

# The Blue Beret



Clean-up of Nicosia buffer zone



## Contents



Editorial . . . . .3

Assessment report of the Secretary-General on the status of the negotiations in Cyprus / Major General Chao Liu of China Assumes Responsibility as UNFICYP Force Commander. . . .4/5

World Water Day Marked in Cyprus . . . . .6



UN Staff Relocated from Egypt Arrive Safely in Cyprus / Cypriot Parties Express Support for CMP . . . . .7

International Women's Day Marked . . . . .8/9

Buffer Zone Clean Up . . . . .10/11



St Patricks Day in UNFICYP / Memorial Stone Dedication to WO2 Steven Goldsmith . . . . .12

Peacekeepers Receive UN Medals / Buttenheim: Important milestones reached, but much still needed for settlement . . .13

The First Female Technician in UN Flight . . . . .14

UN Flight Rotation / Transfer of Operational Responsibility in Sector 1 / Farewell Line Up in Sector 4 . . . . .15

New Faces . . . . .16/17

Visits / UNFICYP 10KM Run . . . . .18

Conquering the Buffer Zone Challenge . . . . .19



## Serving UNFICYP's civilian, military and police personnel

The **Blue Beret** is UNFICYP's in-house journal. Views expressed are of the authors concerned, and do not necessarily conform with official policy. Articles of general interest (plus photos with captions) are invited from all members of the Force. Copyright of all material is vested in UN publications, but may be reproduced with the Editor's permission.

### The Blue Beret

Published bi-monthly by the:  
Public Information Office  
United Nations Force in Cyprus

HQ UNFICYP  
PO Box 21642  
1590 Nicosia  
Cyprus

### Editorial Team

Netha Kreouzou  
Ersin Öztoycan  
Rolando Gomez  
MSgt. Gabriel Zelei (Photographer)  
Capt. Tomas Daño

### Unit Press Officers

**Sector 1** Capt. Marcelo Alejandro Quiroz  
**Sector 2** Capt. Matt Lindow  
**Sector 4** Capt. Ivan Lassut  
**MFR** Maj. Adrian W. Patrick  
**UNPOL** Deputy Senior Police Adviser  
Miroslav Milojevic  
**UN Fit** Lt. Counago Martin  
**FMPU** Capt. Jozef Bolecek

Tel: 2261-4553/4416/4408 - Fax: 2261-4461

E-mail: unficyp-blue-beret@un.org - blueberetcyprus@hotmail.com

Website: www.unficyp.org

## Editorial

Although the current issue of the Blue Beret covers key and relevant developments spanning February and March, we have exceptionally decided to devote our opening commentary to those which unfolded in late March and carried over to the beginning of April; namely, the loss of several United Nations staff across the globe.

The early days of April were indeed very difficult times for our peacekeeping family as we watched events unfold in Afghanistan, where seven of our colleagues were brutally murdered in Mazar-e-Sharif, in Côte d'Ivoire, where another United Nations staff member was killed by a stray bullet amidst the turmoil in that country, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a United Nations aircraft crashed on landing in Kinshasa killing all but one of the 33 people on board the flight originating in Kisangani, most of whom were working for the peacekeeping force in the central African nation.

In all, at least 40 staff members lost their lives over the course of one week while performing their duties. Additionally, staff members were recently killed in Uganda, Haiti and in Darfur while serving in the line of duty.

Never before has the United Nations witnessed so many deaths of its staff in multiple locations within such a short duration. Indeed, United Nations peacekeeping staff put their lives at risk daily working in places where others can't or won't go. As noted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on this sombre occasion, "Our fallen colleagues were working in the best tradition of the United Nations, far from home in dangerous places. They gave their lives in the service of humanity; their dedication will continue to inspire us."

Over years the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus has also been subjected to its own sense of tragedy. Since the inception of the mission in 1964, 180 peacekeepers have lost their lives while serving on duty across the island. These include the death of a United Nations de-miner as recent as 18 months ago who was working towards ridding the island of its lethal landmine legacy.

As we go through this very difficult time for our peacekeeping family, let us remember our fallen United Nations colleagues and vow to honour their memory by upholding the highest principles of the Organization to which they dedicated their lives.







## Assessment report of the Secretary-General on the status of the negotiations in Cyprus

The report issued on 4 March 2011 provide the Security Council with an updated assessment of the state of the negotiations in Cyprus since the Secretary-General's previous report (S/2010/603), dated 24 November 2010. Excerpts of the Secretary-General's report are included below:

Since I made my last assessment in November 2010, the pace of the talks has quickened. Despite the temporary absence of Mr. Eroğlu, who had to undergo surgery, the leaders of Cyprus and Turkey have met 11 times and their representatives have met 21 times since the November meeting, including at the meeting I had with them in Geneva in January 2011. Altogether, since the start of the full-fledged negotiations in 2008, there have been almost 100 meetings at the level of the leaders.

### Observations

I made it clear when I met with the leaders in New York in November and again in Geneva in January that the United Nations respects the talks as a Cypriot-led and Cypriot-owned process and that it is precisely for this reason that we expect the two sides to assume responsibility for driving the process forward. The destiny of Cyprus is in the hands of its leaders. It is they who must act to reconcile their differences. Without their dedication and commitment to reunifying the island, the process cannot move forward.

In my report to the Security Council in November, I made several observations related to the need for the two leaders to be mindful about creating an environment conducive to successful talks and to eventual support for a settlement by Cypriots on both sides. I noted the growing public scepticism that a settlement would be reached. The low expectations of the public are in contrast to the exciting possibilities being discussed by the sides. While I respect the need for confidentiality in the process of achieving compromise, I continue to believe that the official secrecy of the negotiations, broken only by the selective leaking of texts through the media, is not conducive to constructive negotiations. This trend has continued since November and public opinion continues to predict the failure of the negotiations. Both leaders need to make a convincing case to the public that good progress is being made, that the status quo cannot continue and that a united Cyprus can be achieved to the benefit of both communities.

In the November report I also expressed my concern about the use of negative public rhetoric and its potential harm to the process. While public discourse initially showed signs of becoming gentler after my meeting with the leaders in November, the recent record has been more mixed. I reiterate my belief that negative messaging makes it more difficult to reach an agreement. I made it clear again when I met Mr. Christofias and Mr. Eroğlu in January that they cannot

project strong doubts about the process and still expect their respective communities to trust and support them in their endeavours. Nor can they hope to create an environment in which the public on both sides will embrace reunification if public statements demonize or ascribe ulterior motives to the other side.

For the talks to proceed smoothly, a supportive regional and international environment is of key importance. I urge all regional and international actors to remain focused on finding a solution in Cyprus, to speak with one voice and to make every effort to support both sides in the ongoing talks. The three guarantor powers have provided important support for the process and I am grateful for their continued strong interest. During my contacts with the Foreign Ministers of Greece and Turkey, both recognized the difficulties inherent in resolving the outstanding issues. They are ready to offer whatever assistance they can. I encourage and welcome their continued engagement. The European Commission has also continued to provide useful advice. The constant support of the Commission during the negotiations will be crucial in helping the sides to craft a settlement in line with European Union law.

The commitment of the United Nations to Cyprus has been enduring and extensive. For almost half a century, Member States have committed enormous amounts of energy and resources to helping the two sides to bridge their divisions. Each side should weigh the risks of not reaching a solution against the likelihood of achieving everything they want. The leaders need to focus on the best way to lead the process to its completion. In doing so, they must be mindful of the wishes of all Cypriots.

### Conclusions

I remain concerned about the rate of progress of the talks. In my November report, I warned that the upcoming election cycle could bring with it the risk of the negotiations foundering fatally. I believe that the leaders have made efforts over the past months but more must be done to prevent the negotiations from stalling or drifting endlessly. It is important that the parties reach convergence on the outstanding core issues as soon as possible.

As I told both leaders when we met on 26 January in Geneva, the moment has come to confront the hard choices. The negotiations cannot be an open-ended process, nor can we afford interminable talks for the sake of talks. Now, more than ever, both sides must demonstrate courageous and dedicated leadership and

take practical steps to bring the negotiations to a conclusion. This will require the two leaders to build a greater level of trust, both between themselves and between their two communities.

After the meeting in January, I said that I would call another meeting soon to review progress made in the talks. In the coming weeks, therefore, I intend to closely follow the leaders' efforts to reach further convergence. During the latter part of March, I will assess whether there has been enough progress for me to convene another meeting with the two sides. I expect that, on that occasion, the leaders will explain to me how they intend to resolve the remaining divergences. 24. When I deem it appropriate and in consultation with both sides, I will determine if there has been sufficient progress on the core issues within and across chapters to warrant the convening of a multilateral meeting. The parameters of such a meeting are still being discussed by the two leaders.

25. I understand that the two sides have agreed that the issue of international treaties in the security and guarantees chapter will be discussed at the multilateral meeting, although the Greek Cypriots would also like

to discuss the issue in advance of such a meeting. On the issue of maps and figures relating to the territory chapter, both sides agree that this should be discussed during the last phase of the process. An agreement still has to be reached on the precise timing.

I strongly encourage the sides to take the necessary steps to finalize the negotiation on property. The terms of a framework for resolving affected property issues have been established. In Geneva, I offered to make international experts available to both sides to look in depth at the technical aspects of the property issue. I have instructed the good offices team to ensure that such expertise is available and I encourage both sides to use such resources productively.

In my previous report, I expressed my intention to conduct a broader assessment of the United Nations presence in Cyprus, with a view to recommending ways of adjusting to ongoing developments. This process has been initiated through preliminary internal discussions. I will update the Security Council on the course of this exercise in my next assessment of the state of the talks, which I intend to incorporate into my June report on my mission of good offices in Cyprus.



## Major General Chao Liu of China Assumes Responsibility as UNFICYP Force Commander

Major General Chao Liu of China officially assumed his duties as Force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) on 25 February at a brief ceremony held in the United Nations Protected Area in Nicosia. Acting Force Commander, Colonel Gerard Hughes, officially transferred duties and responsibilities to Major General Liu who succeeds Rear Admiral Mario Sánchez Debernardi of Peru who served as UNFICYP Force Commander from April 2008 to December 2010. The ceremony was attended by Lisa M. Battenheim, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, members of UNFICYP and the UN country team in Cyprus.

Major General Chao Liu brings with him over 35 years of military experience at the national and international level. He has served as the Military, Air and Naval Attaché at the Embassy of China in India

since 2008. Prior to this position, he had served as the Deputy Commander of a mechanized infantry division in Shen Yang Military Region since 2006. He held various positions in the Ministry of National Defence, including as the Section Chief in charge of planning and coordination, Staff Officer, as well as a Regimental Commander in Shen Yang Military Region. During 1993-1994, he served in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara as a military observer.

Major General Chao Liu has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Shijiazhuang Military Command Academy and a Master of Science degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Born in Liaoning, China, on 6 March 1959, Major General Liu is married to Dai Yubin, they have one daughter, Yiyang.





## World Water Day Marked in Cyprus

World Water Day was marked in Cyprus with the launch of an Exhibit on Water-Saving Technologies. The UN-backed Technical Committee on Environment marked World Water Day on 22 March by launching an

exhibit showcasing a variety of water-saving technologies aiming to heighten awareness about the many water management challenges faced in Cyprus and methods to address them.

The Water-Saving Technology Exhibit, was launched along the Ledra/Lokmaci Street crossing in the old town of Nicosia, and remained at the crossing over the course of four days, from 22 - 25 March, and then went on the road to various locations throughout the island. Among the many features on display are those designed to reduce water consumption by up to 60 per cent from current usage.

Speakers addressing the launch underscored the realities facing the population in drought-prone Cyprus highlighting the need to take urgent action to address the many problems that arise in such extreme climates. Addressing the event were Eleni Mavrou and Cemal Bulutođlulari, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Mayors of Nicosia, George Iacovou and Kudret Ozersay, the Representatives of the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, Frank C. Urbancic Jr., U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus, representing the main funder to the project by way of USAID, and Alexander Downer, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Cyprus.

Emphasizing the breadth of water scarcity on the island, Alexander Downer, the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Cyprus, remarked that "the environment does not respect politics", nor did it recognize borders or buffer zones. "It makes a lot of sense for the two communities to get together in bi-communal projects of this kind in order to address

the sorts of problems we have in Cyprus". Lauding the Technical Committee for their good work evidenced by the positive impact they have had in both communities, Mr. Downer expressed hope that this work would auger well for the great project to bring the two communities together in a re-unified bi-communal, bi-zonal federation.

Launched by the Technical Committee on Environment, one of the seven committees set up by the two communities in March 2008 to foster bi-communal projects on a range of issues, the exhibit is part of the project on "Awareness Raising Measures for Water Saving" launched last November and which is one of the confidence-building measures implemented on behalf of the Committee on the Environment. This bi-communal project is implemented by the AKTI Project and Research Centre and the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Environmental Engineers, in co-operation with the Cyprus Environmental Stakeholder Forum and the Regional Network for Sustainable Future. The project is also supported by the UN Development Programme-Action for Cooperation and Trust.

In his message issued on the occasion of the World Water Day 2011, carrying the theme "Water for Cities", Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged governments "to recognize the urban water crisis for what it is – a crisis of governance, weak policies and poor management, rather than one of scarcity." Mr. Ban also called on the international community to reaffirm its "commitment to ending the plight of the more than 800 million people who, in a world of plenty, still do not have the safe drinking water or sanitation they need for a life in dignity and good health."

World Water Day is observed internationally as a means of focusing attention on the importance of fresh-water and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. An international day to celebrate freshwater was recommended at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The United Nations General Assembly responded by designating 22 March 1993 as the first World Water Day.



Exhibitors explain to members of the technical committee and other officials the latest water saving technologies. The two Mayors of Nicosia Eleni Mavrou and Cemal Bulutuglurari welcomed the exhibit organised by the technical committee on Environment. Special Adviser of the Secretary-General Alexander Downer and the representatives of the leaders George Iacovou and Kudret Özersay also expressed their support for such initiatives.



## UN Staff Relocated from Egypt Arrive Safely in Cyprus

An UNFICYP-led operation to relocate UN staff and their dependents from Egypt to Cyprus was successfully concluded on 4 February with the last of 325 passengers landing safely in Larnaca airport just after 10:30 pm.

The one-day operation was carried out by military, police and civilian units of the UN peacekeeping force working in close coordination with airport authorities and government officials to assist the UN staff and their family members, many of whom were young children, who have been temporarily relocated from Egypt due to the persisting unrest in that country.

The first of three UN-chartered planes, landed at

Larnaca airport just before 3 pm with 153 people on board. The second plane followed some hours later carrying another 117 passengers before the last of the flights managed to touch down at 10:30 pm with an additional 55 passengers on board.

UNFICYP had made arrangements to receive up to 600 passengers drawn from the 350 UN staff and some 500 of their family members who have been based in Egypt. Of the 325 relocated to the island are UN staff members working for over 15 UN agencies represented in the North African state. A number of staff members working for the Organization still remain in Egypt carrying out essential tasks.

## Cypriot Parties Express Support for CMP



Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot politicians expressed their support for the work carried out by the Committee on Missing Persons during a visit to the Anthropological Laboratory in the United Nations Protected Area.

The visit by leaders and representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties, which participate in the regular bi-communal meetings at the Ledra Palace Hotel, under the auspices of the embassy of the Slovak Republic to Cyprus took place on 9 February.

Accompanied by Slovak Ambassador in Nicosia, Anna Turenikova the Cypriot politicians had the opportunity to watch a documentary on the work of the CMP and then visit the CMP Anthropological Laboratory, which analyses exhumed remains of missing persons before bone samples are sent to the Cyprus Institute for Neurology and Genetics Laboratory of Forensic Genetics for DNA identification.

The three members of the CMP, Greek Cypriot Elias Georgiades, Turkish Cypriot Gulden Plumer Kucuk and UN appointed representative Christophe Girod briefed them about the work carried out by the bi-communal

teams of scientists and asked for the support of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties so as to continue their work unhindered. They also underlined the need to speed up the process of exhumation and identification of remains.

The mandate of the CMP whose task it is to establish the fate of missing Greek and Turkish Cypriot persons is: "... to look only into cases of persons reported missing in the inter-communal fighting as well as in the events of July 1974 and afterwards. As a result of the violence generated during those times, a total of 502 Turkish Cypriots and 1,493 Greek Cypriots were officially reported as missing by both communities to the CMP. Following a number of recent identifications in the early 2000's, the total number of missing Greek Cypriots actually stands at 1,468 and the number of missing Turkish Cypriots at 494.

According to figures released by the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP), to date, human remains representing over 760 individuals have been exhumed. Over 260 persons have been identified and returned to their families for proper burial.



## International Women's Day in UNFICYP



UNFICYP marked International Women's Day with number of activities in the sectors as well as at headquarters.

The activities culminated in a panel discussion on equality for women in the workplace on 29 March in the United Nations Protected Area in Nicosia attended by civilian, military and police personnel of the mission. Panelists included the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNFICYP Chief of Mission Lisa M. Buttenheim as well as representatives of civilian staff (international and national), police and military personnel.

In her address Buttenheim discussed how women continue to be under-represented in leadership and decision making roles across the UN. She also referred to what the roles and initiatives of senior management are in advancing gender equality and promoting a positive and gender friendly environment in the mission. The Chief of Mission pointed out that the General Assembly Resolution 59/164 [2005] reaffirmed the urgent goal of getting to 50/50 gender balance in all categories of posts and that the Secretary-General regularly reports to the member states on the status of women in the UN.

Steps that have been taken by the organization towards these goals include the creation of Focal Points for Women in all departments, offices and missions, promoting awareness of gender issues, helping managers reach targets. The Gender focal points are active in the staff selection process, ensuring fair representation of women e.g. both on selection panels as well as being interviewed and monitoring implementation.

Another major step was the creation of UN Women in 2010 which brought together four previously distinct parts of the UN system (DAW – INSTRAW – OSAGI – UNIFEM). UN Women mostly, regards integrating gender sensitive policies of missions towards beneficiaries of Peacekeeping operations but also has role to hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

Buttenheim noted that the broad philosophy behind the initiative of UN Women is that: "When you lack senior women, you lack the sponsors, mentors and role models needed to inspire the next generation of young women coming up through the

ranks." She stressed an increased female representation in missions improves relations with the population we are serving. The logic is simple she said, a positive work environment will help attract and retain qualified women. What makes staff happy also makes us more efficient, and productive.

Elizabeth Solomon, Senior Political Affairs Officer from the office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General spoke about the issue of human rights and women reflecting equality in the work place. Solomon pointed out that it is essential human rights be protected by the rule of law and that legal, institutional, interpersonal and structural discrimination had to be eradicated in order to achieve equality in the work place.

The issue of preventing violence against women and sexual harassment, particularly in the workplace was raised by Donatella Giubilaro, Senior Political Affairs Officer from the office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General who noted that the United Nations has taken concrete steps to address this issue and inform all personnel on their rights and responsibilities.

Dympna Flynn, from the Irish Police highlighted the problems faced by women police officers in the issue of women's equality in law. She also looked at why women are under-represented in the Irish police, An Garda Síochána, and in police forces in general. Another issue she touched upon was what policemen's attitudes are towards policewomen and what obstacles females have to overcome to succeed in the male dominated environment.

Julie Wadham, from the military component of the mission referred to the roles of women in the armed forces, what exclusions are in place and why. She also highlighted how women are able to be on the front line despite these restrictions giving specific examples and statistics from within the British Army.

National staff representative, Ersin Öztoycan talked about the role of staff unions in securing equality for all workers, explaining what equality means to the trade union movement. She stressed that the UNFICYP locally employed staff organization, ULESO views equality as a core value and aims to make equal opportunity and equal treatment the norm and not the exception within the mission.

HIV/AIDS Focal Point Netha Kreouzoz reflected on the vulnerability of women affected by HIV/AIDS in the work place. She pointed out that gender-based abuse and violence and discrimination against women make them more vulnerable to contracting HIV.



## UNPOL Mark International Women's Day



Chief Superintendent John Farrelly once again hosted all his female UN Police Staff for breakfast at the UNPA International Cafeteria, on International Women's Day, 8 March. The female police officers came in from headquarters and the outlying UNPOL Stations across the island and enjoyed a great start to the day.

## Peacekeepers at San Martin Camp (Sector1 ) Celebrated International Women's Day



Peacekeepers at San Martin Camp (Sector1 ) celebrated International women's Day with a special ceremony led by the Commanding Officer who highlighted the role of women in the operation of the mission. The gender focal point for Sector 1, Capt Julieta Retamar also gave a brief speech about the historical role played by women particularly in the armed forces. The eleven women serving in Sector 1 received a gift, from the Commanding officer before the ceremony concluded with a parade and a lunch in honor of the women peacekeepers.



## Bicommunal teams conduct major clean-up of Nicosia buffer zone

Engineering teams from the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Nicosia Master Plan carried out a major clean-up of the buffer zone area in the heart of Nicosia in a joint effort to save architecturally valuable buildings in the historic city centre.

The clean-up operation facilitated by UNFICYP peacekeepers from Sector 2 involved the removal of decades worth of debris, overgrown trees and vegetation that had affected the structure of buildings corroding them and subsequently posing risks to patrolling peacekeepers but also encouraged the spread of vermin threatening the health of residents living close to the green line.

Ali Gural, leader of Turkish Cypriot Nicosia Master Plan team pointed out that this kind of clean up activity was not possible for more than 30 years, maybe even forty-since 1963. "Only now have we been able to carry out this clean-up and the main reason for this is because the buildings in this area are architecturally valuable and their facades are unique to Nicosia and have to be saved. At the same time they are threatening to collapse posing a danger to UN soldiers patrolling the buffer zone. After so many years of abandonment nature has started to take over and trees are growing in the walls of buildings further deteriorating the situation," he said. Gural notes that the clean-up activity carried out together with the

Greek Cypriot Nicosia Master Plan team has been a success because they share the same objective, which is to save the historic city centre which is part of Cyprus' cultural heritage.

Agni Petridou, leader of the Greek Cypriot Nicosia Master Plan team said they viewed the clean-up of the buffer zone as extremely important as it is the historic centre of the town with valuable architectural buildings. Many of the buildings have suffered great damage as a result of the vegetation that causes damp to the lower parts of the buildings creating structural problems that gradually corrode the buildings. There are also health concerns because the vegetation allows for vermin and snakes to breed that pose threats to the residents closest to the green line.

Petridou noted that a bicommunal team had already conducted a major study of the buildings in the area and had found that there were 265 facades that were considered architecturally valuable and needed to be saved. A proposal has been submitted for funding she said and hopefully not too far in the future work to restore them by a bicommunal team of builders and engineers can begin.

Currently work is being done on the historic Olympus Hotel located on the corner of Ledra Street and Kykkos Street in an effort to prevent its further deterioration she said.



Sector 2, the centre stretch of the buffer zone, has always been able to boast the most unusual terrains. Centred around the walled city of Nicosia, Sector 2 is split into 3 areas of operation; east, west and centre. Where the edges of the east and the west areas meet the other sectors there are open farm lands and as they meet the walled city in the centre they become narrower. Consisting of abandoned crumbling buildings with sandbag fortifications, rusting barrel walls and barbed wire, this creates the 'frozen in time' area of the buffer zone. The Green line through the centre of the city, so known because the original line was drawn on the map with a green chinagraph pen, has some of the narrowest areas of the buffer zone. At one point the buffer zone is only as wide as the single lane street and the famous 'Spear Alley' is literally 3 metres in width between two opposing balconies.

When the British contingent, 7 Regiment RLC first arrived in Sector 2 it was noticed that the manoeuvrability through the Buffer Zone in some areas was an issue due to the build-up of debris. The debris had

been building up since 1974; the trees, plant matter and rubbish encouraged vermin and hygiene problems as well as encouraging the dumping of rubbish from outside the buffer zone. The trees and rubbish also had an impact on the state of the buildings, which are very dangerous in areas especially to patrolling peacekeepers; in fact over the last six month period we have seen several of the buildings fall down. The clearing of the trees, foliage and rubbish would serve to stop further damage to buildings and allowing for better assessment of the decay.

The Sector 2 Civil Affairs Military Liaison Officer, Scott Reid quickly took the initiative and through risk assessments and with the Support of Sector 2's Commanding Officer began to approach the Greek and Turkish Cypriot municipalities in an attempt to try and clean-up some of the buffer zone and try to save as much of the unique architecture as possible as well as making it a safe place for the soldiers to patrol. For safety, various areas of the buffer zone were marked out of bounds and the patrols were limited to vehicle patrols only.

Ledra Street crossing point was opened in 2008 cutting through the buffer zone linking the two sides and attracting hundreds of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot pedestrians as well as foreign tourists daily. The beautiful old Olympus Hotel located on the corner of Ledra Street and the adjacent Kykkos Street after years of abandonment began to show signs of corrosion and in early October 2010 the first of our fears came to light as some strong winds began to bring down some of the stone masonry from the roof of the Olympus hotel straight onto the narrow crossing street. Fortunately nobody was injured and the area was cordoned off to try and prevent anything from falling and injuring the public. Work has now begun to support the roof and facade of the hotel to stop further deterioration.

The last major work in the historic Nicosia city centre was carried out by the Bicommunal Nicosia Master Plan in 2000, when they shored up all the buildings that they assessed were most dangerous and likely to fall down. This means that the timber holding up some of the buildings is now over 10 years old and any trees that were cut in the past were simply left to add to the build up of debris.

In October 2010 the first of the clear up operations took place with the cutting down of the trees growing into the side of the Olympus Hotel. UNFICYP then facilitated a meeting between the Turkish and Greek

Cypriot Nicosia Master Plan teams to drive down the buffer zone together to discuss a larger combined clear-up operation to remove the rest of the rubbish and vegetation that had been building up since 1974. After the drive through the buffer zone the two teams stood in a circle together and discussed how best to tackle the task. A few weeks later they presented their plans which were then put in motion.

From 2-11 February the bicommunal teams managed to clean up 37 years of debris. In some areas it was a case of removing overgrown foliage and trees, in others the build up of earth that was obstructing roads and encouraging weeds to grow and more major clear ups saw the removal of building matter that had fallen down. Both teams worked together with machinery and manpower and the results were quite impressive. Previously obscured alleyways branching off the main route were now visible allowing the patrols to monitor the opposing forces more efficiently.

While some of the "frozen in time - left to the elements" character of the buffer zone has been lost, the aim to clean it up and make it safer for those that work in it was achieved. Seeing both engineering teams work together was encouraging for the future peace process. Further work is now needed to assess the decaying buildings and assist the two sides in undertaking their restoration.





## St Patricks Day in UNFICYP



St Patricks Day was celebrated in the UNPA by 18th and 19th Irish Contingents of An Garda Siochana, the Irish Police Force attached to UNPOL along with many international colleagues and friends.

The festivities began with Holy Mass held in St Columba's Church which was attended by all 18 members of the Irish Police Force, the Force Commander, Major General Chaoi Liu and his wife Yubin, The Senior Police Adviser, Chief Superintendent John Farrelly and his wife Luma, the Irish Ambassador to Cyprus, His Excellency, Mr Pat Scullion, the Chief of Staff, Lt. Col Gerard Hughes and his wife Gi, Assistant Commissioner Fintan Fanning (representing the Irish Police Force) and his wife Eleanor and over 200 invited guests and colleagues from the UNFICYP family.

The mass was concelebrated by Fr Ivensio and Fr Juan from the Holy Cross Church in Nicosia. The choir who performed beautifully was made up by members of the Irish Contingent under the guidance of Inspector Noel Mostyn. His Excellency, Mr Pat Scullion read out a message from the President of Ireland, Mrs Mary McAleese. When mass was over all 18 members of the Irish Police Contingent formed a Guard of Honour outside the church to pay tribute to all those who attended the mass.

An "Irish Coffee" reception was then held at the UNPOL Club followed by dinner for all who attended. The Chief of Mission, Ms. Lisa Buttenheim also joined the festivities where there was plenty of "Irish Music" to entertain the audience. The Irish Contingent

Commander, Superintendent Ken Brennan addressed the audience in both Gaelic and English and bestowed the letter "O" to the family names of all those present to ensure that everyone was "Irish" for the day. He welcomed and thanked everyone for supporting St Patricks Day and the Irish Garda Contingent on one of the great days in the UNFICYP Calendar.

The evening culminated in the viewing of the last game of the RBS 6 Nations Rugby Competition between Ireland and their oldest rivals England.

The UNPOL Club was packed to capacity and the tension was unbearable as both teams of giants took to the field to do combat. Irish men and women joined their English friends and colleagues in singing "God Save our Queen" and then lifted the roof of the UNPOL Club with their rendition of the Irish National Anthem, "Amhrain na Bfhiann" and "Irelands Call". When the dust had settled Ireland had won the match, much to the joy of all Irish, Scottish and Welsh natives, but the day belonged to England, who despite their defeat still won the RBS 6 Nations Championship. Heartiest congratulations to them. Then it was time for more music and dancing and everyone enjoyed the "Ceol agus Craic which lasted for many more hours.

The verdict of all those that attended was that it was a fantastic occasion which everyone enjoyed and that it appears to get better from one year to the next. It was great day for everyone to be Irish. "Go nEiri Libh Go Leir agus Slan". Kenneth A. Brennan Superintendent Irish Contingent Commander.

## Memorial Stone Dedication to WO2 Steven Goldsmith



On 18 March 2011 a service was held in memory of Steve Goldsmith to dedicate the memorial stone in his name.

The service was attended by the Force Commander Major General Chao Liu, Chief of Staff Col Gerard Hughes, Transport Unit staff and members of Britcon. Steve was the UNFICYP Master Driver from July 2006 until he was tragically killed in a car accident in Nicosia on 23 November 2007.

A memorial stone was laid in his memory next to the cross-

country course which was his project from the design and construction and is used today for 4x4 cross country familiarisation training and as part of the Military Skills Competition.

Steve was a true friend and colleague in the Transport Unit and he is still sadly missed and it is a tribute to him that a group of British soldiers who had worked alongside Steve in previous years also attended the ceremony.

## Peacekeepers Receive UN Medals

Two medal parades were held in February to pay tribute to the peacekeepers from all sectors and contingents who had served in Cyprus over the last six months.

On the 16 February the 2011 Winter Medal Parade was held in the hangar of old Nicosia Airport in the United Nations Protected Area. The Mobile Force Reserve (MFR) was given the task of organizing the event for personnel from Sectors 1, 2 and 4 in the two hangars at the UN Flight. The Mobile Force Reserve peacekeepers were decorated at a second parade on 18 February.

The MFR were required to clean the hangar out and set up four tents for the occasion. They were also tasked with ensuring the helicopters were moved in to position by UN flight and that all the various flags of the United Nations were proudly flying on the "parade square." Once this was all done it was simply a case of building the VIP seating area and allowing Sergeant Major Fuller to rehearse the troops until they were an impressive uniform body of men. Due to the various nations taking part and each country having their own unique style of drill, it meant that the end result was an amalgamation of international drill that was quite a spectacle to behold.

Members of the MFR also provided an honour guard for any VIPs attending the event as well as car park attendants to ensure that the vast amount of vehicles that attended were parked in the correct area.

The whole event was a great success and all that attended appeared to have a thoroughly enjoyable evening. The completion of the Winter Medal Parade allowed the MFR to turn its focus to its own personal medal parade two days later which followed a similar format followed by a reception in the UNFICYP international bar in the evening.

BY Cpl Gary Wood



## Buttenheim: Important milestones reached, but much still needed for settlement

Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lisa Buttenheim stressed that important milestones have been reached in recent months in Cyprus but much work still needs to be done if a settlement is to be reached in Cyprus.

Addressing the Winter Medal Parade on 16 February the Chief of Mission noted that, "during the tours of duty of the men and women to whom we pay tribute today, important milestones have been reached which would not have been possible without their support. She pointed out that with the opening of the Limnitis/ Yeşilirmak crossing point in October, there are some 2,000 additional crossings in both directions on a weekly basis. "This has generated increasing economic opportunities for local inhabitants, a seventh gateway bridging the two communities on the island," she said. Another milestone she referred to was that United Nations de-miners have wrapped up their current operations in Cyprus six years after they began. "They have cleared more than 27,000 landmines in 74 minefields across the buffer zone, translating to over nine square kilometers of land which is now being farmed for the benefit of Cypriots throughout the island," she said.

Referring to the peace process, Buttenheim said that during recent months, the Secretary-General met with the leaders of Cyprus twice, in New York last November, and in Geneva in January. "These meetings had the desired effect of injecting new momentum into the talks," she said. Progress has been achieved thus far on a number of key issues, she said adding however that as underscored by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, much more work

needs to be done if a settlement is to be reached.

Focusing on the peacekeepers receiving their medals Buttenheim said they have helped to break down barriers and build new bridges. "Often overlooked are their many daily tasks: whether delivering textbooks, facilitating religious or socio-cultural gatherings, or assisting with medical evacuations, these activities are aimed at bringing us closer to the day when all Cypriots share their island under peaceful and stable conditions," she said.

"Your efforts have even extended beyond the island. Just two weeks ago some 325 of our UN colleagues and their dependents were relocated to Cyprus from Egypt. Thanks to the hard work of our own civilian, police and military colleagues, the operation was conducted smoothly and with great success. This is just one of many examples where our multi-faceted and integrated approach yields positive results," she said.

Awarding the United Nations medal in the name of the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Buttenheim said: "All United Nations personnel serving in Cyprus stand ready to support the two sides in their endeavours to realize their stated goal of achieving a lasting and viable solution to the decades-old Cyprus issue, she said. Tonight we pay tribute to the peacekeepers who have contributed their part."







## The First Female Technician in UN Flight

Sergeant Jessica Belinda Bussano of Argentina has made history in UNFICYP by becoming the first female helicopter technician of UN Flight. Her arrival in January as part of the Argentinean Aviation Unit as a Maintenance Assistant working on the Hughes 500 helicopters UN 021 and UN 025 is the culmination of years of hard work and perseverance in a male dominated profession.

Born on 18 May 1989 in Cordoba Province, Argentina at the young age of 13 she entered the elite technical school of the Argentinean Air force, Escuela Guarnicion Aerea, IPEM 251. She found herself the only girl attending the school but enjoyed her lessons and the practical work on the air force trainee pilot aircraft so much that this did not bother her. She notes that her teachers were experienced Air Force pilots and this inspired her even more to continue her studies. By the time she graduated another two girls had entered the school which only takes in 30 students a year.

At the age of 17 she decided that her future was to become an Aircraft mechanic and she entered the Air Force School for non-commissioned officers (ESFA) from which she graduated two years later. In January 2009 she was assigned to the VII Brigada Aerea, in Buenos Aires. This was the first time she would leave her close-knit family made up of her parents Luis and Silvia, older brothers Ricardo and Ezekiel and younger sister Natalia, something she says she found very difficult.

She served for two years as a maintenance assistant working on Hughes helicopters before

taking up her current assignment with UNFICYP where she is tasked with conducting checks and maintenance services on the UN Flight helicopters before and after their flight patrols, marshaling for take-off and landing as well as assisting pilots in start-up checks and coordinating the refueling of the helicopters.

She actively participates with the other maintenance crew members in the inspection of the Hughes helicopters as well as serving as a crew member of aircraft contributing to flight safety, briefing passengers and ensuring their compliance with safety regulations.

Reflecting on the fact that she entered a male dominated environment from a young age and continues to pursue a career where there are very few women, she says has never felt different to her colleagues and has always been accepted as a part of the team, undertaking the same responsibilities and tasks.

One of the hardest things she says she faced was not working in a male dominated environment but leaving her family in Cordoba to go to Buenos Aires to work. However her colleagues became her extended family and it is with the same colleagues that she has deployed to Cyprus which makes it easier to be so far away from home, she says. "We know its part of the job to be away from home and that is why we take care of each other like family," she says. So far she is enjoying her mission in Cyprus and is enjoying being so close to the sea which she had never experienced before.

## UN Flight Rotation

Sixteen new members of UN Flight arrived in January to replace the outgoing peacekeepers who had completed their tour of duty in UNFICYP. UN Flight has four rotations of personnel a year, the first in January, the second in April, the third in July, and the last at the end of October allowing for operational flying capabilities 365 days a year.

This rotation included the arrival of the new Officer in Command, the Second in Command, the Air Operations Officer, 2 new pilots for the Hughes 500 helicopters, 8 technicians, 2 fuel and lubricant technicians and 1 load master. In total UN Flight has 10 officers and 18 non-commissioned officers. The previous experience of the members of UN Flight involves work in a number of missions including MINUSTAH (in Haiti), Antarctica Logistical Support, High Mountain Flights, Fire fighting and others. A normal day in UN Flight includes four to five flights a day depending on the various requests from the different components within the mission with



the last flight landing one or two hours before sunset. However both pilots and technicians are always on stand-by to fulfill any flight request the mission has. The Argentinean contingent of UN Flight will reach 20000 flying hours in UNFICYP in November.

## Transfer of Operational Responsibility in Sector 1

The rotation of troops was held in Sector 1 between 18 February and 1 March with the arrival of the new Argentinean Task Force. A symbolic ceremony was held on 28 February to transfer operational responsibilities from Argentinean Task Force 36 to Argentinean Task Force 37. Addressing the peacekeepers the Commanding Officer expressed his appreciation for the excellent job done by members of Argentinean Task Force 36 and called on the incoming Argentinean Task Force 37 to reflect the same level of professionalism in carrying out their duties. Flags were then transferred and the parade was handed over to the Sergeant Major of Sector 1. The outgoing Deputy-Commanding Officer with the personnel of Argentinean Task Force 36 then moved to the stage to watch the parade held in their honor.



## Farewell Line Up in Sector 4

A final farewell line-up was held at Camp General Stefanik in Famagusta on 9 March for the outgoing personnel of Sector 4. During the joint line up of Slovakian, Hungarian, Serbian and Croatian peacekeepers, the national anthems of all contingents were played and each soldier was awarded a plaque commemorating their service in UNFICYP. Distinguished guests attending the ceremony included Slovak Ambassador Her Excellency Anna Tureničová and Hungarian Ambassador, His Excellency Csaba Lovró who lauded the work of the peacekeepers serving in Sector 4. The plaques were presented to the peacekeepers by Commanding Officer Lt Col Vladimír Voštiar and Deputy Commanding Officer Lt Col Imre Kovács.

Addressing the troops Lt Col Voštiar said: "I would like to personally thank to each and every one of you for all you have done during your tour on this island. Thank

you for your performance, commitment and achievement which was to the benefit of UNFICYP and international peace. All contributing nations can be proud of you for your excellent representation. You have contributed to the international effort to preserve peace on this island by observing the cease-fire agreement and by decreasing tensions between the opposing forces. You have made a valuable contribution to maintaining the credibility of the UN in the eyes of the local communities and have helped to return life to normal conditions. I am delighted that I had the opportunity to be your commanding officer and to work with you. You succeeded and I am certain you will do so again whenever your efforts are required." The line up was concluded by Sector 4 Padre's prayer "God save the troops and international peace".





# New Faces

## Liaison Officer to the National Guard



**L**ieutenant Colonel Dr. Sebastian Hitz took up the appointment of Liaison Officer to the National Guard. He was born in Carinthia, in the southern part of Austria on the 17 December 1966. In 1989 he served with UNFICYP for the first time in the Press Office of the Austrian Contingent (Sector Four). Back in Austria he started to study law at the University of Vienna. He completed a second tour with UNFICYP in 1999 and after graduating from the University of Salzburg he was appointed Legal Advisor to the Austrian Air Force Command. After serving as a Legal Advisor in Kosovo, he was transferred to the Personnel Branch of the Austrian Ministry of Defence. A tour with the African Union, acting as a Legal Expert to the Darfur Integrated Task Force in 2006 marked a temporary end to foreign appointments. As all good things come in threes, he is now glad to return to Cyprus as the new UNFICYP Liaison Officer to the National Guard on the HQ level and National Senior of the Austrian Contingent. Sebastian Hitz shares with his partner Florentina the charming company of their 12 month old son Valentin.

## Force Photographer



**1**st Sgt Rastislav Ochotnický arrived in UNFICYP on 16 March and took up the post of Force Photographer. He was born in Stara Lubovna, Slovakia, on 25 April 1972 and is a graduate of the High school of Transport. He joined the Slovak Army in 1991 going through many technical and command positions. Sgt Ochotnický then moved on to work as a Training Instructor in the Pre-deployment Training Centre in Nitra. This is 1st Sgt Ochotnický's fourth tour of duty with UNFICYP, twice as Engineer in Sector-4 - with his first tour of duty in 2001- 2002, second from 2003 - 2005 and third as Sector-4 Ops Info Assistant from 2007 - 2008. He has also served with the UNTAES mission in the former Yugoslavia from 1996 - 1998. He enjoys football, hockey, good movies and photography of course. 1st Sgt Ochotnický is married to Janka and they have a 2-year old son, Marko.

## Deputy Commanding Officer Sector 1



**L**ieutenant Colonel Jose Maria Protti arrived in UNFICYP on 20 February 2011 to take up the position of deputy commanding officer of Sector 1. He was commissioned from Military College in 1989 and is a Cavalry Officer in the Argentinean Army. He has held various positions during his military career including Armor Platoon Leader, Mortar Platoon Leader, Troop Commander, Instructor at Cavalry School, Instructor and Squadron Commander in the Military College, Operations Officer in an Armor Battalion, and 2nd Commander in an Armored Cavalry Regiment. He also served in, the UN Peace-keeping Forces in the former Yugoslavia. He is a Staff Officer graduate from both, the Superior War School in his country and the U.S Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC). He also attended the Armor Advanced Course (Ft. Knox, Kentucky, USA) and was attached to 3-69 Armor Battalion 3rd Infantry Division in Fort Stewart Georgia USA in a Job Training Course. He holds a degree in Organization and in Strategy and a Master of International Relations from Webster University (USA). He is an enthusiastic soccer player, horse rider in the three days event; he enjoys reading and outdoor sports. He is married to Laura and they have two children Francisco aged 5, and Florencia aged 4.

## Procurement Assistant



**S**tella-Kitti joined UNFICYP in March 2011 as a Procurement Assistant, hoping for more challenges and learning experiences. Stella has worked for UNDP and UNDP/UNOPS for the last nine years in various administrative positions and in procurement. She believes that the UN is part of life - her life! Stella wishes and is hoping one day to work for other UN missions around the world, assisting with the change and development of countries in need. She is particularly keen on working in Nepal. Stella's vision is to work for UNFICYP and promote a brighter future in Cyprus! Stella's motto in life is 'be the change you want to see in the world' by Gandhi.

# New Faces

## Supply Warrant Officer



**M** Sgt Peter Hoppan took up the post of Supply Warrant Officer in March. He was born on 11 March 1978 in Nitra, Slovakia and has been in the Armed forces for the last 16 years. He began his military career at the Military Secondary School from which he graduated in 1992 as a Company Technician. In 1996 he joined the Slovak Armed Forces as a Section Commander at the Supply base in Nitra. After 5 years of service there he proceeded through various technician and Staff NCO positions. He has completed two tours of duty with UNFICYP in Sector 4. This is his third tour of duty with UNFICYP. He has a son Samuel and his wife is a teacher. His hobbies are football, volleyball, kickboxing, floorball, traveling, music and movies.

## Military Public Information Officer



**C**apt Michal Harnadek took over the post of Military Public Information Officer on 16 March. He was born on 3 January 1977 in Zvolen, Slovakia. He graduated from the Military Academy in Liptovsky Mikulas in 2000 as a 2nd Lieutenant of the Ground Based Air Defence missile specialist. Capt Harnadek then moved on to serve at the Foreign Affairs branch where he worked as the Assistant of the Commandant of the National Defence Academy following as Slovak National Representative in the International Junior Staff Officers' Course. This is Capt Harnadek's second tour of duty with UNFICYP, with the first one in 2006 - 2007 as Adjutant of the Commanding Officer in Sector-4. After completing his first mission he returned to Slovakia to serve as an Instructor in the International Staff Officers' Course (ISOC) at the Armed Forces Academy. During his tenure in ISOC he also worked as a liaison for the Partnership for Peace Training Centre. Capt Harnadek enjoys alpine skiing, trail running and free diving. He is married to Sonja and they have a 2-year old son, Michal.

## Personal Staff Officer to the Force Commander



**M**ajor Xiaojiang Chai took up the post of Personal Staff Officer to the Force Commander, in February 2011. His arrival set 2 records, that of the first Chinese military peacekeeper in UNFICYP and the first Chinese military officer on the island of Cyprus. Major Chai was born in 1973, in Xi'an, China. Commissioned into the Chinese Army in 1995, he has served in a number of appointments including platoon leader in an infantry division, Assistant to DA of Chinese Embassy in the UK, battalion DCO, staff officer in the HQ of Beijing Military Region (planning and training), Strategic Plans and Training Office, Ministry of Defence, China. Major Chai graduated from Shijiazhuang Army Academy and has a master's degree from Warwick University, Coventry, UK. He also holds certificates of the 9th UN Military Observer and Staff Officer Training Course in Ireland, and intermediate command and staff courses in Nanjing Army Command College, China. His interests include jogging, swimming, playing table tennis, reading, travelling and enjoying music. Major Chai is married to Fei Wang and they have a nine month old Ruixiao.

## Force Signal Officer



Wing Commander Eduardo L. Rodríguez was appointed Force Signal Officer for UNFICYP on 17 February, following his appointment as staff officer in the Argentine Air Force General Headquarters. Initially commissioned into the Flying Corps, he joined the signal branch after graduating from the University of the Argentine Air Force as a signal officer. In 1994 he was stationed at a Signals Squadron where he supervised the operation of a number of communication services of the Air Force and participated in deployments to the northern part of the country in support of air defence operations and air space surveillance. He served as an military observer in UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) from October 2006 to October 2007 observing, patrolling, inspecting and reporting the degree to which the opposing forces abided by the cease-fire agreement signed by Israel and Syria. During his tenure he became Deputy Team Leader and joined the staff as Military Personnel Officer. Eduardo is married to Lilian and has a ten year daughter Camila, who will join him during his tour of duty in Cyprus. He enjoys swimming and trekking.



## Visits

UNFICYP extended the usual courtesies when the Chief of Mission Lisa Buttenheim and Force Commander Major General Chao Liu received the following guests during February/March.



Dr. Michael Spindelegger - Austrian Foreign Minister visited UNFICYP on 24 March where he met with the Chief of Mission Lisa Buttenheim.



Col. Schlacmender - Belgian Defense Attaché visited UNFICYP on 24 March where he met with Force Commander Major General Chao Liu.



Mr. Farid Zarif - Director of Europe and Latin American Division Department of Peacekeepers Operation visited UNFICYP on 15 March where he met with Chief of Mission Lisa Buttenheim and other members of the mission leadership.



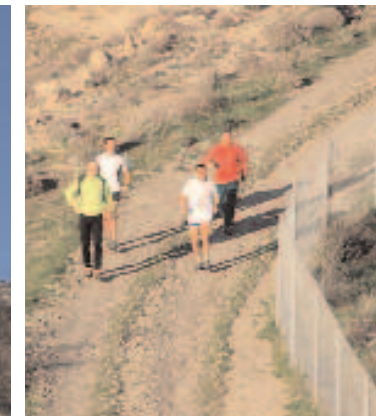
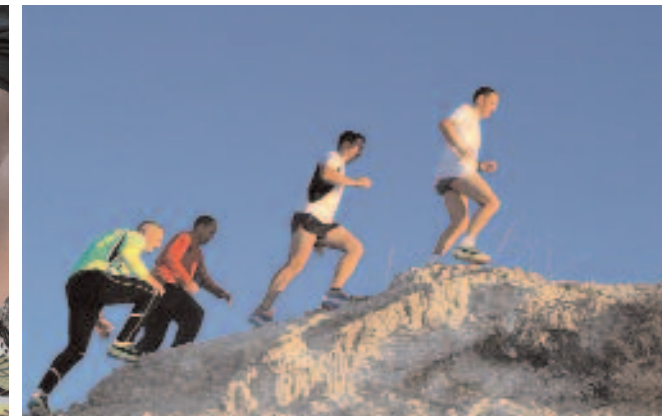
Members of the European Union Parliament visited UNFICYP on 26 February and were taken on a tour of Ledra Palace Hotel and received a briefing from Chief of Staff Colonel Gerard Hughes.

## UNFICYP 10KM RUN



Soldiers from the Mobile Force Reserve organized a challenging 10km Run and Children's Fun Run which took place on Saturday 5 March. The route was within the UNPA camp, covering patrol tracks, on and off road and just to make it slightly less difficult (depending on your perspective!), one long stretch along the air-field and back. The race began at the sports ground at 10am for men, women and veterans with children running a mile-long fun run with their super hero supporters shortly afterwards. Altogether the turnout on the morning brought together just over one hundred runners from across the Mission. It was a tough run for many and every runner completing the 10km was awarded a medal at the finishing point by the smiling super heroes. The winners in each category were

awarded trophies and prizes by UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Chao Liu. The winner and the runner up for the men's 10km event were both from Sector 2. Private Jallow was the overall winner followed by Corporal Damai, who finished thirty-seconds behind him with a very respectable time of 35 minutes and 29 seconds. Lance Corporal Clark from Sector 2 took the ladies' title, finishing with a time of 42 minutes and 40 seconds. Corporal Baillie from the MFR was the runner up in the women's event. Winner for the veterans' mens event was from the Headquarters, Sergeant Tamas Kolonics who also came third overall, with Lieutenant Colonel Sebastian Hitz taking second place. Ladies veteran winner was Sergeant Dora Adamecz from UNPOL with Mrs Tracy Stockdale taking second place. Finally the junior Fun Run winner was Callum Coleman with Castello Santiago taking second place. After seeing all the effort that each and every individual put into this event to make it a success for everyone, it's quite clear it is not about winning or losing, it's about taking part, participating and giving your best!



## Conquering the Buffer Zone Challenge



In mid-2010 it was proposed by Maj Si Thomson that a small team of personnel attempt to traverse the entire length of the buffer zone within a time limit of 60hrs pausing only for required admin stops and one period of approximately 4 hours sleep. A team comprising of Maj Si Thomson, Mr Max Dyck, WO2 Wayne Rowett and Sgt Andy Gillies was then formed and planning got underway addressing all aspects of training and logistics upon which the challenge would be based.

Due to work commitments Maj Thomson had to postpone his participation for a week which left a team of 3 to attempt to be the first personnel to continuously traverse the buffer zone in under 60hrs. On 2 March the challenge team awoke to favourable albeit fresh weather conditions and at OP08 final preparations were made before they eagerly set off to face the arduous challenge that lay ahead.

The full length of Sector 1 had been covered by a combination of training runs and therefore the team were content with the terrain and that the distance that would be covered before last light. The team arrived at the designated lunch stop just over an hour after the intended time but were content with the pace and reassured that they had started as they meant to.

Upon reaching the welcome light of the UNPA the team was met by a few family members and took a short admin break before heading back into the outskirts of Nicosia. The training run to Ledra was one that had been regularly undertaken at a mere 20km+ and thoughts headed toward the other side of the city and the scheduled sleep stop.

A seamless transition through the city centre buffer zone was provided by an ever willing Sector 2 and as first light appeared the team was heading toward the

open plains of east Nicosia. The much needed sleep stop was set up by the support team and the 4 hours gratefully received by all three. The team then surfaced and prepared to set off after some breakfast and fluids. The temperature was unseasonably high as the team set off around midday on day 2 as they headed for Sector 4 and the long slog around the Louroujina pocket. The Sector 4 boundary was passed with relief as the team had now entered into the final Sector and although had a considerable distance to travel were making good progress and remained focused and slightly refreshed after the sleep stop. The team progressed through Louroujina pocket into Athienou as darkness fell for the second night. The team was tired at this stage and were keen to push through the last hours of darkness in the knowledge that the prospect of the long Sovereign Base Area (SBA) corridor road stood between them and the final 10km stretch of the BZ.

The team exited Pyla at first light and had approximately 12hrs in which to reach the finish line and entered corridor road in good spirits. The hard surface of the concrete did nothing more than agitate aches and pains as the team slowly progressed eastwards. The last 10km through the BZ was the final test of the legs and stamina and with the finish in sight and the knowledge that families and colleagues were waiting help spur the team on to complete the challenge. The team crossed the finish line and the clock stopped at 56hr 45mins.

So it was that the precedent was set and a short week and a half later, beneath an overcast sky venting a light drizzle, Major Si "Thommo" Thomson stepped off from the start line for a solo attempt to traverse the same ground. The days were enjoyable the nights less so;

With the aid of his small dedicated support crew, a couple of cans of a well-known caffeine-based drink and some super road-side physiotherapy, he ripped through the final four hours to complete the challenge at 0937 on Sunday Morning.

It is perhaps most appropriate to thank both support crews for their dedicated, selfless support for the two attempts. It is also worth adding that the motivation for undertaking the challenge was twofold; to raise some money for some worthy charities and because life's worth living and conquering challenges proves that you're living it. The team will leave it to the reader to decide what their motivation would be.

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) [www.helpforheroes.org.uk](http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk)  
[www.captainjim.org](http://www.captainjim.org)  
[www.themarkwrightproject.org.uk](http://www.themarkwrightproject.org.uk)



# World Water Day

