Meeting in Kyrenia

Shamrock for St. Patrick’s Day

The Blue Beret
March 2006

Meeting in Kyrenia
Sixteen months ago, in November 2004, de-mining began in a National Guard minefield in the buffer zone. Nine months later, that combination of UN support, Mine Action expertise and EU and other donor funding, propelled by the spirit of the Ottawa Treaty and UN Security Council resolutions to clear the buffer zone and the island of landmines once and for all, was boosted even further. On 12 August 2005, phase two of the de-mining project was launched with the detonation of two landmines in a Turkish Force minefield.

To date, 20 of the buffer zone's 48 minefields have been cleared and more than 900,000 square metres have been returned to normal use. In the process, the way has also been paved for new crossings, enabling the two communities to move about more freely, and opening up new opportunities for trade and commerce.

Now we must focus on the remaining minefields, both inside and outside the buffer zone. But for that we need the resources to complete the job. If the work is to continue, ridding the buffer zone of mines will take an estimated six million euros more. A further five million euros are needed in the immediate future to achieve the ultimate goal of a mine-free Cyprus.

An appeal to the donor countries is being mounted at this time to maintain momentum. The amount involved is a small price to pay for helping accomplish so worthwhile and historic an objective.

Peacemaking and Gender

In late March, some 50 troop-sending and troop-contributing countries took part in a two-day session run by DPKO at UN Headquarters in New York to help expand the number of women military and police personnel in UN peacekeeping missions.

DPKO Gender Adviser Comfort Lamptey said women were crucial in the field. In Liberia, for instance, the presence of women had contributed to disarming and demobilizing more than 20,000 female ex-combatants. That would not have been possible had women not been there as peacekeepers to screen the female ex-combatants. Moreover, the zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation was more effective when more women on the ground. Only 1% of all military personnel, police, peacekeepers, were women – 746 women, 63,862 men. Women comprised only 4% of the police in peacekeeping, 16,000 worldwide, compared to 7,418 men.

She noted that DPKO was asking countries to recruit more women and to deploy more of them. Ms. Lamptey said women wanted to work, not only in administrative or "women only" areas, when it came to their roles in peacekeeping operations. Women were needed to screen female ex-combatants in such areas as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The whole spectrum of peacekeeping activities had to be open to women in uniform.

"We need to come together, determined to commit the strategies we can pursue to work in a joined-up way, bringing women, most especially as a community of women in Cyprus."

"Women have to raise a common banner to join forces against the war within ourselves and surely we can work together across barriers and make a difference!"

– Olga Demetriades

"Progress for women is progress for all!"

– Meral Akinci

In Georgia, for example, made up of 9% of the military, yet only a fraction of them were deployed as peacekeepers.

Antero Lopes, UN Deputy Police Adviser, acknowledged that, to date, women only accounted for 4.1% of the police officers contributed by Member States. Less than 30 police-contributing countries had female officers, he noted. In Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste, women represented 25% of the police force. In Kosovo, the figure was just 14%.
The “Greening” of Cyprus!

St. Patrick’s Day, the day when the Irish, at home and abroad, engage in a glorious outpouring of national pride and cheerful celebrations. We, the Irish contingent of UNPOL, were not going to be found wanting – we would do our country proud.

We gathered at 9.00 a.m. and focused on the tasks ahead. The venues had to be decorated appropriately. No difficult job at the UNPOL club, where we already had a strong presence. But there was also St. Columba’s Church and the International Mess, which had to become “Irish” for the day.

A few short hours later, all was ready. Our distinguished visitor from home, Assistant Commissioner Dermot Jennings (seen amidst his blue-bereted colleagues in photo above) was, as we worked, being afforded the privilege of a Guard of Honour.

Families, friends and guests arriving at the church were ushered to their seats. Soon, the service got under way with “Cead Mile Fáilte Rómháth”, a fine Irish welcome, sung in our native tongue to set the tone for the day. Father Kevin Price, of Irish stock of course, welcomed everyone and gave a brief rundown on the life and work of St. Patrick. Aileen Magner and Conor O’Neill, contingent members, then gave the readings.

Young Eve O’Connor proudly carried the shamrock to the altar for the blessing, head held high, bringing perhaps a tear to the eye of her proud father John, SCAT team leader at Pyla. Contingent Commander Supt. Galway then presented each contingent member with a sprig of shamrock pinned proudly on our lapels. Liam Lawton, Pyla, led us through the “Our Father” as Geilguy. Finally, Father Price summed proceedings up with some tales of his Irish background and some tongue-in-cheek references to our traditional rivalry with our English neighbours. Amazing what you can get away with when you’re a “man of the cloth”!

Then our own four tenors, John O’Connor, Liam Lawton, Paul Curran and Jimmy Kelly, did us proud and sang gloriously as we exited the church.

As everyone made their way to the International Mess, the sky darkened a little but we kept our fingers crossed, confident our patron saint would not let us down. Irish coffees were already prepared for our guests, duly served by the men from the contingent. Kieran Dooley, Chargé d’Affaires at the Irish Embassy, got the formal proceedings underway, reading a St. Patrick’s Day message from President Mary McAleese. Supt. Galway welcomed our guests. Formal proceedings were rounded off with a hearty rendition of the Irish National Anthem as Supt. Galway took the salute.

Traditional Irish dancing and music then followed, accompanied by festive food and drink. The “caicr” was mighty, as was the music. So fine was the day, we thought they would say it at home. As we eventually closed our eyes that night (or should it be next morning?), we smiled in satisfaction – another memorable “Paddy’s Day”.

Diversity in the Sectors

Argentina is the largest contributor to UNFICYP with 295 military personnel, mainly based in Sector 1 but also located at the HQ/UNPOL, UN Flight, MFR, FMU and the Supply Group. However, there are not only Argentinians serving in Sector 1. As a result of a formal invitation by Argentina to other South American countries, the Argentinian Contingent has in the past included soldiers from Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Bolivia and Uruguay have since withdrawn, but Sector 1 still remains very much an integrated contingent.

Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Peru in Sector 1

Brazil has been participating with UNFICYP since 1992; Paraguay since 1998; Chile since 2001 and Peru since 2002. Currently, Brazil and Chile provide one officer each as a MOLO, while Chile, Paraguay and Peru each provide one squad of 14 soldiers.

Although from the same continent, each country has a different way of life, habits and customs. The different climates, lifestyles, vegetation, food and so on, impact on their respective and varied cultures.

Paraguay: Cpl. First Class Lugo Vidal

Paraguay: Cpl. First Class Lugo Vidal has been participating with UNFICYP since 1995; Paraguay since 1998; Chile since 2001 and Peru since 2002. He is married to Ana Maria and they have a son, Juan Pablo, and a daughter, Maria Victoria.

Paraguay: Cpl. First Class Lugo Vidal shares the responsibilites of being a member of the Fijian Contingent. Heh is a member of the Army’s Air Arm and serves in the Flight Unit as a pilot. In his spare time, he enjoys listening to music. He has held various roles within the Air Force, including serving in the military band.

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Let Ordinary Citizens Speak Out Against "Ordinary" Intolerance

On 21 March 1960, police in apartheid South Africa fired on a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville protesting racially discriminatory laws. Dozens of protestors died and many more were wounded. In commemorating the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, we not only remember the lives that were lost, but draw attention to the broader suffering inflicted by racial discrimination worldwide.

The focus of this year’s commemoration, “Fighting Everyday Discrimination”, challenges us to take meaningful steps to fight commonplace discriminatory practices in our societies. We are all aware that many of man’s greatest atrocities have had racial under-pinnings, but the collective toll inflicted by routine racism is frequently overlooked. Indeed, the edifices of humanity’s most horrific crimes have often been built on the foundations of banal bigotry.

From name-calling in schools to hiring and firing decisions in the workplace, from selective media or police coverage of crimes to unequal provision of government services, the mistreatment of racial or ethnic groups not only abounds in our societies, but often passes unchallenged. That such everyday racism remains prevalent is undeniable. But for it to pass unchallenged is unconscionable.

Day of Solidarity with Detained Staff Members

The 21st annual International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members was observed on 24 March to draw attention to the staff members who have been arrested, detained, abducted or "disappeared" while in UN service.

The Day marks the abduction by armed men, in 1985, near Beirut Airport, of Alec Collett, on assignment for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The fate of Mr. Collett, a former journalist and Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Ghana, has never been determined.

Staff are reminded that donations can be made to the Scholarship Fund of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA), which benefits the children of those killed in the service of the UN.

At least 43 staff members of the UN family of organisations are under arrest or detention or are missing, according to the Secretary-General’s latest report on the issue. In February, 27 national staff working for the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) were arrested by the Eritrean authorities for varying durations, and in March militia groups kidnapped two staff members in Somalia.

Malloch Brown Succeeds Louise Fréchette as Deputy SG

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed Mark Malloch Brown to succeed Louise Fréchette as Deputy Secretary-General. Ms. Fréchette stepped down as of 31 March having served eight years as the UN’s first ever Deputy SG, the most senior woman in the organisation’s history.

Paying tribute, the SG said she had worked tirelessly for a more coherent and effective UN on subjects ranging from HIV/AIDS to our relationship with civil society. He applauded her “indefatigable efforts” for reform of the organisation, and her “unstinting faith” in its ability to keep changing for the better.

Mark Malloch Brown has served as Chef de Cabinet since January 2005. In that position, he has worked closely with the SG and Deputy SG on all aspects of UN work, including helping to set out an ambitious reform agenda for the UN, much of which was endorsed by world leaders at the World Summit in New York last September.

Force Commander Lt. Gen. Rafael José Barni Arrives

Force Commander Lt. Gen. Rafael José Barni arrived on island on 5 March. Landing at Larnaca Airport, he was greeted by Chief of Staff Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell.

The next day, the new FC “signed on” at UNFICYP HQ after inspecting a guard of honour. Since then, he has been on the go touring the buffer zone, making calls, inspecting the sectors and in general familiarizing himself with UNFICYP’s personnel and range of responsibilities.
Environmental Issues

Water and Culture

The theme of this year’s World Water Day, “Water and Culture”, served as a reminder that water is not only essential for life – it is also a wide-rangiing cultural presence. It is an inspiration for artists, a focus of scientific research, and an indispensible element in the religious rituals of many traditions and faiths.

Despite its importance and often sacred nature, water continues to be wasted and degraded all over the world, in cities and rural areas alike. Eighteen per cent of the world’s population lack access to safe drinking water, and 40% lack basic sanitation. Every day, some 6,000 people, most of them children, die from water-related causes.

Spare a Thought, Save a Drought

That is why the General Assembly resolution, proclaiming the period 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action (“Water for Life”), called for more concerted action to reach the internationally agreed targets for access to water and sanitation.

The GA also stressed the need to involve women in all water-related development efforts. In many cultures, including indigenous societies, women are the guardians of water. They often spend long, arduous hours searching for and carrying water, when they could – and should – be involved in decision-making on how water is used and managed.

This year’s observance of World Water Day also marked the launch of the second edition of the World Water Development Report (http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwd2/table_contents.html), produced by the UN system’s World Water Assessment Programme.

The SG, in his World Water Day message, has urged us all to “recognize” the cultural, environmental and economic importance of clean water, and to “strengthen” our efforts to protect rivers, lakes and aquifers. We need to distribute water more equitably, and increase the efficiency of water use, especially in agriculture. Let us mount a sustained effort – among international bodies, governments and local communities, and across traditions and cultures – that will reach our goals.”

The Buffer Zone is Not a Rubbish Dump

We know the dramatic impact the opening of crossing points have had on the island’s day-to-day life and we have seen how de-mining has facilitated this and how it has opened up new lands in the buffer zone to the farming communities.

These are excellent examples of what can be accomplished through cooperation between the UN, the EU and the two communities.

Sector 1

However, as evidenced from the accompanying photographs, there are always those among us who show little respect for landscape and environment. Too often, our patrols encounter eyesores in the buffer zone that are used by an anti-social few as sites where they indiscriminately dump rubbish.

Spare a Thought, Save a Drought

So far, in excess of 900,000 square metres of land have been freed through these actions. Twenty of the estimated 48 minefields have been cleared. The EU-funded effort is releasing buffer zone land previously held hostage by the threat of mines back to community use, whether for farming or by paving the way for new crossings.

Towards Normalcy

The Mine Action Centre (MAC) continues in its efforts to clear the island’s undetonated mines located within the United Nations buffer zone.

Sector 4

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SPEED AND SAFETY ATTITUDE COUNTS

The speed at which you drive is one of the most important factors in determining your risk of having an accident. The faster you go, the less chance you have of taking evading action, and the greater your risk of having an accident. Speed is largely a matter of choice. Occasions when it is absolutely necessary to drive fast are fairly limited. Good driving requires that you drive at a speed suitable and safe for the conditions.

Attitudes to risk-taking

There is always some degree of risk associated with driving because it involves moving a large heavy object at relatively high speeds, but a driver’s attitude can greatly influence the risk involved. Mindsets that don’t help:

- Enjoying the thrill of danger
- Enjoying impressing passengers or other drivers
- Disregarding personal safety
- The illusion of control, or overestimating your ability
- Justifying risks because they are taken in a noble cause
- It’s not your vehicle

Safety

Speed has a major impact on safety. International evidence clearly shows that lower speed limits result in fewer accidents. At greater speeds the risks obviously increase; you approach hazards faster, you have less time to react, and impact damage is greater. A child hit by a car at 32 km/h may be injured but will probably live; a child hit at 56 km/h will probably die. There is an important risk in speed, but whatever your speed, if it is inappropriate in the circumstances, it is dangerous.

Always drive so that you are able to stop safely on your own side of the road in the distance you can see to be clear. This identifies the maximum speed at which it is safe to drive. It requires you to take into account all the circumstances before deciding the appropriate speed and always to keep files on speed. It is important to consider:

- Speed perception is complicated and depends on several factors such as:
  - The difference in detail perceived by your forward and side vision
  - Engine, road and wind noise
  - Unevenness of the ride
  - What you regard as a normal speed
  - How wide the road is
  - Your height off the ground

Alterations to any of these factors can alter your perception of speed. The solution is simple: adjust your speed by checking your speedometer regularly.

- When you have been travelling at high speed on a motorway or other fast road and then transfer to roads where speeds below 50 and 65 kmph are appropriate, these slower speeds will seem much slower than they really are. Allow time for normal speed perception to return.
- When visibility is low, in fog, sleet, heavy rain and at night, speed perception becomes distorted and it is easy to drive faster than you realise.
- When driving a vehicle that is smoother, quieter or more powerful than your usual vehicle, it is easy to drive too fast. As well as sight and balance, you use other senses to assess speed, road noise, engine noise and vibration all play a part. When one or more of these is reduced, it can seem that you are going slower than you really are.
- On wide-open roads, speeds will seem slower than on small confined roads.

**Key safety points**

- Do not drive at speed unless you are competent and it is safe to do so.
- Be familiar with the controls and the handling characteristics of your vehicle; use the controls smoothly.
- Always drive so that you can stop within the distance you can see to be clear, by day or by night.
- If you double your speed, you quadruple your braking distance.
- No patrol or emergency is so great that it justifies an accident.
- It is far better to arrive late than not at all!
New Faces

Jucca Clough (Bostock) arrived in UNFICYP on 16 February 2006, taking up the post as Personal Assistant to Chief of Mission Michael Moller. Although she is new to the island, she had worked with the SRSIG in New York, so from a career perspective, Juana was familiar with her departmental head!

A native New Yorker, Juana is proud of her Indonesian and Filipina heritage. She is also a musical talent, playing the piano from the age of four and the violin since she was 11. No wonder she attended the renowned “Fame” high school in New York!

She joined the UN in 1988 before starting college, and decided to stay with the organisation. Her assignments range from stints with General Services through the Office of Human Resources Management, DPKO, Office of the PRSG for Southern Lebanon and the Executive Office of the SG.

Juana is accompanied by husband Allen, son, Jalen (13), and Fletcher (3), a six-pound Yorkshire Terrier and the best guard dog in the world!

Juana’s interests include reading, motorcycles and MotoGP, foreign/ independent films and the beach!

Reason for coming to Cyprus?

Spending quality time with family and friends.

Looking Back at Blue Berets

The wealth of nations that have served with UNFICYP over the years is reflected in the pages of the Blue Beret, which has recorded not only the arrival and departure of their peacekeepers but how the family of nations that make up the United Nations have left their imprint on the island.

March 1996

Thousands of peacekeepers have served in Cyprus over the years, some longer than others, but few have managed to collect 35 UN medals for an impressive 17.5 years of distinguished service. Wayne Deakin, a Melbourne comedian who tours extensively throughout Australia and has performed at the Montreal Comedy Festival, talked a blue streak literally and kept the audience in stitches. The surprise guest performer was AFP member Jason Striegher, a man of many talents!

The party travelled to Cyprus after entertaining Australian soldiers serving with the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai Peninsula. The show also featured Forces Advisory Council on Entertainment (FACE).

March 1986

The 3rd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment commenced its second tour of duty in Cyprus after a nine-year absence. The 3rd Battalion, equipped and trained as a mechanised infantry battalion, served in Cyprus from October 1976 to April 1977. Photo shows Battalion members on pre-departure parade in Canada.

Reason for coming to Cyprus?

Spending quality time with family and friends.

Thanks, Goodbye, Good Luck

March is the season of rotations and re-assignment and this year was no exception. A “Mega Mug Out” was held on 24 March in the International Club for 10 stalwarts who contributed greatly to UNFICYP during their time in Cyprus.


March 2006 - The Blue Beret
Visits to UNFICYP

On 23 March, a party of DANCON veterans and family members visited Camp Roca. These former Danish peacekeepers (both military and police) included veterans who had served at different times during the Danish presence on the island from 1964 to 1992, initially in central Cyprus and subsequently in Sector 1. They arrived at Xeros, home of Camp Roca (formerly DANCON's Camp Viking between 1970 and 1992) and marched proudly to the parade square, followed by their families.

They placed a wreath at the plaque that commemorates DANCON presence in the camp (see photo left). Afterwards they broke ranks and visited the facilities. Many commented that the facilities are almost unchanged since the old days, and they complimented the Argentinian Task Force for maintaining them in such excellent condition.

Before leaving, the visitors were invited to the new NCOMess where refreshments were served. They left Camp Roca after reliving their experiences in UNFICYP and also meeting their successors.

Since UNFICYP downsized in 2005 into a more mobile and flexible force, its buffer zone patrols still had to cover the same amount of territory. Observation from OPs was severely reduced when manpower was cut. The buffer zone did not shrink, so operations demanded greater mobility and flexibility. Foot patrols and vehicle patrols were reinforced by helicopter monitoring of the buffer zone.

Up until recently, UN Flight consisted of one Bell 212 and one Hughes 500, both used mainly for patrolling purposes, but also for MEDEVACs, exercises, etc. They carried out 90 flying hours per month, 45 for the Bell and 45 for the Hughes. The Bell 212 is a much larger helicopter seating up to 13 crew and passengers, and consequently, costs a lot more to run and maintain than the Hughes 500 which seats four.

The decision was to augment UN Flight's helicopter capacity by one additional Hughes 500, capable of carrying out patrolling duties, but at a much reduced cost. It also serves to maintain availability of one helicopter at all times for increased operational duties and time spent on maintenance and inspection.

Therefore, on 9 February, one Hughes 500 was added to UNFICYP's helicopter family. It arrived by truck at its new home in the hangar, having spent one month in a huge container, travelling to Cyprus from Argentina over land and sea.

UN Flight's technicians are not only qualified to maintain and inspect helicopters, but also to assemble them. Therefore, within two hours, it was possible to fit together all parts of the new Hughes 500 and make it ready for flight. However, being very conscious that safety is of paramount importance, and fully aware of the outstanding record UN Flight holds over the last 13 years, the technicians opted to give it a full reception inspection as well. It was finally ready to fly one week later.

Although overall flying hours have increased to a total of 110 per month, the Bell 212 now undertakes only 40 hours per month, and the two Hughes 500 take on the main bulk of patrolling duties with 70 hours per month.

The LOA (Letter of Assist), defining all helicopter regulations and insurance issues, is now finalized and the new Hughes is a very welcomed member of the UN Flight family.