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HEAD OF MISSION AND FORCE COMMANDER'S MESSAGE



It gives me immense gratification to write this message for the professional publication and a mouthpiece of UNDOF, "Golan - the UNDOF Journal." I am particularly elated to unveil the 159th edition of this journal, which effectively showcases the activities of UNDOF. After the publication of the last edition of 'Golan' UNDOF AOR has experienced a heightened security situation with the wider region in broader conflict not experienced for a long time. I am profoundly pleased by the dedicated efforts of all peacekeepers and UN personnel affiliated with UNDOF, who, amidst these challenging times, have admirably persisted in accomplishing their duties to help implement the mission mandate with unwavering efficacy.

UNDOF has always played a crucial role in maintaining the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic and is continuously devoted to maintaining stability in the region. The potential of spillover of the regional conflict to UNDOF AOR cannot be ruled out. UNDOF strived to have more meaningful and close coordination with the parties to the agreement in this period to uphold the ceasefire and maintain peace in the Golan Heights. It also takes a great part of the parties to the agreement to have observed restraints and a sensitive approach to prevent escalations. I want to thank the host nations in their great strides toward upholding the 1974 Agreement.

UNDOF is soon completing 50 years of contributions in the Golan Heights. It has been achieved through the admirable devotion to duties and untiring efforts of all the peacekeepers who are currently serving and those who have served in the UNDOF. While we bid farewell to many of our peacekeepers, I welcome the incoming peacekeepers to the mission. We, all must continue to do our part to uphold the UN principles and to the greatest extent possible contribute toward implementing the mission mandate. I take this opportunity to appreciate the mission leadership, all branches, civil staff, Staff Officers, and contingents for your persistence and dedicated contribution. I want to thank the OGG for their resilience and expertise in their duties amidst the challenges in this constrained operational environment.

"Golan, The UNDOF Journal" has provided an excellent platform for all of us to showcase our hard work on the field and share our creativity through articles of different kinds, views, and experiences. I encourage all UNDOF members to use this digital platform to involve themselves in adding a bit part to this journal. I would like to thank and compliment the editorial board and those contributing to publishing this yet another edition of Golan Journal.

Finally, let us all continue to execute our mandated task and uphold the mandate of the mission in the best possible ways with careful consideration for safety and security in this challenging operational environment. We are all here for the cause of Peace. "May Peace Prevail in the Golan". Thank you.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DEAR READERS

Welcome to the 159th edition of the GOLAN - The UNDOF Journal. It is my privilege to present the latest edition. As military men and women, we are well used to change, and adapting to new circumstances and environments. The rotation of staff officers and contingents is part and parcel of what we do. To our colleagues and friends that have left the mission, we wish you a fond and happy reunion with your families. To our new colleagues and friends we wish you a warm welcome and a safe and successful tour of duty.

In this edition of the GOLAN, we look forward to UNDOF 50. On the 31st of May 2024 the UNDOF mandate will be 50 years in existence, first signed on the 31st of May 1974. Our Mission Leadership Team share their thoughts as we approach the missions 50th year in the service of peace on the Golan.

We also take a look back at 10 years of the FRC in UNDOF. We read about UNDOF personnel's experiences here in the mission area. UMIC shows us their Eco-Efforts. INDCON LOGCOY supports the mission. NEPCON & NMCs deployment to UNDOF and FIJIBATTs activities in Camp Ziouanni.

Finally, to you the members of UNDOF. This is your magazine. Pick up your pen (or keyboard) and write an article about your life and experiences here in UNDOF and share it with us.

Commandant Lisa McMahon
Editor in Chief



50 YEARS OF UNDOF - A FORCE FOR PEACE (5 DECADES OF RESILIENCE, PERSEVERANCE & DEDICATION)



As your Deputy Force Commander, and as a fellow peacekeeper who is immensely proud of United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), a 'Force for Peace in Golan', it's an honour and a privilege to pen down my thoughts.

As we navigate the 50th year of Peacekeeping that we have undertaken together, we celebrate five decades of UNDOF's relentless service in peacekeeping operations seeped in blood, sacrifice, pride, and glory. UNDOF's presence in Golan has been critical and perhaps the singular most important factor in maintaining the ceasefire between Israel and Syria, and facilitating the implementation of the Agreement on Disengagement which was signed on 31 May 1974. UNDOF has also been a symbol of the international community's commitment to peace and security in this volatile region. At the time UNDOF was established, we embarked on a mission to maintain peace and stability in a region fraught with tension. And in this journey, we have had a reliable, responsible, and trustworthy partner and colleague all along, in our Observer Group Golan (OGG).

Our mandate was clear, but the path was filled with challenges. Yet, we persevered, driven by our shared commitment to peace. Over the past five decades, we have faced numerous trials and tribulations. We have navigated through political instability, resource constraints, and changes in conflict dynamics. While each of the challenges has tested our resolve, yet we in UNDOF have emerged stronger and more resilient than ever before. Our presence in the Golan Heights has been a beacon of hope for the people of the region. We have maintained the ceasefire, prevented escalation of conflicts, and provided a neutral and impartial ground in true spirit of United Nations. Our contributions have been instrumental in maintaining regional peace and stability.

Over the past 50 years, UNDOF personnel, OGG observers, and civilian staff members have shown an unwavering commitment to the UNDOF mission. Despite the challenges and uncertainties, we have remained resilient, ensuring stability in the Golan Heights. Every action taken by the UNDOF, whether it's manning a UN position, conducting a patrol, investigating incidents and violations, or reporting an observation, contributes to the overall peace in the region. These actions, along with quick impact projects since 2019 though they may seem small, have a significant impact on the lives of the people in Golan.

While looking towards the future, it's important to be prepared for new challenges and opportunities. Our journey does not end here. The road ahead is still filled with challenges as symptoms of conflict persists in the region. Yet, I am confident that with our collective strength

and determination, we will continue to uphold our mandate by our steadfast belief in peacekeepers values and ethos. Our military staff has been the backbone of UNDOF. Your courage, dedication, and professionalism has been instrumental in maintaining the ceasefire and preventing escalation of conflict over the past five decades. You have shown that peace is possible even in the most challenging circumstances. As we move forward, let us carry with us the lessons from our past. Let us remember that our strength lies in our unity, our power in our diversity, and our success in our perseverance.

As we celebrate this milestone, we also pay tribute to the brave men and women who have served and continue to serve in UNDOF, under the blue flag of the United Nations. We remember our peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, and we honour their memory. I also take this opportunity to commend the professionalism, dedication, and courage of those who have faced many challenges and risks, especially in the past decade and in decades before. Despite those difficulties, UNDOF has remained steadfast in fulfilling its mandate, with the full cooperation of both our host nations, the unflinching support of the troop-contributing countries and the cooperation and understanding and support of our international and national staff members.

UNDOF's mandate, as endorsed by the Security Council, remains relevant, unique and essential, as long as the underlying issues of the conflict are unresolved. We at UNDOF will continue to monitor the situation, report on any violations, and liaise with both parties, to prevent any escalation or misunderstanding. UNDOF will also continue to implement its confidence-building measures, such as ensuring effective communication for peaceful Golan, facilitating the humanitarian crossing of students, pilgrims, and farmers, across the ceasefire line. UNDOF will constantly strive to optimize also seek to enhance its operational capabilities and effectiveness, and by strengthening its safety and security measures to enable its mandate delivery.

I am confident that as in the past with our collective strength, adaptability, and determination, we will continue to uphold our mandate. Remember, each one of you is a vital part of this mission. Your efforts are crucial for the success of our unique mandate and peacekeeping operations. Your dedication, courage, and resilience over the past five decades are what makes UNDOF a 'Force for Peace'.
As we mark this occasion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the stakeholders who have contributed to the success of UNDOF over the past 50 years. I am deeply humbled and proud to be part of this remarkable mission and look forward to working with you in the coming months, to uphold the legacy and the achievements of our predecessors of UNDOF.

Together, we can make a difference, and we can make a positive impact on the lives of the people on the Golan, and beyond. I thank you for your service.

UNDOF AT 50
A LEGACY OF PEACEKEEPING IN THE GOLAN HEIGHTS



Dear colleagues and fellow peacekeepers, 31 May 2024 will mark 50 years of dedicated peacekeeping by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights. As we approach this remarkable feat, it is essential to reflect on the significant milestones, challenges and enduring commitment to maintaining peace in the region. It is also an opportune moment to recognize and salute the dedication and sacrifices of all troop contributing countries past and present and the gallant peacekeepers who have served in the Golan for the past 5 decades, some at the peril of their lives.

Since its establishment in 1974, UNDOF has supervised the ceasefire between Israel and Syria thus playing a crucial role in preventing hostilities. Beyond our traditional role of maintaining the ceasefire agreement, UNDOF has been actively involved in providing humanitarian assistance to the local population, fostering goodwill and cooperation. The force has served as a bridge for communication between the two sides, promoting understanding and facilitating dialogue even in challenging circumstances.

Like many other UN Mission's globally, UNDOF's operations have been fraught with security and environmental challenges and the evolving geopolitical landscape and dynamics of the conflict. The challenges have been surmounted thanks to great leadership displayed by the UN Headquarters, the mission leaders and the flexibility and resilience of our peacekeepers. These traits have been essential in maintaining stability and promoting peace in our complex and ever-changing operational environment. Looking into the future, we must continue to adapt, innovate and find new approaches to address threats faced in the mission. The adaptation and innovation for the future will certainly be guided by lessons learnt over the past 50 years.

Despite the security challenges, several activities have been scheduled over the upcoming months as a build up to the commemoration. The commemoration has been preceded by the design and sale of merchandise to raise funds for charity projects in UNDOF AOR. Other activities earmarked include the design of a hall of fame (Pentagon Conference room) and building memorial monuments in Camp Faouar and Camp Ziouani in memory of fallen peacekeepers and photo/video exhibitions. Additionally, a coffee table book will be published to highlight and create awareness of the UNDOF's journey over the past 5 decades. Finally, parades will be held in Camp Faouar and Camp Ziouani to crown the commemorations.

On behalf of the mission leadership, I extend sincere appreciation to all past and present peacekeepers of this mission whose indefatigable service and dedication has seen UNDOF uphold its motto "ONE MISSION, ONE TEAM, ONE GOAL".

UNDOF 50 (2024)

The UNDOF 50 emblem incorporates the United Nations emblem at its core. The figure 50 represents the numbers of years peacekeepers have been deployed on the Golan under the UNDOF Mission Mandate. Centered with the UNDOF emblem and colours. Our mission motto wraps around the bottom. As we are ONE MISSION, ONE TEAM, with ONE GOAL.



UNDOF - KEY MILITARY PERSONNEL



MA FC
Lt Col Nirmal Shrestha



MA DFC
Lt Col Jagannath Desai



CMPO
Lt. Col. Roberto Fernandez



CLO
Lt. Col. John Verebasaga



COO
Lt. Col Cathal English



PLANS CHIEF
Lt. Col. Libor Madzia



CLSO
Lt. Col. Shubham Madan



CITO
Lt. Col. Sanjeev Bhandari



FMO
Lt Col Drishti Shah



CO NEPCON
Lt. Col Sunil Kumar Malla



CO FIJIBATT
Lt Col Antonio Nagauna



CO FRC
Lt Col Oliver Clear



CO NMC
Lt Col Dinesh Khadka



CO UMIC
Lt. Col. Manuel Rosales



CO INDCON
Lt Col Manoj Yadav

The UNDOF Mission Leadership Chart is available to serving UNDOF personnel on request to the Media office.

UNDOF - KEY CIVILIAN STAFF



CMS
Bernard Lee



CORM
Amedeo Micelli



CSCM
Henry Nuamah

UNDOF - NEW CIVILIAN STAFF



Chief Engineering Officer
Ravi Paudel



Civil Affairs Officer
Marie-Rose Ferdenade Alexandre

GOOD PRACTICES -UNDOF CIVIL AFFAIRS
UNDOF 8 DECEMBER 2023



Civil Affairs is among the most vital sections of a Peace Mission. Their proximity to communities and local authorities makes them essential key players in achieving sustainable peace. Commonly called “Tomato paste” due to their multidimensional roles. Civil Affairs officers are sometimes gender advisers, women protection advisers, human rights officers, conduct and discipline and so on.



A concrete example can be found in referring to the Civil Affairs Officer (CAO) of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). Arriving on the scene on November 9, 2023, she quickly understood that it was a mission with few personnel and that she had to be on several fronts at the same time. As she worked to improve the Mission's relations with the authorities, she was at the same time trying to create corridors to foster relations with the communities. To achieve this, she thinks that trust and Qips are the best vectors.





Upon arrival, she realized that UNDOF lacked some key divisions and sections like Gender, Human rights, and women's protection, as the CAO, she understood early on that the 44th anniversary of CEDAW and the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were very important dates to the United Nations, to the world and specially to women everywhere. Just a few weeks after her arrival, she immediately went to work. Having the support of senior leadership, in particular the Force Commander, Head of Mission, she understood that teamwork was the best way to achieve the objectives she had set forth by commemorating these two special UN days. The military and civilians (150+) came together to commemorate these two events which were a great success; in fact, December 8 marked one of the biggest activities of the year in UNDOF.



Women and men of the Camp Faouar made their voices heard through speeches, poems, dances, and signs with slogans marking the occasion. The head of the mission took the opportunity to raise awareness about gender-based violence and the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The day ended with a food festival, generously offered by the different contingents present at the event.







COMMEMORATION OF THE 44TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW), AND THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATION.

The fight for the respect of human rights is as old as the fight for women's rights. Despite the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which aim was to include all human beings without distinction of sex, race, and color, but regrettably; women and girls are still victims of discrimination and hence gender-based violence. This violence is not limited to the family, but it also intensifies in the workplace where sexual harassment of women has increased considerably.



Marie-Rose Fernande Alexandre, Civil Affairs Officer UNDOF

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted more than 44 years ago with the objective of "eliminating all forms of discrimination against women based on sex. It guaranteed women the recognition, enjoyment and exercise of all human rights and the fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, and family fields or in any other field; regardless of their marital status and was based on equality with men."

It is important that every human being becomes aware of this convention which is very fundamental in the fight for the respect of women's rights. Gender-based violence has no geographic limits, it is present in every continent, society, and culture in the world. On November the 25th, women across the world demonstrated to express their anger against violence against women. According to data published by UN Women, more than 736 million women are victims of violence, that's more than 1/3 of all women in the planet. In 2021 more than 45,000 women were killed, nearly 60% of them by their spouses or boyfriends or a member of their family. No continent is exempt. We need to do much more to alleviate their sufferings!

What's a bit strange is that whether it is technological advancements, epidemics or even natural disasters, women are usually the first victims and suffer the brunt of the negative effects. Women are therefore more likely to be victims of cybercrime than men. This was the case with the AIDS pandemic, then with Covid-19, it is currently the case with climate change, wars and conflicts that are raging across the world.

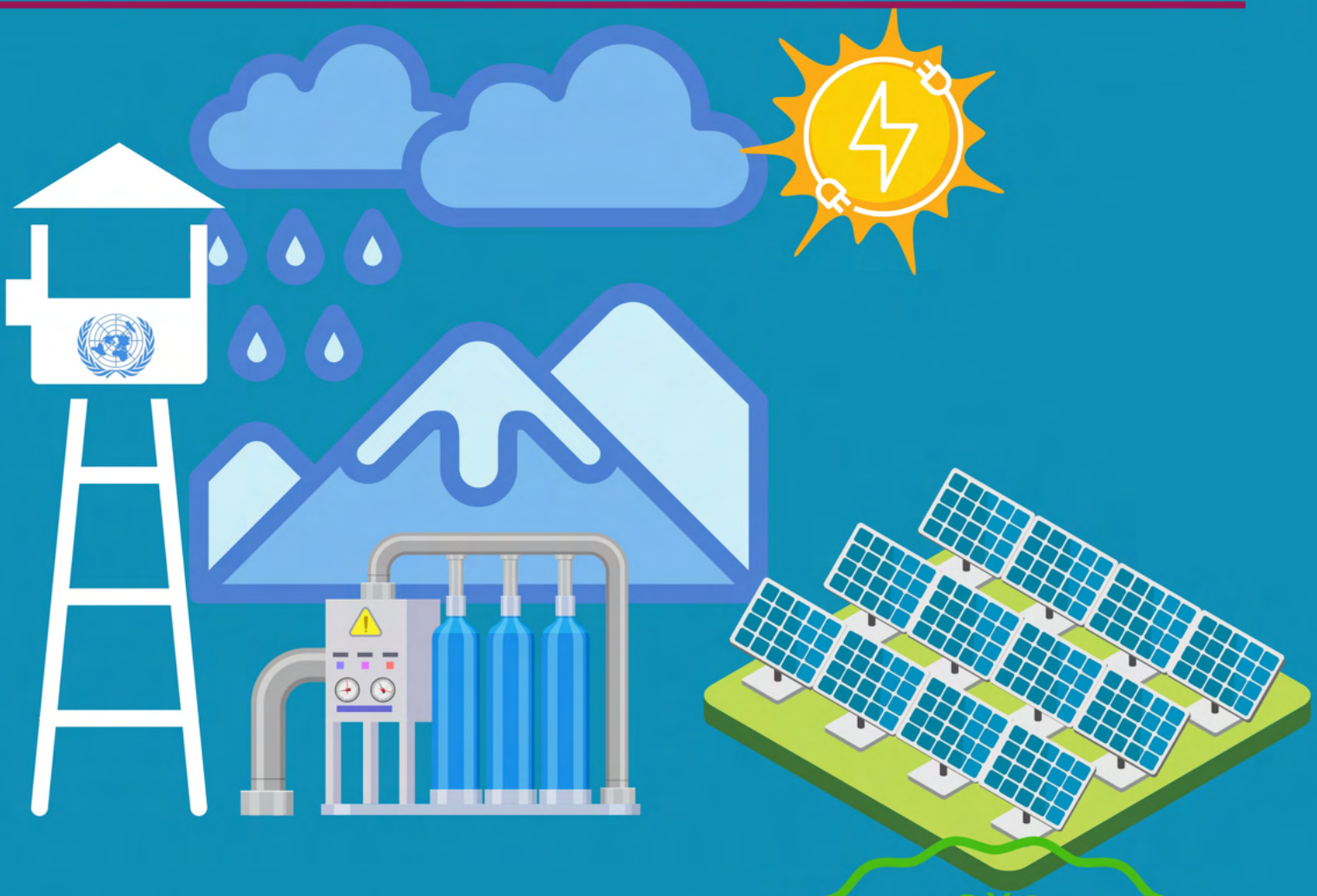


Every individual, especially peacekeepers must embrace the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the CEDAW so that we can be examples of men and women that could loudly advocate the principles of dignity, freedom, and equality throughout this world. Let us commit ourselves more than ever and let us work together to eliminate and combat all forms of discrimination including gender-based violence against women and girls who are the image of our mothers, our sisters, and our daughters.

Let's orange our day and let's work for a better world where all human being including women and girls can live free and equal in dignity and rights because, "we are all endowed with reason and conscience so therefore, we should embrace one another with love in a spirit of brotherhood for a better world."

Me Marie-Rose Fernande Alexandre, avocate, Conflictogue
Civil Affairs Officer UNDOF

UNDOF FUTURE VISIONS





UNDOF staff and personnel have long been working on projects to help reduce our environmental impact by installing solar power, drinking water filtration systems and thinking of ways to recycle and reuse commonly used plastic bottles and waste.

UNDOF SOLAR FUTURE VISIONS

UNDOF Engineers have undertaken a large program of works over the previous months to install large solar arrays in UNDOF camps and positions.

The future vision for UNDOF is that a large proportion of our energy needs are fulfilled by renewable energy means. This will decrease our reliance on the use of energy generated by fossil fuels and help lower of environmental footprint.



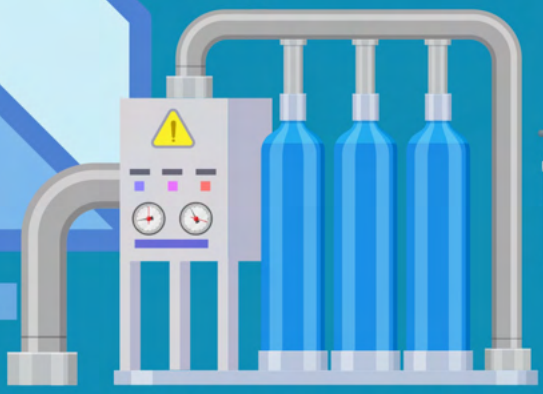




UNDOF WATER FUTURE VISIONS



A number of UNDOF posts, on the Golan, are fitted with large water filtration systems which allow us to cut down on our use of plastic bottles and reuse grey water in an environmentally friendly way.





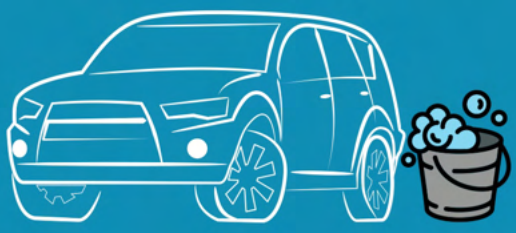
Across the 6 UNDOF positions fitted with the drinking water filtration systems we consume over 5,000 litres daily. This significantly cuts down on our use of bottled water.



5,000 Litres Per day



UNDOF also has grey water filtration systems in various locations. This water is reused to wash our vehicles and water plants and trees in posts.





UNDOF WATER FUTURE VISIONS







Water filtration systems in place in UNP 60, 37 & CF

UNDOF Engineers maintain water filtration systems in a number of camps and positions across our AOR. Systems pump water from the ground wells up into water storage tanks. As water is needed it is release from the water tanks and through a sophisticated system of filtration processes. This makes the water safe to drink and use for cooking.

These water filtration systems are in place in six UNDOF positions. The average daily usage is approximately 4,000 to 5,800 litres. This decreases our reliance on plastic bottled water.

Grey water is the water that is generated from sinks, washing machines, and other kitchen appliances. UNDOF has grey water filtration system in place in some of our camps and positions. The water that is filtered through this system is used to wash UN vehicles and water plants and trees. These plants and trees act as a natural habitat for birds and insects.

UNDOF RECYCLE FUTURE VISIONS

UMIC ECO-HOUSE

In the period of October 2022-2023 and with the aim to promote the sustainability, members of the UMIC (Mechanized Infantry Company of Uruguay), made the difference engaging a project for the construction of an ecological house using bottles.

From planning to construction was approximately 5 months. Five thousand ecological bricks, made using plastic bottles filled with non-organic waste such as paper, bags, cardboard, wrappers, and other products that are consumed by the troops.



This project is aligned with the seventeen sustainable development goals together with the UN 2030 agenda, highlighting the commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility. Every aspect of this project was implemented with these objectives in mind.





UP TO 3,000 BOTTLES WERE USED TO SHAPE WALLS. THEY WERE FILLED WITH MATERIALS TO GIVE THEM STRENGTH. ENOUGH SPACE LEFT INSIDE THEM, FOR INSULATING PURPOSES.

UMIC ECO-HOUSE





THE HOUSE IS REINFORCED WITH IRON BEAMS TO STRENGTHEN THE STRUCTURE . INTRNAL AND EXTERNAL PLASTER WAS APPLIED TO THE WALLS AND A LIGHT SHEET METAL ROOF WAS ERRECTED.



On the front of the house, the Uruguayan flag flies proudly, while on the sides are representations of the famous tango singer Carlos Gardel and a GAUCHO enjoying our traditional drink called MATE. Not only do these paintings add a unique aesthetic look, but they also pay homage to Uruguay's rich culture and traditions.





UMIC ECO-HOUSE



"The vivarium", promotes the production of fresh food in a sustainable way. was constructed along side the eco-house using the same principles except the bottles were not filled or covered. This allows the sun light to get through at a lower heat to promote growth of vegetable plants.







Pictures of the vivarium built by UMIC, where they successfully grew various food plants and vegetables.

UMIC ECO-HOUSE

Our goal is to inspire others and contribute to a greener future by emphasizing the reutilization of recyclable materials, reducing environmental impact, significantly minimizing waste and the need to extract new resources. The Uruguayan contingent have demonstrated their commitment to build a more sustainable world, promoting the importance for achieving all goals set out in the UN 2030 Agenda.

We extend the useful life of valuable materials by alleviating the consequences of pollution associated with extraction and manufacturing, exemplifying the concept of circular economy, promoting a sustainable and efficient use of resources. By reusing materials, we reduce costs compared to traditional construction methods, lowering costs by U$4,000 to U$5,000 worth of materials, making sustainable homes more affordable. Our house has three rooms which are distributed in two bedrooms and a bathroom, thus completing 18 square meters of construction.

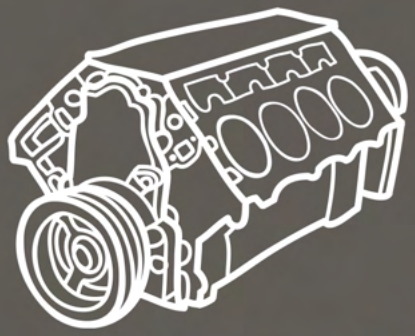


LOGCOY - VEHICLE MAINTENANCE



UNDOF mechanics conduct on average 160 + vehicle maintenance and service works each month.

This tireless work ensures UNDOF vehicle fleet is safe and roadworthy.







HMT Anurag Sharma, carrying out a fuel filter check.

Our INDCON mechanics maintain a variety of vehicles from small to large, including 4x4s, vans, minibuses and logistics trucks.

LOGCOY - VEHICLE MAINTENANCE



Pte Sunil Yadav, carrying out caliper mounting and adjustments.



Cpl Nitin Rana, checks front lights electronics.



Members of the Maintenance Platoon (EME), INCON, Logistics Company.

10 YEARS OF THE IRISH FRC IN UNDOF

On 28 September 2013, the 43rd Infantry Group deployed to Syria with 115 troops led by their commanding officer Lt Col Brendan Delaney. Ireland was proud to begin their service in UNDOF and brought with them a history of experienced peacekeeping from missions in Chad, Lebanon, and Liberia. Ireland, with its proud history in peacekeeping, became the newest members of UNDOF. The 43rd Infantry Group were deployed as the Force Reserve, and were there to ensure the safety and protection of all other contingents and staff serving in UNDOF on various UN posts. During the St Patricks Day medal parade for the first Irish contingent to serve in UNDOF, the Head of Mission and Force Commander at the time Lt Gen I.S Singha said, *"that the capabilities brought by the Mechanized Infantry unit had enhanced the Force's ability to conduct its mission, improved its self defence capability and also provided an asset willing and able to ensure the safety and security of UN personnel throughout the AOR".*







The main task of the Force Reserve Company (FRC) is to provide an Armoured Quick Reaction Force (QRF) at fifteen minutes notice to move on order by the Force Commander. Other tasks include serving as an independent FRC, deploying at Platoon and Company level within UNDOF AOR, remaining at a high state of readiness as a QRF, and reacting to emerging situations throughout the UNDOF AOR. The FRC contribute to monitoring and reporting throughout the UNDOF AOR while also providing an Improvised Explosive Disposal Device Team (whilst embedded with a FRC unit). The FRC is prepared to conduct mobile or combined patrols by day and night independently or in conjunction with other UNDOF patrols, and being prepared to reinforce vulnerable UNDOF positions and UNTSO OP's. The FRC is also prepared to assist in the securing, extraction and evacuation of UN personnel under threat while also being prepared to conduct other operations within capability when tasked.



Monday the 16th of Sept 2019 Brig Gen Maureen O'Brien arrived in UNDOF HQ to take up the position of Deputy Force Commander UNDOF. She was the first women in the Irish defence Forces to reach the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier General and Major General. Ireland was proud to have such an experienced officer and peacekeeper as the DFC to UNDOF, in a position in which she held for 2 years. It is notable for much of that term she held the appointment of Acting Force Commander while the position remained vacant. Ireland is also proud to not only have troops serving as the Force Reserve to the mission, but has also had numerous officers and NCOs serving in staff appointments, throughout the UNDOF headquarters over our 10 years of supporting the Mission. This proportion of Irish involvement commenced on June 2013, initially under the leadership of Brigadier General Dave Stapleton (RIP).



One of the key lasting events, that will long remain in the minds of our UN colleagues, is an Irish national holiday, St, Patricks Day. St Patricks day is celebrated globally on the 17th March. Every St. Patrick's Day, a special tradition unfolds, Irish soldiers serving overseas receive a gift of the shamrock, a poignant reminder of home and a touch of luck on this special day. The name shamrock comes from Irish seamróg, which is the diminutive of the Irish word seamair óg and simply means "young clover". The St Patricks day parade overseas is also the ceremony for presenting Medals to troops in the Irish contingents.

While Ireland's withdrawal from UNDOF marks a significant shift, it does not reflect a diminished commitment to peacekeeping. The Irish Defence Forces remain actively engaged in various missions around the world and continue to value their contribution to international peace and security. Our legacy of service in UNDOF, spanning over a decade, is a testament to Ireland's long-standing dedication to conflict resolution and global stability. The 68th Infantry Group under the command of Lt Col Oliver Clear and Sgt Maj Anthony Jinks will be the last Irish contingent to serve as the FRC in UNDOF. Ireland would like to thank our UN colleagues, for their hospitality, support, comradery and overall professionalism each previous Irish contingent has received while working with UNDOF.

Capt Cathal Owens
FRC



FROM HIMALAYAS TO GOLAN HEIGHTS

Mount Hermon is a majestic mountain range featuring an elevation of over 2800 meters posing physiological challenges that require exceptional training and skills. Coming, from the country that hosts the formidable Himalayan Range, not only are the Nepali troops more attuned to the demanding weather conditions, but they are also the optimal choice for operating in the complex landscape that comes with it.

As a country with diverse geography, the Nepali army's emphasis on physical endurance training, and regular training at high altitudes not only improves cardiovascular fitness but also enhances lung capacity and overall endurance, ensuring that soldiers are well-prepared for the rigors of mountain operations. Similarly, the elevated altitude brings about challenges such as reduced oxygen levels, extreme weather fluctuations, difficult logistical conditions et cetera, all situations that Nepali troops have trained for given the similarities in terrain. Having developed its talents in the Himalayas, the Nepali Army recognizes the need for cold weather survival. Nepali soldiers have a plethora of experience for Mount Hermon, from efficiently navigating snowy environments to effectively managing cold-weather equipment. This knowledge not only assures their safety but also positions them as important assets in cold-weather environments.

The Nepali Army prioritizes mountain combat training, understanding the strategic value of such capabilities in their region. The specialized instruction involves rock climbing, rappelling, and mountain survival tactics. Deploying Nepali forces on Mount Hermon allows them to use their great understanding of mountain warfare to operate in difficult terrain and inclement weather conditions.

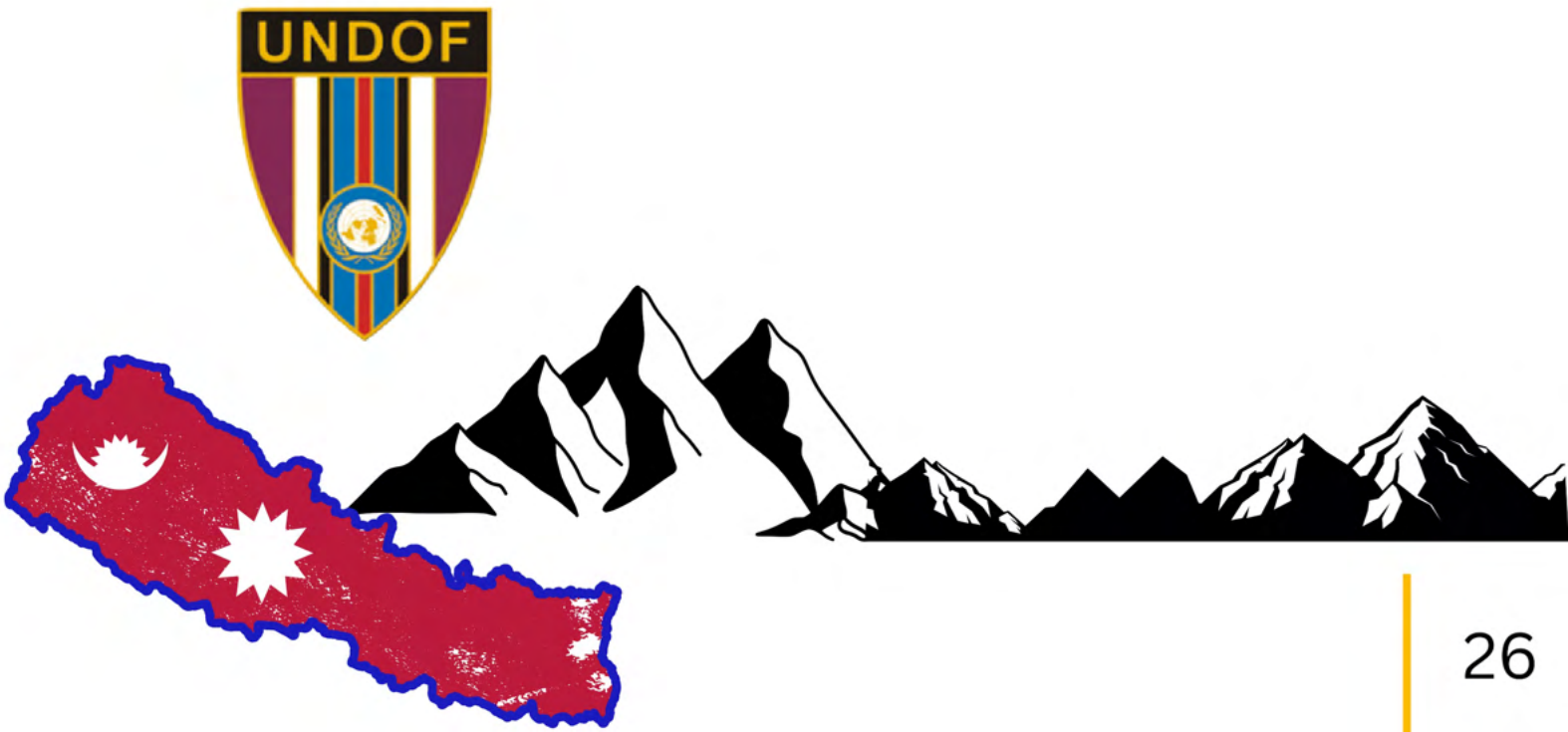
Beyond physical attributes, the mental fortitude of Nepali soldiers is a crucial asset. The cultural resilience ingrained in the Nepali Army, rooted in a history of facing challenges head-on, contributes to their adaptability in diverse environments. Mount Hermon's complex geopolitical context and challenging conditions require soldiers who can maintain composure and focus under pressure, making the Nepali Army an ideal fit for this demanding setting. The Nepali Army also reflects the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of Nepal. This diversity enhances their ability to collaborate with multinational forces that may be deployed in the Mount Hermon region. The soldiers' proficiency in multiple languages and cultural understanding fosters effective communication and cooperation, crucial elements in joint military operations in a complex geopolitical landscape.



During the pre-deployment period, the troops of NEPCON XII received intensive training at the HAMWS (High altitude mountain warfare school) in Jomsom, Nepal. Most have even carried out combat actions in mountains higher than 5000 meters above sea level. With similar climatic constraints, the Golan Heights provides a perfect opportunity for NEPCON XII to demonstrate its professionalism, mountain warfare abilities, stamina, and ability to overcome any operational impediments.

The Nepali Army's extraordinary adaptability, physical fitness, cold weather survival abilities, geographical familiarity, and cultural resilience make them an ideal force for deployment in Mount Hermon's tough environment. Beyond their military prowess, the presence of Nepali soldiers in this strategic location demonstrates the global significance of their capabilities, demonstrating that Himalayan warriors are not only masters of their own rugged terrain but also formidable forces on distant, difficult battlegrounds like Mount Hermon.

DR AARADHYA BAHADUR KC
T/CAPTAIN



"FROM HIMALAYAS OF NEPAL TO THE HILLS OF SYRIA" NEPALI ARMY FEMALE PEACEKEEPERS: A STALWART PRESENCE IN UNDOF

"Female peacekeepers in UN missions exemplify the courage and strength needed to build a more peaceful world. Their dedication inspires hope, and their actions speak louder than words, echoing the enduring commitment to global harmony."
Malala Yousafzai



The United Nations recognizes the vital role of female peacekeepers in promoting gender equality, enhancement of the overall effectiveness of UN missions and acknowledges that such diverse perspective is essential for sustainable peacekeeping efforts. In line with this, Nepal has been a steadfast contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions as the second largest troops contributing country and with the highest number of female peacekeepers deployed.

The Nepali Army actively encourages women to enlist because it recognizes the importance of diversity in peacekeeping operations. When assigned to UN missions, Nepali female peacekeepers bring unique perspectives and expertise to the operation as they undergo rigorous training to prepare for their roles. In addition to performing traditional military tasks, they also contribute to humanitarian assistance, community engagement, prevention of gender-based violence.

In local communities, their presence fosters bonds and trust, particularly among women and children, who frequently experience severe challenges during times of conflict. Female peacekeepers have been essential in supporting and defending those in need. It has fostered the capacity to establish connections with women and dismantled social barriers, which are particularly challenging for traditional peacekeeping operations due to cultural nuances.



Beyond the military facets of operations, Nepali female peacekeepers make significant contributions to community projects, educational initiatives, and healthcare provisions. The multifaceted approach taken highlights the larger objectives of the mission and the necessity of tackling social and economic issues to establish lasting peace.

The Nepali Army has demonstrated its commitment to gender equality by contributing female peacekeepers - 10 percent of the force's total - to the UN Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF) in Syria. The Nepali female peacekeepers, assigned to observe the disengagement agreement as a part of a contingent, bring a distinctive and compassionate touch to their roles. In doing so, they bolster UNDOF's efficacy and underscore the significance of diverse viewpoints in peacekeeping operations. The UNDOF's deployment of Nepali female peacekeepers is indicative of the growing appreciation for the important role that women play in resolving conflicts. The presence of female peacekeepers contributes to Nepal and Nepali Army's commitment to promoting gender parity and active involvement in global peacekeeping missions. In difficult circumstances, Nepali female peacekeepers exemplify the commitment and fortitude required to navigate challenging conditions and contribute to regional peace efforts.



Involving Nepali female peacekeepers in UN peacekeeping missions increases the efficacy of the mission, and positively impacts the lives of the people they serve. The involvement of Nepali female peacekeepers in UN peacekeeping missions is indicative of the country's progressive attempts to the country's gender parity and support international peacekeeping endeavors. The participation of Nepali female peacekeepers in UN missions marks the principles of the United Nations and the notion that diversity and inclusion are fundamental to achieving global peace.



CAPTAIN KRITI RAI
NEPALESE MECHANIZED COMPANY VII

HARMONY IN HEIGHTS: A NARRATIVE OF NEPCON-XII'S PRE-DEPLOYMENT JOURNEY FOR UN PEACEKEEPING ON SYRIA'S GOLAN HEIGHTS

As the dust settles on the rugged terrain of NEPCON-XII's training ground, a diverse assembly of Nepali troops emerges, their readiness honed through an intensive pre-deployment training, a testament to unity, resilience, and preparedness for the challenges awaiting them in the UNDOF Mission in Syria.



Field Training Exercise (FTX) during the Pre-Deployment Training

The NEPCON-XII Contingent underwent a comprehensive 14-week pre-deployment training (PDT) program in preparation for their deployment in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) Mission in Syria. Led by Lt Col Sunil Malla, the contingent commenced training on 2nd July 2023, embracing the unifying motto of "One Mission, One Team, One Goal." Brigadier General Bhola Thapa, then serving as the Commandant of the Birendra Peace Operations Training Centre (BPOTC), officiated the commencement of the training period, establishing the atmosphere for an intense and focused training session at the BPOTC during the opening ceremony.

The Pre-Deployment Training (PDT), approved by the United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operations (UNDPKO), unfolded in five distinct phases, strategically designed to equip the troops mentally and physically for the complexities of the UNDOF Mission in Syria.

The initial phase focused on Weapon Training, spanning two weeks. This phase covered comprehensive aspects of weapon handling and firing exercises. Subsequently, the Basic Military Training (BMT) phase unfolded over three weeks, immersing the troops in fundamental military skills essential for contemporary operating environments. Covering diverse topics such as field craft, battle craft, minor tactics, physical training, map reading, communications, first aid, hygiene, and sanitation. This phase aimed to create a well-rounded and adaptable peacekeeping force.

The Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) training phase followed, providing an in-depth exploration of UN peace operations and the specific mission environment. Aligned with UNDPKO guidelines, this phase covered Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law/Law of Armed Conflict (IHL/LOAC) on Protection of Civilians (POC), Child Protection, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), ensuring that the troops are well-versed in the legal and ethical aspects of peacekeeping.

Reinforcement Training, a two-week module, focused on refreshing and enhancing trade-specific knowledge and skills essential for the mission area after deployment. This phase ensured that the troops remained adept in their specialized roles, ready to apply their expertise in real-world scenarios.



CASEVAC Exercise during the Pre-Deployment Training.

The Mission Specific Training (MST) phase, conducted by experienced officers with prior mission deployment, provided a deep dive into mission-specific capabilities and skills. The curriculum included detailed information on the operating environment, specified and implied tasks, challenges, lessons learned, and good practices. Scenario-based exercises and lane training added practical dimensions to the learning process, preparing the troops for the unpredictable nature of peacekeeping missions.



Command Post Exercise (CPX) during the Pre-deployment Training.

The final phase, Integrated Training and Evaluation, spanned two weeks and aimed to assimilate all preceding training components into a cohesive package. This phase included Command Post Exercises (CPX), Field Training Exercises (FTX), and Operational Readiness Inspections (ORI) at both Battalion Headquarters (BN HQ) and platoon levels. The comprehensive assessment during this phase determined the level of operational readiness based on the tasks, conditions, and standards set by the United Nations and the Nepali Army.

Beyond the core PDT, the NEPCON-XII Contingent engaged in additional initiatives to enhance their overall readiness. A basic English language course during off-parade timings aimed to improve language proficiency, recognizing the importance of effective communication in the diverse and multilingual environment of international peacekeeping. Veterans with prior deployment experience in the UNDOF Mission shared their insights and experiences with the contingent, providing invaluable firsthand knowledge. Regular video conferences with then deployed troops bridged the gap between training and real-world deployment, allowing for the exchange of real-time information, updates, and advice.

At the conclusion of the PDT on 8th October 2023, the NEPCON-XII Contingent emerged as a testament to the effectiveness of the comprehensive training program. Their performance during the Integrated Training and Evaluation phase, marked by excellence in CPX, FTX, and ORI, affirmed their operational readiness according to UN and Nepali Army standards. In the history of BPOTC, the UNDOF (FSHQ) Unit's performance set a benchmark, showcasing a level of readiness that underscored their capability to be deployed in challenging mission environments.

The NEPCON-XII Contingent, having completed their training, stands as a shining example of the Nepali Army's commitment and capability to contribute to global peacekeeping efforts. Their journey provides valuable insights for future pre-deployment training programs, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach that addresses technical proficiency and psychological preparedness in the face of complex and dynamic mission environments. The successful integration of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and additional initiatives highlights the importance of a well-rounded training program for peacekeeping forces.

ISHWOR BHANDAR
CAPTAIN
NEPCON



NEPMED IN GOLAN

Initially, a Level 1 hospital was set up in Camp Faouar with the aim of providing medical assistance within its capabilities to all UNDOF members. The hospital operated under the guidance of the Force Medical Officer (FMO) and was managed by Austrian medical contingents from 1974 to July 2013. Subsequently, Fijian medical contingents upgraded the hospital to a Level 1 Plus facility from 2013 to July 2019.



Following this upgrade, the medical services at UNDOF were continued by Nepalese medical contingents (NEPMED) with additional medical facilities. Since 2019, NEPMED has been consistently offering 24-hour medical support to all UNDOF members, ensuring the ongoing health and well-being of the force.



STRUCTURE OF NEPMED

UNDOF comprises diverse contingent troops, each equipped with their respective basic medical facilities. Cases requiring advanced medical attention are directed from these facilities to the NEPMED Level 1 Plus Hospital. Initially, NEPMED boasted a team of 29, including 2 Surgeons, 1 Anesthesiologist, 2 General Practitioners (GPs), 12 Nurses, 4 Medical Technicians, 1 Physiotherapist, and 1 Pharmacist. Subsequently, in June 2021 enhancements were made, introducing a new dental module, which increased NEPMED's strength to 34. The surgical module of NEPMED is organized into two forward medical teams, contributing to the force's comprehensive medical capabilities. This strategic categorization ensures efficient and specialized medical support for various situations, reinforcing the overall effectiveness of UNDOF's healthcare provision. NEPMED boasts its state-of-the-art medical bunker, a facility meticulously designed to conduct operating theater (OT) procedures seamlessly even in the face of potential threats. This fortified sanctuary is equipped with sufficient medical technology, ensuring a comprehensive and secure environment for medical interventions.

In addition to its advanced medical equipment, the bunker is strategically fortified to function effectively under threat conditions. The logistics of the bunker are bolstered with the capability to accommodate and sustain up to 74 personnel during critical times. This strategic approach not only prioritizes the safety of the medical team but also underscores NEPMED's commitment to maintaining uninterrupted healthcare services, even in challenging situations.The telemedicine set up is installed in NEPMED medical bunker to provide specialized consultation to casualties during crisis. The medical consultation can be done between shelters and shelter to tertiary health care.

NEPMED SERVICES

Our hospital prides itself on a comprehensive range of specialized departments, each dedicated to delivering exceptional healthcare services. The Outpatient Department (OPD) serves as the initial point of contact for non-emergency medical needs, offering timely consultations and diagnostics. Our Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ensures critical care with cutting-edge technology and skilled healthcare professionals.



SURGICAL

The Surgical Department is capable of conducting a myriad of procedures with precision and care. The Lab Department employs advanced diagnostics, while the Physiotherapy Department aids in rehabilitation. X-ray services contribute to accurate diagnostics



DENTAL

Our Dental Module stands as a specialized hub within our healthcare facility, dedicated to promoting optimal oral health and providing comprehensive patient centered dental care. Equipped with advanced technology and staffed by skilled dental professionals, the module offers a range of services, including routine check ups, preventive as well as curative oral health care with proficient dental and surgical procedures as per treatment need.



PHARMACY



The pharmacy services of NEPMED is well established to support its medical facilities. Committed to ensuring seamless patient care, our pharmacy team collaborates closely with the surgical unit, providing timely and accurate medication management. From pre-operative assessments to post-operative recovery, our pharmacy service integrates seamlessly, offering expertise in medication selection, dosage optimization, and meticulous inventory control.

Together, these departments form a cohesive network, guaranteeing safe and specialized care to meet the diverse needs of our patients.

NEPMED actively managed COVID 19 during the pandemic in Camp Faouar. Collection of swab samples, isolation of covid positive patients, providing supportive medical and psychological treatments and vaccination campaigns to military personnel and civilians were major events done to relieve the pandemic burden.

Additionally, NEPMED also provides emergency primary care to all civilians in need at primary trauma care (PTC) located in the perimeter of Camp Faouar. NEPMED is also assisting UNDOF with any humanitarian crossings. To aid for better health, NEPMED puts continuous efficient efforts by conducting various medical training and health awareness programs to all force contingents as well as to civil personnels.

CONCLUSION

In United Nations (UN) missions, healthcare professionals play a vital role in working together to achieve a singular goal: the promotion of health and well-being in challenging and often resource-constrained environments. Collaborative efforts involving physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, and support staff create a synergistic environment to addresses the needs of patients. This cohesive teamwork of NEPMED not only enhances the overall quality of healthcare services but also promotes a positive and supportive work culture, ultimately benefiting both the healthcare professionals and the individuals they serve.

Maj Dr Sunil Basukala
Lt. Dr Supriya karki
Lt.Mahima D.C.(Dhami Chhetri)

MY DAY IN UNDOF: A JOURNEY TOWARDS GRATITUDE, BALANCE, AND PRODUCTIVITY

Every day is a new opportunity to make the most out of life. My day in UNDOF is a journey towards maintaining a healthy balance between work, personal life, and self-development while expressing gratitude towards everything that life has given me. As the saying goes, "how you start your day is how you live your life". For me, each day presents an opportunity to learn, grow, and connect with others. Here is a glimpse into my day in UNDOF that revolves around productivity, connection, and gratitude.



I believe that starting my day with physical training is essential for a healthy lifestyle. So, I wake up early and begin my day with Physical Training parade with the Indian contingent. This helps in building camaraderie, improving teamwork, enhancing individual skills, strengthening unit cohesion, developing discipline, improving physical fitness, and fostering a sense of pride in being part of a unit. Soldiers who train together and work together to achieve common goals can develop a strong sense of pride in their unit and their accomplishments. Moreover, it energizes me, helps me clear my mind, and prepares me for the day ahead.

After my workout, I sit cross-legged on my meditation cushion, taking a deep breath to center myself. I close my eyes and begin to recite the Gayatri Mantra, feeling the power and energy of the words that resonate within me. Gayatri Mantra is a sacred Hindu chant that is believed to have powerful spiritual and healing properties. The mantra is traditionally chanted in Sanskrit and is translated as: "We meditate on the glory of the Creator; Who has created the Universe; Who is worthy of Worship; Who is the embodiment of Knowledge and Light; Who is the remover of all Sin and Ignorance; May He enlighten our Intellect". The power of the Gayatri Mantra has helped me connect to something greater than myself, reminding me of the beauty and mystery of the universe.

After freshening up, I make my way to the kitchen where I can already smell the aroma of coffee brewing and the sizzle of eggs cooking on the stove. I know my roommates in Building 15 are already up and about, preparing breakfast. Soon, breakfast is ready, and we all dig in. While we eat, Kimmi Maam shares a funny meme she saw on social media, while Jasmine maam and Amreet maam talk about a movie we watched the night before. We all laugh and joke around, enjoying the easy camaraderie that comes with living with friends. As I leave the apartment and head out to the office, I feel a sense of warmth and connection from the

breakfast conversation with my roommates. It's a small moment, but it's one that reminds me of the value of friendship and community.





As I enter the Military Police office building, I am greeted by a diverse group of people from different countries, each one busy with their own tasks and responsibilities. The atmosphere is one of collaboration and teamwork, with everyone working together towards a common goal. As I begin my work, I am amazed at the level of efficiency and professionalism that permeates throughout the office. Everyone is focused and dedicated to their tasks, and the energy is infectious. I feel inspired and motivated to do my best work, knowing that I am part of such a talented and driven team. As the clock strikes 10:30, I feel my stomach grumbling, and I know it's time for a much-needed coffee break. I pour myself a steaming cup of coffee and join a group of colleagues at the table. We exchange pleasantries, catch up on each other's work, and share stories about our lives outside of the office. Despite our different backgrounds and experiences, we find common ground in our love for good coffee and enjoyable conversations. We talk about everything from our favorite restaurants to our travel experiences, and the time flies by quickly. As the day comes to a close, I reflect on the experiences I've had and the connections I've made. I feel grateful and thank Indian Army to provide me with an opportunity to be part of such an incredible multinational environment, one that encourages growth, innovation, and collaboration.





GOOD FRIENDS MAKE GREAT COLLEAGUES, AND GREAT COLLEAGUES MAKE UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES

It's lunchtime and being a big-time foodie, I like to explore different cuisines available in the international kitchen. I often try new dishes prepared by the different contingents, which not only satisfy my taste buds but also expose me to new cultures and ways of life. As I sit down to enjoy my meal, I feel grateful for the opportunity to try different cuisines and expand my palate. It's not every day that I get to experience such a diverse range of flavors and cultures in one meal.

UNITED BY WORK, ENRICHED BY DIVERSITY





It's a typical afternoon, and I am just back from work. As I take off my shoes and make myself comfortable, I pick up my phone to make a video call to my family who live in India. They are always curious to know how my day at work went and I am excited to share with them the details. As the video call connects, I can hear the voices of my parents and siblings coming through the speaker. They are all eager to see me and catch up on my day. I start by telling them about my work, explaining how it feels to work with colleagues from different parts of the world, and how this diversity has helped me understand different cultures and ways of thinking. It helps me to stay connected with my roots and reminds me of the importance of family and relationships. Talking to my loved ones brings a sense of comfort, joy, and belonging to my life. After that I usually hit the gym or go for a run/walk or maybe a quick sauna session to clear my mind and stay active. It's a great way to unwind and release stress.

I then like to catch up with my friends and colleagues over dinner. As we chat and unwind from the day, the conversation flows smoothly from light-hearted banter to more serious topics. It's a refreshing change of pace to connect with my colleagues and friends on a personal level outside of the work environment. We discuss everything from our favorite movies and TV shows to recent news stories and upcoming events. Laughter fills the air as we share jokes and funny anecdotes, enjoying each other's company. One of my favorite evenings are the Fuji Hut days that are usually on Fridays, where we enjoy some fun, dance, and catch up on all the latest news with everyone. Some evenings are also spent on celebrating birthdays and anniversaries which are filled with joy and excitement. Whether it's a small gathering or a big party, these occasions give us a chance to show our love and appreciation for those who are important to us.

GOOD FRIENDS AND GREAT COLLEAGUES, THE PERFECT RECIPE FOR A MEMORABLE EVENING

As someone who values personal growth and development, I make it a point to set aside time each day to pursue a new skill or hobby. Recently, I have been learning how to play the ukulele. Every day, I try to set aside 30 minutes to practice playing the ukulele. I start by tuning the instrument, then work through different chords and strumming patterns that I've been practicing. It can be frustrating at times, but I remind myself that progress takes time and practice. I've also been using online tutorials and resources to learn new songs and techniques. I focus on my strumming and fingerpicking techniques, trying to get them just right. Sometimes I struggle, and my fingers fumble on the fretboard, but I keep at it, determined to make progress. As I practice, I feel a sense of calm and relaxation wash over me. It's a welcome break from the stresses of daily life, and it allows me to focus on something that brings me joy and fulfillment. With each practice session, I can feel myself getting better, and I'm proud of the progress I've made so far. I look forward to continuing my ukulele journey and seeing where it takes me in the future. By setting aside time each day for personal development, I am able to grow and improve in different areas of my life. It's a small investment of time that pays off in big ways over time.

Before going to bed, I prepare for the next day. I start by organizing my schedule for the following day. I make a list of all the important tasks I needed to complete and prioritize them. After that, I take a few minutes to reflect on the day that had just passed. I think about the things that went well and the areas where I could improve. As I settle into bed, I close my eyes and take a deep breath. I recite my nightly prayer, thanking God for everything He has given me. I express my gratitude for my health, my family, my friends, and all the blessings in my life. Finally, I drift off to sleep, feeling content and at peace. I know that I had done everything I could to make the most of the day that had passed, and I was ready to face whatever tomorrow had in store for me.

CAPT BHAWNA CHHETRI
DET CDR, FMPP PL
INDCON

SYRIA, A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

War is destruction, death, pain and suffering and the biggest drawback is the loss of humanity. The infrastructure can be rebuilt but the circle of hatred which gets started keeps on taking its toll for many generations and the loss of humanity keeps on repeating itself. Towards this end, the various United Nations Peacekeeping Missions have the onerous task of peace building and bring order and stability in war-torn nations.

I was thrilled to be selected last year by my country India to become a "Blue Helmet" i.e, a UN Peacekeeper at the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. The idea of representing my nation's army & my country on a foreign soil, getting exposure to serve overseas with soldiers from different countries as well as becoming part of the prestigious United Nations, instilled a sense of immense pride.

I wasn't quiet sure what to expect when arriving in the UNDOF mission area. I had done my research on distant and recent conflict, which has resulted in much destruction. Despite the devastation, Syria remains a beautiful country with a rich history and culture, and it is unfortunate that the ongoing conflict has overshadowed its beauty. On the eve of my departure from the Mission after completing one year of service here, I felt the urge to pen down my perspective of Syria and the Syrian people.

Ancient Civilization. Syria is home to some of world's most beautiful and historic sites. The country has six UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the ancient city of Palmyra, Aleppo and Bosra. These sites are a testament to the country's rich history and culture. Existing since 2nd Millenium BC, Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, while its capital, Damascus is the oldest continuously inhabited capital in the world. The Temple of Bel in Palmyra was built in 1st century AD and is one of the best-preserved ancient temples in the world. Similarly, the Roman Amphitheatre in Bosra is one of the best-preserved Roman Theatres in the World. Established in 1919, the National Museum of Syria in Damascus is a rich cultural heritage institution in Syria which covers the entire range of Syrian history spanning over 11 millenia.





Natural Wonders. Syria is home to many beautiful beaches, including the beaches in Latakia and Tartus. We could discover these serene beaches as part of a 'Cultural Trip' from the mission. These port cities are a popular destination for tourists and locals alike. The country also has picturesque landscape and many beautiful mountains including Mount Hermon which is also the location of world's highest permanently manned UN Position at an altitude of 2,814 meters. The mountain is a popular destination for hikers and nature lovers. The Golan Heights also witnesses snowfall during winters which is a rare phenomenon in Middle East countries.

Al Umayyad Mosque. I was fortunate to visit the Al Umayyad Mosque early on my tour of duty. Probably the blessings contributed to my successful completion of the tenure. The Umayyad Mosque , also known as the Great Mosque of Damascus, located in the old city of Damascus, is one of the largest and oldest mosques in the world. Christian and Muslim tradition alike consider it the burial place of John the Baptist's head. Two shrines inside the premises commemorate the Islamic prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn ibn Ali and John the Baptist. The mosque is considered to be the fourth holiest site of Islam, after Mecca, Medina and Al Aqsa.

Markets. The country has wonderful local markets known as Souks. Here one can find everything from household items, fancy lighting to souvenirs and handicrafts. There are a few items which should definitely be considered while in the country. Such items include precious and semi-precious stones which are native to the region like pearl, wooden carvings like chess sets, gold and silver jewelry and hand-woven traditional materials. Souk Al Hamidiya, located in the Old Damascus City, is a dome covered Souk and is the most famous and bustling market offering a wide range of shopping options.





Having discussed about the beautiful but not so talked about aspects of this wonderful country, one thing that clearly emerges distinctly and catches every tourist/ foreigner's eye, is the 'Spirit of the Syrian People'. All markets, stores, restaurants, streets, etc are teeming with life and despite the hardships, there is life as usual. Any place which we entered, we were always greeted warmly and courteously. During our induction training, which is conducted for officers who are newly posted to the mission, a lecture on "Cultural Awareness" on Syria was taken by Miss Haala Mufti, a Syrian national working with UNDOF, and I still remember when she got teary eyed while talking about her country. All the Syrian Nationals working here with UNDOF, including Diaa, Amal, Haala, Ghofran, Mahmoud, Nabeel and Ahmad with whom I interacted frequently, are indeed very spirited and passionate about their country. During our various drives around the country, we always had children waving cheerfully and happily at us. While returning to Al Hind (India as referred by Syrians) after completing one year of beautiful time here in this magnificent country, I sincerely wish Syria bounces back to its glory and much happier days.

'SHUKRAN'

LT COL VARUN KHARE



FIJIAN CONTINGENT



Fiji Battalion 10 poses after the commemorating of 11/11 Armistice Day on Sat, 11 Nov 23.

Taskforce Ai Matai is the 10th rotation of FIJIBATT to Golan under the UNDOF mandate. The main body of troops arrived at the mission on 17 July 2023, and transitioned straight into the unit battle rhythm, with the main effort focused on maintaining operational consistency.

Taskforce Ai Matai maintains a strength of 144 troops including 8 women. The Taskforce has so far adapted under the current fluid operational climate especially when the A-Side is at war. It is challenging to achieve UNDOF's operational imperatives at tactical level, but we are making steady progress and will maintain our resolve under the prevailing circumstances.

Taskforce Ai Matai has 3 rifle platoons. 1 is deployed in Pos 60 on the B-Side. 1 Platoon is in Pos 22 and the third platoon is BMR. We also have an Engineering section, an EOD Det, and 1 medical section with an RMO.



Command Team

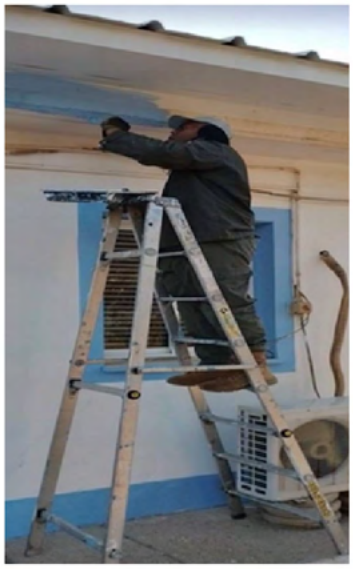




Fire Fighting Team (LEFT) responsible for force protection and support to all A-side UNDOF Positions. Engineering Team (IN BLUE COVERALL) posing with CO & PADRE after the Blessing of the NEWLY RENOVATED OFIRA HOUSE

FIJIBATT







FIJIBATT Engineers conduct regular building maintenance on office and accommodation buildings.





Our Engineers are also tasked with **Mine Clearance operations** in our AO to ensure the safe movement of personnel around our UN positions.

FIJIBATT



FIJIBATT Medical team after taking part in an UNDOF combined exercise.

Our medical team train with their mission counterparts to ensure interoperability and clear standard procedures are adhered to should they be needed in the event of an incident or emergency.





FIJIBATT Security Platoon are responsible for camp security. They work tirelessly around the clock to ensure 24/7 all round security of our positions.

UNDOF PHOTO CORNER












BASKAR P
VINESH N






INDIAN ARMY




KAUSHAL SINGH
INDIAN ARMY















