

GOLAN

The UNDOF Journal



January - March 2013
No. 134



DEAR READERS!

As the cover shows, the first quarter of this year started with the march out of our comrades from Japanese Contingent in January and the withdrawal of our Croatian colleagues in March. Within weeks UNDOF lost almost 150 competent and well experienced peacekeepers. They mainly fulfilled logistic tasks within LOGBATT and operational duties in 3rd Coy AUSBATT. The striking gap of manpower had to be urgently closed, that was partially mastered by Austrian, Indian and Filipino soldiers in an outstanding way!

Due to the dramatic personnel situation also HQ Staff Officers had to temporarily change their appointments. In the last edition the operational business in the Joint Operations Center was described; now the magazine's editor found himself there taking over responsibilities as JOC-Officer for almost a two-month period.

Nevertheless I am proud to present you 'slightly delayed' this edition of the Golan Journal with special



The Editorial Staff of Golan Journal 134

*Maj Alexander Unterweger, SSO Media/PR
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SSgt Martin Austerhuber*

contributions from SSO Pers Maj Dominguez about 'Soldiers of the Month', a Women's Day reportage by female OGG-UNMOs, LOGBATT and PHILBATT articles about exciting Medal Parades as well as the warm welcome of our new Chief of Staff, Col Cirilito E. Sobejana, and much more...

Ekkehard Gröppel

*Yours sincerely,
Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR*



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Front (Page 1): J-CON marches out / HRVCON lowers the flag
Collage by SSgt Martin Austerhuber

Back (Page 24): Apple Crossing March 2013: "An apple a day..."
Photo by SSgt Martin Austerhuber

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Force Commander's Message

Dear Gallant Peacekeepers!

We are passing through trying times and now is the time to show our commitment to peace and hold on to our positions strongly. However, we must also keep in mind that in order to stay safe and still carry out our tasks, we will have to take stringent security measures, which might lead to slight inconvenience but will go a long way in ensuring the safety and security of all peacekeepers.

The past few months have been very eventful to say the least. There were moments that were extremely tense and potentially dangerous. However, due to the steadfast commitment, patience and professionalism exhibited by everyone in the mission, we were able to sail over the crisis. It was only possible due to the team effort of all members of UNDOF along with the support from UNIFIL and the UNHQ at New York. I am really relieved to have a DFC and additional staff members joining us as a result of Mission capability study and Security Reappraisal undertaken by an able team from New York.



The period witnessed one of our TCCs leaving the mission due to certain political compulsions. It was a precarious situation as some of the important positions in the North of the AOS were with our Croatian friends. However, Austria, the oldest and the largest contributor to the Mission, stepped up during this time of need and very efficiently took over the command of these positions. The way in which AUSBATT reorganized itself at a short notice and covered the void reflects the professional competence of their soldiers and the excellent leadership skills of the officer cadre.

PHILBATT has faced many challenging situations in the Southern part of AOR but have stood fast in the interest of peace in the Golan Heights. They have been providing very effective security to OP 52 and are always in a state of alert to provide security cover to the nearest OP to their positions. They have also taken additional responsibility and contributed troops to positions 10 and 31. They have done a commendable job and we are proud of them.

The 13th rotation of INDCON has left the mission area and the new contingent has arrived. I congratulate the outgoing contingent members for having done an excellent job even in the absence of the Japanese contingent. I wish them all the very best in their future endeavors and a happy reunion with their families back home. I welcome the 14th rotation of INDCON into the folds of UNDOF and urge them to continue with the good work of their predecessors.

Another positive for UNDOF that emerged during this time of crisis was the cooperation extended by UNTSO and the synergy achieved by both the missions, which contributed immensely towards the fulfillment of UNDOF's mandate during the period. I hope and pray that the coming few months bring the spiral of violence in the region to an end and lasting peace prevails in the region and on the Golan Heights.

God Speed in all your endeavours,

Thank You, Danke, Salamat, Hvala, Arigato, Dhanyavad, Shukran, Toe Dah!

Major General Iqbal Singh Singha
Head of Mission & Force Commander UNDOF

Chief of Staff Words

Fellow Peacekeepers!

To the superstitious, anything that has to do with number 13 is considered a misfortune. But for me, I say otherwise because the year 2013 has given me another opportunity to be involved in Peacekeeping Operations. Taking my new post as the Chief of Staff, UNDOF, when Syrian unrest is at its height, is certainly has a purpose. Back home, my assignment in the Army were always where the actions are and here comes my renewed arena.



The unfolding events show that we cannot just pretend that our safety and security are insulated. Definitely, these troubled times pose new demands and challenges in the security landscape of our area of responsibility. Nevertheless, I feel honored to be a part of the team. It warms my heart to meet and work with my fellow servicemen from Austria, Croatia and India, not to mention the International Staffs from across the globe and the local support staffs, as well. Let us join hands and contribute towards the successful peacekeeping mission in this part of the Middle East. The sustainment of our respective countries' defense relations is a continuing process that requires consistent effort to strengthen the foundation of peace, goodwill, and cooperation among nations.

Other than being your Chief of Staff, I also represent my country, the Philippines, in this bond of peacekeepers working together under the auspices of the United Nations to perform our mandate of preserving peace and stability in the Golan Heights. The purpose seems very simple, but considering the diversity of foreign policies, military and national history, and even the cultural orientation of each country, its realization becomes a tedious job.

While it may be very challenging to work in a highly interactive and cross-cultural environment, things will not be as difficult for all of us if we do collaborate and do our job. All of us will surely learn how to go over the cultural differences and how to appreciate diversity. Our purpose here is to forge cooperative efforts among ourselves in the defense and preservation of host nations' national security, integrity and sovereignty.

Another challenge is our ability to cope with the high expectations as a result of the standards that may have been set by our predecessors. We will also make our own mark and we are bound to do well, if not even better. I strongly encourage you to surpass the bar of performance that peacekeepers before us have done in Golan Heights.

As we embark on our daily tasks here in UNDOF, I enjoin all of you to extend your support and wholehearted cooperation so that we could successfully accomplish our mandated tasks. Let us all be responsive and decisive. I am hopeful that the "One Team, One Goal and One Mission" concept will result in a stronger fraternal and harmonious relations between and among us.

Let us all be role models of professionalism, competence and excellence. Learn as much as we can and make it a practice to share to others what you knew. The old comparison between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea is still true. Galilee is a lake full of life because it takes in water but also gives it out. In contrast, nothing lives in the Dead Sea because with no outflow, the lake has stagnated. I am sure you liken to be a Sea Galilee than Dead Sea.

We will give our best effort in the name of the service and for the good of humanity. I am very positive that in unity of purpose we will all be successful as we seek and implore the Divine's guidance and blessings in our daily operations.

"One Mission – One Team – One Goal"

Colonel Cirilito Sobejana, Chief of Staff UNDOF

Visits to UNDOF

by Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR



Military Capability Study delegation from UNHQ New York led by Col David Barr, Chief of Military Planning Service in Office of Military Affairs, visited UNDOF and met with FC UNDOF (16th - 26th Jan 2013)



H.E. Mr. Pjer Šimunović, Croatian Ambassador to the State of Israel, and H.E. Ms. Alenka Suhadolnik, Slovenian Ambassador to the State of Israel, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (11th Feb 2013)



Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, Director of Asia and Middle East Division in DPKO, visited UNDOF and met with FC and CMS UNDOF (15th - 16th Feb 2013)



BGen Mate Paden, Commanding General of Croatian Armed Forces, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (8th Mar 2013)



LtGen Franz Reissner, Commanding General of Austrian Joint Forces, visited Posn 22 and met with FC UNDOF in Camp Ziouani (13th - 14th Mar 2013)

- Col Kazumichi Tsurumura, Supply Chief of Japanese of Central Readiness Force, visited Camp Ziouani with a 16-head delegation (28th Dec 2012 - 13th Jan 2013)

- Col Alfred Oswald, Austrian Armed Forces, visited Camp Ziouani with a 8-head delegation for AUTCON medical training (13th - 24th Jan 2013)

- Mr. William Hopkinson, Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, visited UNDOF on A-Side (19th Feb 2013)

- Mr. Alan Shatter, Irish Defense Minister, visited Camp Ziouani und met with FC UNDOF (12th Mar 2013)

- BGen David Humar, Slovenian Armed Forces, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (26th Mar 2013)



The new Chief of Staff (COS)

Col Cirilito Elola Sobejana was born on 31st Jul 1965 in Zamboanguita, Negros Oriental, Philippines. He started his military career when he entered the Philippine Military Academy in 1983 and graduated in 1987.

His previous command positions include; Company Commander and Battalion Commander of Ranger units: Commandant of the Ranger School; Group Commander of the Civil-Military Operations Group, Philippine Army. He also held various staff positions among which were Deputy Operations and Training Officer of the Army Ranger Regiment; Head of the Plans, Policies and Materiel Development Division of the Army Support Command; Chief of the Firepower Division at the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, J4, Armed Forces of the Philippines; Executive Officer of the Army Resource Management Office; and the Deputy Chief to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Civil-Military Operations, G7, Philippine Army. In 2003 to 2004, he was deployed under the auspices of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNMISET) as Military Observer (MILOBS).

Col Sobejana is a Ranger trained; a Special Forces qualified; a Para-trooper; and a Scuba diver. He finished his Command and General Staff Course at the AFP Command and General Staff College and underwent Executive Course on National Security Administration at the National Defense College of the Philippines. He also holds Masters Degree in Public Administration and a fellow on Corporate Governance.

He is a recipient of the country's highest military award, the Medal for Valor, an award equivalent to the Congressional Medal of Honor in the United States of America.

Col Sobejana is happily married to the former Edna Iturriaga and they are blessed with five children, Mae Suzanne (23), Mae Suzette (21), Sheena Joy (19), Sean Jason (14) and Siegfried Joshua (13).



The new Chief Engineer (CE)

Mr. Ilkhom Saliev was born on 9th Apr 1959 in the Tajikistan and joined UNDOF on 4th Mar 2013 as Chief Engineer. After graduating as a civil engineer in 1981, he served as a field engineer in a construction company. In 1985 he was promoted to Chief Engineer. From 1988 until 1993 he served as Chief of Facility Management Service within a military mission in Germany. From 1993 until 1998 he was engaged as Vice-President of the State Building Corporation for Special Assembling and Installation Works in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. There Mr. Saliev was responsible for the overall management of activities relating to technical and administrative affairs, logistic support, procurement, financial management,

monitoring and evaluation of the Corporation's activities.

From 1998 until 2000 he was the Project Engineer (Post-Natural Disasters Rehabilitation Program) at the Republican Project Coordination Unit of the Center for the Liquidation of Consequences of Natural Disasters (RPCU/LNCD). The project was jointly implemented by the World Bank and Asia Development Bank. Mr. Saliev brings with him extensive experience and knowledge of 13 years in the areas of Civil Engineering and Building Management where he has worked in numerous UN missions including UNTAET, UNMISET, UNOTIL (East Timor) and ONUB, as Civil Engineer and Chief of Building Management Units.

Mr. Saliev's hobbies are traveling, collecting aircraft models and playing guitar.



The new Deputy Chief Integrated Service Support (D/CISS)

LtCol Rajeshwar Singh Nughaal was born on 22nd May 1968 in Himachal Pradesh, India. He has done his schooling from Bishop Cotton School, Shimla and graduation in Geography (Honors) from DAV College, Chandigarh. He was commissioned into the Mechanised Infantry in 1989. In addition to the mandatory courses he is a graduate of the prestigious Defense Services Staff College, Wellington, India. He has commanded companies in High Altitude, Counter Insurgency, Plains and Deserts. He also has the distinction of commanding the elite Independent Mechanised Infantry Company of the Indian Army. He has held staff appointments as a Grade 2 Staff Officer of a Brigade in

Counter Insurgency, Grade 1 Staff Officer at New Delhi and as Colonel in charge of Administration. He has been awarded the Army Commanders Commendation Card.

LtCol Nughaal is married to Archana and they have two sons Yuvraj and Abhayraj. A keen sportsman, he has been selected in cricket for the Junior National and Services level. His hobbies include golf, music, travelling and photography.

AMED, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu visited UNDOF

The Director of Asia and Middle East Division in DPKO, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, visited UNDOF on 15th and 16th Feb 2013. To get familiar with the current situation in mission area, she met with civilian and military staff.

On her arrival, Ms. Izumi was greeted with a Guard of Honor at parade square in Camp Faouar, followed by an office call with the Force Commander UNDOF, MGen I. S. Singha. The distinguished guest was then provided with a detailed mission briefing by LtCol Robert Glanner, COO UNDOF, including development and appraisal of the situation inside UNDOF's Area of Responsibility. Afterwards Ms. Nakamitsu was escorted to a line tour in convoy through the Area of Separation.

Focal points of the tour were UNDOF Positions 37 and 68 in AUSBATT and PHILBATT area as well as UNTSO Observation Posts 72 and 56. At the spot the position leaders brought

the last operational incidents to the guest's attention as well as the challenging situation for UNDOF peacekeepers. At the end of the tour the VIP kindly signed the guest book at OP 56.

Before entertaining Ms. Izumi to dinner in the Indian social club 'Taj Mahal', Mr. Bernard Lee, CMS UNDOF gave her an all-out analysis of the situation in

UNDOF's Area of Operation in a meeting attended by Political Affairs Officer Mr. George Zachariah.

In Damascus the high profile visitor has also met with the Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister, the Defense Minister, the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate, Commanding Col Eng. Ibrahim Younes, and Mr. Mokhtar Lamani, Head of Office of the UN-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative for Syria.

On second day Ms. Nakamitsu and Mr. Zachariah left UNDOF early in the morning and proceeded to the Lebanese border with up to date information about the current situation in the Golan Heights mission.



Article by
Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR
Photo by Cpl Alen Mulavdic

8th March – Women's leadership on the Golan Heights

Women are always found to be in the minority armies throughout the world. 23 female soldiers are currently serving within UNDOF and yet two have found their way to the UNTSO mission as Military Observers. The two UNMOs are now in leading positions in the OGG-D southern team.

In the Area of Separation on B-Side, 'Team Oasis' is operating in the southern area, manning OPs 57 and 58. The team currently consists of eleven Military

team members who showed experiences in hijackings and kidnappings and who also served under continuous shelling in the vicinity of the most southern OP 58.

Due to the increasing threat to UNMOs, the situation finally led to the evacuation of three UNMOs from OP 58 on 3rd Mar 2013.

The challenges associated with being a leader in these demanding times are significant as leaders are expected to represent and support their team in times of greater danger and risk. "I was really happy to become the team leader of 'Team Oasis' even though I foresaw that, with the rapid changing environment. The role could be a significant challenge", Capt Jensen mentions. Many a time she has been asked questions along the lines of "isn't it difficult to be a female in a place like this, when you are mainly surrounded by men?" – Her clear cut answer



Female UNMOs preparing for patrol

Observers (UNMOs) with different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

The leader of 'Team Oasis' is Capt Mette Jensen from Denmark. She arrived in the mission area on 8th Jul 12 and became team leader on 19th Sep 12. It has certainly been a challenging time to be an UNMO in the Golan Heights. The mission, roles and manner in which OGG-D carries out its duties have been greatly affected by the ongoing instability and conflict in Syria. The whole team has first-hand experience to handle the increasing tension by working alongside with



Situation update for Chief OGG



is “no! “As a female you have to understand that the way things are dealt with, is on male terms.

You can’t afford to get hysterical if you don’t get your way but you can put your fist on the table and raise your voice. If you fail, it will be noticed, because you already stand out in the crowd.

I do believe that we in ‘Team Oasis’ have a different work environment due to the presence of females. It is not as loud and influenced by ‘testosterone’ as it could be, but it also requires that we, as females acknowledge that for different parts of the world it is not the normal picture to see females take charge and give orders during incidents. It can be a huge challenge for some and for others it is normal, but that is the beauty of this environment, it provides challenges on so many levels in the international sphere.”

Capt Alexandrina Bojilova: “The truth of it is, as an officer, serving with the New Zealand



Mette and Alexandria, female UNMOs in leading positions

Defense Force, my thinking and expectations of myself and others have been shaped in an environment where the only factors limiting or changing what you can or cannot do are those you set for yourself. When the task and the expectation that you are to contribute as an officer and a soldier, are the measure of success, gender becomes a lot less relevant. I recall my first week on an OP when I shocked my then Senior UNMO by fixing the piping in the kitchen, as a small team we all have to pitch in with all tasks.

There is, I guess, an expectation that we are capable of relating with more empathy; and of course, an expectation that an OP week in which a female takes a part in the cooking roster means fine-dining on the Golan (I certainly have much to prove there).”

So what is it like being a female UNMO and a Deputy Team-leader on a predominantly male Golan? “Well I have to say, it is what you make of it. The key message here is, in an environment such as the one we operate in, the challenges are countless and you seldom have

the time to consider whether others may think less of you for being a woman.”

The 8th March is the International Women’s Day originally called International Working Women’s Day. The first national Women’s Day was observed on 28th Feb 1909 in the United States following a declaration by the Socialist Party of America.

Article by Capt Mette Jensen and Capt Alexandrina Bojilova
Concept by Maj Fabio Svaizer (all UNTSO OGG)
Photos by SSgt Martin Austerhuber, Force Photographer

Not a daily routine

Since its inception, UNDOF has followed the tradition of assisting its host **countries in many ways. The first humanitarian crossing in the history of the mission** came to fruition in 2005 but no one knew that it was the beginning of a tradition; the Apple Crossing.

Some of us UN peacekeepers still remember well when the Apple crossing story began after 31 years of no trading activities between Syria and Israel. Since that kick start, convoys from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) transferred almost yearly tons of fresh apples from A-Gate to B-Side.

5th Mar 2013 has witnessed yet another Apple Crossing operation supervised by the CLPIO UNDOF, LtCol Dennis G. Gammad together with Ms. Biljana Milošević, Deputy Head of ICRC Delegation, and the assistance of UNDOF Military Police in coordination and traffic management. Following the usual sequence of procedures where ICRC trucks were loaded in front of A-Gate, and documents were checked at C-Detachment, all apple boxes were carefully and safely delivered to B-Side. Some of the fruits, which include Golden Deli-

cious and Starking Delicious, were distributed to UNDOF peacekeepers, who really enjoyed the quality and juicy taste.

Mr. Asaad Safadi, ICRC representative highlighted the statistics when he said, "in total almost 45.000 tons of apples were delivered in the past eight years". This time, further 18.000 tons were planned to be transferred within a period of three months, he added. According statistics and documentation the amount of crossed apple-tons permanently increased year by year starting with 4.000. In 2006 about 5.000 tons were shipped and 2007 the number climbed to 7.600 tons. In 2008 and 2012 no apple crossing took place due to a poor harvest but in 2009 and 2010 again 8.000 tons were delivered per year. The following year the total carriage of the apple issue accounted for 12.000 tons.

The apples mainly come from Druze famers on A-Side, who sell the over-production to Syria.



The precious goods arrived at B-Side

Despite the Apple Crossing was executed so many times it still is a special event that demonstrates a win-win situation for the host countries, the ICRC and UNDOF as well.



*Article by Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR
Photos by SSgt Martin Austerhuber,
Force Photographer*



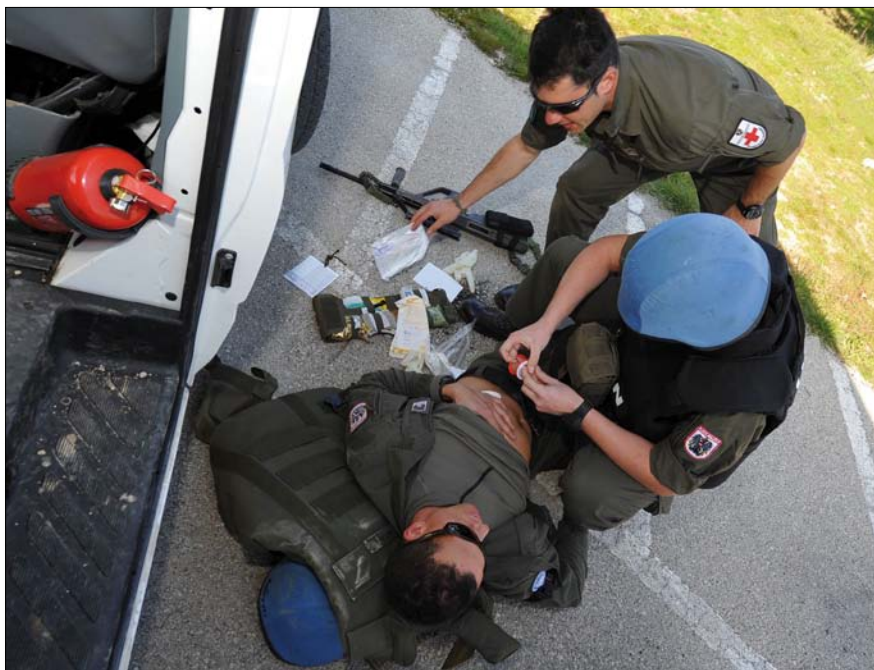
A juicy fruit for CLPIO

IFAK - special training for Austrians

On initiative of the Austrian Joint Armed Forces Commander, LtGen Franz Reissner, who visited UNDOF in March, a special training on the 'Improved First Aid Kit' for all Austrian peacekeepers serving in UNDOF was provided.

The special IFAK-training was organized in close cooperation with the Austrian Medical Training Center and took place from 13th to 24th January this year in Camp Ziouani.

This kind of medical treatment is meant to provide for a quick and effective application of first aid on the so called 'Level Zero'. This level of combat casualty care is highly important as it bridges the time between injury and hand over of patient to medical team. The aim is to stabilize the wounded soldier and thus give him a higher chance of survival in the battle field. Measures and materials applied include adequate stypic means, compression and special bandages, stabilization of respiratory system and donation of pain relief medication to prevent the wounded transcending into a status of shock. To facilitate that, a highly trained and motivated team from Austria was deployed to convey the knowledge to our troops, and did that in an outstanding way. They also provided an extensive drill program, as combat medical care is mostly applied under extreme pressure and in a hostile environment.



Medical training by using the Improved First Aid Kit

Leader of Posn 37, WO II Martin Reitmayer stated: "I was chosen to take part in the first aid training. I have been a professional soldier since 1992 and up to now had to deal with far less effective measures that concerns first aid. The IFAK is really a high value asset when it comes to combat casualty care. I assess it is highly necessary that every soldier being deployed on mission abroad is well trained and equipped when it comes to giving first aid and I am convinced, that this was a step in the right direction", he concludes.

SSgt Erwin Koller, deputy leader of Posn 25 in Khan Arnabeh highlighted: "This training is a very positive aspect. Our trainers are highly competent and motivated individuals who provided an excellent training for us. All questions were perfectly answered and we were moving on step by step. I can recommend this training to everybody and consider it essential for a well prepared peacekeeper to have this knowledge and equipment."

Survival is the utmost aim for every soldier deployed in a hostile environment and this training surely grants us a good chance to do so. The IFAK had to be carried along by all Austrian UNDOF peacekeepers every time they leave their position or camp.

*Article by Capt Rüdiger von Gimborn, OpsInfo/AB
Photo by SSgt Martin Austerhuber, Force Photographer*



Dovidenja Hrvatska! – Good bye Croatia!

On 17th Mar 2013 the Croatian Contingent left UNDOF forever after almost **five years of deployment. Due to a political decision by their government, the** Croatians withdrew from the Middle East with some tear drops in their eyes.

At a meeting, held on 8th Mar in Camp Ziouani between the Croatian National Contingent Commander Maj Mile Vukicević and Representatives of the Croatian Armed Forces Deputy Chief of Staff BGen Mate Paden, Training and Doctrine Commander BGen Ivan Jurić on one side, and Force Commander UNDOF, MGen I. S. Singha on the other side, the decamping procedure and dynamics of withdrawal were coordinated. The meeting was also attended by the Croatian Ambassador to the State of Israel, Mr. Pjer Simunović, CO AUSBATT LtCol Paul Schneider and officers from 10th Croatian Contingent (HRVCON). After that day it seemed clear: "HRVCON will leave!"

Then a curious hand-over process followed that was never done before in mission history. Within only few days, UN soldiers of the remaining troop contributing countries Austria, India and the Philippines had to take-over all responsibilities from their Croatian comrades:

Austrians of FHQ Company were redeployed to AUSBATT where they joined the newly formed "Lion 3rd Company", commanded by Capt Christoph Seirer, former OiC/FHQ Coy. Furthermore 15 soldiers from HQ Coy/AB followed suit as well as eight Filipino peacekeepers took over Position 30. The current situation showed an almost 'all' Austrian Battalion again after 1998, when Slovakia joined the 3rd Coy/AB. In addition to the unprecedented situation, UNTSO OPs 71 and 57 had to be manned by UNDOF too. This was solved by Austrians from Posn 37 and Philippines from Posn 80 providing a 24 hours shift duty with two to four soldiers. Also positions of HQ Staff Officers like CMPO, SSO Ops and one Ops Officer had to be succeeded. That was temporarily done by Filipino, Indian and Austrian Staff Officers appointed in different UNDOF sections; Media and Public Relations, IT, Training and GIS.

It was a strange mood on that morning at the parade square in

Camp Faouar, when the final farewell ceremony was conducted in a very emotional manner. After presenting arms by a Guard of Honor platoon and striking the Croatian national flag, Maj Mile Vukicević, NCC HRVCON and DCO AUSBATT, thanked in a moving farewell speech (see page 23), all Croatian and Austrian peacekeepers present. During the address to the troops he held the Croatian flag in his hands. At afternoon a last Medal Parade was celebrated in Khetarpal Hall in Camp Ziouani with 97 HRVCON members and Chief of Staff UNDOF, Col Cirilito Sobejana. Then Croatians left UNDOF...

We wish our Croatian comrades all the best for the future - Dovidenja Hrvatska!

*Article by Lt I Marko Perica, 3rd Coy/AB and
Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR
Photo and photo collage by
SSgt Martin Austerhuber,
Force Photographer*



Japan withdrew from Golan Heights

After 17 years deployment in UNDOF, the Japanese Contingent left the mission at the Golan Heights. On 13th Jan 2013 all J-CON members led by **their National Contingent Commander, Maj Fumihiko Kayanuma, marched out.**

The following weeks were marked by a strange mood for all after the Japanese government's decision to end the Japanese peacekeepers mission in UNDOF on 21st Dec 2012. Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto has cited deterioration of the security situation in Syria as the reason behind the withdrawal of Japanese peacekeepers from the embattled region.

Peacekeepers from contributing countries gathered at the main gate in Camp Ziouani on this wintry but sunny Sunday. Filipinos, Indians, Croatians and Austrians as well as representatives of the civilian staff accompanied the out marching J-CON members, with a sad smile in their faces. Headed by NCC J-CON, Maj Fumihiko Kayanuma, Japanese comrades left the camp for Ben Gurion Airport, after they hauled down the Japanese flag in front of their HQ building during the final ceremony.

Japan has been in Golan Heights for 17 years, making it the country's longest-running peacekeeping operation. The last contingent of 47 personnel of Japan's Self Defense Forces (SDF) who were stationed in UNDOF, will never experience the usual six month rotation following the Japanese government to withdraw its troops from UNDOF. From March 1996 until January 2013, 34 Japanese Contingents were mainly dispatched to fulfill logistic tasks such as cargo shipment, road work and recovery. Japan also held Staff Officers posts in HQ UNDOF such as DMPIO (Media and Public Relations), SO Transport and SSO Logistics.

Japan had previously decided to withdraw SDF troops from East Timor and Haiti. This will leave South Sudan as the last place where SDF are still dispatched.

**J-CON soldiers,
we will miss you all! - Arrigato!**

Article by Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR
Photo and photo collage by
SSgt Martin Austerhuber,
Force Photographer



Dear Peacekeepers!

First I would like to express our gratitude for your cooperation and support.



Unfortunately, as of January 2013, our mission here on the Golan Heights has come to an end. Over the past 17 years, the Japanese Contingents have been proud to carry out their tasks as members of UNDOF. This has been a great honor for Japan's Self Defense Force.

On the ground, over 1.500 Japanese soldiers had a chance to create extraordinary universal bonds of friendship and alliances that have become personal assets to every Japanese peacekeeper. I believe that these relationships will strengthen and rise above the tests of time.

Finally I wish each and every peacekeeper and UNDOF member, a safe and successful mission and happiness in future!

Thank you very much!

*The Commander of the
34th Japanese Contingent*

Maj Fumihiko Kayanuma



Filipino Peacekeepers receive UNDOF medals

Members of the 6th Philippine Contingent, also known as the 'Professional Peacekeepers' proudly received the UNDOF Medals during Medal Parade Ceremony on 23rd Mar 2013 held at Camp Ziouani.



The UNDOF medal, awarded by the Force Commander

MGen I. S. Singha, Head of Mission and Force Commander UNDOF, and Philippine Ambassador to Israel, His Excellency Generoso D.G. Calonge, were the guests of honor and speakers at that event and led the pinning of UNDOF medals to the awardees. LtCol Nolie Anquillano, CO PHILBATT led the Filipino peacekeepers in receiving the UNDOF medals for their vast accomplishments and for the excellent performance of the mandated

tasks for the past four months.

One of the significant accomplishments of the unit was the act of heroism on 3rd Mar 2013 involving risk of life by 31 PHILBATT members spearheaded by LtCol Anquillano in the evacuation of OGG personnel from UNTSO OP 58 namely, Maj Felipe Schaffhauser, Capt Jarrod Turner and Capt Alexandria Bojilova. Despite the heavy shelling and airstrikes in the OP's vicinity, the rescue was successfully conducted

during the firefight between Syrian Arab Armed Forces and FSA units. The rescued OGG officers were trapped inside the village when their barracks were hit by indirect fires that ruined the power supply and communication facilities of the said military establishment.

Another significant accomplishment is the display of courage by TSgt Herman L Galiza as a driver and part of the convoy transporting the Austrian and Croatian UN peacekeepers from Camp Faouar

to Damascus International Airport when they were sprayed with bullets by unknown perpetrators while on their way to Damascus City on 29th and 30th Nov 2012. TSgt Galiza was able to maintain his composure and successfully brought his passengers safely to the airport.

In his speech, LtCol Anquillano congratulated the recipients of the UNDOF medal and said it should serve as inspiration to work even harder. He urged every peacekeeper to continue displaying world-class professionalism at all times in conformity with the 6th PHILCON dictum “Professional Peacekeepers committed to serve with pride and honor.” He furthermore expressed his sincere gratitude for the support and inspiration of the UNDOF leadership, complemented with the harmonious working relationship and support accorded by the different contingents. He extended his sincere thanks to the empowering guidance and unqualified assistance accorded by the leadership of the Philippine Embassy in Tel Aviv with the Embassy officials as well as the officers and members of the Filipino community in Israel.

H.E. Calonge, in his message, congratulated his fellow Filipino UN Peacekeepers for the well-deserve UN medals. He reiterated the pronouncement of the President of the Philippines that the government remains committed to deploying troops in the United Nations peacekeeping mission areas, which include the Golan region,

despite the hostage-taking incident of 21 PHILBATT personnel that transpired on 6th until 9th Mar 2013.

In his speech, MGen Singha appreciated the dedication and commitment of the Filipino peacekeepers for the last four months even to the time of crisis when 21 PHILBATT troopers were forcibly taken by unidentified armed elements for four days. “The manner which you conduct yourselves in the mission area is very impressive and praiseworthy. I am impressed with your professionalism, dedication and commitment to the mandate of the mission,” he said.

Other attendees were the Chief of Staff of UNDOF Colonel Cirilito Sobejana, the Philippine National Contingent Commander, UNDOF staffs, liaison officers of the Israeli Defence Force, and the Contingent Commanders of India and Austria, Chief OGG from UNTSO, Philippine embassy officials and the Filipino community members in Israel.

After the ceremony, selected members of PHILBATT presented several cultural dances of the Philippines, which mesmerized the viewers. The celebration was jibed with the commemoration of the 116th Philippine Army Founding Anniversary.

*Article by Maj Arnold Gasalatan, PIO PHILBATT
Photos by SSgt Rolybert Pablo, Photographer PHILBATT*



A Medal for the Force Commander

The Medal Parade being one of the most awaited functions during the tour of duty of a contingent was eagerly awaited and tastefully executed by INDCON on 24th Jan 2013.

INDCON took this momentous occasion as a perfect opportunity for a modest display of the multifaceted Indian culture and the rich traditions of the Indian Army. It was decided to conduct a march past with 'high energy' Indian Army Drill movements in Camp Ziouani parade square to be followed by cultural event and an Indian meal at the International Kitchen.

Weather Gods were kind to bless the occasion with a pleasant sunny day, much to the relief of each INDCON member. When Maj Sandeep Kalra commanded the lineup to march in, to the tunes of the Indian Army Regimental song 'Kadam Kadam Badaye Ja', Indian peacekeepers were fortunate to have amongst the spectators, most of the UNDOF HQ and representatives of their compatriots from AUSBATT, HRVCON and PHILBATT. Distinguished guests from the Israel Defense Forces and Druze Community Head of Majdal Shams also graced the occasion.

The parade consisted of five officers, ten warrant officers and 62 lower ranks lined up in four squads that were commanded by Maj Sanjay Kumar, Maj Muralee Gopal, Maj Ritesh Kohli and Capt Anurag Chauhan respectively. The privilege of bringing the National Flag on parade was entrusted upon to Maj Soochak Kumkar. Maj Sandeep Sharma along with his wife Mrs. Peeush Sharma gave life to the commentary and made best of the opportunity to acquaint the august gathering with information regarding India.

During the proceedings which followed, MGen I. S. Singha, Force Commander and Head of Mission UNDOF, Col Cirilito Sobejana, Chief of Staff and Mr. Bernard Lee, Chief Mission Support, pinned up the coveted UNDOF medal to all ranks of INDCON. It was a momentous occasion when Mr. Lee pinned the medal on to the Force Commander himself.

The euphoria of having accomplished a mission and being recognized for the same, is an inexplicable feeling for any soldier. Soldiers across the world derive immense motivation from an inch long ribbon and inch wide piece of metal, pinned to their chest in recognition of their selfless service to any cause they are assigned to. The beauty of UNDOF medal brings out the essence of the mission in the depiction of the mandate and the geography of the mission area in an artistic blend of superlative quality.



Indian Guard of Honor at the Medal Parade

MGen Singha inspected the parade and expressed his appreciation for the parade and the good work done by the contingent. He further acknowledged the contribution of the contingent in the accomplishment of



LtCol Kwardeep Sawhney receives the UNDOF medal

the mission and complimented each member of the team for going beyond the mandated logistics task when the mission demanded the same.

In his address which followed, LtCol Kwardeep Sawhney, CO LOGBATT complimented each soldier under his command on the momentous occasion and exhorted them to keep on doing the good work. He set the morale of his troops soaring high, when he said: "Wear this medal that you have received today with utmost pride

because you have earned it through your excellent work and your great professionalism."



After the spectacular march past, the distinguish guests were ushered by the contingent to International Kitchen, where the food was arranged and decorated in a splendid way to enhance its aesthetic appeal. A few folk dance forms

to include the famous Bhangra from Punjab, Laciun from Maharashtra and a cinematic dance to the tune of 'Jai Ho', the famous Oscar winning composition of Mr. A.R. Rahman were presented to the elite audience.

The day's proceedings come to a conclusion after the sumptuous Indian lunch with an impromptu group photograph of the contingent with the Force Commander and Chief of Staff, in front of International Kitchen in Camp Ziouani.

This day and its events will remain etched in the memory of each member of INDCON, for it was the day when they were formally recognized for the efforts as a 'Blue Beret' in the Biblical land of Golan.

*Article by Maj Muralee Gopal, OpsO LOGBATT
Photos by LOGBATT*



With pleasure - Mr. Bernard Lee awards INDCON peacekeepers after he had honored the Force Commander

A warm welcome for Chief of Staff UNDOF

PHILBATT welcomed its new National Contingent Commander with the **assumption of Col Cirilito E. Sobejana as the new appointed Chief of Staff UNDOF** effective 14th Jan 2013, with a special celebration.

The officers and enlisted personnel of PHILBATT headed by its Commanding Officer, LtCol Nolie L. Anquillano, were grateful for the designation of Col Cirilito E. Sobejana as the first Filipino Chief of Staff UNDOF, replacing LtCol Dennis Godfrey F. Gammad, CLPIO UNDOF as NCC PHILCON.

Accompanied by LtCol Anquillano and Filipino leading staff, Col Sobejana visited in a line tour the Area of Responsibility of PHILBATT to inspect firsthand the Filipino peacekeepers serving at UNDOF and to know the capabilities in fulfilling the assigned tasks of maintaining peace in the southern part of UNDOF's Area of Separation.

During his visit to Posn 60, the new COS UNDOF was briefed on the current situation of PHILBATT's AOR, its mission and capabilities. He also toured around the Headquarters of PHILBATT in Camp Ziouani.

On 18th Jan 2013, PHILBATT and Filipino International Staff hosted a 'Happy Hour' at Bayanihan Hall, the Philippines social club in Camp Faouar. Col Sobejana underwent the same reception tradition as a genuine Filipino peacekeeper – when he ate the Golan cake and drank the Golan juice.

In his message, Col Sobejana reminded all the Filipino peacekeepers that they are representing the Philippines in this part of the world.

“Back home, we have that core purpose of serving the people and securing the land, we have to adopt the same purpose that we will be serving the people and securing the ‘foreign’ land, since we are in a foreign country. So, again, my fellow Filipinos and our allies in this mission, thank you very much for the warm welcome though the weather is cold but I felt the warm welcome that you accorded me since I arrive in this mission,” Col Sobejana finally highlighted.

Article by Maj Arnold Gasalatan, PIO PHILBATT
Photo by SSgt Rolynbert Pablo, Photographer PHILBATT



Welcome in Camp Ziouani

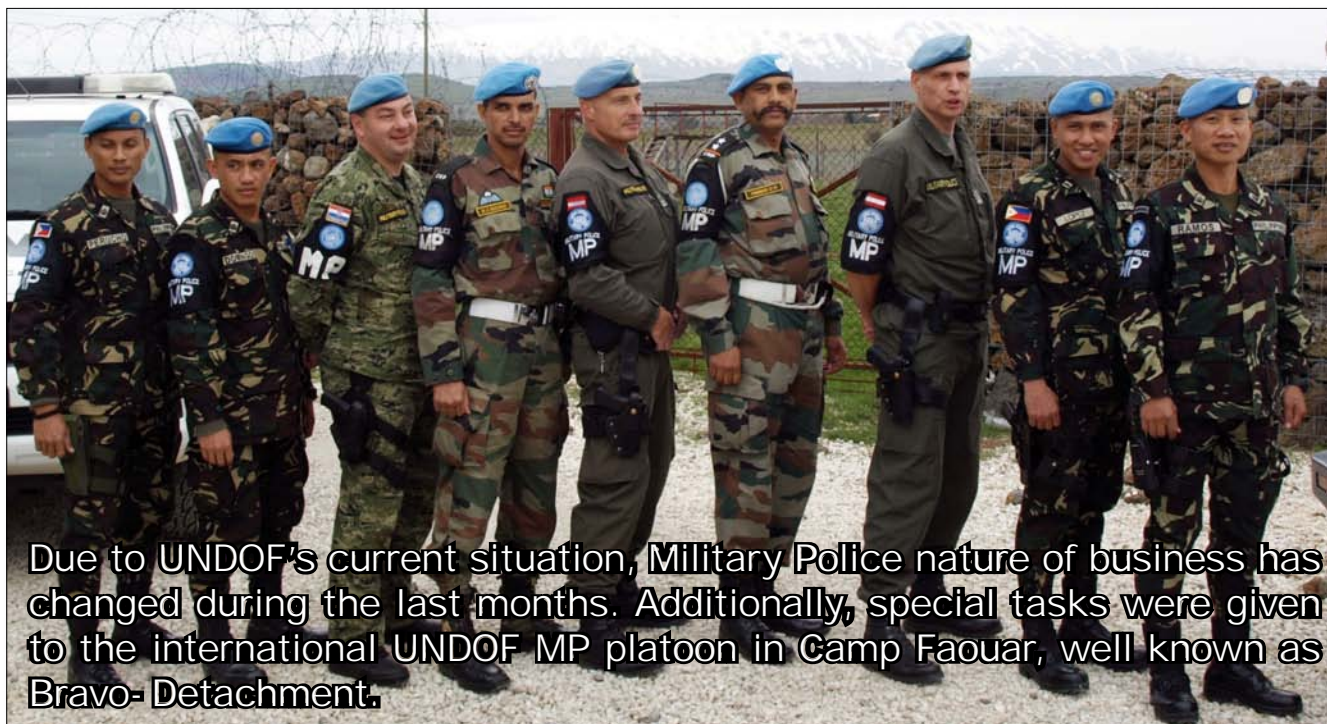


Line Tour in the Area of Responsibility



Taking over the COS mobile and going operational

“This is Military Police, message over!”



Due to UNDOF's current situation, Military Police nature of business has changed during the last months. Additionally, special tasks were given to the international UNDOF MP platoon in Camp Faouar, well known as Bravo- Detachment.

The Military Police B-Detachment team at UNDOF's service

That morning when I woke up and as I prepared for work the sun was shining from the east and the wind was gently blowing and touching my face as I walked towards my office at MP Bravo-Detachment. Upon reaching my desk to check my inbox for any important emails, suddenly my phone starts ringing. I pick up the receiver and hear an authoritative voice saying: “Dispatch two of your MP to the Joint Operations Center, as soon as possible!” A special task was given by the Operations Officer to accompany a convoy through the Area of Separation. This is just a current and ordinary scene for my MP platoon at B-Detachment.

The B-Detachment is based in Camp Faouar, co-located with UNDOF HQ MP platoon, and consists of nine Military Police members from four different nationalities. Under my command as the Detachment Commander are my deputy and Second in Command from Austria, SSgt Ralph Marko and seven patrolmen from Croatia, India, the Philippines and Austria. All work very closely together with UNDOF HQ MP platoon and stay in close contact with the Liaison Officers of SSAD, especially at B-Gate.

Patrolling UNDOF's Area of Responsibility, providing escorts for activities such as movements of weapons, VIPs, troop's rotations, or convoy security are our key tasks these days. Furthermore, we conduct traffic control, radar speed checks, search of UN vehicles and baggage for drugs and explosives, as well as assisting Austrian dog handlers with their sniffer dogs in various tasks. The MP platoon also investigates traffic accidents where UNDOF vehicles are involved.

But now time has dramatically changed for every one of us here as the security situation is becoming increasingly risky. We have been deprived of our freedom of movement (in addition to coming under fire), and many of our UN rights and immunity regulations accorded by virtue of our mandate have been violated. We are now facing the dilemma brought by the current situation in our area whereas, looming danger is at hand every time we move out from Camp Faouar. Even so, despite of these new challenges for us, your MP Bravo-Detachment is truly determined and dedicated in fulfilling our mandate in a befitting manner.

*Article by WO II D.R. Pawar, Cmdr MP B-Detachment
Photos by MSgt Peter Grassl and SSgt Ariel Ramos*

Peacekeepers as Ambassadors of Goodwill

The award for the best peacekeeper of the month had started in the late 2012. It is one among the internal policies of UNDOF by direction of MGen I. S. Singha, the Force Commander, to confer such award to all deserving military and civilian personnel of UNDOF who excel in their respective duties and responsibilities.

Each unit and office such as AUSBATT, PHILBATT, LOGBATT, Military Police and FHQ Company has its own Commendation Board to select candidates from among its members who deserve to receive such award. In the case of personnel from HQ UNDOF, the Commendation Board Alfa is organized to deliberate military personnel while the Bravo one is organized to deliberate civilian personnel entitled for the award of the "Best Peacekeeper of the Month".

After selection process, all units shall submit the narratives and pictures of their respective best peacekeepers at the Office of the Military

Morning Brief as scheduled at the Conference Room of UNDOF where the FC UNDOF Commendation Certificate will be conferred.

The award for the best peacekeeper of the month embraces not only gallantry or noble actions involving risk of life but also good administration and management. Key achievements that warrant an award include the conduct of negotiations during hostage situation, conduct of patrols, escort services and reconnaissance to ensure a safe conveyance during movement of personnel, equipment and logistics materials, the render of EOD assistance in detonating UXOs and clearing of all types of displaced or planted landmines in all mobility corridors in the Mission Area.

It also comprises commendable deeds related to service support such as provision of excellent communications system for effective Command and Control and undertaking of some infrastructure projects in UNDOF. On the other hand, good administration and management



The awarding ceremony in the Pentagon

comprises the conduct of hectic and complex clerical jobs and investigative works related to conduct and discipline, also merit the best peacekeeper award.

Being part of the morale and welfare of all military organizations, the peacekeepers are ought to be awarded and commended with the best peacekeeper award in recognition of their meritorious achievements and invaluable services. Most importantly, the award symbolizes recognition of their exemplary abilities and excellent performance of duty, worthy of emulation, and motivation, for others to follow, as ambassadors of goodwill to the United Nations.

Article by Maj William
Guillermo Dominguez Jr., SSO Pers
Photos by SSgt Martin Austerhuber,
Force Photographer

tary Personnel Branch for publication in the bulletin board of UNDOF at the HQ Building, commonly 'Pentagon' called. After publication, the peacekeepers of the month will be presented to the Force Commander following the

Farewell HRVCON

Farewell speech of Maj Mile Vukicević, NCC HRVCON and DCO AUSBATT, on 17th Mar 2013 at Khetarpal Hall Camp Ziouani during HRVCON Medal Parade:

Your Excellency, Mr. Pjer Simunović, MGen Ivan Jurić, Col Cirilito Sobejana, LtCol Paul Schneider, ladies and gentlemen, dear comrades!

Before we say Goodbye, I want to express my biggest thanks to you. Words of saying goodbye are sad words. We members of the 10th HRVCON are slightly sad because we have to leave. But at the same time we feel also happy and satisfied that we had the great opportunity in the last five years to socialize and cooperate with all members of UNDOF mission. And we are happy to go back to our home country and families.

My deepest respect to our friends and colleagues, who served with us in this area at these challenging times and to whom I say thank you for your cooperation, your friendship, your warmth. We love you all.

It is very important to know that we, Croatians, have certainly felt the good vibrations from our interaction with you which has been translated into such an exemplary cooperation, team work and camaraderie between all UNDOF peacekeepers.

Now, we have to go on with our army obligations, but our time in UNDOF will stay in our permanent memories for ever. You will stay, our friends, but we will be available for you in Croatia or at any other place in the world where our cooperation, support and camaraderie is needed.

Our combined goal is to make every effort for peace in the Middle East region to survive and prosper and to give each other a hand of friendship with all the good intentions as we did at the end of our mission.

Thank you all! - Hvala!

Maj Mile Vukicević, NCC HRVCON and DCO AUSBATT





Apple - Crossing, March 2013