Mr de Soto arrives
Staff members get together
Engineers never have a dull moment
Mr de Soto noted that the aim of the talks is to prepare the ground for meaningful negotiations that will lead to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. "This will require willingness by both parties to compromise," he said. "It will require continued support and encouragement from those actors on the international scene whom the Secretary-General views as his friends in conducting this process. It will require a certain amount of patience as well. And the Cypriots must know about patience."

During his visit to Cyprus, Mr de Soto had a view of Cyprus from the air in several UNFICYP helicopter trips, over the buffer zone and between the UNPA and Pyla and Famagusta. He travelled to the Karpas peninsula, where he met with some of the 4,188 Greek Cypriots living there and saw the Apostolos Andreas monastery which is to be renovated in a project led by UNOFS (UN Office for Project Services). In Rizokarpaso, he went to the primary school and the local clinic, as well as to the Greek Cypriot cemetery. A crowd of TV and newspaper reporters and cameramen followed him, including 35 Greek Cypriot journalists.

In other familiarisation visits, he also went to Pyla where he met the Greek and Turkish Cypriot mukhtars (and was briefed by UNICVOLP), to the deserted town of Varosha (briefed by Sector 4), the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque in Nicosia (also to be improved under the UNNOCS project), and for a walk along the Green Line in Nicosia (briefed by Sector 2). He attended the Austrian-Slovenian-Hungarian medal parade in Dervenika and went to San Martin Camp (Sector 1) for a visit with the Argentine Contingent.

Separate meetings with the two leaders were held on 6 March. Prior to his appointment as Special Adviser on Cyprus, Mr de Soto had been Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs at the United Nations since 1 January 1995. In that capacity, he had responsibility for the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific. He also supervised the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Decolonization Unit. Mr de Soto joined the United Nations in 1982 as Special Assistant to Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, and subsequently became the Secretary-General’s Executive Assistant. He was promoted to Assistant Secretary-General in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General in 1988, and served as the Secretary-General’s Personal Representative for the Central American Peace Process from 1989-1991. He conducted the negotiations that resulted in the January 1992 peace agreements in El Salvador.

Mr de Soto is on special leave from the Peruvian diplomatic service in which he holds the rank of Ambassador.

Preparing the ground for meaningful negotiations

By Charles Gaulkin
When the track is wet, it’s too dangerous to drive uphill. This means I have to walk, but I don’t mind. It’s good exercise.

My OP lies at about 260 metres above sea level. It’s not the highest point in the vicinity. On top of this mountain there is the church of Saint Stavros, easily visible from the highway.

During my four-hour shift, I enjoy the fantastic view. To the west, I can see the Lymbia-Dali road, many fields, and the Larnaca-Nicosia highway. Whenever I see a convoy of more than four military vehicles on the highway, or more than two on the Lymbia-Dali road, I have to report this immediately. That’s considered a ‘move forward’. Other incidents I sometimes have to deal with are hunters intruding the buffer zone. To the south, I can see the village of Lymbia.

In winter time, working conditions can be unpleasant at OP 96. Sometimes it is very cold, and there is a strong wind blowing, the tower swings a bit. You need a strong stomach not to become sick.

In March, I will end my tour of duty, and will return to my wife and two daughters.

It is traditional for Sector 4 to present the UN medal to their soldiers alternately north and south of the buffer zone. This time, on 3 March, the event took place at the “Zapion Palace” in Dherinia.

There was a second reason for Sector 4 to hold a parade: Commanding Officer Lt Col Helmut Püschnegger symbolically handed over the UN flag, as the sign of responsibility for more than 300 soldiers in Sector 4, through the hands of the UNFICYP Force Commander, Maj Gen Victory Rana, to Lt Col Günter Kienberger. Special Adviser to the Secretary General, His Excellency Mr Alvaro de Soto, who was on a familiarisation visit to Cyprus for one week, joined in the ceremony in Dherinia.

All in all, 80 Austrian, 62 Hungarian and 25 Slovenian soldiers, who had served their first six months within UNFICYP, were presented their medals by Chief of Mission Mr James Holger, Force Com-mander Maj Gen Victory Rana, Hungarian Brig Gen Tibor Nagy and the Commander of the Austrian International Training Centre, Brig Gen Günter Höfler. Their presentation was musi-cally supported by the city band of Spittal/Drau from Austria. The soldiers and the audience, some of whom were not dressed for an outdoor event, warmed up after the ceremony during the reception at the Zapion Palace hall, where they were treated to drinks, snacks and more Austrian music.

In Austria, he holds the post of Head of the Mission Specific Training Section at the Austrian International Peace Support Command, and is therefore involved with all missions where Austrian soldiers carry out their service.

Lt Col Kienberger is married to Evelin, and they have two daughters.

Early in February, the Austrian Premier League soccer club, GAK Liebherr, spent a winter training camp in Ayia Napa to prepare for the second round of the league. The Austrian soldiers had an opportunity to visit and support the Austrian team during several training sessions.

It was also possible to have a closer look at and meet with the players and their famous trainer, Mr Augenthaler, who earned his credits early in German football.

On 9 February, GAK played MTK Budapest. For the Austrian and Hungarian soldiers of Sector 4, this was almost like a small national tournament within the Sector. The Hungarians beat the Austrians 4-0, which earns the score, since the Austrians were the winners of the military skills competition.

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In March, I will end my tour of duty, and will return to my wife and my two-year-old daughter.
The Staffords remember fallen comrades

By Capt Neil Richardson

T he Staffords serving with UNFICYP in Nicosia held a wreath laying ceremony at Wayne’s Keep Cemetery in the buffer zone on 23 February in honour of four of the members of the South Staffordshire Regiment who are buried there. Pte B Banks, W H A Asprey, C K Hewitt and C A Ingram died while the Battalion was garrisoned in Cyprus between 1955 and 1957.

The South Staffordshire Regiment was posted to Nicosia in Sept 1955, and the enjoyment of Nicosia nightlife after service in the Egyptian desert was short-lived. Tensions soon increased, making it unsafe for soldiers to move around the city unless in arms. The civil police were unable to cope with the civil disturbances and small detachments of troops led by an NCO were soon billeted at the isolated police outposts.

Most of the battalion’s time in 1956 was spent in searches for wanted men, arms and ammunition and in numerous street disturbances in which the soldiers behaved with much steadiness and restraint. Although the primary role of the battalion was internal security, detached platoons and companies played their part in the large scale operations conducted outside of Nicosia. Towards the end of the year, the call on the soldiers was at such a peak that the Band and Drums was often used.

Before leaving Cyprus, the South Staffords had a relief from their 18 months of static internal security duties and played a full part in two large scale operations in the Kyrenia Mountains and Troodos range.

In his farewell speech to the Battalion in February 1957, Sir John Harding, Governor and Commander in Chief, said: “When you return to the United Kingdom, you can tell everyone you meet that you have carried out your task with honour and distinction, and that you have played a major part in restoring the forces of law and order in Cyprus.”

43 years on, the Staffords are back in Cyprus and continue to promote the values of their predecessors along the buffer zone.

New civilian police on the beat

By Sgt Mark Yarrow

T he latest contingents of Australian and Irish civilian police arrived in Cyprus on 14 February to replace those members of UNFICYP who, having finished their tours, were heading back to their home countries.

All new personnel are experienced police officers with knowledge gained in a number of areas of civilian policing including uniform duties, criminal investigations, surveillance, international operations, special branch, administration and internal investigations. Despite this, the new officers still needed to undergo four days of familiarisation training at the Ledra Palace Hotel to prepare them for their deployments to the various UNPOL stations around Cyprus.

Now at their stations, the new members have been wholeheartedly throwing themselves into their UN duties, showing that they are more than capable of maintaining the same high standards displayed by the UNPOL members they have replaced.

FPM visits UNFIL

T he Force Prevent Marshal, Maj Richard Moore, recently carried out a liaison visit to UNFIL in southern Lebanon. He was hosted by the FPM - Lt Col HS Dinhchka from the Indian Army.

The visit included detailed briefings from all the departments of the UNFIL MP Company. The two police units are faced with many similar problems and there was a useful exchange of information during the visit. It was no surprise to find that road traffic accidents feature high on the list of priorities for UNFIL MP’s, but with road conditions and driving standards far worse than in Cyprus, the number is surprisingly low.

The primary UNFIL patrol vehicle is the Toyota Land Cruiser/Four Runner, which is seen as near perfect for the task. Other equipment is very similar to that in UNFICYP.

During his visit, Maj Moore was admirably hosted by Indian officers at Indian House in Naqora for an evening of delightful national music and hospitality.

Getting away from it all

By Capt Neil Richardson

U nder the direction of Sgt Terry Smith, the MT cell took on the task of renovating the Canadian memorial outside Sector 2 Headquarters. Clearly suffering from the elements, and in desperate need of a new coat of paint, the task was set and the MT set about collecting the necessary equipment. Work started with the paving being scrubbed clean of weeds and the brass plaque was removed before a new coat of paint was applied all round. With the brass plaque given vigorous elbow grease and a generous dose of Brasso, finally restored to its former glory, it was screwed back in place.

The memorial was constructed on the departure of the Canadian Contingent from the military mission of UNFICYP in June 1993. The brass plaque commemorates the three officers and 25 other ranks who died while serving as a part of the contingent keeping the peace in Cyprus.

The Commanding Officer, Sector Two, lays a wreath at the grave of Pte Ingram, South Staffordshire Regiment.

The MT cell renovate Canadian memorial

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By Capt Neil Richardson

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MT cell renovate Canadian memorial

Off to the pyramids
Bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, carpenters. A military operation can’t do without them. UNIFICYP is no exception. In Sector Two, a detachment of 13 sappers deploys with every Roulement Regiment, tasked with providing engineer support to the unit in order to create and maintain safe working conditions for United Nations operations.

“And that’s quite a challenge,” says Lt Ruth Lloyd, the commander of the current engineer detachment.

“Although UNIFICYP has been deployed along the buffer zone for more than 25 years now, maintenance was always carried out with a six-monthly mandated period in mind.”

Ruth hails from Ayrshire in Scotland.

There’s no hiding her accent when she says: “The sappers on this tour returned to Bosnia only in March ’99. Getting an opportunity to see the world is never a concern for sappers in 36 Engineer Regiment, the regiment supporting the Roulement Regiment. We frequently have sappers with KFOR in Kosovo, and we provide support to Kenya and Northern Ireland.

“With UNIFICYP, my sappers have an excellent and valuable opportunity to gain experience in their artisan trades. Amongst others, the detachment holds electricians, plumbers, carpenters and bricklayers. Every sapper is also trained as a combat engineer, which provides skills in areas such as water supply and bridging. The sum total of all the trades and experience is a detachment of little more than a section of sappers, on which the commander relies.

Currently the detachment includes two engineers from the Royal Netherlands Army. The Dutch follow a very different training system from the Brits. Instead of training their lads in one particular field, they take one overall course and learn a little of everything; then they specialise later wherever they want. For example, Cpl Timmermans, a bricklayer by trade, is a carpenter in the army. We’ve enjoyed working with the Dutch, and we’ve learned a lot from each other. Now we’re completely integrated. Having the facility of Dutch sappers as a point of contact with the Dutch Sector 2 West is such a great help. It’s made a huge difference. And we already have invitations to Holland!”

Dutch Cpl Dennis Leeimeier confirms the satisfaction of working with other nationalities is mutual.

“There’s a nice atmosphere in our group, I know Lt Lloyd takes good care of his personnel. If need be, he fights for us.”

Right now, Dennis is replacing a ventilator in a toilet at Falcon’s troop house.

“There’s always a lot of work, especially when it has been raining. The electrical wiring in many places is very bad. At Ortona troop house it is terrible. The good thing is that I can gain experience in this field. My colleague, LCpl ‘Smudge’ Smith, is a more highly trained electrician than I am and I’ve learned a lot from him. At Ypenburg, we have rearranged the electrical lines to make sure that when a fuse blows after using a heater, the equipment in the Ops room will not be affected.”

Three of Dennis’ colleagues start their day in an office at Wolesley Barracks, which has been stripped to the ground.

“I started this task yesterday,” says Spr Craig Ramsbottom.

“Together with Keith Stafford, I’ve taken off all the old plaster. Today we shall replaster this office, while Peter Leighton makes sure everything will be finished off nicely.”

“My main challenge is that we’re up against several constraints, money being the biggest one. Not always does the funding meet up to what needs to be done on the line. So we have to use a lot of initiative and maintain flexibility. Primarily we are under orders from CO Sector 2, but we also receive requests from the Force Engineer and Chief Engineer. They give us more long-term planning, while the short term requirements come from CO Sector 2. Having such a variety of skills with such a breadth of experience means we can overcome most problems.”

“Luckily,” says Ruth, “a tour in Cyprus isn’t all work. My sappers look forward to the many adventure training opportunities that are available, as well as enjoying the many sights and attractions that the island has to offer. A deploy-mend in December gives the lads a chance to go to the Troodos moun-
tains for a spot of skiing, whilst also providing enough good weather in the latter stages of the tour to return to Maidstone with a good suntan to show off to the next detachment.”

Ruth actually started off her working life in accountancy. But then, she adds: “I found I enjoyed doing something more tangible, if only in a small way. Even out here in Cyprus, we are providing a service to the guys to make life comfortable for them - whichever theatre you go to, you can see the fruits of your labour, and that’s one of the reasons the engineers appealed to me. I also enjoy working with other nationalities very much and I’ve got used to dealing with other armies. For me, that’s one of the attractions. I’ve met many interesting people. After my Cyprus tour, I will travel to Australia to visit contacts I’ve made since joining the army. I basically signed up because I thought it would be a challenge, and I was right!”
What is close combat? Some people may think that it’s like martial arts. But it isn’t. Close combat is a fight under a distance of 30m with hand grenades, rifles, bayonets and man against man. That means you have to fight with your weapon when you’re not able to shoot with it, and these are the main techniques of the Austrian system. The Austrian Army teaches this practice to all conscripts of fighting units. It is a very important part of their training, and it’s the reason we need close quarter combat basic trainers.

A course to train soldiers in close combat techniques and to qualify them as close combat basic instructors was run in the UNPA between 9 and 18 Feb. It was planned and run by WO2 Niegl (MFR) who is a close combat instructor. The course was initially planned for soldiers from the Austrian contingent, however three places were allocated to soldiers from the MFR. One Dutch, one Argentinian and one British JNCO took part.

The course consisted of a number of days of teaching and of practical lessons. Various methods of attack and defence, both with and without weapons, were taught. In addition, the students learned how to teach these techniques safely and correctly to others.

The final day consisted of both written and practical tests. The practical test involved a close quarter battle (CQB) lane and a two-minute full contact free fight with your opponent.

All students successfully passed the course with only minor bumps, bruises and one broken nose. WO2 Niegl was pleased with the outcome, and enjoyed teaching the Austrian system of close combat to a multinational class.

Integration in peacekeeping missions

For a few years now, the HQ Mobile Force Reserve company has been a mix of soldiers, customs - with the members having many things in common, yet many differences. Differences in thinking, in dress, in mode of behaviour, in eating habits, all of which makes the MFR an excellent place (and I personally think the best) in UNFICYP to develop and improve our knowledge of each other. It isn’t strange to hear a Hungarian saying: “hola” or “buén dia”, or to see an Argentinian, a Brit and a Dutchman chatting in Spanish, English and Dutch - with a lot of gestures and body language.

As second-in-command of a unit in a multinational force, this has been an excellent opportunity for me to improve my skills of command as well as thinking, speaking and writing in another language. This could appear difficult, but all members of the MFR are well aware of the chain of command. In addition, every platoon and section comman-der handles the official lan-guage of his unit, so it isn’t as difficult as it could be.

For me, the relationships I have built are priceless. As comrades, we have all worked as hard and efficiently as possible, and I hope that the friends I have made will remain my friends for a long time.

Mr Fix It

If there’s a problem with the heating system, a broken boiler, a damaged window pane, a burst pipe, a wall which needs painting or whatever, who’s responsible? There are constantly problems arising in the working and living quarters of Sector 1, and, of course, there are those designated to help sort these matters out. They are the members of the engineer’s section in HQ Company. We invariably don’t even notice them - until something goes wrong.

In Headquarters Sector 1, WOII Pablo Galeazzi is the man in charge. On a regular basis, he visits every installation and building, looking for possible failures and problems. He’s also the person who receives complaints from all of us who live in San Martín Camp when something isn’t working properly.

Although his duties can sometimes be tedious, he always has a big smile on his face and is ready to help everyone who needs him. But what really surprises us all is his unfaillng ability to fix almost anything.

He never has Saturdays or Sundays off, and his work never finishes. Every time he thinks he’s free, a new problem appears and he’s off again.

Pablo says: “I was born in 1963 in Buenos Aires. I joined the NCO Academy in 1982 and became a corporal in the mechanical engineer’s branch in 1986. Specialised in mountain climbing and I’m the proud holder of the “Silver Condor”.

“This is my second peacekeeping mission. I was first posted to the former Yugoslavia where I was a member of the Argentine Battalion in UNPROFOR. I am married with six children.”

El señor repara tuiti

Hoy problemas con la calefacción! ... Quién va a reparar la caldera? ... Esta ventana está rot@! ... Fíjese esa gotera por ahí! ... Hay que pintar esta pared! .... Esta es mi segunda misión en una Fuerza de Móvil. Como Pablo dice, “live by the engineer’s slogan. “If we don’t have the materials, we acquire or buy them. If they don’t exist, we simply invent them.”

By Capt Alberto Reyes

By Capt Luis Cormick

By WO2 Jack Kennedy

Taking a ‘mate’ break

Give and take a bit

Of course, Pablo doesn’t work alone. There is a six-man team working together, but it is he who sets the example. The efforts of this team, which are carried out in a quick, efficient and tireless manner, are much appreciated by all personnel in Sector 1.

As Pablo says, “We live by the engineer’s slogan. “If we don’t have the materials, we acquire or buy them. If they don’t exist, we simply invent them.”

And what can I do for you?

By WO2 Niegl

The Blue Beret - March 2000
As we all know, the majority of UNFICYP is composed of military people, but not much gets said about the locally employed civilians who make up just under 200 of the workforce. Mainly Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, they work not only in the UNFICYP headquarters area, but also in the eastern and western parts of the buffer zone.

To date, these civilians have been represented by a committee named ULESO – the UNFICYP Local Establishment Staff Organisation. In July 1995, the United Nations in New York took over from the British Bases the employment and administration of the UNFICYP local workforce. Since then, yearly elections of ULESO's committee of nine have been held, and the committee consists of at least nine members, or seven if nine are not available.

The evening was arranged with two specific objectives in mind. The first was to bring colleagues together in a spirit of togetherness. The second was no less important. According to ULESO’s constitution, the committee must consist of at least nine members, or seven if nine are not available. Unfortunately, during the last elections, an insufficient number of names was submitted. So unless more colleagues are willing to come forward and volunteer to keep ULESO alive, the committee will have no option but to dissolve, thus rendering many colleagues with no representation to the civilian administration.

Unfortunately, it’s not easy for the two communities to spend an evening in each other’s company. The Turkish Cypriots, who were escorted to the restaurant by a member of UNCIPO, arrived without problem and by 8:30 pm, everyone was sitting down to a very acceptable meal. A band was provided which played local music and which, judging by the lack of space on the dance floor, was very popular. Sally Kyriakides, from the ISU Budget Unit, said: “This event was a good opportunity for the local staff who work together, cooperate together and, sadly, share the fear of downsizing, to socialise together. Unfortunately, it’s not easy for the two communities to spend an evening in each other’s company – this was the perfect occasion.”

Houssien Boz, the signwriter in the UNFICYP Workshops, commented: “The Turkish Cypriot had a wonderful time. We had little trouble passing through our checkpoint, or later returning home. We really enjoyed spending an evening with the people we work with during the day. We should definitely do this more often.”

The UNFICYP’s local workforce is composed of soldiers and international staff who have only just arrived in Cyprus. Once the ship is unpacked, the children go to school and the spouse goes to work, there is a huge gap, an ear-deafening silence. No job any more, no friends yet, only strangers around. Strangers, speaking another language. The new start can be hard.

Some partners, having already had such an experience, try to help others build their new social circle. The coffee mornings, which usually take place every second Wednesday, are the first meeting point for newly arrived, the starting point of new friendships, and hopefully the end of hidden loneliness.

Life can be hard for partners of soldiers and international staff who have only just arrived in Cyprus. Once the ship is unpacked, the children go to school and the spouse goes to work, there is a huge gap, an ear-deafening silence. No job any more, no friends yet, only strangers around. Strangers, speaking another language. The new start can be hard.

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Ingys Saad, from the Per-sonnel Section, added: “I was personally very touched by the way both communities joined in everything together and shared their laughter and fun. I also greatly appreciated the efforts of both the Staff Committee and the Civil Affairs Branch to make this event a very special occasion.

There is absolutely no doubt that the whole event was a success. It will be seen whether the staff will succeed in forming a new committee.

J ust a few months since we arrived in Cyprus,” says Shirley, “Apart from Nivis, whose husband works in the personnel office, I don’t know anybody. I sometimes feel so lonely. I’m hoping to meet more people here and make friends.”

According to Helgard Adams, the newly arrived tend to stick with their own nationalities. “Probably also because of the driving forces behind the U.Network,” comments Shirley. “Apart from Nivis, whose husband works in the personnel office, I don’t know anybody. I sometimes feel so lonely. I’m hoping to meet more people here and make friends.”

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Rina joins in and gives some examples of recent activities. “At the end of last year, we spent some lovely hours on a boat trip. Only weeks ago we were kindly invited to Sector 4 and were informed about their work. Now we have an invitation to visit San Martin Camp. This way, we meet other people and widen our social circle. Helping to organise these events is important for me. Before I moved to Cyprus, I had a busy job. It was hard to get used to life without daily commitments. I’m glad I’ve found some sort of a challenge again.”

A s we all know, the majority of UNFICYP is composed of military people, but not much gets said about the locally employed civilians who make up just under 200 of the workforce. Mainly Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, they work not only in the UNFICYP headquarters area, but also in the eastern and western parts of the buffer zone.

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British soldiers play the role of Hungarian

By Cpl Steve hack

The words of Cpl Greg Bayliss follow:

Pafos marathon

By Li Rich Rich

The first runners of the participating teams UNICIPOL, HICUNIFICYP, MFPR-e, MFPR-f, S2W 3, S2W 3, S2W e, S2W e and Ledra start off at 8:30 a.m.

Paphos marathon

More than 100 runners gathered in the picturesque harbour of Paphos to participate in the second Paphos marathon on Sunday 7 February. Runners had come from all over to join in to support the Community Services football team that was to play a touring Hungarian team.

The course, which started at the old market in the town centre, was a bit hilly and included a climb out of the city. It was a good training day for the runners, who were looking to improve their performance before the main event.

The team, six instructors, an admin SNOO and the OC, competed from the beginning and even reached the finish line, which was met with great enthusiasm by the crowd.

Adventurous training

By Cpl Greg Bayliss

Adventurous training has been a key component of the training programme for the Ohara soldiers.

The team has been trying to find new ways to train and have been exploring various training techniques.

One of the most popular training methods has been off-road running, which has been a great way to improve fitness and endurance.

During the training programme, the soldiers have been exploring new locations and trying new activities, such as rock climbing and kayaking.

The soldiers have been setting new goals and challenging themselves to improve their performance.

The training programme is designed to prepare the soldiers for future missions and to keep them motivated.

Adventurous training is an essential part of the training programme for the Ohara soldiers.
Following the disasters in Mozambique, the force chaplains organised an emergency appeal within UNFICYP to help the people caught in the grip of the catastrophe. With more money coming in, the appeal has so far raised over £1,000. Many thanks to everyone who helped and contributed.