

# The Blue Beret

July 2006



On the steps  
of progress



## THE BLUE BERET

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## Editorial

We devote this special issue of the Blue Beret to two issues only. The first recounts the successful outcome of USG Gambari's visit at the beginning of the month and the agreement he brokered with the two leaders to move ahead with the launch of technical committees. The second shows how this mission geared up virtually overnight to support and help out our embattled colleagues and the many others trapped in the devastating developments in neighbouring Lebanon. Sadly, we also salute the four military observers who died so tragically and we extend our sympathies to their families.

An op-ed article by USG Gambari endorses the view expressed in the 8 July agreement that the status quo in Cyprus is unacceptable. He notes that prolonging it is harmful to all Cypriots. He observes that many will look to the bi-communal discussions as a barometer of the political will to move forward, determining whether the time is ripe to re-launch negotiations for a comprehensive settlement. He urges Cypriots and their representatives to take advantage of this new opportunity, noting that the Cyprus problem requires a Cypriot solution.

As USG Gambari makes his pitch for resuming the peace process here on island and SRSG Moller gets ready to facilitate the technical committee meetings, Cyprus has been helping some 47,000 evacuees en route to their eventual destinations as they flee the conflict in Lebanon.

We report on UNFICYP's own efforts, which helped bring 1,222 evacuees to safety from Beirut and ports in southern Lebanon, including 392 UN staff or dependents. We also helped resupply our beleaguered colleagues in UNIFIL. Our UN Flight Bell 212 helicopter flew twice to Beirut, carrying the Lebanese Prime Minister and senior officials to and from Larnaca Airport en route to the 26 July summit in Rome and back.

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**Correction:** June issue (page 6) misidentified the Slovak Ambassador, H.E. Ján Varšo, as Hungarian Ambassador Janos Kisfalvi.

**Front Cover:** On the steps of progress  
**Back Cover:** The Leaving of Lebanon

# Climate Change on Cyprus? By Ibrahim Gambari

During my recent visit to Cyprus from 6 to 9 July 2006, a reception organised in my honour on a Friday night might have helped to break the ice. But it was the agreement signed by Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat in the afternoon of the following day, Saturday, 8 July, that many hope will portend a warming of the atmosphere on Cyprus.

The United Nations could not agree more with the view expressed in the 8 July agreement that the status quo in Cyprus is unacceptable – and that its prolongation is harmful to all Cypriots. Absent a shared commitment to tearing down the barriers and barbed wire, one cannot easily envision a settlement.

Nor can one imagine a successful process in Cyprus in a climate of mutual recriminations. That is why it was also important that the leaders agreed to create a more nurturing environment for discussions.

Eyes turn now to the process of bi-communal discussions, slated to begin by the end of the month with the hands-on involvement of the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Cyprus, Michael Møller. Many will be looking to these discussions, rightly or wrongly, as a barometer of political will to move forward, which, in turn, would determine whether the time is ripe to re-launch negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

Bearing that in mind, I want to take this opportunity to once again commend the two leaders for the commitments they made in my presence. At the same time, I want to urge Cypriots and their representatives in these discussions to take good advantage of this new and potentially important opportunity before them. In stating that a comprehensive settlement is both desirable and possible, I believe the two leaders were articulating the aspirations of their people.

An enduring image of my tour of the buffer zone – the hulk of a vintage automobile frozen in time where it stood in 1974 – was a reminder of just how long the impasse has gone on. But there were also reminders of the dangers that persist. The sight of soldiers separated by only metres in some places underscores the risks of this stalemate continuing.

The Cyprus problem requires a Cypriot solution. The commitment of the United Nations to a comprehensive settlement, so clearly evidenced during the term of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, has not waned and will not go away.

What more can be done in the final months of the year will depend on what signals emerge on the island. The 8 July agreement was a welcome step. What we are looking for now are further signs of climate change on Cyprus.

[Published in *Politis* and *Kibris* on 28 July]

## USG Gambari's Statement after meeting with leaders

*Statement made by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari following the meeting with H.E. Tassos Papadopoulos and H.E. Mehmet Ali Talat at the SRSG's official residence in the UNPA on 8 July 2006.*



### Set of Principles

1. Commitment to the unification of Cyprus based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation and political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions.
2. Recognition of the fact that the status quo is unacceptable and that its prolongation would have negative consequences for the Turkish and Greek Cypriots.
3. Commitment to the proposition that a comprehensive settlement is both desirable and possible, and should not be further delayed.
4. Agreement to begin a process immediately, involving bi-communal discussion of issues that affect the day-to-day life of the people and concurrently those that concern substantive issues, both of which will contribute to a comprehensive settlement.
5. Commitment to ensure that the "right atmosphere" prevails for this process to be successful. In that connection, confidence building measures are essential, both in terms of improving the atmosphere and improving the life of all Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Also in that connection, an end must be put to the so-called "blame game".

### Decision by the two leaders

The Technical Committees on issues that affect the day to day life of people will commence by the end of July provided that, at the same time, the two leaders will also have exchanged a list of issues of substance and its contents to be studied by expert bi-communal working groups and finalized by the leaders.

The two leaders will meet further, from time to time as appropriate, to give directions to the expert bi-communal working groups as well as to review the work of the Technical Committees.



*Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon returned to Beirut via Cyprus on 27 July after attending the previous day's crisis conference in Rome. He and members of his delegation arrived by private jet at Larnaca Airport and were flown on by UNFICYP Bell 212 helicopter to Beirut.*

*Photo shows Prime Minister Siniora (right) getting a pre-flight safety briefing from UN Flight 212/capt. Adrian Longo. Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni looks on.*





SRSG Møller greeting USG Gambari on his arrival in Cyprus

## Three meetings end two-year hiatus

On 8 July, H.E. Tassos Papadopoulos and H.E. Mehmet Ali Talat agreed to a process for the launch by the end of the month of bi-communal discussions of everyday issues on the island provided the two sides have also swapped lists of substantive issues for review by bi-communal working groups and for approval by the leaders.

The agreement was brokered in the course of a three-and-half hour meeting with Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ibrahim Gambari, at SRSG Michael Møller's official residence in the UNPA. It marked the culmination of USG Gambari's three days on the island following visits to Ankara and Athens starting 2 July.

The occasion was the third meeting between the two leaders in the space of a week, breaking a hiatus of more than two years.

After 8 July's three-way meeting, USG Gambari read out a statement (full text previous page) noting the two leaders' commitment to unification based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation and political equality, as set out in relevant SC resolutions. According to the statement, Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat would meet as needed to help direct the expert bi-communal working groups and to review the work of the technical committees.

USG Gambari said the discussions had been very frank, that the two leaders had recognised "that the status quo is unacceptable" and that to prolong it would impact negatively on Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots alike. Both acknowledged a comprehensive settlement "is both desirable and possible, and should not be further delayed", he said. They had agreed to "begin a process immediately, involving bi-communal discussion of issues that affect the day-to-day life of the people and concurrently those that concern substantive issues, both of which will contribute to a comprehensive settlement". Success required the "right atmosphere", including CBMs and an end to the so-called "blame game", he added.

The period between 3 and 8 July ended a lull of more than two years during which there were no meetings between the leaders. Starting 3 July, Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat got together three times in less than a week, all under UN auspices. On 3 July, they first came to the Chief of Mission's official residence in the UNPA, the occasion being the entry on duty of Christophe Girod, the CMP's new 3rd Member. They met again when both attended the 7 July Ledra Palace reception for USG Gambari.

During his stay in Nicosia, USG Gambari met separately twice with each of the leaders and he consulted with members of the island's political, commercial and diplomatic communities in addition to meeting with a cross-section of the island's leadership at the Ledra Palace reception.

In addition to being briefed on UNFICYP's range of activities and responsibilities, USG Gambari was also briefed on the status of UN MAC's de-mining operations and on the activities of UNDP-ACT and UNDP-PFF here on the island.

USG Gambari inspecting the honour guard at HQ UNFICYP



The two leaders and the USG in discussion



The two leaders and their aides



USG Gambari's team - Serge Gakwandi-Kubwimana, Laura Vaccari and Alexandra Pichler



SRSG Møller bidding USG Gambari farewell



USG Gambari inspecting the buffer zone intersection in the Ledra Street area of old Nicosia



Thumbs-Up by USG Gambari prior to his departure from the island

The two leaders, the USG and guests at the Ledra Palace Hotel reception





## Leaders' Aides exchange lists

Mr. Rasit Pertev and Mr. Tasos Tzionis, principal aides to H.E. Mehmet Ali Talat and H.E. Tassos Papadopoulos respectively, exchanged lists of issues of substance at the UNFICYP HQ office of SRSg Michael Møller in the UNPA on 31 July. In doing so, they met the deadline agreed to by the leaders at the 8 July meeting with USG Gambari.

Work continues to ensure the speedy start of the technical committees on issues affecting the day-to-day life of people as well as of the expert bi-communal working groups on substantive issues.

Mr. Tzionis, Mr. Pertev and Mr. Møller expressed confidence that the start of this process was imminent.



## Coffee or Campari?

The Gambari visit to Cyprus and his meetings with the two leaders dominated local press coverage from 6 to 9 July. The apex was the joint meeting and agreement with the two leaders on 8 July for the start of technical talks by the end of the month.

Seen as a tentative breakthrough, the headlines greeted the news as a "positive step" resulting

from a "meeting of substance". One paper called it a "dialogue on the substance under pre-conditions".

The cartoon which got the biggest chuckle was "Coffee or Campari?" (see below), but Mr. Gambari also featured in the regular cartoon strip Zulu, and his appearance in national costume created an approving stir among the fashion-conscious.



## Front Page News



## Leaders keep their date with CMP 3rd Member

The first meeting between the two leaders took place on 3 July, when Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat kept a longstanding commitment that they would get together to mark the entry on duty of the CMP's new 3rd Member Christophe Girod. Mr. Girod had met individually with each of the leaders at the beginning of June during a brief familiarisation visit to the island.

On his return to take up full time duties, Mr. Girod and members of the CMP assembled on 3 July at the Chief of Mission's residence, where he and SRSg Møller greeted each of the leaders as they arrived for their historic meeting and introduced them to all of the CMP members.



CMP members awaiting the leaders at the SRSg's residence





# Crisis in Lebanon – UNF ICYP Aids Colleagues

Some 150 United Nations non-essential staff and their dependents, including more than 100 from UNIFIL, landed safely in Larnaca, Cyprus, in the early hours of 21 July having been evacuated by UN-chartered vessel from Tyre in embattled southern Lebanon. Some 700 non-UN, third nationals who had gathered in Tyre's small port seeking passage to safety were also successfully extracted.

The vessel departed Limassol just before midday on 19 July. On board was a UN support crew made up of some 30 uniformed and civilian personnel, headed by UN Security Official Simon Butt and including UNFICYP peacekeepers, medical staff and civilian police. Team members were hand-picked to help assist in the evacuation.

All told, 56 nationalities were represented in the 900-plus passenger complement that disembarked in Larnaca some 38 hours later at 2.30 a.m. SRSG Michael Møller, accompanied by UNFICYP Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni, was there to greet them on arrival.

SRSG Møller went on board the Louis Cruise Line M.V. Serenade moved in to an offshore anchorage position on the morning of 20 July before launching an intricate eight-hour shuttle operation involving the use of two 70-passenger tenders. This was because Tyre lacks adequate docking facilities for vessels the size of the M.V. Serenade.

Ship's crew and UN personnel from UNFICYP and UNIFIL worked flat out to transfer all evacuees from shore rendezvous point to ship. The effort was handicapped when one of the tenders broke down. This slowed down the transfer since one tender had to tow the other on each shuttle run to and from the port.

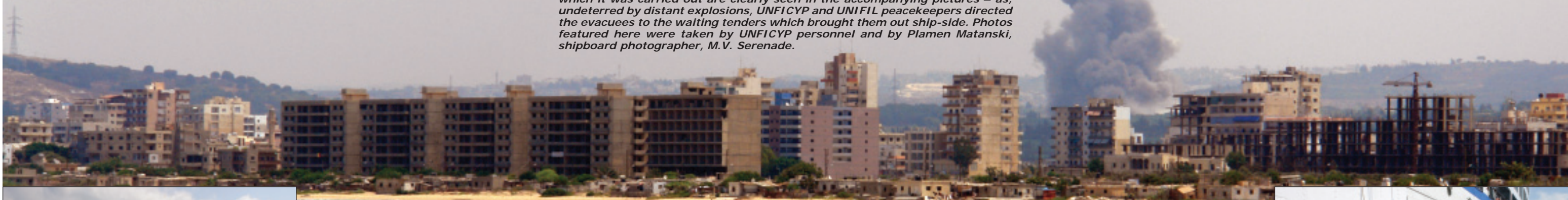
The good ship Serenade did not up anchor and turn for home until all awaiting evacuation port side in Tyre had been safely extracted and brought on board. Next morning, on arrival in Larnaca, the tired but grateful passengers disembarked and were processed by dedicated Cypriot immigration and customs officials in just two and a half hours.

Meanwhile the ship reprovisioned, turned around and headed back out to sea, this time Beirut-bound. A virtually unchanged UNFICYP team remained on board. The Serenade picked up 200 UN staff and dependents in Beirut and docked back in Larnaca at 4.15 a.m. on 22 July.

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*The complexity of the evacuation operation at Tyre and the conditions under which it was carried out are clearly seen in the accompanying pictures – as, undeterred by distant explosions, UNFICYP and UNIFIL peacekeepers directed the evacuees to the waiting tenders which brought them out ship-side. Photos featured here were taken by UNFICYP personnel and by Plamen Matanski, shipboard photographer, M.V. Serenade.*





# Three Profiles – One Mission Accomplished

**In just under 65 hours, starting 19 July, UNFICYP was involved in the evacuation of 1,181 people from southern Lebanon - 981 of them from Tyre where some of the heaviest bombing had been experienced since hostilities began on 12 July. Two**

**hundred UN staff and dependents were evacuated from Beirut. The Blue Beret spoke with members of the military and police team who sailed with the M.V. Serenade, tasked with extracting the civilians and bringing them to safety.**

**F**irst Lieutenant Gabriel Alcides Estrella, Contingent Chief of the Argentinian Gendarmeria, arrived at UNFICYP on 5 July and was thrown into the eye of the storm as the mission prepared to evacuate UN non-essential staff and dependents from embattled southern Lebanon.

His training and experience stood him in good stead when dealing with the evacuees from Tyre and Beirut. He explains that he was not nervous about what might lie ahead. Instead, he focused on the situation at hand and how best to deal with whatever eventualities might crop up in Tyre and Beirut. Anchored approximately two km off the Tyre harbour, he says they could hear the inshore explosions which were very loud. On the horizon, there were black clouds of smoke mushrooming into the sky from the bombs. Against this background, he says UNFICYP military personnel worked calmly alongside colleagues from UNIFIL, helping civilians onto two tenders to ferry passengers to the M.V. Serenade where he and other team members plus the ship's crew were waiting to receive them.

Estrella notes that UNPOL's task was to deal with the administrative paperwork, filling in forms for the ship's manifest, taking down personal details from the families, their final destination, etc. UNPOL also served as points of contact for the passengers, many of whom needed reassurance as well as medical assistance.

Estrella says, "I feel proud to have represented my country and the United Nations in this relief effort. Such situations where you see women and children alone, fleeing for their lives, cannot but make you think of your own family. You feel you have an extra responsibility and duty to help and protect these people whose lives have been shattered."

**2nd Lieutenant Jen Jones** was on board for the runs to both Tyre and Beirut. Jones, who arrived in Cyprus in mid-June, fresh out of the Young Officers' Training School at Sandhurst, describes her evacuation experience as rewarding.

The M.V. Serenade was the first ship to go south since the outbreak of hostilities. Jones notes: "We were going in blind, with very little knowledge of how many casualties we would be picking up and what the condition of the civilians would be. We were also not certain of the military status". Approaching Tyre, conscious of large explosions and heavy artillery fire, Jones recalls, "There was sustained bombardment. One of the soldiers stopped counting after 50 strikes." Although she says she did not feel they were personally threatened at any stage of the rescue operation, the civilians had been in "real danger on a number of occasions". Describing the condition of the civilians evacuees they found at the port in Tyre, she says only one was severely injured. Most were suffering from lack of food, clean water and sheer exhaustion.



1/Lt. Gabriel Alcides Estrella with Force Commander Maj.Gen. Rafael Barni

Jones says two life-boats were initially used to ferry people to the ship. These were manned by ship's crew and military personnel. One of the boats broke down, slowing down operations she said. They had already experienced delays in getting people through customs within the permitted time-frame. Yet, M.V. Serenade did not leave until everybody was safely on board, she says.

Once on board, the medical team, consisting of Maj. Jo Halford and Cpl. Snowy Adams, along with the ship's doctor, managed to treat around 300 people, most suffering from dehydration, exhaustion and stomach upsets. A team of UN Stress Counsellors was also busy reassuring people.

When the ship eventually docked at Larnaca Port, the passengers disembarked and peacekeepers assisted in unloading the luggage and resupplying the ship in just two-and-a-half hours. Then it turned around and headed back out to sea, bound for Beirut. Some 200 UN personnel were picked up from Beirut and brought safely to Larnaca port.

Jones says she was grateful that she was able to participate in the rescue operation. All the military personnel involved were volunteers, she notes. Many more offered their assistance, but there was only a limited number of places. The 20 military personnel selected from Sector 2 left the Ledra Palace at 5.30 a.m. on Wednesday morning and returned on Saturday after the two trips to Lebanon. "It was a fantastic effort and I am grateful to have been part of it," Jones said.

**Station Sergeant Donna Rech**, on her second mission with UNFICYP having served in 1997 to 1998, was one of nine UNPOL officers who assisted in the evacuation process. She participated in both UN evacuation runs, and then signed up for a third in a voluntary capacity to help Australian government efforts to extract Australian citizens from Lebanon.

Apart from collecting passenger information and details for the ship's manifest aboard ship, Donna too noted how UNPOL served as an initial point of contact for many people. "We were a mental aid for those who were scared, frightened, disassociated and living on their nerves for the last 10 days. There were many small children with their parents who had been running on adrenaline. There were also many cases of dehydration and exhaustion."

collapsed in my arms, completely exhausted mentally and physically."

Donna says that while they were in Tyre, it was clear from the explosions that they were in the midst of a war zone. But they had a job to do and that is what they focused on. They didn't have time to reflect.

She says there was excellent interaction between all personnel involved. "The military did a brilliant job, they didn't sleep for days and performed excellently. The Stress Counsellors were a great help, as many people were traumatized by what they had witnessed. Some experienced panic attacks and were suffering from anxiety. The medical team worked tirelessly to help as many people as possible. It was a fantastic team effort all round."

The trip to Beirut involved evacuation of fewer people and there was better access to food and supplies. There was not the same level of stress and exhaustion as had been the case in Tyre, she says.

Donna's third trip as a volunteer for the Australian government resulted in the evacuation of 397 people – 342 Australians, 48 Germans and 7 Poles, she says. "That was hard-going as people were terrified. They had panic attacks, were fainting and suffering from seasickness," she says. She also says she would go back in a heartbeat, and has her passport and toothbrush ready so she can leave at any moment. "From a personal point

of view, just to help people through a dreadful experience saying 'here's my hand – if you need it, take it,' that was good for me."

By Netha Kreouzou



2/Lt. Jen Jones helping passengers disembark

The UNPOL officers offered the evacuees reassurance and a shoulder to cry on. In some cases, they did no more than listen to someone tell their story. It was natural. Police officers are trained to deal with people going through emotional crisis, she says.

Three separate cases made an impression on Donna. One was a group of Kenyan women, UN staff members, whose positive attitude served to support each other. "They were fantastic, sticking together, helping each other and so practical about the whole situation that they had a positive effect on others around them. They knew they were safe and were planning their next steps."

The second case was an American family – husband, wife and two small children. "When the wife saw me, she burst into tears and fainted. When she came round the first thing she said was, 'I'm seeing a friendly face'." Donna notes, "The woman was able to express her feelings without sanction or judgement, and by the time we arrived, she was feeling positive and more relaxed".

The third case was a Lebanese woman married to a Norwegian with six children whose ages ranged from 20 down to a toddler. "The eldest son was translating for her, providing me with their personal details when the woman suddenly grabbed me by the arm and hugged me crying. She



Stn. Sgt. Donna Rech with Sgt. Darren Wiseman and UN Stress Counsellor Leslie Fair-Page



Deterioration of the situation in Lebanon resulted in a decision by United Nations Headquarters to evacuate non-essential staff. UNFICYP was warned over the weekend 15/16 July to assist with the planning for a possible evacuation by sea from Beirut and Tyre. The situation in Tyre in particular was becoming critical as personnel were cut-off from Beirut, the preferred evacuation point.

On Monday 17 July, UNFICYP set up a dedicated crisis centre and detailed planning commenced. The planning team consisted of a core group of 25 which included military, UNPOL, Personnel, Security, Integrated Support Services, Procurement, Supply, Finance, Civil Affairs and Public Information.

Even before the crisis centre was up and running, Chief Civilian Personnel officer Christine Botejue-Kyle, anticipating the need for accommodation, block booked a number of hotels for use by evacuees. At the same time she and Field Security Officer Ross Wickware were developing the first draft of a reception plan for handling incoming staff and dependents from Lebanon. Things might not have been coordinated at the outset, she says, "but it forced us to pull together and work collectively."

"Were there hiccups? Were there flare-ups? Absolutely yes!" But, according to Christine, this was precisely what was needed in order to move ahead and get everyone working from a common platform to ensure support for the people when they got off the boat and to help them to get to their hotels and onward to their eventual destinations.

Christine has praise for military, police, and the various civilian units involved in the operation. She

# Crisis Centre Coordinates Evacuation

is also justly proud of her own colleagues in Personnel – Maria Wilkins and Thalia Constantinou – who were tasked with receiving the evacuees at the hotels and trouble-shooting any problems. Meantime, Ingy Said stood by at UNFICYP HQ to keep the day-to-day business of personnel running smoothly. "For such a small team, we did great work."

Response to the call by the crisis centre for volunteers to help with various tasks was overwhelming with the whole mission wanting to help out in any way possible. Volunteers helped with collecting toys and games for children, as well as being on hand at the various hotels to assist in checking in the evacuees and resolving any problems that came up.

"For the first two days, we had 24-hour coverage with volunteers and staff – from personnel ensuring we had people at the hotels who could feed us information," Christine said.

A booth was set up at each hotel with cell phones so that the evacuees could make a call to their families and reassure them of their wellbeing. Volunteers also assisted with the children, providing toys, games and activities to occupy them.

"Comments I had were that our people have been absolutely fantastic."

People are under duress and stress but if you have made the point of coming out and being there for them it is appreciated. They wanted to thank us for a very well organised and coordinated evacuation," Christine said.

In seven days, Christine says she had a total of approximately 17 hours' sleep. "I didn't know if it was day or night. I didn't know the time of day. But for me to be at the ship when it arrived particularly, the second ship having very good friends on it, seeing them on the deck screaming 'I'm here, I'm here', that was very emotional just to know that they were ok. That's what makes your job worthwhile."



Crisis centre trio: COS, Maj. Tom Moon and Ross Wickware



Sick bay on board



Members of the ship-board UNPOL team



Christine Botejue-Kyle with UNFICYP MPs



Helping hands as women, children and the elderly disembark





Continued from previous page

Thalia Constantinou only joined Personnel three weeks ago and is nearly eight months pregnant, yet she was at the hotels receiving the evacuees. The people were very upset about what they had left behind and were distressed, not knowing what the future held for them. Initially everybody seemed to hold it together but on the second day when the Stress Counsellors arrived many broke down.

"The fact that they were able to contact us on our mobiles 24-hours-a-day was helpful and they did take advantage of this facility. Knowing that there was always someone at the other end of the line was reassuring."

Being new to UNFICYP before the Lebanon crisis, Thalia had not met many UNFICYP staff members, but the crisis brought people together. "We worked together as if we had known each other for years. There was great team work."



Chief of Staff Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell and Spokesperson Brian Kelly look on as Diana Bridger and David Wilkins help complete passenger list details at the UNFICYP crisis centre

Field Security Officer Ross Wickware played a key role in helping devise the plan of evacuation. For him there were moments of joy and sorrow throughout the operation.

"Members of UNFICYP answered the call to assist the evacuees from Lebanon and made me proud to be in the UN," he said.

"I stood at the bottom of the gangway as the evacuees came off the ship. There were grandmothers, children, mothers and babies. Soldiers and UNPOL officers were assisting the weak, the frail and the emotionally overwrought. It was an image that will remain with me. The caring, multi-disciplinary peacekeeper in action, helping people in times of crisis. In one quick moment the scene captured, for me, the essence of what it is we do."

Ross recalls one UN staff member, tears running down his face, recounting the horrors endured during the six days before they were extracted. The distraught staffer told of how Hezbollah would move into the orchard next

to his house, fire some rockets off in the direction of Israel and then disappear back into the surrounding area. Shortly thereafter, artillery would rain down all around his house, flattening everything turning it into a sea of rubble. He wondered how he and his four daughters managed to survive the incessant pounding of Israeli air strikes and artillery. His question, repeated again and again, "Why did they leave us there for so long? Doesn't the UN care about us?"

"A question that will continue to haunt us," Ross says.

Another case that stuck out for Ross was that of the young man sitting with a blank stare on his face, obviously overcome with emotion. He, his pregnant wife and their young baby were to be returned to Lebanon on the ship. He had twice tried to enter Cyprus previously and had been deported. "There was no way to intercede with the authorities on their behalf. Despite the odds we tried, without success. A tragedy took place in front of our eyes," Ross said.

Another, more fortunate, family arrived unauthorised and without proper documentation, lucky to have escaped the pounding of Tyre. Ross said: "We managed to obtain entry visas for the entire family, extended though it was. The grandmother grabbed my arm as I walked past, having presented them with the transit visas that meant they would not be sent back to Lebanon on the ship. She must have been in her late 60s or early 70s, with a grandchild on her knee. She could barely talk, the emotions she had suppressed were fighting to the surface. She must have said thank you five times before I understood what she was saying – thank you for saving her family, her grandchildren, her life. The tiredness and stress that we were under evaporated with that simple eloquent phrase we so often take for granted – thank you."

Netha Kreouzoz



Immigration officials working together with UNFICYP CCAO Kiki Shiotani, Ersin Ozcoyzan, Netha Kreouzoz and Anne Bursey



One familiar face seen here disembarking from the M.V. Serenade is that of Simon Butt, who served here as HQ Ops Info while a British Contingent major not too many years ago. Simon went on to join the UN and is now the UN's Security Coordinator for the Middle East. He worked round the clock with the evacuation coordinating and crisis planning group in the refurbished JOC prior to boarding the M.V. Serenade as the UN official charged with responsibility for all UN personnel on board.



SRSg Moller went on board the Louis Cruise Line M.V. Serenade to present Captain Demetris Giotopoulos and his crew with an UNFICYP plaque, thanking them for an outstanding job carried out in difficult circumstances. The SRSg also paid tribute to the Cypriot authorities.

## "It is wrong" – UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland

Jan Egeland, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, passed through Larnaca Airport Cyprus, on 22 July en route to Beirut and, he hoped, to southern Lebanon. He was travelling on the SG's behalf to assess the humanitarian situation and needs and "what the United Nations can do to improve conditions, to come to the relief of the people in their hour of greatest need".

Next day in Beirut, Mr. Egeland launched an appeal for \$149 million for life-saving relief for the estimated 800,000 people directly affected by the fighting.

He told reporters at Larnaca Airport that the UN "would like to use Cyprus as one of the staging areas for our international relief effort," going to ports such as Beirut, Tripoli and Tyre. Of course, he added, "we want to have humanitarian corridors going into the country and into the people that are now beleaguered". He said he was especially worried at the situation of the civilian population caught in the crossfire in the south.

Mr. Egeland praised Cyprus for a "really amazing" performance in receiving tens of thousands of evacuees from the UN and from many countries out of Lebanon.

Mr. Egeland noted three particularly vulnerable areas

in Lebanon. People in the villages of the south are trapped and pinned down, he said. Then there are those targeted in Beirut, and the people in Tyre. Mr. Egeland condemned both the aerial bombardments of Lebanon and the "totally indiscriminate rain of rockets from Hezbollah" in northern Israel.

"It is wrong according to international law to have a disproportionate attack against civilian populations as is now happening in Lebanon. But it is also totally wrong and condemnable under international law to use civilian areas to launch military attacks as Hezbollah is doing indiscriminately into civilian areas in Israel. It has to stop. This is no natural disaster. This is a man-made crisis. It is a senseless war. It should never have started, and it should never have been carried out like it is now."



22 July: USG Egeland at Larnaca Airport

## Mission-to-Mission Mission

WOI (SSM) Pete Hall (FOWO) was charged with getting the supplies secured by Procurement for UNIFIL re-supply of UNIFIL onto the French naval vessel TCD Siroco. The ship departed from Larnaca port on 24 July. Working with only 24 hours notice, UNFICYP personnel, military and civilian alike in Procurement and Supply plus Transport rose to the occasion and got the job done.

In total, 198,000 litres of water, 52,000 litres of diesel fuel, 100 pallets of food rations, 3,000 litres of oil, military equipment (flak jackets and helmets), medical supplies and other gear, including around 20 pallets of cleaning materials and toiletries, were loaded onto the ship.

It may have been short notice for such a complex task, but as WOI Hall pointed out, everyone pulled together and the UNFICYP team got the job done in time for this crucial sailing. All concerned felt great satisfaction when the news came back on 26 July that the much needed supplies had reached their destination, safely delivered into grateful UNIFIL hands.



24 July: UNFICYP peacekeepers load food, medical, fuel and water supplies onto the French military vessel TCD Siroco at Larnaca port

## "On the Boat, Off the Boat"

"On the boat, Off the Boat" was the mantra as UNFICYP's transport services prepared to do their bit in support of the evacuation. From the time the order was issued this became a logistical operation for the ISS

Transport Section and Sector MTs to show their true colours. All midi-buses and mini-buses within the mission were put on stand-by as the arrival time of M.V. Serenade at Larnaca Port constantly shifted.

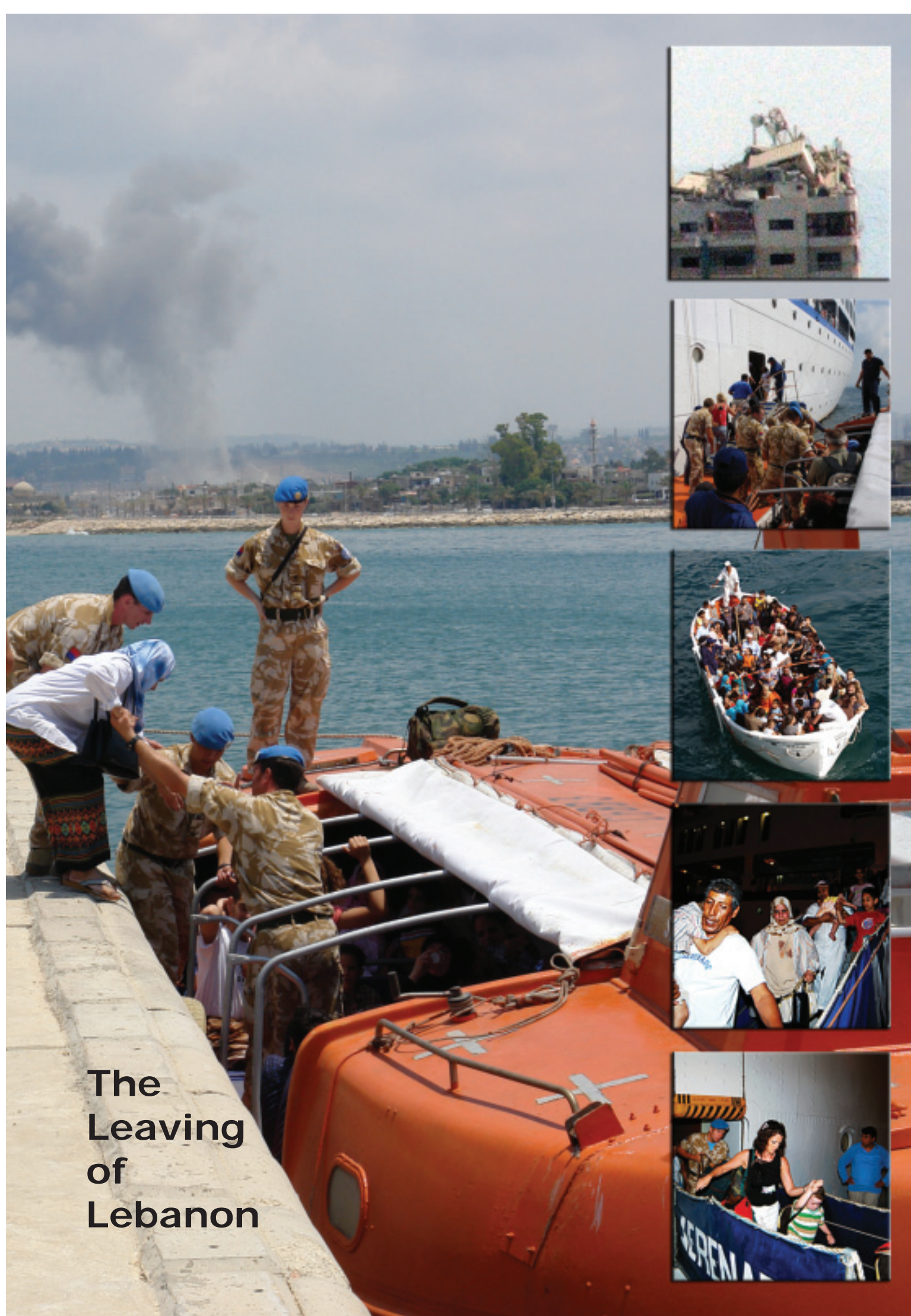
Additional tasks continuously arrived at dispatch, stretching Transport Unit's resources to the extreme limits. A convoy of military and civilian drivers departed Nicosia to the port of Larnaca. The port was a hive of activity. However good the planning, last-minute changes were the order of the day, every day.

To ensure that individuals reached the correct hotels, colours were allocated to each hotel and vehicle, mostly buses transferring the evacuees to them. As the passengers arrived, tired and anxious to get to their accommodation, the drivers assisted them to the vehicles, carrying their bags and suitcases. The departure area was clogged with coaches and taxis fighting for space. Turn-around for buses was approximately 30 minutes, which meant most evacuees did not spend too much time hanging around. Final passengers had departed by 5.30 a.m.



Bus ready to go





The  
Leaving  
of  
Lebanon