De-miners on display

Making Cyprus Mine-free

The Blue Beret
April 2006
Promoting Mine Awareness in the Buffer Zone

April 4th was the first-ever International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. The initiative - a welcome step - aimed to help sustain efforts to end the scourge of landmines and, particularly significant for this mission, the drive to make more countries, Cyprus included, mine-free.

UNFICYP and the Mine Action Centre chose to mark the day on 5 April. This gave Chief of Mission Michael Møller the chance to invite representatives of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties to join him and members of the diplomatic community to observe a special demonstration of de-mining techniques. The chosen staging area was a site next to the historic Venetian walls of old Nicosia, inside the buffer zone, a mere 100 metres away from the Ledra Palace Hotel. The SRSG had been the guest of the monthly meeting of the political party leaders, hosted each month by the Slovak Embassy at Ledra Palace.

Before Mick Raine, head of the MAC, put the team of de-miners and their dogs through their paces in front of the assembled politicians, diplomats, and media plus a balcony-full of interested north Cypriots who looked down from atop the wall, the CM stressed the message of the day that “landmines have no place in any civilised society.”

He noted how these invisible killers can lie silently in villages, hamlets, and how a single landmine— even fear of its presence— can hold an entire community hostage. It prevents farmers from growing crops, and, generally, remains a major obstacle to rebuilding and renewal, he observed.

The 1997 Ottawa Convention bans anti-personnel landmines and 150 countries have signed it to date, a sure sign of the moral revulsion with which these weapons are viewed. Today, governments, donors, NGOs and the UN are cooperating in efforts to tackle the landmine problem in more than 30 countries, one of which is Cyprus.

The CM hoped the demonstration of de-mining techniques would help spur an even more determined effort on the part of both communities to rid the island completely of its lethal landmine heritage. In the case of Cyprus, this was a goal that could be attained in a matter of years, he said, noting that “each mine cleared brings us one step closer to building the conditions for lasting and productive peace.”

The EU-funded de-mining programme is implemented by UNDP, executed by UNOPS, with technical assistance from United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and operations facilitated by UNFICYP. The EU has contributed funding to the tune of 4 million euros for 2004-2006, while Canada and Slovenia made pre-launch contributions of US$250,000 and US$25,000 respectively to help get the Mine Action Centre (MAC) up and running.

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To date, MAC’s de-mining activities have released more than 1 million square metres of buffer zone land, making it available for agricultural and other civil use. In the process, the 51 minefields in the buffer zone have been cleared of landmines.
Oyez Oyez ...
UNFICYP’s First Town Hall Meeting

Chief of Mission, SRSG Michael Møller, hosted the mission’s first-ever Town Hall meeting on 6 April to brief staff on the mission’s latest initiatives and to explain the SG's reform proposals.

He said he would like to hold quarterly gatherings to interact directly with all staff members on the face of the UN on the island and it is important to have the same message, especially now that we are embarking on a new process we hope to succeed in.

"Each one of you is the face of the UN on the island and it is important to have the same message, especially now that we are embarking on a new process we hope to succeed in.

The Blue Beret

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created in 1997, has no statutory authority. "In addition, we are not included in the terms of staff mobility and training with opportunities for experienced staff to move forward in their careers including new opportunities for mid-career officers compared to how other organisations in the public sphere have adapted. The world has changed, government positions are now changing, and we haven’t changed fast enough."

The problems we face and must deal with now are global problems and not just a Cypriot solution.”

The GA reaffirmed its oversight role and that of the Fifth Committee in administrative and budgetary matters, and stressed that setting the UN’s priorities was the prerogative of the SG and that of ensuring the SG’s greater accountability to member states.

"... The Cyprus problem needs a Cypriot solution."
**Maintenance of the Bell 212**

There is one Bell 212 helicopter here in UNFICYP. It is larger than the Hughes 500, the difference being that the Bell has two engines and can seat up to 10 passengers as well as three crew (two pilots and one technician), whereas the Hughes can only take three passengers and one pilot. Every 1,000 flying hours, a major inspection of the entire helicopter including the airframe and engines must be carried out. Since its arrival in December 2000, UNFICYP’s Bell 212 has covered 3,000 flying hours here in Cyprus. Hence, this was the third 1,000-flying hour inspection.

The inspection begins with the disassembling of the entire helicopter. The process takes about two weeks to complete. Three specialists flew in to take part in this inspection, along with eight technicians from UN Flight. One auditor came from Argentina, also an engineer, to oversee the quality of work being carried out. Included in the maintenance was the inspection of the airframe, the main rotor blades, the tail rotor blades, the main transmission, both engines, the electrical installations and flying instruments, and the electronic/fuel/hydraulic/oil systems.

Logistical planning is essential. When an item has to be replaced during the inspection, it means that the Air Force base in Argentina has to acquire the part in a very short space of time (two to three days), as opposed to 15 days under normal conditions. However somehow they manage, as was the case this time, and the inspection was completed successfully.

UN Flight now has a further 1,000 flying hours to look forward to in the Bell 212.

**Buoyant Market!**

In 1980, UNFICYP established the Maritime Security Lines (MSLs) as safety mechanisms for those at sea in the vicinity of the buffer zone where it reaches the sea. The MSLs are not seaward extensions of the BZ and UNFICYP has no maritime capability to police any breaches.

Both sides were notified of the creation of MSLs by UNFICYP. Although neither side officially accepted them, their existence was tolerated for safety reasons. The benefit of warning all fishermen of the dangers of fishing too close to Turkish Forces military positions was understood. The problem is further exacerbated at the eastern MSL in the summer months with tourist craft and pleasure boat operators from the Protaras/Ayia Napa area.

On 4 November 2005, one of the buoys on the Eastern MSL broke from its moorings and was recovered by two Greek Cypriot Maritime Police vessels. In mid-February 2006, a Greek Cypriot fisherman was fishing in a small boat of the western side of the island near to Kokkina. UNFICYP requested the return of the boat on the grounds that it constituted the livelihood of the fisherman.

Authorities in the north stated the boat could not be returned until the confiscated buoy was returned. After some deliberation, this was agreed to and the buoy was released to UNFICYP by authorities in the south. UNFICYP Ops served as intermediary for the exchange, which involved help from SCAT, FMPU, UN Engineers, PIO interpreters, and many other elements of UNFICYP. Boat and buoy were brought to the UNPA as the most convenient point for the exchange. After both parties had inspected their respective items for any signs of damage, the exchange took place. It was as always, a pleasure to act as intermediary for this bi-communal and inter-agency cooperation, and we look forward to similar success on a grander scale in the future.

**30 Years Service**

In the bright sunshine of the Headquarters central courtyard, SRSG Mauno Vanttaja presented four UNFICYP staff members with certificates in recognition of more than 30 years of dedicated service in support of world peace. The special scrolls were signed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The ceremony took place after the weekly Friday briefing for mission-wide staff on 7 April, when coffee and cakes were served to all.


**Nicosia Library Hosts Training Day**

The UNPA Nicosia Library hosted the Cyprus Army Library Services (ALIBS) Staff Training Day on 27 March. Participants included the newly appointed Head of Library Services, Mrs. Sue Lloyd, and Library staff from Episkopi, Dhekelia and Ayios Nicolaos. After the meeting, the group toured the UNPA and then enjoyed a lunch at a local Nicosia restaurant.

For those not familiar with the UNPA Library – it is located in “Married Quarters” and is open:

- **Monday to Thursday**: 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.
- **Friday**: 9.00 a.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Anyone with a UNPA access pass can join. Just drop by and speak to Anthe or Marita. Apart from shelf loads of books, the library also carries a range of videos and DVDs.
An Interview with the new Force Commander

Asked whether he was considering any changes or improvements after his initial assessment tour, the FC replied emphatically: “A lot! I am not used to accepting reality as it is, nor have I the same English skills. I try to change things if change is needed. Of course, there are many things that I consider perfectly fine, so I will try to change things simply for the sake of change.”

One area he plans to focus on is communication and coordination between the military, police and civilian affairs. “Individually, the military, police and civilian affairs work very well. But one thing that needs to be fixed is the coordination of the three. If we want to support the Chief of Mission’s political aspirations, our reason for being here, then we have to coordinate the work among the three pillars better. This is one of the things I aim to change.”

Another area he wants to improve is his HQ’s coordination and to share information and experience with the others as well, even though each sector may face different problems and situations on a daily basis. “I say this because Sectors 1 and 2 may know nothing about some experiences that Sector 4 has had, in negotiating problems or violations for example. Since we are dealing with the same actors – the opposing forces and the civilians – if we share information and/or have similar experiences, it makes the day-to-day way situations were dealt with, rightly or wrongly, easier. By sharing this information, we pass on our experiences. The same applies to other branches – in information, communication, operations.”

The Force Commander points out that HQ may have to be reorganised since last year’s force reduction changed the concept of operations. “The one thing that has not changed is that, as before, we have to coordinate the work among the three pillars better. This is one of the things I aim to change.”

On a personal note, Maj. Gen. Barni describes himself as a family man. He, his wife, two daughters and son make up a close-knit family. His eldest daughter got married on 25 February, just two days before he came to Cyprus. His second daughter, a kindergarten teacher, is working in a bilingual school in Argentina. “Her English is much better than her mother’s,” he says, laughing. She was in Cyprus in 1997 when he was Commanding Officer in Sector 1. He points to a photograph of his son in a military cordon at the opening of the Officer’s Academy. The FC says he is very proud that his son chose to follow in his footsteps, particularly since he never pressured him in any way to do so. “I am very proud of him. He will receive the rank of first lieutenant at the end of the year, so I probably travel to Argentina in order to attend the ceremony.”

It is the first time he and his wife have been so far away from their children and they miss them a lot. However, he says they have accepted it because the three are all doing well in their respective jobs and studies. “They are very responsible and we hope to have them here with our new son-in-law in July for at least a week or ten-day holiday.”

The FC enjoys golf as a hobby and happily accepted the position as honorary president of the UNFICYP golf club. Unfortunately, because of his duties, he has been unable to tee up yet, but plans to do so as soon as his vacation’s time comes. He enjoys reading books on international relations and history, as well as assembling models of military tanks.

Mrs. Maria Rosa Palacios de Barni, the FC’s wife, also tells the Blue Beret she is happy to be back in Cyprus, and that it is very different to when she was based in Skouriotissa as the Contingent Commander’s wife. “There was a certain distance that separated us from the people,” she said. “I have been here for two years now. ‘I have been trying to transform our house into our nest and it is coming along, little by little,” she said.

She has also been talking computer lessons in order to perfect her internet skills, while maintaining contact with her children. Her hobbies include knitting, crockery as well as reading novels.

Netha Krouzas

Meet

Major General Rafael José Barni

An Interview with the new Force Commander
The Blue Beret

April 2006

The AS90 gun used by the Regiment

The majority of his career has been spent with the United Nations from the UK, predominantly in Germany. Regimental duty with the AMF (L) Battery, 50th Missile Regiment and 2 Field Regiment were followed by two years as ADC to the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Field Marshal Vincent, in Brussels. He was loaned to attend the Army Staff Course at Camberley before spending another three years in a grade two staff appoint- ment in the Headquarters of the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (HQ ARI). He also gained an AS90 artillery battery in 4th Regiment before moving to the Headquarters of the 1st (UK) Armoured Division, where he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 2002. He returned to 4th Regiment in 2004, this time as commanding officer. He has com- pleted operational tours in Iraq (several times), Cyprus, Northern Ireland and Kosovo.

Lt. Col. Hudson is married to Chantal and they have three young children. He enjoys most outdoor pursuits and used to be quite a competent sportsman. Now he mainly runs, which he sometimes enjoys.

4th Regiment Royal Artillery – A Brief History

4th Regiment Royal Horse Artillery was formed at Helmsley in Egypt in May 1939 from three batteries drawn from independent commands in India. The batteries were C Battery, F (Sphinx) Battery and G Battery (Mercer’s Trog). It was later redesignated as Mk VA.

4th Regiment RHA was part of 7th Armoured Division. The Regiment was involved in numerous subsequent battles in the Middle East, the capture of Tobruk, Beda Fomm, Sidi Rezegh and the break out from El Alamein to the capture of Tripoli in 1943 to train for the invasion of Europe. It landed in France on 8 June 1944 and saw subsequent action right up until the end of the war.

At the end of the war, the Regiment remained in France and was moved to England for a short time before moving to Hohnie, Germany in 1945. The Regiment comprised F, G and I Batteries and was equipped with the M44 Self-Propelled Howitzer.

On 27 June 1961, the Regiment lost F, G and I Batteries to the newly formed 7th Parachute Regiment RHA, and moved to the Far East where the Regiment saw active service in Borneo before returning to Germany in 1965. In March 1974, the Regiment replaced 7th Regiment RHA in Aldershot, converting to the Light Gun and adopting the parachute role. It was during this time when the Regiment once again saw active service, on Operation CORPUS – the Falkland Islands Campaign, from 20 May to 14 June 1982. Soon after, 4th Regiment RA changed roles with 7th Regiment RHA and moved to Omanbruck, Germany. Originally equipped with the M109 155mm Self-Propelled Howitzer in support of 4th Armoured Division, the Regiment is now equipped with AS90 155mm Self-Propelled Howitzer in support of 1st (UK) Armoured Division.

In May 1993, the Regiment was joined by 52 (Niagara) Battery from 45th Regiment RA (on disbandment). 29 (Corunna) Battery combined with 3 Battery (from 47th Regiment RA) to become 3/29 (Corunna) Battery and Headquarters Battery became 94 (New Zealand) Headquarters Battery.

Recent operations include six emergency tours of Northern Ireland (1972, 1973, 1976, 1991, 1994 and 2003). It deployed to Bosnia in 1992 and 1995, to Jordan in 1998 and to Jordan and Israel in 2000. Since then, the number of soldiers in the Regiment has reduced to around 150. As the Regiment has reduced, the number of soldiers in 45th Regiment RA has also reduced to around 150.

In March 2006, the Regiment was invited to join the United Nations in mission.

New Faces

Chief Civilian Personnel Officer

Christine Boteju-Kyle arrived in UNFICYP on 2 April as the new CCPO, replacing Charles Mix who left the mission in late September 2005.

Christine, who comes from Toronto, Canada, graduated with a degree in International Development Studies and Political Science. Since then, she has had over 15 years of overseas UN experience, serving extensively in hardship areas including Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, Kosovo and Kuwait. Christine has focused mainly on human resource management, administra- tion and project evaluations. She has also been involved extensively with the United Nations Volunteer Programme, having served herself as a UN Volunteer in Sri Lanka and more recently as the Chief of the UNV programme in Kosovo (UNMIL).

Christine is married to Erjon Latifi, and has two sons, Kevin (12) and Shaun (9). All have accompanied her to this mission. As Christine has spent many years on unaccompanied tours, she intends to stay mostly on island and enjoy some valuable time together with her family. Christine enjoys music, dancing and trying new cuisines.

Farewell Mauno

Mauno Vanttaja retires after an interesting 32 years of UN service.

Mauno joined the UN in 1974 on completing the UN Peacekeeping course in Aldershot, becoming a Chief Civilian Personnel Officer in UNFICYP in 1983 as Registry Officer and later Procurement and Shipping Officer, 1995 as CPO and again in 2005 as CPO. 1995 was particularly symbolic as his function was to set up Procurement as a separate section.

Mauno has gained many life experiences and has numerous stories of interest from his UN service which he is keen to tell. One day, he will put down on paper. He has made many friends during his time in Cyprus and will definitely be returning to the island in the future.

We wish Mauno a very enjoyable retirement.
What made Katie’s Parents Run!

On 23 April 2006, Jon and Andrea Moss of UNFICYP, gathered with 45,000 others in the drizzle on Blackheath to run the 2006 Flora London Marathon. The weather was in stark contrast to that in which they had trained running around and around the UN Protected Area (UNPA) in Nicosia, which is centred around the old Nicosia Airport. The last four months have been hard — their trainers could do it on their own, they know the routes so well!

Jon and Andrea were running to raise money for the Dwarf Athletics Association (DAA), which enables dwarf athletes to compete against their peers. Jon and Andrea’s daughter, Katie, aged four, has a form of dwarfism called achondroplasia and recently competed in the UK DAA games. Katie constantly tells them that she wants to be big like her sister Elliot To them, donating to this charity is without doubt a worthwhile cause as it enables those like Katie to compete on equal terms, something that is denied them in everyday life.

As anyone who has ever run the London Marathon will tell you, there are so many people on the course that it is difficult to keep a steady pace. There are other hazards too! In the incessant rain, Andrea fell after six miles, slipping on a discarded Lucozade bottle and injuring her knee. As a consequence, the run was more difficult than originally anticipated. Andrea was very brave to continue, despite being in continuous pain. However, a combination of pain killers, a knee brace and sheer determination won the day!

The total raised is still unclear, but at the moment stands at about UK £4,200. This will be forwarded to the Dwarf Athletics Association.

A big thank-you to their sponsors and a special thank-you to all at the UN, Highgate School Nicosia, family and friends for their generous contributions.

When asked, would they do it again? The reply was, “No, never! Well…, perhaps.”

JM

Blue Beret Retrospective

Leafing back through the pages of the Blue Beret, one can see that over the decades, it is business as usual for UNFICYP. Political talks to the welfare of the soldiers are as current now as they were then.

April 1966

Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus Carlos Bernardes left for Geneva where he was scheduled to meet with Secretary-General U-Thant to report on developments concerning the Cyprus problem.

In March, the SG had broadened Bernardes’ responsibilities to enable him to use his “good offices” and make approaches to the “parties in or outside of Cyprus” in an effort to achieve “discussions at any level of problems and issues of either a purely local or a broader nature”.

April 1976

A chapter in the history of the Austrian Medical Corps closed when the UNFICYP Medical centre closed on 12 April 1976. An Austrian medical team had served UNFICYP for 12 years providing a Field Hospital from 1964 to 1973 and since then ran the Medical Centre. The centre was taken over by the British and Canadians.

A donation will help to make the aspirations of dwarf athlete a reality. Please, please, consider a donation.

You can also donate on line at: http://www.justgiving.com/jonandareamoss or can also be contacted on 2261 4667 or at unficyp-fmpu-csm@unficyp.org on Lotus.

April 2006 – The Blue Beret

UNPOL Medal Parade

The Commissioner also singled out the Cyprus Police Band. Playing at the ceremony under the direction of Inspector George Adamou, the Band played a compilation of the five National Anthems of the medal recipient contingents.

Chef of Mission, Mr. Michael Møller, spoke of the contribution made by the mission’s police officers to the Cyprus peacekeeping mission and of the difficult role they fulfil.

Afterwards, Mr. Møller pinned UN medals to the recipients’ uniforms and congratulated them on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Then guests and recipients adjourned to a well-catered reception behind the International Cafeteria.

April 2006 – The Blue Beret
On the Sporting Front

On 15 April, three members of the MFR picked up trophies at the annual “Nicosia Run along the Green Line” 5 km road race. Despite being new to the island and only just acclimatised, 3/29 Bry, which makes up the bulk of the MFR, made time in their training schedule to send two of their keenest runners to race against 90 local athletes through the streets of Nicosia. Sgt. Rosii Goodwin-Jones from the RAMC, based in the UNPA, and SSgt. Jane Cawley from the FMPU also entered the race.

Sgt. Scott Henshaw was the MFR’s best hope and ran a strong race chasing the lead group throughout, but the heat was too much and he was pushed back to 6th place overall in the final stretches of the race. He still picked up the trophy for fastest in the over-30 category finishing in 17 minutes 26 seconds. Gnr. Gareth Leyland was running his first competitive race and finished 26th overall, coming first in the under-20 category.

Sgt. Rosie Goodwin-Jones won the overall female category with a sprint finish, beating her nearest rival by mere inches in just 20 minutes 16 seconds. SSgt. Jane Cawley took home the trophy for the fastest over-30 female.

From the left: Sgt. Scott Henshaw, Sgt. Rosii Goodwin-Jones, SSgt. Jane Cawley and Gnr. Gareth Leyland

Road Race

Orienteering

Not content with being runners up last season, the UNFICYP Orienteering Team pulled out all the stops and successfully won the Minor Units Orienteering League Championship Trophy for the 2005/2006 season.

Orienteering, often known as “cunning running”, involves navigating yourself round a course of length and difficulty to your standard. It is becoming increasingly popular worldwide. Training and beginner events will be held at least once a month to prepare the team for the next season which begins in September.

Although predominantly military training, everyone is welcome and more women and children are becoming hooked than ever before. If you would like to participate, brush up on your map reading skills and get fit at the same time, then please contact team coordinator Diana Bridger on 22-614756.

Aussie Entertainment

Representatives from the Cyprus Maronite community paid their first visit to Chief of Mission Michael Meller on 12 April. The Maronites, one of the island’s minority groups, trace their history in Cyprus back over 1,000 years. The purpose of their visit was to discuss the problems facing the community under the current circumstances on the island, specifically Maronite villages located in the north, and general matters including farming rights, EU funding and religious freedom of movement.

The Maronite delegation (see left) included MSgr. Ioannis Orphanou, Mr. Antonios Hadji-rousos, Mr. Ioannis Kontos, Mr. Petros Markou, Mr. Guido Kapiri and Mr. Joseph Pekris.

The Blue Beret – April 2006

The Blue Beret – April 2006

UNFICYP Visitors

Swedish peacekeeping veterans at Camp Gen. Štefánik – 12 April

French delegation from L’Association Realite et Relations Internationales – 28 March

CM greets Mr. Akhisar Teruuchi from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs – 23 April

Jason Striegher with guitar and James Blundell on harmonica

The Blundell road show came to Cyprus after entertaining Australian soldiers serving with the Multi-national Force and Observers in the Sinai Peninsula in north-east Egypt. The entertainment was organised by the Forces Advisory Council on Entertainment (FACE).

The performers, who donated their time and talents free of charge, are now back in Australia.

Aussie Entertainment

James Blundell, well-known Australian country music singer, ARIA winner and nine times Golden Guitar award winner, recently led an entertainment party that performed at the Ledra Palace Hotel for members and colleagues of the Australian Federal Police serving with UNFICYP.

Other Australian performers were fellow country music singer Rebecca Lavelle, the beautiful voice behind each track on the songs from the popular Australian television series “McLeod’s Daughters”, and the man who had the audience in raptures Wayne Deakin, a Melbourne comedian who tours extensively throughout Australia and has performed at the Montreal Comedy Festival.

The surprise guest performer was AFP member Jason Striegher a man of many talents.

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