Veterans salute the fallen on International Day of Peace
Autumn is a time of returns: to school, to work, to the business of government. So it is with the re-launched negotiation process in Cyprus. The leaders of the two communities held the first round of fully-fledged talks on 3 September and discussed the question of governance and power-sharing in a future united Cyprus. They met two more times in Sep-tember to continue those discussions. As Special Adviser to the Secretary-General Alexander Downer is quoted as saying in these pages, the United Nations remains cautiously optimistic on the prospects for the peace process.

While much of UNFICYP has been mobilized to support the peace process, the mission is still conducting its day-to-day work. Indeed, the two are closely related. Part of UNFICYP’s mandate is to help create the conditions that make it possible for negotiations to take place. And one very important part of that work involves helping other UN and international efforts to bring Cypriots together or care for the large part of the island that has been placed under UNFICYP’s custodianship. In this issue of the Blue Beret, you will read about two initiatives – on road safety and demining – that fall squarely into that category.

As UN Day approaches on 24 October, we believe it is important to remember the variety of the work of UNFICYP, which reflects the multi-faceted nature of its parent Organisation. The United Nations family is a diverse and extensive one. High-level negotiations and political discussions in the General Assembly or the Security Council often garner all the attention, but UN workers around the world quietly go about a daily routine that in many places can make the difference between life and death. Whether in the areas of humanitarian relief, human rights, peacekeeping or peacemaking, these men and women are working to make that difference.

“Let me, though, say this: there is no doubt that this is a very difficult process. After all, there hasn’t been a successful conclusion to the Cyprus problem for many years, as everybody knows. So therefore it’s not going to be a simple and easy process. There will be ups and there’ll be downs, there will be good days and there’ll be bad days, there will be good headlines and there’ll be bad headlines, of course.

“Inevitably these processes are difficult,” he said but added that he was impressed with the deter-mination on both sides to achieve a successful conclusion to these nego-tiations.

“There is a political will, which is impressive, and that political will gives me cause for cautious optimism.”

“There is a political will, which is impressive, and that political will gives me cause for cautious optimis-m,” he said.

Referring to the negotiations pro-cess, Downer stressed that, “it’s not going to be the UN plan or the UN scheme. Ultimately this is going to be a negotiation, if it is to succeed, which must be embraced by the people of Cyprus.”

September saw the talks move into full swing after the brief lull in political activity on the island during August. Special Adviser to the Secretry-General Alexander Downer arrived on the island on 1 September for the formal opening of direct negotiations on 3 September.

Downer took the opportunity in the two days before the talks began to meet with the leaders of all of the major political parties on both sides of the island to ask them about their views and hear what they had to say.

After the formal launch of the talks, he travelled to Athens where he met with the Greek Prime Minister Kosatas Karamanlis and the Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyianni before travelling to Ankara where he met with President Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister Abdullah Gul and the Foreign Minister Ali Babacan. He returned to Cyprus to be here for the start of substantive talks on 11 September that began with the issue of governance and power sharing.

Following an almost four-hour meeting on 11 September, the two leaders did not make any state-ments. SASG Downer, in a brief statement, told the media that the leaders began negotiations on the subject of governance and power sharing and that the talks have been “productive and fruitful.”

At his first major press confer-ence on the island on 12 September, Downer said, “From both my discussions with all the political parties here, of course in particular with the leaders in Cyprus, but also from my discussions in both Athens and Ankara, I am encouraged by what I have heard.”

Referring to the first meeting on the subject of governance and power sharing, Downer said, “I think it has gone well. The atmosphere is good. The atmosphere of these talks is friendly, and the negotiations are productive.

Serving UNFICYP's civilian, military and police personnel!
The UN’s role, Downer said, “is to be as helpful as we possibly can. As you know, we can’t force anything on anybody and if the UN is helpful, then its role will be valuable. If the UN is not seen to be helpful, then the process is not going to be advanced.

I think the important thing to remember is that what has happened in the past hasn’t succeeded and what I am determined about is that this time it will succeed.”

Reminded that there had been 16 UN envoys prior to him, Downer said: “Let me say that just because a process has failed in the past, doesn’t mean you don’t try to make it succeed in the present and the future.” Time and circumstances change, he said, and the circumstances of today are not the same as the circumstances of four years ago or 34 years ago. So I think the circumstances of today are that you have two leaders who want to succeed. They are quite determined to succeed and they are quite aware of the tough issues and the problems. I wouldn’t have taken on this job if I thought it was a doomed job. I looked at it very carefully before I accepted this job, and I thought there is chance of the process being successful. And I remain of that view.”

“The UN role is to be as helpful as we possibly can.”

Dunner did, however, concede that the process is taking a lot more time than originally anticipated.

“Time and circumstances change. The circumstances of today are not the same as the circumstances of ..... 34 years ago.”

Special Representative of the Secretary-General Taye-Brook Zerihoun hosted the second meeting on 18 September, which continued negotiations on the issue of governance and power sharing. A brief statement issued after the meeting stated that the leaders have agreed to resume negotiations on these questions on 8 October 2008.

“... Today you have two leaders who want to succeed. They are quite determined to succeed and they are quite aware of the tough issues and the problems.”
Interview with the UNFICYP Chief of Mission

Ayé-Brook Zerihoun, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, has been described as an experienced, level-headed, international civil servant; well liked and highly regarded by his colleagues and officials of countries with whom he has worked. A diplomat whose over 30 years of experience in the international organisation means he knows his efforts on the Cyprus problem will take him down a long road, but he asserts that he enjoys a “good walk”, and is pacing himself for the intensive months ahead.

The SRSG arrived in Cyprus at a time when dialogue between Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat was at a crucial turning point. After a full of four years, the peace talks were back on the table, with direct negotiations between the two sides. Zerihoun, together with the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General Alexander Downer, is called on to facilitate these Good Offices efforts to resolve the Cyprus issue that has eluded peacemakers for decades.

Ethiopian born, Zerihoun was appointed Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) on 16 April 2008. He assumed his duties on the island in May in the midst of ground breaking developments on the Cyprus problem. The technical committees and working groups had been launched, and the much-awaited Ledra Street crossing had opened only weeks before.

Zerihoun previously served as the Secretary-General’s Principal Deputy Special Representative in the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and remained in that position from 1 August 2004. He was the Acting Special Representative of UNMIS from October 2006 until October 2007. He then served as Chief United Nations Mediator for the Darfur Peace Talks since October 2007, in support of the efforts of Special Envoy Jan Eliasson.

Zerihoun says the differences (between Sudan and Cyprus) couldn’t be starker. “Of course, UNFICYP is much smaller. But because it has been on the ground for 40 plus years, it is very well set in its ways,” he says, pointing to the proverbial third eye and candidly providing the facts. That is a heavy responsibility,” he says.

“Whatever we do as UNFICYP, it is in pursuit of a peaceful outcome that we link to the reunification of the island.”

The SRSG highlights the role of all UNFICYP personnel in the peace efforts, pointing out that the three pillars of this mission, whether it has compared to the police or the military, all work towards maintaining the integrity of the ceasefire and contribute to the creation of an atmosphere that will allow the parties to move beyond the status quo towards resolving the problem.

Another significant aspect of UNFICYP’s role is public information and Zerihoun says, “We are now looking toward a very robust and forward-looking public information strategy.”

“It’s best really to be as transparent as possible by telling the media what can be told. You cannot tell them about the parties’ negotiating positions, but there can be some kind of agreement. The UN, as they say, is the mother forum for positions and that legitimacy is unparalleled and unmatched.”

The SRSG notes that these are new times with new opportunities that are exciting but also daunting. Another reason for coming to Cyprus was the fact that, “Clearly, with the election of Mr. Christofias and the predisposition of Mr. Talat, the opportunities are much better. There is an agreement among the parties to the problem and I think what the parties have the will, they can make the necessary compromise and look at it as a win-win situation. It’s always when one looks at the problem as a whole that you are better off to find a solution. Compromise literally means understanding and accepting the other’s point of view and trying to accommodate this.”

Another reason for coming to Cyprus was the fact that, “I think the closest that comes to an independent UN is the international civil service,” he says.

Zerihoun observes that the UN has been growing and reforming ever since it was created. Whether that reform has always kept pace with emerging demands and changes is arguable, but the good thing is that there are different interests within the UN. Whether these are expressed in regional groups or on different issues, they keep the UN blood circulating. So in that sense, the UN is forever young to the extent that all issues, not just political but social and other global issues, have awakened people to the need to work together to access the ‘good offices’. This where perhaps the first wrong turn was made, but be that as it may, the UN is the only organisation that can provide information that is in the public interest because all this is being negotiated on behalf of the people. So the people have to be informed and, of course, the two parties have their own responsibilities to provide information and update their own communities but often that was targeted to a specific audience. We have the responsibility to provide the official line, as we have the proverbial third eye and can dispassionately provide the facts. That is a heavy responsibility,” he says.

“The UN, as they say, is the mother forum for positions and that legitimacy is unparalleled and unmatched.”

Away from the office, Zerihoun says he devotes a lot of time to reading and is currently building on his minimum knowledge of the island and the region in general. He also enjoys the challenges of a game of golf, playing occasionally at weekends.

Netha Krousou

August/September 2008 – The Blue Beret
Leaders join hands at bicommunal concert

The two leaders and Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNFICYP Chief of Mission Tayé-Brook Zerihoun joined hands at a highly-moving bicommunal concert at the Ledra Palace. Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat were among hundreds of people from both communities who attended a bicommunal concert organised jointly by the Slovak embassy and the island’s political parties in the framework of the International Day of Peace, and which was hosted at the Ledra Palace on 22 September.

The event generated huge media interest, as not only did the two leaders attend, they took to the stage together with Tayé-Brook Zerihoun where all three joined hands and lifted them aloft to tumultuous applause from an audience made up of prominent politicians from both sides, diplomats, and hundreds of ordinary, young people. In their speeches, the leaders gave a strong commitment to do everything in their power to achieve a solution of the Cyprus problem.

The Greek Cypriot leader said: “I want to reiterate my commitment, before the young people of both communities, that I am going to do my utmost in order to find the common language we need with Mehmet Ali Talat, and with the assistance of the UN, to reunify our island.

“We have started a serious dialogue and we have to keep up the momentum, before the young people of both communities, that I am going to do my utmost in order to find the common language we need with Mehmet Ali Talat, and with the assistance of the UN, on the island.

“Tayé-Brook Zerihoun stated: “The Cyprus in the minds and hearts of all present, young and old, is one in which the island’s obvious enormous potential is given full expression, a Cyprus at peace, a united and dynamic Cyprus that offers the best of opportunities and future to all its citizens. Such a day seems tantalizingly close, at least closer than it has been for a long time.

“Bicommunal initiatives and cultural projects alone will not bring that day about; the leaders and people need the greatest responsibility for turning what will clearly be a difficult peace process into a success. But overcoming divisions entrenched over the years will take more than political action and discussions at the negotiating table. Rebuilding trust among Cypriots across the divide in order to make this island one common home for all its citizens requires acts that may seem less spectacular and dramatic, but which are just as essential. That is why I am glad to take part in one such act this evening.”

The Chief of Mission also praised Slovakia’s ambassador to Cyprus, Anna Tureničová, saying he wished to “pay tribute to her work, her tenacity in perpetuating and reinvigorating the tradition of encouraging bicommunal cooperation established by the Slovak Republic.”

The event was org- anised jointly by the Slovak Embassy and the youth branches of politi- cal parties on both sides in the framework of the bicommunal meetings between party leaders or representatives that take place regularly at the Ledra Palace under the auspices of the Slovak Embassy.

International day of peace

International Day of Peace was observed by UNFICYP for a third year with a peace candle vigil ceremony at Ledra Palace Hotel, Nicosia on 22 September 2008.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNFICYP Chief of Mission Tayé-Brook Zerihoun inaugurated the event that was attended by Greek and Turkish Cypriot members of the World War II Veterans Association, members of the diplomatic community and representatives of the two communities on the island.

In his address, the SRSG pointed out that, “despite this day of celebration of peace, war and armed conflict continue to rage in many places. The millions of people living under oppression, going hungry or lacking shelter around the world are testament to the fact that peace is not just the absence of war.

And yet, amid this tragic reality, there are reasons for hope, and perhaps nowhere more so than here in Cyprus. Prospects for a comprehensive settlement are better now than they have been for a long time. The leaders of the two communities have started full-fledged negotiations to reunite the island. The opening of Ledra Street was the first of a series of measures we hope will build trust, and encourage Cypriots from both sides of the political divide to come together in ever greater numbers as they rebuild a common home in peace and prosperity.”

Referring to the sacrifice of the veterans in the service of peace, Zerihoun stressed that they are the embodiment of the conviction we hold in common: that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots can unite for a greater good.

You, as Cypriots, helped bring peace as you fought tyranny during the Second World War. This shared history and the courage it took has continued to hold you together through the difficulties this island has and is going through.”

Zerihoun called on all attending to take counsel from the wisdom of the veterans present and expressed the hope that the lighting of the peace vigil candle will symbolize the rekindling of our commitment to lasting peace in a reunited Cyprus.

Cyprus World War II Veterans Association President Loizos Demetriou in a brief address said: “As veterans of the World War II, we are well aware of the misery and destruction caused by war and shall always be ready to take part in events such as the present in support of peace and security. We are living in a region where violence and wars are not unknown and our duty to work for peace is therefore greater. We must all try hard to meet the call for building a better world in the 21st century.”

SRSG Zerihoun lit a candle from the peace candle and passed on the light to those attending the ceremony. A minute silence was held in honour of those who have fought for peace. The peace candle burned for 24 hours.
Following six months of duty with UNFICYP, personnel from the Argentinian Contingent were decorated with the United Nations Medal during a ceremony that took place on 4 September.

The event kicked off with the presentation of troops to UNFICYP Force Commander, Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez Debernardi. Guests included the Spanish Ambassador, the Military and Defence Attachés of Argentina and Chile, Military Attaché of the British High Commission, UNFICYP Chief of Staff and other UNFICYP civilian and military personnel.

The ceremony began with the singing of the Argentinean, Chilean and Paraguayan national anthems, after which the Force Commander addressed the parade.

Later, “In the Service of Peace” medals were awarded to Officers, WCOs and soldiers from Argentina, Chile and Paraguay, who serve in Sector 1, HQ UNFICYP, the Mobile Force Reserve, the Force Military Police Unit and UN Flight.

The ceremony ended with a march past of troops saluting the Force Commander. Soldiers and visitors were then invited to enjoy Argentinean traditional dishes and beverages at a reception by the pool.

ARGCON is the largest contingent serving with UNFICYP, and has been part of this mission since 25 September 1993, contributing more than 10,000 peacekeepers to date.

The UNFICYP medal was introduced in 1964 for a minimum of 90 days duty in Cyprus. To date, in the interest of regional peace and security, 171,970 medals have been awarded since the start of the mission, and on 22 September, the Mobile Force Reserve held a military medal parade at the old Nicosia airport in the United Nations Protected Area.

On parade were soldiers from the United Kingdom, Hungary, Slovakia and Argentina; pulling together a parade with all these different nationalities and drill styles was no mean feat.

The parade commenced at 9.15 a.m. and was initially commanded by the MFR Company Sergeant Major Jacquie Barlow, who handed the parade over to Maj. Dan McNeil, OC MFR.

In total, 57 soldiers received their medals from Force Commander Rear Admiral Debernardi, who then addressed the parade and thanked the MFR for their sterling efforts during the past six months. After all the preparation and hard work, the parade went without a hitch. It was a complete success and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

About 120 young Cypriots and road safety experts came together in the United Nations Protected Area on 10 September to talk about safe driving during the first pilot test of the “Respect for Speed” programme, part of a two-year project called “Road Safety in Cyprus.”

The programme, based on a Danish model, targets young drivers aged 18-25, and involves a driving drill, screening of short video clips featuring severe accidents, as well as educational modules. Since its introduction in Denmark, “Respect for Speed” has had a 100% success rate: none of the more than 10,000 young drivers who have been through the programme have been involved in a fatal car accident. First the participants are briefed on the realities of car accidents by ambulance doctors and police officers who then work to engage them in a dialogue on the subject.

Survivors of traffic accidents from Denmark along with doctors, police officers and first aid workers – the first witnesses at an accident scene – shared their experiences during the four-hour session, which took place at the old Nicosia International Airport. Under the supervision of experienced driving instructors, participants took part in a driving drill on the airport runway to experience the effects of having to unexpectedly stop to avoid hitting somebody at a short distance while driving at 110 km per hour. They are then schooled in first-aid and listen to the traumatic experience of a young public information officer who has to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair as a result of a road accident. Finally, the groups come together to view short films featuring interviews with young drivers who, driving under the influence of alcohol and/or too fast, have caused the loss of the life of another person in a road accident.

Traffic accidents have become one of the major social problems in Cyprus. The dramatic statistics presented by both communities show that Cyprus has the third worst death toll on traffic accidents in Europe. During the period 1996-2005, Greek Cypriots have mourned an average of 108 dead yearly due to traffic-related accidents. During 2005 alone, there were 2,398 road accidents of which 102 were fatal, 741 serious and 1,555 not serious.

In proportion to the size of the population, the picture is even more worrying in the Turkish Cypriot community. Last year there were 3,254 accidents and the average number of deaths caused by road accidents between 1996-2005 was 51. This calls for immediate island-wide action to reduce accidents and casualties.

Jaco Cilliers, Senior Programme Manager at UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust, said:

“This initiative creates opportunities for the exchange of knowledge which inevitably helps to develop mutual trust and lead to common solutions among Cypriots. Within this spirit, we hope the young people who will be involved in this project will use their experiences to effect island-wide in attitudes and behaviour. Young people are being called to experience their own limits in order to learn to respect speed, respect human life, respect each other”.

The event also saw the participation of Taye-Brook Zerhoun, the Secretary General’s Special Representative to Cyprus and chief of UNFICYP, George Jacouvo, Senior Advisor to the Greek Cypriot Community Leader, and Ozdil Nami, Senior Advisor to the Turkish Cypriot Community Leader. The European University and Road Traffic Accident Prevention Association organised the event.

The “Road Safety in Cyprus” project was designed and implemented by the Foundation of Social and Political Studies, in collaboration with the European University Cyprus Research Centre in the Greek Cypriot community, and the Road Traffic Accident Prevention Association (RTAPA) in the Turkish Cypriot community. The programme is funded by the United Nations Development Programme’s initiative, Action for Cooperation and Trust, which is supported by USAID and consists of several outputs, aiming at further development and promotion of road safety across the island.

Respect for speed

Rewarding service

SRSG Zerhoun (centre) with Ozdil Nami (left) and George Jacouvo (right), senior aides to the two leaders at the “Respect for Speed” event

Experience driving instructors conducting a traffic exercise
Clearing the remnants of war – landmines and unexploded ordnance – in Cyprus over the last 30 years has had a significant impact on the two communities in Cyprus. The mines that have contaminated the land for over three decades are finally being removed and, together with them, the fear they instil in the communities that live and work near them.

The United Nations Development Programme’s Partnership for the Future – Mine Action Centre began its work in October 2004, with the support of UNFICYP to de-mine the buffer zone. The European Union has to date provided nine million euros for the project as part of humanitarian efforts to clear landmines and unexploded ordnance from Cyprus. Over 45 minefields are now safe, with over five million square metres of land released so far. A total of 4,512 mines have been cleared, including 2,381 anti-personnel mines and 2,231 anti-tank mines.

Farmers who live and work in the buffer zone areas are now able to cultivate land that was previously inaccessible, while other landowners have been able to develop their properties. De-mining supports the restoration of normal conditions in the area, in that it enables people to safely use the land for daily activities without risk of being injured or killed by landmines.

Even though access to the buffer zone was always strictly controlled by UNFICYP with suspected minefields clearly marked and entry prohibited, over the years, there have been incidents where civilians and UN personnel have been killed or injured in landmine accidents in Cyprus while bringing people together.

Minefields around Kato-Pyrgos and Lefka have been cleared in preparation for the opening of a new crossing point. Sotiros Christodoulou notes that the clearing of the opening cross point would amount to de-mining because all the young people are forced to leave their village in order to attend schools in the larger towns and then remain there to find employment. Travelling to the bigger towns like Limassol and Nicosia is too expensive for many of the local people and, therefore, interest in returning to the land is not high, Diogenouss says.

De-mining has taken place around the village. Christodoulou explains that the village used to be a minefield but, in a minefield in another village, she says, "It was a great relief when they cleared the land and we could return to our orchards with our goats, pigs and sheep," she says.

Christodoulou also notes that with cleared land and the potential for opening a new crossing point, her children that have left the village due to its isolated position could return to the area they would have had to travel so far (over three hours) to get there. They would have greater access to work opportunities as well as better medical and education facilities. "The house prices are also cheaper here than in Nicosia and more people would be able to enjoy a healthier lifestyle in their village," she says.

Lefka Muhtar Altan Oksuz echoes some of the views of his Greek Cypriot counterpart in Kato-Pyrgos, noting that the residents would benefit if a crossing were to open, particularly regarding education opportunities. "The war changed all this and the buffer zone cut off Kato-Pyrgos from these places. Now it takes about three hours to travel from Kato-Pyrgos to Nicosia, which means that it is too far for people to travel to work or access educational opportunities on a daily basis. As a result, people, particularly the younger generation, have left the area in order to travel to work. The minefield has caused a great deal of suffering," she says.

De-mining has taken place around the village, she says, "It was a great relief when they cleared the land and we could return to our orchards with our goats, pigs and sheep," she says. "It was a great relief when they cleared the land and we could return to our orchards with our goats, pigs and sheep," she says. People are finally being removed and, together with them, the fear they instil in the communities that live and work near them.

Delivering as one on HIV prevention

DPKO invited its HIV advisers, focal points and coordinators as well as partners from UN Cares, UNDP and UNFICYP to participate in the fifth annual HIV workshop hosted at the UNLB in Brindisi, Italy between 25-29 August 2008.

UNFICYP Focal Point Netha Kreouzos who attended the workshop echoed the concerns expressed by many advisers and focal points of the need to streamline efforts and maintain a minimum standard across all UN missions and agencies. To address this the UN Cares representatives briefed participants on the system-wide programme created to address the problems of confusion and duplication of efforts.

UN Focal Points noted that since 1991, the UN has had a system-wide HIV workplace policy stating that all staff and their dependents have access to prevention, education, voluntary counselling and testing services, an workplace code of stigma and discrimination. However, despite many successes, agency-specific programmes were creating duplication of effort and a common approach was needed.

While the issue of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse was also addressed, it was stressed that there is no contradiction between making condoms available in peacekeeping missions and the need to maintain a code of conduct.

"It was stressed that there is no contradiction between making condoms available in peacekeeping missions and the need to maintain a code of conduct. It was also stressed that there is no contradiction between making condoms available in peacekeeping missions and the need to maintain a code of conduct."
A small step against global warming

S
ince taking up his appointment, Secretary- General Mr. Ban Ki-moon has made the adoption of renewable energy solutions as one of his major priorities to combat the threat of global warming. UNFICYP CITS is committed to reducing energy consumption from non-green sources by 15% in the current financial year. This will primarily be achieved through the installation of solar panels at remote OPs, but a variety of small but cumulative projects should help us achieve this target.

One recent initiative was the installation of a wind-powered electricity generator at OP107 to supplement an existing solar panel array. CITS technician Mark Hughes installed the generator with the help of the Hungarian soldiers stationed at Camp Szent Istvan, Athienou and he extends his warm thanks for their assistance. OP107 is the CITS channel 9 radio-repeatersite, strategically situated on a hilltop for extensive radio coverage of the area. Fortunately, the hilltop is subject to windy conditions and hence is an ideal location for a wind-powered generator. The generator’s rotors are extremely efficient and spin rapidly in breezy conditions, producing up to 900 Watts of cost-free, clean electricity.

New trucks for old

T
August 2008, the Transport Unit received 18 brand new Isuzu 4 x 4 double cabin trucks. Some of you may have seen them parked up in the yard in an impressive shiny white line. It wasn’t very long before we started receiving a surprising number of visitors who just happened to be in the neighbourhood and thought they would drop by for coffee and casually wonder if they were a lucky winner of a new car.

One visitor felt that he should get three vehicles but we are quite possessive and do not let go of our new trucks that easily so most of our visitors, and you know who you are, left feeling a little deflated. But congratulations go to you all for your persuasive arguments. None of them worked but they were most entertaining!

On a more serious note, UNFICYP’s vehicle fleet is required to be maintained to a standard ensuring the Buffer Zone patrols are carried out continuously and effectively with driver safety a priority. The unit constantly receives various requests for vehicles to be updated, for an increase in number of vehicles in an area or more specific requirements may be requested for specialised details and assignments.

These requests are put forward to the Vehicle Establish- ment Committee, who meet periodically to consider and then either grant or reject a request. The decisions are based on set vehicle/manpower ratios and criteria laid down by HQNY.

With this in mind, our fleet of hired vehicles is con- stantly inspected and monitored and on this occasion the oldest vehicles, those with high mileage and trouble-some, were identified and put to the top of the list. The type of terrain and work the vehicle is required to tackle is also taken into consideration.

Wind-powered electricity generator installed at OP 107

The procedure to exchange the vehicles was straightforward and involved de-riding the old model - that is removing the Carlog Unit, the Motorola radio and number plates and fitting them to the new truck. And of course there is always the documentation assigning the new vehicle to the sector or unit and handing back the old one. The whole exercise progressed smoothly due to the expertise and preparation by the Transport Unit staff and as you can see from the photo’s the satisfied customers left in their nice new vehicles.

Cyril Hames, Senior Transport Assistant, had this to say: “We are expecting delivery of more new trucks in con- tinuation of the current vehicle rotation period. The whole operation is anticipated to be complete by the end of November 2008 so by that time, all the hired patrol vehicles will be less than 3½ years old, improving the operational efficiency and the reliability of a young fleet.”

Good news for our military and UNPOL who patrol daily on some potentially very dangerous roads.

Fire kills, but you can prevent it

F
ew of us realize how easily – and how quickly – these devices should not be put in a bathroom, kitchen or garage, because there are sources or con- ceived sources of products of combustion, which can trip the sensor. As a bonus, when you are not at home, a smoke alarm can also alert your neighbours or passers-by about the fire in your property so that they can call the fire brigade.

Smoke alarms detect smoke before you can even see or smell it. The smoke particles break a circuit in the smoke detector which triggers a loud warning signal, and keeps sounding until the smoke clears.

There are two types of smoke alarms available today: photoelectric and ionization. While photoelectric smoke alarms generally respond faster to smoldering smoke and ionization smoke alarms gener- ally respond faster to flaming fire conditions, both types provide adequate protection against fire. Combination smoke alarms featuring both photoelectric and ionization technology are also available at hardware, department and home improvement stores.

Many people who already have smoke alarms could still be in danger. The alarm could be in the wrong place, there may not be sufficient smoke alarms for the size of their home or the device may not have been regularly checked.

Within UNFICYP almost all required locations have the fire smoke detectors/systems.

On 18 May and 28 July 2008, two electric fires occurred in UNFICYP Sector 2’s Ledra Palace Hotel. Is it just a coincidence that the fire alarm systems which detected the fires and alarmed the fire crew on time to evacuate all four floors and to extinguish the fire before it got out of control? I think not.

Excuses kill! To this end, it’s for your safety and your responsibility to fit an alarm.

In Cyprus, there is a variety of models and makes to choose from, depending on requirements and budget.

The UNFICYP Fire Crew (telephone 22-61-4453) will be happy to give you advice on which is best for your circumstances.

Crew Commander Incident Command Course

The UNFICYP Senior Fire Officer Nadeem Paul Qadir attended the Crew Commander Incident Command Course at the International Fire Training Centre, Darlington, UK, between 28 April and 2 May 2008. The school is one of the most prestigious Fire Training Centres in the world, and provides Fire Related Training for delegates from more than 80 countries.

“The course itself was different from anything I have previously attended,” Qadir says. “The reason for this is the Command and Control training which uses the latest Computer Based Simulator Technology. It is same latest technology been used to train fighter pilots.”

Now back within UNFICYP, equipped with more knowledge and experience, Paul has already put his training to good use as when the UNFICYP Fire Crew provided the fire cover for an emergency landing of the RAF Rescue Bell helicopter at Nicosia Airport/UN Flight area.

Smoke emergency number: 112/199 and North fire emergency number: 199

Smoke alarms should be tested once a month, and their bat-teries replaced annually. Every family should develop a fire escape plan and practise it at least every six months.

Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms in the home are considered one of the best and least expen- sive means of providing an early warning of a potentially deadly fire. Every year, thou- sands of people lose their lives in residential fires. Most fire victims die from inhalation of smoke and toxic gases, not as a result of burns. The risk of dying from fires in homes without smoke alarms is twice as high as in homes with them. Most deaths and injuries occur in fires that happen at night while the victims are asleep. When asleep, our sense of smell, along with ability to see, also goes to sleep. If there is a fire, toxic fumes may overcome us before we wake up. Keep in mind that a fire will not wake even a light sleeper until maybe too late.

There are two types of smoke alarms available today: photoelectric and ionization. While photoelectric smoke alarms generally respond faster to smoldering smoke and ionization smoke alarms generally respond faster to flaming fire conditions, both types provide adequate protection against fire. Combination smoke alarms featuring both photoelectric and ionization technology are also available at hardware, department and home improvement stores.

Many people who already have smoke alarms could still be in danger. The alarm could be in the wrong place, there may not be sufficient smoke alarms for the size of their home or the device may not have been regularly checked.

Within UNFICYP almost all required locations have the fire smoke detectors/systems.

On 18 May and 28 July 2008, two electric fires occurred in UNFICYP Sector 2’s Ledra Palace Hotel. Is it just a coincidence that the fire alarm systems which detected the fires and alarmed the fire crew on time to evacuate all four floors and to extinguish the fire before it got out of control? I think not.

Excuses kill! To this end, it’s for your safety and your responsibility to fit an alarm.

In Cyprus, there is a variety of models and makes to choose from, depending on requirements and budget.

The UNFICYP Fire Crew (telephone 22-61-4453) will be happy to give you advice on which is best for your circumstances.

Crew Commander Incident Command Course

The UNFICYP Senior Fire Officer Nadeem Paul Qadir attended the Crew Commander Incident Command Course at the International Fire Training Centre, Darlington, UK, between 28 April and 2 May 2008. The school is one of the most prestigious Fire Training Centres in the world, and provides Fire Related Training for delegates from more than 80 countries.

“The course itself was different from anything I have previously attended,” Qadir says. “The reason for this is the Command and Control training which uses the latest Computer Based Simulator Technology. It is same latest technology been used to train fighter pilots.”

Now back within UNFICYP, equipped with more knowledge and experience, Paul has already put his training to good use as when the UNFICYP Fire Crew provided the fire cover for an emergency landing of the RAF Rescue Bell helicopter at Nicosia Airport/UN Flight area.
Hungary, Slovakia defence chiefs visit

In late August, a four-star general delegation arrived for an official visit to the mission, headed by Gen. Lubomir Bulík, Chief of Defence of the Slovak Republic, and Gen. András Havril, Chief of Defence of the Republic of Hungary. The inspection took place between 21 and 22 August.

UNFICYP Chief of Staff/Acting Force Commander Col. Gerard Hughes greeted the visiting generals on arrival at UNFICYP Headquarters and later gave a briefing on the mission operational issues, current tasks, political climate improvement, new visions and possible future challenges. The generals later met with their national staff based in the Headquarters. Gen. Bulík visited the Engineer Camp Taty, while Gen. Havril dropped by the Hungarian national club.

The delegation then travelled to HQ Sector 4, Camp General Štefánik in Famagusta, where they were briefed by Senior Ops Officer Capt. Miroslav Štefánik on the operational update and tasks of Sector 4. The generals then took the opportunity to meet with Slovak and Hungarian soldiers.

A line tour to CP-10 and OP 146 in the Dherinia Line buffer zone followed. Subsequently, the Slovak party proceeded to PB 126 and OP 129 in Pyla, where they were briefed on the daily routine by the post commanders. The Hungarian delegation also called in on the HUNCON members of 1st Platoon at Camp Szent Istvan in Athienou village and PB 91 in the western part of Sector 4.

German ambassador

German Ambassador H.E. Mr. Gottfried Zeitz paid an official visit to UNFICYP on 5 August. On his arrival he was met by Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sánchez and Chief of Staff Col. Gerard Hughes, after which he visited SRSG/Chief of Mission Mr Tayé-Brook Zerihoun.

Mr. Zeitz was then taken on a vehicle tour of the buffer zone at HQ UNFICYP, followed by a city tour of Sector 2.

Hungarian national day

Hungarian National Day was celebrated at HQ UNFICYP by members of the Hungarian Contingent led by Commander HUNCON/DCO Sector 4, Lt. Col. Béla Berendi. This day celebrates the founder of the state of Hungary, St. Stephen, the country’s national leader and first king. A small reception followed.

New Faces

Chief of Staff

Col. Gerard Hughes was appointed COS UNFICYP on 31 July 2008, following his appointment as Military Adviser to the UNSG’s Special Envoy to Darfur, in the rank of Brigadier. Immediately preceding this appointment he was principal drafting officer on the Medii Team in UNHQ New York, drafting the concept, administrative and logistic framework for UNAMID. Prior to this he was the COS (Force) of UNMIS.

Commissioned into the Queen’s Own Hussars in 1979, Col. Hughes served as a Tank Troop Leader in Germany and Armoured Reconnaissance Troop Leader on Operations in Belize. In 1985 he transferred into the Royal Gurkha Rifles where he commanded at all levels up to Lieutenant Colonel and was Military Attaché in Kathmandu in 1996/1997.

Col. Hughes was educated at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the Army Command and Staff College and has an MPhil from the University of Glasgow. He was a Military Assistant in the Chief of the General Staff’s office and in Military Operations Branch in the UK Ministry of Defence. In NATO he served as Assistant to the Deputy Commander Joint Force Command. In 2002 he served as Assistant to the US Chief, Office of Military Cooperation in the US Embassy in Kabul, where he assisted in drafting the DDR Programme for UNAMA.

Col. Hughes served as an UNMO Team leader in Sierra Leone in 2000/2001, where he was awarded the OBE for leading the team that negotiated the disarmament and demobilisation of the first two RUF rebel brigades. In 2002/2003 he was Assistant Secretary to the UK Chiefs of Staff. In 2004/2005 he was Chief of Staff of UNAMSIL.

Col. Hughes is married to Ji and has one daughter, Rita, who is at boarding school in the UK.

Chief Operations Officer

Lt. Col. Ricardo Daniel Beldi was born in Sante Fe, Argentina, in 1963. He took up the post of Chief Operations Officer on 8 September 2008.

Lt. Col. Beldi graduated from the Argentinian Military Academy in 1986. From 1987-1989, he served in an Infantry Mechanized Regiment, and from 1990-1996, he was an Instructor in two Military Institutes, the Argentine NCO School and Argentinian Military Academy training Officer.

In December 2001, as a major, he graduated as a staff officer in the Command and General Staff in Buenos Aires. From 2002 to 2004, he was the Operations Officer in the 7th Mechanized Regiment. Later he was posted as Operational Training Centre Commander from 2005 to 2006 and his latest post in the Army in 2007 as Chief of Operations Plans Division in the Land Operations Command.

Lt. Col. Beldi holds a university degree in Strategy and Organisation from the Command General Staff College. He is now in his final year of a course in Political Science and International Relations.

He is married to Karina Amaparo Schild and they have two sons, Agustín Roberto (14) and Tomás Ricardo (12).

Force Provost Marshal

Maj. Russell (Russ) Feouler joined the British Army in 1978 as a direct enlistment to the Corps of Royal Military Police having previously been a Police Cadet with the Strathclyde Police Force.

Serving at Regimental Duty, he has seen service in the UK, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Northern Ireland, Berlin, Germany, Canada, Norway, Bosnia, Hong Kong (the last RMP RSM to hold the post prior to the handover of the colony to the People’s Republic of China), Hawaii and Sierra Leone. Having commissioned from the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 in 2001, he has held the appointments of 2i/c, Regimental Adjutant, Staff Officer Grade 3 G1/G4 and Loan Service Advisor.

A keen service shooter, as Secretary of his Corps’ Shooting Association, he secured the Corps’ championship title for the first time in the 22 years of the competition. An active individual, he enjoys almost all sports but particularly paragliding, motocycling, golf, fishing and diving.

He is accompanied by his wife Carole and, following a year of separation due to deployment in Sierra Leone, looks forward to enjoying all that Cyprus has to offer when work permits.
New Faces

Human Resources Assistant

Richard Steggall took over the post of Human Resources Assistant in September 2008. Richard started his UN career at UNHQ New York in 1998, serving as an Administrative Assistant with the Department of Management until 2002 and then as a Human Resources Assistant with DPKO until 2007. Prior to joining UNFICYP, he was a Senior Human Resources Assistant with the OUSG/DFS, working as part of the Senior Leadership Appointments Section, a small team dealing with senior leadership issues in peacekeeping and political missions. During his stay at UNHQ, he had short-term assignments to Afghanistan and Nepal, working on HR issues and training local and international staff. Richard is married to Dina and they have two sons: Rowan, age four, and Reed, six months, who will all be joining him in Cyprus very soon. Outside of working hours, his interests include sport, especially football and golf, photography and music.

Supply Assistant

The new UNFICYP Supply Officer, Paulo Oliveira Martins, was born in Angola on 11 September 1967 when it was still part of the Portuguese empire. After the war of independence, his family returned to Portugal where Paulo was raised and educated. In 1988, Paulo joined the Special Forces of the Portuguese Army. He then worked for the Portuguese Railroad Company (CP) for two years as a Station Master. In 1992, he joined the Portuguese Police where he stayed until he joined the civilian police element of UNMIS in Bosnia.

HQ Telephone Operator

Athena Georgiou was appointed UNFICYP’s Telephone Operator on 18 September 2008. Athena graduated from Makedonitissa High School, Nicosia, in 1992, studied Marketing and Hellenic Language at the Cyprus College as well as Public Relations. For the last six years, Athena has been working as the Assistant to an Executive Director of an Information Technology company in Cyprus. First contacts with United Nations family Athena experienced was when she served with the Red Cross in Cyprus during the war in Lebanon in 2001.

Force Hygiene Officer


SO2 Pers

Lt. Col. Bernhard Theissel arrived in UNFICYP on 24 August to take up the appointment of Liaison Officer to the National Guard. He was born in Eibiswald, Austria in 1951 and joined the Army in 1971. He has served as an NCO in the functions of a recruit instructor, anti-tank platoon leader, infantry platoon leader, instructor for the MOD and in the Austrian MOD. As an officer, he also served in the MOD, and now serves as a senior CIMIC Officer in the Austrian Joint Forces.

Liaison Officer to the National Guard

Maj. Dr. Zsolt Fejes was born in Szentes, Hungary. He arrived in Cyprus on 17 September to take over the post of Force Medical Officer. This is Maj. Fejes’ third tour of duty with UNFICYP, having served as FHO in 2004 and 2006. Maj. Fejes studied and graduated at the Semmelweis Medical University in Hungary, Budapest. He began his career in the Hungarian Defence Force’s Health Protection Institute. One year later, he was posted to the Central Military Hospital, ENT and Head-Neck Surgery Department. He gained a diploma as an ENT/Head-Neck surgery specialist in 2001 and was promoted as an Assistant Professor in 2004. He also graduated in Disaster Medicine in 2006. Maj. Fejes is currently working on his PhD thesis, “The biological and medical effects of chemical weapons”. He will graduate next year from the University of National Defence.

Lt. Col. Theissel married Dorothea in 1972 and has one son Michael (37) who also serves in the army as a professional soldier. Lt. Col. Theissel first served with this mission in 1975 as a platoon leader in the Pyla district, in 1978, 1979, and 1980 with the UNFICYP Military Police, and in 1999 and 2001 with the Civil Affairs Branch. He has also served in other missions including Syria, Israel, Albania, Bosnia and Kosovo. His hobbies are skiing, mountain climbing, diving and motor racing.

Force Medical Officer

Capt. Rastislav Kapa comes from Presov in eastern Slovakia, and took up the position of SO2 JLOC Plans on 9 September. He was born on 3 June 1972. After graduating from the Military High School in Zilina and the Military Academy in Liptovsky Mikulas as a supply officer, he went through positions in logistics branch of the Military High School in Zilina and the Military Academy in Liptovsky Mikulas as a supply officer, he

Liaison Officer to the National Guard

Lt. Col. Kovács's second tour with UNFICYP, having served in the same position from 2002 to 2004. Lt. Col. Kovács speaks English and Russian. He is married to Tünde and they have four children: Kristóf (16) and Ákos József (six). His hobbies include reading, gardening and playing football. He is also interested in social sciences and international politics.

First contacts with United Nations family Athena experienced was when she served with the Red Cross in Cyprus during the war in Lebanon in 2001.

For the last six years, Athena has been working as the Assistant to an Executive Director of an Information Technology company in Cyprus. First contacts with United Nations family Athena experienced was when she served with the Red Cross in Cyprus during the war in Lebanon in 2001.

Athena Georgiou was appointed UNFICYP’s Telephone Operator on 18 September 2008. Athena graduated from Makedonitissa High School, Nicosia, in 1992, studied Marketing and Hellenic Language at the Cyprus College as well as Public Relations. For the last six years, Athena has been working as the Assistant to an Executive Director of an Information Technology company in Cyprus. First contacts with United Nations family Athena experienced was when she served with the Red Cross in Cyprus during the war in Lebanon in 2001.

Athena Georgiou was appointed UNFICYP’s Telephone Operator on 18 September 2008. Athena graduated from Makedonitissa High School, Nicosia, in 1992, studied Marketing and Hellenic Language at the Cyprus College as well as Public Relations. For the last six years, Athena has been working as the Assistant to an Executive Director of an Information Technology company in Cyprus. First contacts with United Nations family Athena experienced was when she served with the Red Cross in Cyprus during the war in Lebanon in 2001.

Athena Georgiou was appointed UNFICYP’s Telephone Operator on 18 September 2008. Athena graduated from Makedonitissa High School, Nicosia, in 1992, studied Marketing and Hellenic Language at the Cyprus College as well as Public Relations. For the last six years, Athena has been working as the Assistant to an Executive Director of an Information Technology company in Cyprus. First contacts with United Nations family Athena experienced was when she served with the Red Cross in Cyprus during the war in Lebanon in 2001.
Downer visits patrol base 126