.

Born in 1950, Maj.Gen. Barni is married and has three children.
A coming together of children from the two communities for a performance by the Merlin Marching Band of the Royal Fusiliers on 27 January 2006 marked the first visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Michael Møller, to the UN-supervised buffer zone village of Pyla.

Around 70 children from both schools gathered in the town square where they were given a hands-on, show-and-tell about the world of band music. Individual instruments were displayed and the band leader briefly explained how each is played. Children from both schools got a chance to play some of the instruments along with their head teachers. This brought on a chorus of excited giggles and happy laughter at the novel experience.

The band then led the children on a march through the streets of the village to the Greek Cypriot School where a tree planting ceremony was held.

Both schools thanked the UNFICYP Chief of Mission as well as Civil Affairs Political Officer Sally Anne Corcoran for facilitating the event and presented them with plaques. The two parents’ associations also exchanged gifts.

After the event, the Chief of Mission met and was briefed by UNPOL officers on their work in the buffer zone village. He also met the head teachers of the two schools and the Turkish and Greek Cypriot Muhktars.

Pyla was one of three villages that suffered damage as a result of a tornado passing through the area on 7 February. According to press reports, around 50 homes were affected with slates blown off roofs and windows smashed. Cars were also damaged and water tanks destroyed. Trees were uprooted by the force of the tornado.

Two people were reported to have sustained injuries – one, a Turkish Cypriot man, was struck by metal debris flying through the air; the other, an elderly Greek Cypriot, sustained head injuries when hit by a flowerpot.

The tornado also damaged the nearby villages of Makrasyka, Ayios Theodoros and Engomi in the north, with Turkish Cypriot newspapers stating that numerous homes and 50 vehicles had been damaged.
UNFICYP's third integrated medal parade, took place at the UN Flight hangar on 23 February. SRSG Møller welcomed guests, including the Ambassadors of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, the Australian High Commissioner and the British Deputy High Commissioner, as well as members of the UN family in Cyprus to the parade, noting that it was being held in the buffer zone, “our place of business”.

Those on parade represented a cross-section of UNFICYP’s military contingents from all three sectors, he said. “The uniforms may differ from contingent to contingent, but the blue berets they all wear remind us that our peacekeepers are here, united in purpose and dedication, to serve in support of the UN’s long-standing commitment to the cause of peace, stability and a return to normalcy on this island.”

In the year since UNFICYP downsized into a reconfigured, more mobile and flexible force, “the buffer zone had not shrunk,” he observed. “Our patrols continue to go out and cover the same ground, the same terrain, night and day.

“While we may be a smaller force than just over a year ago, we do not shrink from our responsibilities of patrol and control. The task of maintaining the integrity of the buffer zone is not always easy, particularly when UNFICYP patrols are challenged by one or other side as to where the buffer zone begins or ends.

“Those challenges are a reminder to us all that the significance and reality of the buffer zone lies in the fact that it exists between unresolved cease fire lines between two opposing military forces. "Thankfully, over the years, the level and nature of incidents has dropped off significantly. However, there are still sufficient instances of friction and fractious behaviour between the two to remind us on a daily basis of why we, the peacekeepers, are here and why UNFICYP’s presence is still needed on this island.

“While it is is fraught, however. Supported by the UN family of agencies here on the island, working in tandem with the communities, we continue to promote the return of normal conditions in the buffer zone. Look at the dramatic impact the opening of the crossing points have had on the island’s day-to-day life. See how de-mining has paved the way for new crossing points and how it has opened up new lands in the buffer zone to the farming community. This is a fine example of cooperation between the UN, the European Union and the two communities. How much better, if this cooperation were extended beyond the buffer zone confines and we could proceed to demine all the island’s minefields!”

The SRSG congratulated all the medal recipients for a job well done.

Polish Posters on Display
One highlight of the Integrated Medal Parade was a special exhibition of Polish poster art celebrating the UN’s 60th anniversary. The prize-winning graphics by young Polish artists were displayed alongside designs by some of Poland’s most eminent printmakers. All were made available for display through the generosity of the Polish Government.

SRSG Møller thanked Poland’s Ambassador to Cyprus, H.E. Zbigniew Szymanski, for the gesture and urged those attending the parade to visit the show.

Maria Skotnicka’s “We, the peoples of the United Nations... 60 years of international solidarity"
**UNFICYP Conducts Rigging Course**

PKO does not recruit specialised rigging staff. Nevertheless, DPKO communications technicians conduct all tower work including the erection of communications towers, installation of antennas, coaxial feeders, obstacle lights and lightning protection systems. At the end of the mission, they take it all down again, a practice which also requires special equipment and training.

Recognising the need to train Communication and Information Technology Section (CITS) technicians to use safe working practices and modern safety equipment while on the towers and to be fully versed in appropriate rescue techniques, CITS in UNHQ, along with colleagues at the UN Logistics Base, set up a two-week “safe working practices at heights” course in the UK in November 2004. UNFICYP’s communications technician Emirali Tunay attended, as did staff members from several other field missions.

Subsequently, UNFICYP was requested to host the second formal rigging training course in November 2005. Participants included:

- Mahmut Devin – UNFICYP
- Hazem Abdulbaqi – UNAMI
- Jimsher Kurtanidze – UNOMIG
- Rashid Sankoh – MONUC
- Per Svedling – UNMIS
- Tariq Masood – UNAMA

Both instructors and students used towers in several UNFICYP locations including UNPA’s 36-metre tower at OP 2005. Participants included:

- Tariq Masood – UNFICYP
- Hazem Abdulbaqi – UNAMI
- Jimsher Kurtanidze – UNOMIG
- Mike Kondokowski – CITS
- Sando Burphy – UNMIS
- Per Svedling – UNMIS
- Rashid Sankoh – MONUC

Subsequently, UNFICYP was requested to host the next course, as UNFICYP will gain training and experience, to visit new countries and indulge in the culture.

D uring February, a number of colleagues reached the end of their tours and left the mission, all sad to go but happy to return to their homelands. Above (left) is Jurgen Leitner, who held the post of Supply Officer for UNFICYP’s Integrated Support Services. He returns to Austria after four-and-a-half-years with the mission and looks forward to his new career – farming artichokes! Above is Lt.Col. Osvaldo Albanesi who returns to Argentina after holding the post of OC UN Flight for one year. On the right is Maj. Horacio Ghionis, the outgoing Force Signals Officer, who also returns to Argentina after a three-year tour. Duilia also returns to HQ New York.

**Driving Safety Road - Rage - What is It?**

As “road rage” incidents make daily headlines and aggressive driving becomes a greater traffic safety concern, UNFICYP’s Master Driver explains what road rage is and how to deal with it.

Road rage is defined as “an assault with a motor vehicle or other dangerous weapon by the operator or passenger(s) of another motor vehicle or an incident that occurred on a roadway.” In order for an incident to be defined as road rage, there must be “willful and wanton disregard for the safety of others.” In other words, road rage means that someone deliberately tried to harm you as a result of something that happened while you were driving your car.

Road rage is a result of several factors, including traffic, personal and professional stress, and aggressive personalities. It is often caused by a combination of these factors. For example, a person who is already stressed due to their daily routine may then encounter traffic congestion, which can trigger their road rage.

**Signs of Aggressive Driving**

- Expressing frustration, cursing,
yelling, gesturing to other drivers
- Not paying attention. Eating,
drinking, talking on the phone,
while driving
- Frequently changing lanes
- Running red lights
- Speeding

These driving patterns can change by concentrating on the issue at hand – driving. Be calm, drive at the same speed as the cars around you (although this is not a legal excuse for driving too fast), take less congested or shorter routes (making a series of right turns may be a lot easier than trying to make a left turn through six lanes of traffic), leave yourself enough time to get where you are going without driving like a manic, and, if necessary, decide you’ll be a little late and stay calm.

If an aggressive driver confronts you, your best course of action is to get out of his way. Swallow your pride, and let him do whatever he pleases, so he can get away from you. Resist the urge to let him pass, or let him merge. Do not make eye contact. You don’t want to see any gestures he may be making. You may not even be aware of it, but these actions may lead to road rage.

**Departing Colleagues**

Chief of UNFICYP CITS Robert Walker and his staff managed the course administration. This included arranging vehicles, accommodation, security passes, training room facilities and the additional equipment for the students and instructors to ensure the course was a success for CITS and for UNFICYP.

Both instructors and students used towers in several UNFICYP locations including UNPA’s 36-metre (120-foot) freestanding tower. This tower provided the introduction to safe working practices, rope work, and rescue techniques. During the two-week course, the students were introduced to standard and specialized rigging equipment; harnesses, helmets, clamps, descenders, types of ropes and knots, rescue techniques, installation of antennas and feeders on towers and cenders, types of ropes and knots, rescue techniques, etc.

Despite the disruption caused by the striking potato farmers on the road to Pyla, and the additional work/travel time involved, the students and instructors also managed to visit tower sites in the buffer zone at OP 123 – Pyla and Camp Izay – Athienou.
Heads Up!!!

New CO UN Flight

Lt. Col. Fernando Augusto Simo was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He graduated from the Argentine Air Force Academy in 1984 as a military pilot and holds a degree in aeronautical and airspace systems. Having passed the helicopter pilot’s course, he has been working with helicopters ever since. This includes many dangerous assignments involving natural disasters, floods and forest fires. In 1988, he was commissioned into 1 Sqn to fly the Bell 212 and participated in SAR activities over the last 42 years.

Looking Back at Blue Berets

UNFICYP has been in operation for more than four decades. The Blue Beret has been reporting its activities over the last 42 years. A look-back at past issues reflects the wealth of people and events.

February 1976

As part of the humanitarian and economic tasks carried out by UNFICYP, 308 tons of wheat flour was transported from Limassol to Nicosia for the United Nations to provide a helicopter for the emergency transport of transient organs from Paphos to Nicosia to save two patients in Nicosia.

February 1996

On Tuesday 13 February, the Argentinian pilots of UN Flight lost the air to an emergency flight against the clock to transport a doctor from Nicosia to Paphos to operate on a kidney donor. Dr. George Kyriakides, Director of the Parasevaidion Surgery and Transplant Centre, and implementing partner of UNHCR bimunal projects in Cyprus, requested the assistance of the United Nations to provide a helicopter for the emergency transport of transient organs from Paphos to Nicosia to save two patients in Nicosia.

MFR – Always Training

The MFR continued its operational readiness training on 18 January by conducting a range serial in the old copper mine at Troulli Village in Sector 4. The exercise consisted of firing vehicle-mounted machine guns from the Company’s armoured TACTICAs and was organised by Capt. Lucas Filippi and Lt. Juan Mujica.

Lt. Mujica also used the exercise as a familiarisation period and selected a deployment route through the buffer zone to test his soldiers’ driving ability along the winding tracks. Once at the firing range, the exercise started with a basic shoot and finished with all four vehicles conducting a “pair fire and manoeuvre” exercise. This final exercise tested the drivers, the gunners and the commander who had to control the movement.

At the end of the day, in line with Argentinian custom, we all gathered around an improvised table in the back of the pick-up to enjoy a traditional Asado. We want to thank the kind cooperation of Sector 4 and FMU, who supported us.

Three Treats for Sector 2

Soldiers of 12th Regiment Royal Artillery got a surprise treat when they were visited by England Rugby Union star Kyran Bracken and models Lucy Pinder and Michelle Marsh, courtesy of Combined Services Entertainment (CSE).

CSE has been providing entertainment to British forces stationed since the end of World War II, offering a welcome respite from the rigours of being stationed abroad.

Kyran Bracken enjoyed a training session with the 12th Regt RA “Stormers” RFC, current holders of the MacLwaine Cup. He was also challenged at every sport from football to ping-pong by both the soldiers of Sector 2 and the Multinational Force Reserve (MFR).

Lucy Pinder and Michelle Marsh posed for photographs with soldiers before being given a tour of the buffer zone.

The end of the visit culminated in an all-ranks party in Ledra Palace Hotel, marking the four-month point of the Regiment’s fourth UN tour in Cyprus.

The Blue Beret
Squash

On the Sporting Front:

Run by the MFR, a squash tournament including all UNFICYP sectors and units took place on 30 January. It was organised as an individual tournament with a play-off system. Nevertheless, every competitor gained points according to the level they reached and then those points were added together for a final sector/unit score. The results are as follows:

**Individuals:**
- **1st Place:** Capt. N. Henderson
- **2nd Place:** Capt. L.J. Filippi

**Teams:**
- **1st Place:** Sector 2
- **2nd Place:** MFR
- **3rd Place:** HQ

Orienteering

The 2006 Cyprus Services Orienteering League Night Championships, known as the Night Owl event, was hosted by UNFICYP this year and held in the UNPA on 15 February. The event, organised by veteran orienteer Diana Bridger, was sponsored by Marios Hadjipetris of GET OUT outdoor gear shop.

Twenty six keen competitors braved probably the coldest night of the year so far and ran on one of the two courses set round the roads, tracks and bondhu near the old Nicosia International Airport.

The results were as follows:

**A Course**
- **Winner:** Sgt. John Thomas
- **Runner-up:** Cpl. Colin Raynor

**B Course**
- **Winner:** Cpl. Hendry
- **Runner-up:** Amanda Wright

**Overall Winner (A and B courses)**
- **Winners:** WO2 Will MacGill and Cpl. Hendry
- **Runners-up:** Sgt. Thomas and Capt. Hannah Frost
- **Third:** Sgt. Richard Burnham and Kyriakos Michaelidou

Running

UNFICYP runners got it together for a run in Petrovilia, Larnaca district, on 29 January. The big event was the UltraSports half marathon (21.1 km) along a scenic route that hugged the coastline and went through the village. The 5 km and 2 km races were a challenge for novice competitors, including teenagers. The temperature hovered around 14 degrees, making it a warm run for January.

Terrific prizes were awarded to runners in many categories. Indeed, just about anyone who turned up won trophies, ranging from windbreakers to shampoo!

**Visitors to UNFICYP**

Sergeant Major Adrian Antonio Paulucci belongs to the Clerks Corps. He has been in the Army since 1980 serving at Headquarter, 8th Mountain Brigade. This is his first mission overseas and he works at Camp Roca JOC.

Congratulations to all three on their promotions and may they have a happy return back to Argentina next April!