

The Blue Beret

May 2007



**President Ivan
Gašparovič of
the Slovak
Republic visits
UNFICYP**



THE BLUE BERET

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Editorial

Despite frequent public disagreements over the process set in motion by the Gambari Agreement almost a year ago, representatives of the two sides continue to meet and to exchange proposals. Sometimes, these proposals are on paper, sometimes they are transmitted orally. It does not help the process to publicly dispute or second-guess the merit of each and every idea or suggestion as and when it is put forward given that the ongoing exchange of proposals is an intrinsic part of the consultative dynamic.

SRSg Møller, a self-professed optimist, insists that there is considerable commonality of positions between the sides and that the gap between them is not so large as to be unbridgeable.

He also suggests we keep in mind that any assurance of reasonable progress requires that the sides be allowed to work together in an atmosphere of trust. Stridently measuring this sensitive and dynamic process in blame game and/or media spin terms only serves to undermine that trust. More damagingly, it also erodes whatever faith the public at large has in advancing prospects for a solution of the Cyprus problem when, according to the recent UNFICYP inter-communal survey, the prevailing attitude is one of scepticism and disillusionment regarding hopes for an early Cyprus settlement.

Persistent accusation and counter accusation between the two sides does not help instill the trust and confidence so sorely needed in the two communities at this time. Cypriots must feel that their voices have been heard and that they have had a say in shaping the solution. The Cyprus problem must have a Cypriot solution. The current process with its technical committee and working group mechanisms is geared to providing precisely that.

Voices must be heard - Civil Society and the Cyprus Problem

Cypriots must feel that their voices have been heard and that they have had a say in shaping that solution – the Cyprus problem must have a Cypriot solution, SRSg Michael Møller said, opening the International Civil Society Fair at Ledra Palace in early May.

There can be no sustainable solution to the Cyprus problem unless and until every Cypriot is convinced that he or she truly understands all its components and ramifications.

On an unseasonably warm day, SRSg Møller welcomed members of the greater civil society to Ledra Palace area where he and U.S. Ambassador Ronald Schlicher launched the first-time event. He congratulated UNDP-ACT and Jaco Cilliers for organising the three-day event and said he hoped the fair would serve to promote a more vibrant civil society – “one that is alive and alert to both the challenges the island faces and the potential that beckons”.

The Chief of Mission noted that civil society is the “lifeblood of a healthy democratic culture”. A community’s sense of democratic well-being “thrives on open and ongoing debate about the basic systems that shape governance and their relationship with, and the role of, the individual citizen”. It is a basic function of democracy to ensure that people have the opportunity to join in “a critical and balanced debate” on the issues of the day in order to participate in the decision-making processes that impact on their lives, he said.

Hence the importance of getting the island’s youth involved so that they can participate in this debate, which, after all, is about their future and their prospects. An active and involved civil society is key to how that future is shaped. “Creating a sustainable peace requires that every Cypriot – individually and collectively – takes part in the debate over what their country is going to look like in the future and in helping unleash its potential.”

Understanding and peace is best achieved by those who already know each other and is seldom sustainable if imposed by “outsiders”, Mr. Møller noted. The recent UNFICYP inter-communal survey showed that Cypriots make a clear distinction between meddling and facilitating by outsiders in bicomunal activities. Yet majorities in both communities were “convinced that day-to-day bicomunal contact is essential to pave the way for a united Cyprus”, even though the actual number of Cypriots engaged in inter-communal activities “remains surprisingly small.”

The SRSg said the prevailing spirit of scepticism and disillusionment recorded by the survey

about attitudes towards prospects for an early Cyprus settlement, “shows the crying need for dialogue, debate and discussion between and among the island’s communities on all the issues which make the mosaic of life on the island and, just as importantly, the need to overcome the pervasive and persistent lack of trust between the two communities.”

Civil society serves both as “catalyst” and “early warning system”. It is “a communal megaphone enabling people to voice their concerns, or a springboard for individual and collective initiatives for the public good.” The challenge is to ensure that civil society partners responsibly with government in the service of all through a culture of openness, accountability and good governance.

“Clearly, the politics of reconciliation demand that the voices of civil society and citizens be heard. Finding a solution to the de facto division of the island must involve a process where Cypriots grapple with issues such as the shape of Cypriot society 10 and more years from now; keeping the island’s unique environment intact; managing social realities such as multiculturalism, gender equality, HIV/AIDS and social exclusion, etc.

“However, the debate requires a societal context and the right atmosphere. There is a need for catalysts like politicians, academics, public figures and the media to promote and support the debate. Indeed, a national media that informs objectively and educates factually is a must. The debate can and should tackle controversy, but in a fair and balanced manner, where different views can be expressed and people have an opportunity to have an open voice.”

Every Cypriot should be an active participant in the debate, Mr. Møller concluded.

A total of 82 NGOs participated, and approximately 2,000 people visited the fair between 3-5 May.



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**President Ivan Gašparovič
of the Slovak Republic
visits UNFICYP**

Back Cover:

**President Heinz Fischer of
the Federal Republic of
Austria at the Goshi
Memorial**



29 May: International Peacekeepers Day

Peacekeeping tends to be associated with blue berets. A stereotype image is that of a UN soldier or police officer providing humanitarian assistance to civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world. Yet peacekeeping is more than intervention or post-conflict humanitarian assistance. It is also, and perhaps more importantly, about normalisation and rebuilding. Not just the reassembling of shattered infrastructure, but the long, slow haul of restoring trust and confidence in the day-to-day activities that underpin the social structure so many of the more fortunate take for granted.

Peacekeepers tasked with rebuilding are defined by the United Nations as, "soldiers, civilian police officers and other civilian personnel who monitor and observe a peace process in post conflict areas and assist ex-combatants in implementing peace agreements they may have signed."

The **Blue Beret** spoke to several UNFICYP military, police and civilian peacekeepers who all concur that international peace may be a lofty ideal that seems unattainable in the world today, but being a small cog in the wheel, trying to alter the course of events, is worth the effort.

SSgt. Michal Ivan, UNFICYP Force Photographer, who is on his second UN mission to Cyprus, said that for a Slovakian soldier, joining a peacekeeping mission is voluntary, yet it is a much sought-after position. A cynic would say the economic benefits are the drawing card, but Michal points out that no amount of money could replace the lives lost by peacekeepers on dangerous missions around the world. He views peacekeeping as an opportunity to work in a multinational environment where his training and skills as a soldier offer him the opportunity to help people. "International Day of Peacekeeping serves as a reminder of the soldiers who lost their lives in the service of peace in Cyprus and other countries," he said.

Sgt. Paul Rhodes from 8 Transport Regiment in Sector 2, although on his first UN mission, has served in other peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan. As a British soldier, he does not have the choice of joining a peacekeeping mission and

says he does not differentiate between being in the service of his country or that of the UN. He has been trained to face the enemy and defend his territory and, if necessary, return fire. However, the key difference here, he says, is being the buffer between two opposing forces and remaining impartial. He would like to see developments towards normalisation during his tour here, and says that the opening of the Ledra Street crossing would be, for him, a great achievement that he could say he was a small part of.

Argentinian **Capt. Marjano Tato**, Civil Affairs Liaison Officer, is on his first UN mission and admits that it is a challenge overcoming the cultural barriers, while at the same time adjusting to different work environments and procedures. "The greatest challenge, however, is being 'the bridge-builder' between the two communities on the island," he said, adding that the responsibility of providing the framework for political, social, economic and environmental normalisation is a complex task.

"Being a peacekeeper with UNFICYP is more complex than being on a battlefield. In battle, you are prepared to fight and implement a plan of action. With a peacekeeping role, there are more grey areas where you have to adjust from being a soldier and are made to discover another face of the military. You are monitoring and observing a peace process. In the case of UNFICYP, you are in a BZ where civilians may live and work between two opposing forces.

Marjano says he is not looking for recognition as a peacekeeper because as a soldier, he is taught to carry out orders. But, he says, "it is nice to be acknowledged for the work we do, as well as pay tribute to those who have lost their lives for peace."

Capt. Csaba Bakos, SO2 Ops Policy and Planning, is on his third peacekeeping mission, having served previously in Kosovo and Afghanistan.

In Hungary, he is stationed at the Peace and Support Training Centre where, as an instructor, he trained soldiers for deployment on peacekeeping missions. He is, therefore, familiar with the difficulties faced by peacekeepers sent to conflict areas to either intervene, provide humanitarian

assistance or oversee the return to normal conditions.

In Cyprus, he says, although the situation appears peaceful, there are minefields and opposing forces with rifles and ammunition facing each other while our peacekeepers are unarmed and need to use negotiation skills to resolve disputes when they arise. Pointing to the UN badge on his left arm and the Hungarian badge on his right arm, Csaba says these are both visible to civilians and military, "identifying not only our nationality, but also the responsibilities we have as peacekeepers".

Sgt. Anne Byrne, Irish UNPOL officer working with Civil Affairs, is on her first mission and admits its quite different to the work she did at home as a police officer. Being part of Civil Affairs means working as a team not only with police but also civilian staff and military who together accomplish their tasks. "My boss at home is a police officer. My boss here is a civilian. And we work in cooperation with military liaison." Also she says the type of work is different to her usual crime investigations. The issues Civil Affairs deals with are related to farming, well drilling, construction in the BZ as well as dealing with civilians from the two communities that may have their own issues. Anne says she volunteered to join a peacekeeping mission because she wanted to do something completely different.

"In Ireland, I work in a relatively small area and it is more community policing. I wanted to do something completely different, work with different agencies and cultures." Work at UNFICYP is busier than she expected and her community policing background is useful in the liaison work. Anne says she would advise others to become peacekeepers, whether they are uniformed or civilian, as it is important to be involved not only in our own problems but in assisting others solve theirs.

The uniformed world of soldiers and police tends to be male dominated but, as Anne notes, the contribution of women has complemented the work of male peacekeepers positively.

David Wilkins, OIC ITU, is a civilian peacekeeper who manages and supervises the ITU unit within CITS. This encompasses all hardware and software requirements for the mission. This is David's fourth UN mission. He has served in Angola, Brindisi and Israel, as well as visiting many other missions on temporary assignments including Georgia, Lebanon and Syria. Having served 11 years as a peacekeeper he says, "I am a very proud and staunch believer in the UN and I believe it does have a purpose and serves a great cause in the world." David rejects what he says is often unfair criticism of the organisation, pointing out that it is not the SG nor the people who work in the organisation who take the decisions. It's the contributing countries, the Security Council and the General Assembly who ultimately decide where the UN does or does not



This year International Day of Peacekeepers pays tribute to the 2,344 peacekeepers killed in peace operations to date. It also honours an estimated one million soldiers, police officers and civilians who have served under the UN flag in the last 59 years since the first peacekeeping mission was established in 1948

The day – 29 May – was chosen for the celebration because on that day in 1948, the first mission, the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), began operations with a group of unarmed military observers in Palestine – a mission that is still alive today. Since then, there have been 61 UN peacekeeping operations.

Today, there are over 100,000 UN peacekeepers from 89 countries deployed in 18 missions on three continents. The cost of peacekeeping is steadily on the rise as new missions are set up, with approximately \$5.28 billion approved for the period of 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007. The estimated cost of operations from 1948 to 30 June 2006 is \$41,54 billion.

Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan said of the first peacekeeping mission "...soldiers were sent onto the battlefield under a new flag and with a new mission: a mission of peace. That mission was without precedent in human history. It was an attempt to confront and defeat the worst in man with the best in man; to counter violence with tolerance, might with moderation, and war with peace."

Continued overleaf



UNPOL Medal Parade

On 13 April, UNPOL held a medal parade for 34 UNPOL officers who were presented with the UN medal. Recipients comprised members of the Argentinian, Australian, Bosnian, Croatian, Dutch, Salvadorian, Indian and Italian contingents.

The presentation was held in the courtyard of the International Cafeteria at the UNPA. Among the guests were members of senior management, as well as Ambassadors and High Commissioners of the contributing countries. The Ambassador of Bosnia Herzegovina, Mrs Jadranka Maslesa, came all the way from Israel for the occasion. A delegation of police from The Netherlands was present as well. The ceremony was conducted by Deputy Senior Police Adviser Col Speedie, with speeches by the Senior Police Adviser Carla Van Maris and Acting Chief of Mission, Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael José Barni.

In her welcoming speech, SPA Van Maris stated, "When considering the many differences in background, be it culture, style of policing or international experience, it never fails to amaze

and impress me how well these UNPOL officers manage their quite demanding task at UNFICYP. Apart from the occasional exception, there exists a great cooperation and dedication to the job. Communication, tolerance and mutual respect are, after all, the key words to success."

Maj. Gen. Barni commented during his speech that the UN has always had exceptionally good relationships with both communities in Cyprus. He said this was because of the ability to communicate in an appropriate manner and deal with issues of concern to both sides in a balanced and non-biased manner.

A reception was held after the main ceremony. UNPOL members, family and friends were able to convey their congratulations to the proud medalists.

Croatian medal recipient Sgt. Vedran Zgela's attempt to return from holidays at home in time for the parade missed the main ceremony when his plane was delayed by a few hours. However, Maj. Gen. Barni was kind enough to hold another short ceremony to present Sgt. Zgela with his medal during the reception afterwards.

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go. "I believe I am a small cog in the very big machine of the United Nations," he says, noting that the three pillars of peacekeeping – military, police and civilian – work together and are only effective when they all support each other.



"Without administration and civilian support staff, the military and police could not function, while the military and police are the face of the United Nations and frequently put themselves in the line of fire."

Referring to the International Peacekeepers Day, David says: "Many people have laid down their lives for the United Nations and have died in the service of peace. They should be honoured, remembered and recognised for their dedication and commitment to the organisation. It is also a good time for self-reflection. What are we all here for? We are not here just to pick up a pay cheque at the end of the month. We all have a role and destiny in the future of the UN."

David says he is a peacekeeper "for the long haul,"



describing himself as "an international nomad" whose family is the United Nations wherever it takes him. "When you are a peacekeeper, the world becomes a much smaller place and you have colleagues and friends all over the world."

Netha Kreouzos

ANZAC Day

Every 25th of April at dawn, Australians and New Zealanders from cities and towns gather at monuments all over the world to commemorate and remember the ANZAC legend.

It was on this date in 1915 that the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) landed on the beaches of Gallipoli, Turkey. They landed one mile off course and encountered well-defended positions on brutal terrain. Eight months of tortuous inch-by-inch warfare in myriads of trenches and tunnels, through steep ravines and over impossible cliffs resulted in tremendous casualties. From this landscape, a special Australian spirit was born – an identity of courage, endurance, sacrifice and mateship. It is that special

25 April quickly became the day on which all Australians remember the sacrifice of those who died in war and peacekeeping.

In Cyprus this year, the Australian Police (AUSTPOL) Contingent led by Commander Col Speedie, their families and invited guests attended the dawn service at Wayne's Keep Cemetery in the buffer zone not far from the UN Protected Area. A candlelit path guided the way, for guests bearing sprigs of rosemary, past soldiers' graves to seats near the Cross of Sacrifice. The gathering light of dawn, from the very direction of the Gallipoli beaches, gradually filtered over the eastern horizon, revealing the eerie silhouettes of Turkish soldiers in hilltop OPs. The haunting bugle



sensation when the bugle sounds and the flag is raised that gives every Australian reason to be proud.

Over the course of the Gallipoli campaign, the ANZACs and allies advanced little more than one kilometre. Whilst the ANZACs were part of a larger coalition, the proportional losses were staggering. Over half the Australians who fought became casualties with 8,700 dead. Nearly 90% of the New Zealanders became casualties with 2,700 killed. The Gallipoli campaign had such a profound effect that

notes of "The Last Post" echoed across the quiet of the cemetery gravestones, reminding all those present of the sacrifices made.

At the conclusion of the service, the guests were hosted by AUSTPOL to a "gunfire breakfast" in the International Mess. A cup of coffee with a dash of Bundaberg Rum and some ANZAC biscuits were also served, making the breakfast uniquely Australian.

Many of the guests also attended the CIVPOL Club to be treated to a demonstration of the ANZAC trench game of Two-



Up, followed by a traditional Australian barbecue.

AUSTPOL would like to thank all those who attended and assisted in making ANZAC Day in Cyprus such a wonderful memory to take home.



Australian High Commissioner Garth Hunt presented UNFICYP's Ms. Diana Bridger (above) with a letter of thanks from the Australian Federal Minister for Veteran Affairs for her well-recognised efforts in organising this special day for the last nine years.



Presidential Visits

SRS Michael Møller, the UNFICYP Chief of Mission, received two Presidents during the April-May period, first meeting with the President of the Slovak Republic Mr. Ivan Gašparovič on 18 April, and then with the President of the Federal Republic of Austria, Dr. Heinz Fischer on 12 May. Both countries have peacekeepers serving with UNFICYP.

President of the Slovak Republic Mr. Ivan Gašparovič

On 18 April, the President of the Slovak Republic, Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, accompanied by his wife, Silvia Gašparovič, the Minister of Defence of the Slovak Armed Forces, František Kašický, and other political representatives, arrived in Cyprus.

Following a visit to Chief of Mission Michael Møller and Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni, the visitors got a chance to find out more about the soldiers' everyday mission life when they toured Slovak Engineers' quarters in the UNPA.

The President and his party then travelled to Pyla to meet members of the Slovak Contingent who are stationed there. Patrol Base 126, overlooking the village, had been refurbished especially for the occasion.

After a briefing by Commander Sector 4, Lt. Col. Jaroslav Schonvicky, the President was introduced to members of Sector 4, many of whom had travelled to Pyla from Camp Štefánik, Fama-gusta, for the occasion.

Highlight of the special Slovakian buffet lunch prepared for the visit was the informal discussion between members of the delegation and Slovak

soldiers. Many asked the President and the Defence Minister questions about the recently introduced revised military law and the new standards of military service. The President expressed his satisfaction at the high esteem in which members of the Slovak Contingent are held.

Capt. Michal Harnadek



Overlooking the village of Pyla, President Ivan Gašparovič (centre) and his Defence Minister are briefed by CO Sector 4

President of the Federal Republic of Austria, Dr. Heinz Fischer

The Federal President of the Republic of Austria, Dr. Heinz Fischer, paid an official visit to the Republic of Cyprus from 10 to 12 May, accompanied by his wife, Margit, and a high ranking delegation.

On 12 May, President Fischer visited HQ UNFICYP. He met with the Chief of Mission, Mr. Michael Møller, and the Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Rafael José Barni. Then Chief of Staff Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell briefed the President and his party on the current situation in UNFICYP.

A vehicle tour through the buffer zone in Sector 2 gave the President and his party a sense of the duty of the UN soldiers on the ground.

In the afternoon, President Fischer and Maj. Gen. Barni laid a wreath at the monument for three Austrian soldiers, killed in action in 1974 in Goshi.



After the commemoration, President Fischer congratulated Maj. Gen. Barni on the excellent atmosphere in UNFICYP,



reiterated his thanks for the wonderful hospitality shown to him and his party during their visit, and wished all UNFICYP members continued success.

Lt. Col. Klaus Peer

On a lighter note, the President asked his wife to take a picture of himself with UNFICYP Force Photographer SSgt. Michal Ivan saying, "It's about time you have a picture of yourself!"

"Kafenio" or "Kahve"

The coffee shop, or "Kafenio" for Greek Cypriots and "Kahve" (short for Kahvehane) for Turkish Cypriots, plays an integral role in village life on the island. Whether it's a Turkish Cypriot or Greek Cypriot village, the idea is the same – the coffee shop is located in the centre or in the central square of the village. Larger villages may have more than one coffee shop, but they can usually be found in the central square at the heart of the village.

It is where the residents, as well as visitors, gather to drink small, pungent cups of their favourite black beverage, either "sketo"/"sade", (without sugar), "metrio"/"orta" (medium – one spoon of sugar) or "glyki"/"shekerli" (sweet – two spoons of sugar).

If one is not a coffee drinker, there is always tea from herbs growing in the mountains (spad-gia, mint and anise), and for those who want to soothe their indigestion after a heavy meal, there is "Afroza"/"Perisgan", a type of sherbet that fizzes when water is added and must be drunk immediately to have any effect.

Villagers gather in the coffee shop to chat with friends, play cards or "tavli" (backgammon), or just meet and see other people. It is also the right place to obtain all the latest news of the village, the country and the whole world for that matter.

In the past, coffee shops were restricted to men who played the important socio-economic roles in their respective communities. Local politics and other community issues were discussed, private business deals could be made in the setting of the coffee shop, as well as wedding dowry arrangements between the fathers of the bride and groom. Women visited the coffee shops only for special occasions like "Karagiozi" (puppet theatre) performances, or to listen to the radio and later, from 1956, to watch television.



UNFICYP Information Assistant Ersin Oztoycan (second left) with Dante (second right) and Noé (right) in Lefke's Turkish Cypriot coffee shop



Greek Cypriot coffee shop discussions in Kato Pyrgos

Although nowadays everyone is welcome, in practice, mostly men remain the regular customers of coffee shops across the island.

Keeping in with their traditional role where important socio-economic community issues are discussed, the coffee shops in buffer zone villages have become informal meeting places where Turkish and Greek Cypriots who live, work or farm in the buffer zone are able to raise their concerns and discuss possible ways of dealing with issues affecting them with the UN peacekeepers.

The **Blue Beret** accompanied the Civil Affairs SCAT team members Cpl. Noé Amaya from El Salvador and 1/Lt Dante Contreras from Argentina on one of their coffee shop visits to Lefke and Kato Pyrgos. Arriving at the first coffee shop, Dante and Noé point to a table in the far corner saying, "that is our table whenever we come here". Sure enough, the regulars soon start arriving to pick up farming permits and apply for new ones. The welcome is evident in the insistence of all the "customers" wanting to buy refreshments for the peacekeepers. Their work includes discussing areas where farming is permitted, issuing farming and work permits, and resolving any problems that may arise within the BZ.

After an hour, their work is complete and the peacekeepers pack up their briefcases to move on to the next coffee shop in Kato Pyrgos. Here a similar scene unfolds, with the peacekeepers being ushered by the coffee shop owner to their regular table, offering them refreshments while they await their customers. Soon, a few farmers arrive with their permits for renewal or to pick up ones they applied for at the previous meeting.

Noé says this is the first time he has been involved in community policing and says he finds the work rewarding as he is able to do something positive for the community. Dante concurs, noting that their interaction with the community, whether it's issuing a permit or facilitating a pilgrimage to a church in the BZ, is a small but positive step in the right direction.

Netha Kreouzios

Old foes working side-by-side

It may be the 25th anniversary of the Falklands War this year, but British soldiers from the UNFICYP Roulement Regiment in Nicosia have been enjoying working side-by-side with Argentinian soldiers in perfect harmony as part of joint patrols with the United Nations.

Seventeen soldiers from West Troop, 8 Transport Regiment RLC, have spent a week helping to man an Argentinian Platoon base in Morphou, while the Argentinian Contingent conducts a handover with their new arrivals.

That has meant British and Argentinian soldiers deploying together to check on any encroachments on disputed land, observe potential trouble spots between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, deter illegal access to protected areas, as well as enjoy some "down-time" in the same camp playing football, table tennis and some good-natured banter.

Lt. Simon Barker, who commands West Troop, normally based at the Ledra Palace Hotel in Nicosia, said that it has been a tremendous experience.

"We are relatively new into theatre ourselves, having arrived in late March, so it has been great to get to see a new Sector, controlled by the Argentinians, who are also just getting to know the ground themselves.

"It seems that we have similar concerns to deal with, such as farming issues and rights over land, and as much as anything getting used to the political complications on the island and life as a soldier patrolling for perhaps the first time without weapons."

According to Lt. Barker's opposite number, Lt. Javier Beltran from the Argentinian marines, it has also been a beneficial experience to work with British troops.

He said: "We've got to see a different way of working through this period with the British. The atmosphere, attitude to discipline and respect between the ranks is slightly different between us and it is interesting to see.

"As a professional soldier, it is important to learn from others, and I think that has been the case for all of us in the last week."

One thing the Argentinian troops may not have experienced before is British Army cooking, and in this area, the results have been perhaps a little surprising. The food has been a total success!

Pte. Sean Cornish, attached as a chef for the week, has been serving up such well-known classics as macaroni cheese, curry and lasagne, as well as the traditional English breakfast.

He said: "At first, I wasn't sure what to expect as the Argentinians are used to quite different meals to ourselves, and what with the language barrier communication has been a bit tricky at times.

"But it soon became clear that with the empty plates coming back, I was doing the right thing!"

Indeed, for many of the Argentinian soldiers, a taste of British grub has been a welcome change from the norm.

Cpl. Leonardo Jacinto said: "Usually, we cook for ourselves as we are in a Platoon strength location here. We were delighted when the chef arrived and instead, we started getting three choices at meal times.

"The food has been excellent and nothing like the British reputation. We want the chef to stay!"

As for the future and six months working with the United Nations in Cyprus on Op TOSCA, almost all the soldiers are united in looking forward to what is a very different six-month operational tour.

LCpl. Gregor Nicolson, of the Catterick based Regiment, said: "We all know that this will be a challenging tour, although in different ways to Iraq or Afghanistan, where many in the Regiment have been before.

"Out here, the emphasis is much more political, and every incident can have serious implications – we have to understand the two opposing forces and the country's perspective, all at the same time.

"But it is also true that being here on a summer tour has the potential to be a great opportunity. We all hope to get involved in as many outside activities as possible, and get to see some of the recreational side of the island."

And for some soldiers, the tour has already been a way to bond with team members.

Pte. Darren Archer, who just missed out on a tour to Iraq and was last deployed to the Falkland Islands, said: "I prefer it here to back home. At least now we get away from all the worries of everyday life and work with mates, where it is often chilled-out and yet we are doing a real job in a unique environment."



Capt. Gary Allen smiling as Cpl. Leonardo Jacinto piles on the ketchup!



Lt. Simon Barker with Lt. Carlos Beltran

One way of preventing the operational tour from falling into routine is the fact that soldiers of both nations are well aware that, not too far in the future looms a big military skills competition for the United Nations, due to take place at the end of May.

The participating Regiments are very keen to show just who is

the number one nation in the contest between the Argentinians, the British, and also the Hungarian and Slovakian contingents who make up Sector 4 of the United Nations, based near Famagusta.

In fact, according to Cpl. Jacinto of the Argentinian marines, they have been left with very little choice.

"We have both found out since we've been here that we have been given the same order from our bosses," he said. "We both have to win it!"

While the winners of that competition have been argued over by the soldiers at the Platoon base in Morphou well into the night, the chance to work

with a once-opposing army has been educational and well-enjoyed throughout.

As Pte. Archer said: "We've had some good fun together, a lot of banter of course, and also some evenly-contested games of football after work.

"All the soldiers we have met here have been a good laugh and not afraid to talk to us, even if our Spanish and their English meant for a lot of sign-language at times – the right sort of sign-language of course!"

"It's been a bit of an eye-opener and we've all made some good mates. I hope we can work together again in Cyprus before we go home."

Capt. Gary Allen

8 Transport Regiment RLC

8 Transport Column, Royal Army Service Corps, was formed in Munster, West Germany, in 1964 and assumed the role of the carriage of 1 (BR) Corps special weapons. Protection was provided by a dedicated mechanised infantry battalion and the whole organisation was given the title Weapons Support Group (WSG). On the formation of the Royal Corps of Transport (RCT) on 15 July 1965, the unit was re-titled 9 Transport Regiment RCT.

In 1981, the Regiment was expanded to incorporate 10 defence platoons, composed of RCT and Royal Pioneer Corps (RPC) soldiers in the infantry role. In 1986 a further reorganisation witnessed the disbandment of the RCT close support troops and the reorganisation of the remaining RPC manpower into four defence platoons.

The Regiment's unique task of special weapons movement came to a conclusion on 15 March 1988. It was marked by a Regimental parade which not only commemorated the re-role of the Regiment from its special weapons task, but also marked the removal from the Regimental ORBAT of the RPC close support platoons.

From 1988, the Regiment's role became that of providing conventional artillery ammunition transport support. 12 Squadron RCT deployed to the Gulf on Operation GRANBY from 20 October 1990 until 5 May 1991, while 13 Squadron RCT deployed to Northern Ireland on Operation BANNER from 4 December 1990 until 20 May 1991.

On 5 April 1993, upon the formation of the Royal Logistic Corps, the Regiment was re-titled 8 Artillery Support Regiment The Royal Logistic Corps; it supported deployments to Northern Ireland the same year.

During the summer of 1994, 8 Artillery Support Regiment RLC moved to its current location at Marne Barracks in Catterick, Yorkshire. The Regiment provided support to the 3 MLRS equipped regiments of the Royal Artillery, which were also in the process of re-deploying to the United Kingdom.

During the next 10 years, the Regiment deployed in various strengths to Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Kuwait, Iraq and the Arabian Gulf and most recently Afghanistan and UNFICYP operations in Cyprus. It has also seen another name change to its current 8 Transport Regiment RLC.



The Scorpion was adopted as the Regimental cipher for 8 Regiment RCT in 1980 when its role was the transporting and safe custody of tactical nuclear warheads. The Regimental Sergeant Major is the traditional custodian of the Regimental Scorpion, "Stinger", who has deployed on many operations and has continued to remind others of the Regimental motto: "The Regiment with the sting in the tail".

In April 2004, the Regiment operated in Iraq as 8 Logistic Support Regiment; it had on detachment LCpl. Darren Dickson of the Scottish Tpt Regt (V). This soldier sustained injuries when his convoy was ambushed, receiving wounds to his shoulder. Despite his injuries, he managed to return fire. As a result of his courageous action, he became the first ever RLC member to be awarded the Military Cross.

Sector 1 Rotation

Sector One's rotation, which took place between 6 and 23 April, saw the departure of Deputy Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Hector Marcelo Tomas who handed the post over to Lt. Col. Pablo Eugenio Chort (see page 14).

The arrival of Task Force 29 marked 14 years of uninterrupted Argentinian presence in UNFICYP. The Sector continues to include personnel from the armed forces of Chile and Paraguay, and its responsibilities cover a buffer zone area stretching across 80 km of terrain.

Sector 1 currently comprises 254 members. Task Force 29 will serve with the mission until next October.



New MOLOs join Sector 1



From left to right: Capt. Antonio Herrera (Navy), Capt. Claudio Reigert (Air Force), Capt. Martin Stella (Army), Capt. Guillermo Larreyna (Army), Maj. Victor Ledezma (Army), and Capt. Roberto Collins (Army)

Along with the Sector 1 rotation which took place early April, six new Military Observation Liaison Officers arrived from Argentina. They are all posted on a one-year tour.

A 10-day course began on 10 April where the MOLOs were briefed on several topics, including communications, map-reading, driving skills, negotiation procedures, etc. The extensive course ended with a final exercise on the ground.

On 20 April, diplomas were presented to all course attendants at St. Michael's School by Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni.

Pilgrimage to Agios Georgios

Within Sector 1's buffer zone area is the abandoned village of Agios Georgios, located approximately 1.5 km from San Martín Camp. Sector 1's OPT 23 is positioned just east of the village.

On 1 May, nearly 160 villagers arrived at Sector 1 for a pilgrimage. The religious activity started with a mass, held in the Orthodox Chapel located inside San Martín Camp. The pilgrims then walked to OPT 23 where they visited the now abandoned village.

Argentinian blue berets, SCAT 1 and UNPOL deployed personnel and vehicles to escort and assist the pilgrims. The three pillars worked together in order to ensure that the whole event went off without disturbance and according to plan.

At the end of the pilgrimage, which was a complete success, the villagers thanked UNFICYP's peacekeepers and requested a return visit in 2008.



Visitors to UNFICYP

UNFICYP extended the usual courtesies when the Chief of Mission and Force Commander received the following visitors during April and May:



H.E. Ms. Mandisa Dona Marasha, High Commissioner of the Republic of South Africa with the SRSg – 9 May



H.E. Mr. Bae Young-Han, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea with the Chief of Staff – 17 May



Austrian university students – 26 April



Finnish veteran's re-union – 19 April



92 UK military air cadets, ranging in age from 15 to 21 years, arrived at the UNPA for a familiarisation tour – 26 April



Union for Europe of the Nations delegation, led by MEP Brian Crowley (front) – 15 May

New Faces



CO Sector 2

Lt. Col. Keith Robinson spent life as a junior officer with 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers; as a degree student at the Royal Military College of Science; and with 31 Forward Ordnance Company in Munster. He served in Northern Ireland, BATUS, Hong Kong, Cyprus and Kenya. Ammunition Technical

Officer training followed, after which he commanded the Liverpool Detachment of 11 EOD Regiment RLC. He then took over as Adjutant to this same Regiment in Didcot. Next he went on to command 61 Ammunition Squadron, 6 Supply Regiment RLC in

Gutersloh. Following an MSc in Defence Technology at RMCS and attendance at the Advanced Command and Staff Course, he took up an MOD Central Staff appointment within the Directorate of Equipment Capability.

After a short period in HQ LAND, he took up the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and deployed to Kuwait with HQ 3rd (US) Army on Op VERITAS, followed by a tour on Op TELIC 1. He then served with PJHQ Command Group, Northwood. He assumed command of 8 Transport Regiment RLC on 7 June 2005.

Lt. Col. Robinson is married to Sam and they have two sons under 10. He enjoys most ball sports (and remains competitive in some), cross country and distance running, hill-walking, photography and poetry.



Liaison Officer TF

Lt. Col. Ladislav Dovhun arrived in UNFICYP on 20 April. He graduated from the Slovak Military Academy in 1991, and continued his defence studies at King's College London from 2004 to 2005. He has completed defence courses in

Advanced Military Studies (UK), International Staff Officers' Orientation (The Netherlands), the Operational Planning Workshop (Lithuania) and the Joint Services Command and Staff College (the UK).

Lt. Col. Dovhun is married to Anna, and they have two children, Ladislava (16) and Boris (14). His hobbies include tennis, running and keep fit.



Liaison Officer NG

Lt. Col. Klaus Peer was born in 1962 in Leoben, Styria, Austria, and graduated as an infantry officer in 1987. He left the armed forces in 1987 and took up a position as an engineer with a computer company. He rejoined in 1989 as a platoon leader and company commander in the 10th Infantry Regiment.

Lt. Col. Peer has served twice with UNFICYP,

from 1992 to 1993 as a platoon leader 1st Coy in Sector 4, and as Deputy Commander and then Commander 2 Coy, Sector 4 from 1995 to 1996. In 1998, he left 10th Infantry Regiment and joined the Federal Ministry of Defence in Vienna. In 2003, at the rank of Major, he took up the post of Ops Info Officer in UNDOF for one year. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 2007.

Lt. Col. Peer is married to Silvia and they have one daughter, Sophie, aged 16.



Chief of Mission Training Cell

Lt. Col. Gonzalo Villagran was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. As a member of the Argentinian Army (artillery unit), Lt. Col. Villagran has served in UNPROFOR in 1992, as a Military Observer in UNIKOM (1999) and as the

Training Officer in MINUSTAH (2005). Before arriving in UNFICYP, he was in charge of the courses and training division at Caecopaz, the Argentinian Joint Press Officers' Training Centre.

Lt. Col. Villagran is married to Matilde. His hobbies include football, history and business studies.



DCO Sector 1

Lt. Col. Pablo Eugenio Chort joined Sector 1 on 6 April. Born on 21 September 1964 in Entre Rios, Argentina, he graduated from the Argentinian Army Officers' Academy in 1985 as an Infantry 2nd Lt. Later, he attended the Argentinian Army General Staff College in Buenos Aires.

In 2003, as a Major, he took command of the 6th Special Mountain Troops Company in Patagonia for

two years. Then he was posted to the 6th Mountain Brigade HQ as a staff officer.

His overseas missions included a mountain course at the Military Mountain School in Aosta, Italy, Military Observer in UNIKOM, Staff Officer at the KFOR HQ NATO, and a Peace Support Operations Course at the Naval Post Graduate School in California, USA.

Lt. Col. Chort has a degree in Strategy and Organisations and also an MA in Strategy and Geopolitics.

He is married and has three sons. His interests include running and squash.



SO2 Ops - Air

Maj. Adam C.J. Ainsworth (Royal Engineers) joined the British Army in 1998 and spent one year at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst before commissioning into the Corps of Royal Engineers. His first posting was as a general support troop commander in

Germany where he undertook exercises to Poland, Oman, Kenya, the Czech Republic and Belgium. Posted to Tidworth, England, he then deployed to

Kosovo. Next was a brigade training year as a Battle Group Engineer, after which he deployed to Iraq. As Adjutant to an Air Support engineer regiment, he deployed to Afghanistan to build the Helmand Province infrastructure.

On promotion to Major, he attended the UK Defence Academy where he completed the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land).

Maj. Ainsworth has a colloquial grasp of French and is a keen squash player and kitesurfer. He is married to Kirsten and they have a daughter, Erlina.



OC MFR

Maj. Steve Hanson-Church joined UNFICYP on 28 March. Born in Grantham, England, in 1971, he was a geography graduate from Sheffield University before undertaking entering the Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst.

During his service with the British military as a trained logistics officer, he has

seen operational service in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. Prior to his posting in Cyprus, he commanded a Fuel Squadron with responsibility for the supply and distribution of bulk fuel.

Maj. Hanson-Church is married to Claire and they have a 10-month-old son, Owen. He enjoys most sports including rugby, football and skiing, though classes himself as an enthusiastic amateur, rather than a gifted Olympian.



SO2 Ops - Policy & Planning

Capt. Csaba Bakos joined the Whattay Ferenc Military Cadet School in 1988. Four years later, he went to the Kossuth Lajos Military Academy, graduating as an Infantry officer in 1996.

His first assignment as platoon commander at the 88th Air Assault Battalion. Later he took up various sub-unit commands in the 1st Light Cavalry Regiment. Between 2002 and 2003, he served twice in MSU/SFOR (Bosnia).

From 2004 to 2005, he was attached to ISAF HQ (Afghanistan). He has attended courses in counter terrorism, enhanced international peacekeeping capabilities for instructors, the NATO Theatre Tactical CIMIC Course, and Planning Peace Support Operations Course. His languages include English and (basic) German. His decorations include the "Service Merit Medal" (bronze), the "Long Service Cross", the "Peacekeepers' medal" (twice), the "NATO service medal" (numeral 2) and the "NATO service medal" for ISAF.

Capt. Bakis is engaged to Orsolya.



Military Public Information Officer

Capt. Tomáš Pavlík joined UNFICYP on 20 March

This is Tomáš's first mission outside Slovakia. Born in 1976, he comes from Zvolen (central Slovakia) and joined the Slovak Air Force Academy in 1994. He graduated in 1999 as a

Lieutenant and was posted to Sliac AFB, where he completed a number of air force maintenance postings, the last being Deputy/2ic Squadron Commander.

Tomáš is married to Lenka, and they have a daughter (Nina, four years of age) and a son (Alexander, 10 months). His interests include history, military equipment, aircraft and computers.



Force Photographer

SSgt. Michal Ivan arrived in UNFICYP on 20 March.

Michal comes from Vazec in central Slovakia. He joined the armed forces in 2000 and trained in the Military Academy in Liptovsky Mikulas as an air defence instructor. His first

posting was as a platoon leader in the Air Defence Base in Poprad (eastern Slovakia).

This is Michal's second tour with UNFICYP, having first served in Sector 4 (one year) and then in the MFR (second year) from 2003 to 2005.

Michal, who is single, enjoys football, ice hockey and fitness.

Secretary-General calls for solidarity with detained staff

Kidnapping, assault, robbery, theft, harassment and detention continue to be grim realities for United Nations personnel and our colleagues in the media and non-governmental community. In his message on 25 March to mark our solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members, Ban Ki-moon noted that there are 14 staff members currently under arrest, detained or missing, with respect to whom the United Nations family of organisations has been unable to exercise fully their right to protection.

"The International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members is thus an important occasion on which to underscore not only the plight of those who have been incarcerated, but the broader need for peacekeepers, civilian staff and others to be able to pursue their work free of impediment and mortal threat," he said.

The SG also reminded that it is 22 years since UN staff member Alec Collett was abducted by armed men in Beirut while working for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. He has never been seen since, and there has been no final resolution to his case.

The SG pointed out that legal protection is essential for international and national staff alike and noted that 81 countries have become party to the United Nations Convention on the Safety of UN and Associated Personnel, while another 43 have signed it. Urging the Organisation's membership to embrace this Convention, he noted it as a key piece of the architecture of protection that also includes the Geneva Conventions, the Statute of the International Criminal Court, and other instruments.

A strong commitment to staff security is especially timely given the dramatic increase in the number of UN field personnel in recent years, and

the Organisation's growing involvement in delicate tasks such as criminal justice.

"I urge governments and all involved to uphold their responsibilities, from prevention to protection – and prosecution when violations and crimes have occurred," he said.

In a World Press Freedom Day message on 3 May 2007, the SG voiced concern for the safety of BBC journalist Alan Johnston, while noting that over the past year, more than 150 media professionals have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Attacks on freedom of the press are attacks against international law, against humanity, against freedom itself – against everything the United Nations stands for, he said.

"A free, secure and independent press is among the very foundations of democracy and peace."

May 3 was this year's International Day of Families, and this year's theme was "Families and Persons with Disabilities".

For many persons with disabilities, their family has been, and remains, a source of empowerment. For others, however, their family has perhaps been overprotective, restricting their growth as individuals. Tragically, for others still, their family has viewed them with stigma or shame, and has even become a source of abuse and neglect.

The SG's message stressed that, in December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the first human rights treaty of the 21st century. "Society has a responsibility to persons with disabilities and their families. On this International Day of Families, let us dedicate ourselves to enabling the family, the most basic unit of society, to fulfill its role in ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy full human rights and dignity, and flourish as individuals," he said.



Alvaro de Soto's service to the United Nations

Alvaro de Soto's service to the United Nations wrapped up 25 years of dedicated work for the Organisation. On 7 May, the Secretary-General expressed his profound gratitude for Mr. de Soto's outstanding service.

During a distinguished career both at UN headquarters and in the field, the diplomatic talents of Under-Secretary-General Alvaro de Soto were in high demand around the world, from El Salvador to Myanmar, Cyprus to Western Sahara, and most recently in the search for peace in the Middle East. Mr. de Soto made a decisive mark in the Central American peace process. The agreements he helped to broker

in El Salvador not only brought a better future to the people of that country, but also became a model for UN peacemaking efforts elsewhere. From November 1999 to May 2004, he served as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser to Cyprus and helped create what came to be known as the Annan plan – the most comprehensive solution plan ever formulated for the island. Mr. de Soto's contributions to the development of UN practices in conflict mediation and resolution will be a lasting part of his legacy to the United Nations. The SG joined UN staff in wishing him the very best in his future endeavours.

Town Hall Meetings

Conduct and Discipline

Mr. Wayne Hayde, the newly appointed Regional Chief Conduct and Discipline Officer (CCDO), welcomed all UNFICYP headquarters staff to a Town Hall Meeting, held at the International Cafeteria on 11 May.

He outlined the nature of his appointment, explaining that in accordance with his duties and responsibilities, all incidents, reports, complaints and other issues relating to conduct and discipline are to be addressed to the unit, either directly or through the UNFICYP Conduct and Discipline Focal Points (see box).

Mr. Hayde, who will be based in UNIFIL, Lebanon, took up his position on 30 March. His Unit will be joined by Ms. Mumbi Njau, a civilian Conduct and Discipline Officer. A military officer of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel is also assigned by DPKO as a member of the Unit. Both report to the CCDO. The CCDO himself reports directly to the Chief of Mission with respect to all conduct and discipline issues, including all categories of mission personnel.

Mr. Hayde will be visiting UNFICYP on a monthly basis. He invited all categories of personnel to feel free to contact him on any issue they wish to discuss relating to conduct and discipline, regardless of rank, and stressed that all matters will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

His comments were received with a positive reaction from those present.

Mr. Hayde can be reached at UNIFIL on the following numbers:

Office: +1-212-963-3303/4, Ext: 6727
+ 961 1 826 727
Mobile: + 961 70 913 568
E-mail: hayde@un.org



On 1 April, a Conduct and Discipline Unit (CDU) was established for the Middle East region. Based in UNIFIL, Lebanon, the Unit will be responsible for conduct and discipline issues, including sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and will be responsible for the missions of UNTSO, UNSCO, UNDOF, UNIFIL, UNLB, and UNFICYP.

In addition, missions have been advised that with the establishment of a CD Unit, the Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse Focal Point role will be incorporated into the Conduct and Discipline Focal Point's terms of reference.

Accordingly, UNFICYP's Conduct and Discipline Units's Focal Points are Ms. Maria Wilkins, Ext: 4441 and in her absence Mr. Thomas Grasberger, Ext: 4420. Any requests for assistance on conduct and discipline and SEA-related matters should be forwarded to these staff members.

UNFICYP Survey



On 27 April, Senior Adviser Wlodek Cibor welcomed Mr. Alexandros Lordos and Mr. Erol Kaymak to the International Cafeteria for a Town Hall Briefing on the the polling results from an island-wide survey conducted by UNFICYP in January/February 2007.

A sample of 1,000 Turkish Cypriots and 1,000 Greek Cypriots were interviewed in their respective languages face-to-face in addition to a special sample of 100 Turkish Cypriots and 250 Greek Cypriots, all resident within the UN buffer zone for comparison with the general population.

Both Mr. Lordos and Mr. Kaymak analyzed the results of the poll for the UNFICYP staff, noting that both communities on the island consider that the UN has an important role to play in Cyprus, and that its presence here is essential.

The April edition of the **Blue Beret** gave extensive coverage to the results and it can be viewed on the UNFICYP website at www.unficy.org.

Endurance Tests

Triathlon

The UNFICYP Sprint Triathlon took place on 22 May 2007 and attracted athletes from throughout UNFICYP. The event was a sprint distance triathlon (400m swim, 20km cycle and 5km run) and for many of the participants it was the first triathlon they had ever attempted.

The event attracted both young (the youngest competitor was Ryan Hall aged 14) and old (the eldest competitor was 55 and anonymous!) and was open to all abilities.

On arrival at the pool, all competitors were given a race number and allocated a heat for the aqua-phase of the event. The first heat was quick, with most of the competitors completing the nine lengths in less than nine minutes. First out of the pool was Maj. Matt Walker, and with a short sprint to the transition area, he was onto his bike and away for the cycle phase of the competition. The fastest swimmer of the day was Cpl. Rachael Hunt from Sector 2 who, competing in the Relay Competition, completed the nine lengths in an amazing six minutes!

The cycle phase followed a route from the pool out towards Foxtrot Gate before turning back onto the long, slow, uphill grind of Concession Road. Once Concession Road was (eventually!) put behind them, competitors headed on to the airfield before

turning towards the control tower and back to the pool via the sports pitches. Competitors with road bikes had a clear advantage over those with mountain bikes, but this didn't daunt the cyclists with knobbly tyres who worked hard to get over some tough hills. Scott Carnie from the UNFICYP PIO began to establish his position at the top during this phase with a solid cycle, covering the 20 km in 36 minutes, but the quickest time was one of the relay cyclists, WO1 (RSM) Andy Simpson from Sector 2, who covered the distance in 35 minutes (averaging over 33 kph).

After a quick transition and a sip of water, the competitors moved on to the run; a 5 km circular course around UNPA. Again, the route was surprisingly hilly and it proved to be hard work after almost an hour's physical effort. The short but



sharp hill up to the HIVE was a real killer and everyone could feel their legs pounding. This didn't stop Sgt. Alex Keenan from Sector 2, another relay competitor, who ran the 5 km course in under 18 minutes. The short downhill to the pool and the finish was enough to spur most people on, and a lot of competitors managed a sprint finish and a smile as they crossed the line.

Once the race was over, the competitors tucked into a full English breakfast (the breakfast of true athletes!) which was provided by the military chefs from Sector 2. The Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni, was then asked to present prizes to the following winners: *Veteran (over 35) - Maj. Stan Stanton (1 hr 9 mins); Super Veteran (over 45) Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell (1 hr 18 mins); Female Winner: Cpl. Amanda Kemp (1 hr 21 mins); Male Winner: Scott Carnie (1 hr 6 mins); Relay Team: Sector 2's Fife Flyers (1 hr 3 mins); and the Overall Team: BRITCON (1 hr 13 mins).*



Jake Morland (right) and James Turner plan their route to the North Pole

Winners of North Pole race pledge funds to UN refugee agency

Two intrepid young Britons have won an Arctic sprint to the magnetic North Pole which they say should boost their chances of raising \$495,000 for the United Nations refugee agency. Co-organiser Jock Wishart confirmed that former UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) staffer Jake Morland and teacher James Turner reached the Pole on 2 May and

edged out five other teams to win the 2007 Polar Race. The two, racing as Team Refuge, trudged across 560 km of snow and ice in just over two weeks, almost seven hours ahead of second-placed Polar Horizon and five days faster than the final team, which included a 62-year-old woman and her son.

UN Buffer Zone Cycle ride

On 27 and 28 April, British soldiers serving with HQ BRITCON completed a charity buffer zone cycle ride, which encompassed the whole BZ less the Kokkina and Louroujina pockets.

Friday started nice with an early meeting at HQ BRITCON. Raring to start with our go-faster sunglasses and ridiculously tight cycling shorts, we hadn't really grasped the concept of what we were about to do. At the western end of the BZ, we all jumped off the bus eager to start. A few quick stretches and lathering on of the issue sun cream left us all white, with the FOWO, looking much like a giant Smurf.

The first section of the BZ is through quite hilly terrain. This left the team carrying mountain bikes up hills and unable to cycle down others because of severe gradients and loose rocks and gravel. There were some very memorable times during this initial phase, from watching Sgt. Tom Jacques fall off his bike going up hill into a bracken bush to the FOWO, the only recognised mountain biker, come off his bike head over heels to end with a war wound on his knee that Rambo would be proud of.

At this point, some people got scared; others thought this is cracking fun! Life saving falls then came from Maj. Martin Birch who said, "it was either fall off the bike or go over the edge". However, for sheer comedy and achievement, the best fall has to go to Maj. Tom Moon, who managed to realise he was coming off his bike and going over the edge, so he jumped over his handle bars, sidestepped away from the edge and ran, taking 10m strides down the remaining track before it levelled out to a hairpin bend and a wall in front of him!!

As the crow flies, we covered a massive 20 km in the first five hours. The remaining 65 km for the rest of the day only took us an additional 5½ hours. Blissfully, it was only undulating



tracks from there on, giving us a much better grip, although some of these small hills had us peddling in the low gears and gunning to get up them.

Day 2 began at the later time of 7.00 a.m. with nearly everyone fighting their demons to get out of bed, not helped by a few beers in the mess the previous night. It took a lot of courage from some people to sit back on the seats as the pelvis was well and truly bruised from the previous day. Everyone wished they had been as clever as Maj Stanton, who took his wife's big comfortable seat!

The second day had very few hills, but the mental strain of keeping the pace, especially in ESBA, was equally as hard as the first day, except for WO2 Tim Cook-Hannah who was back at home on the flat and showed what a good cyclist he is by setting the pace.

Yet again there were some comedy moments. Crossing the Louroujina pocket, the Turkish Forces made us load the vehicles with our bikes and shipped us across to the far side, a huge 150m. Maj. Moon again was at the butt end of our laughter. His chain broke so he had to use the spare bike - which slowed him down as he decided to continue, despite the spare not having a seat!! Standing and peddling across undulating rough terrain for several kilometres was a serious

achievement and left him feeling rather sick by the time we took our next planned stop.

At the end, the legendary WO2 Nash ran down the cliff to take a dip in the sea, delaying that much warranted beer by 15 minutes. Overall, the experience was fantastic, with the 10 competitors split between which day they preferred - the pain of the hills or the monotonous speed of the flats. The team completed the BZ cycle challenge in 18 hrs 50 mins over two days covering 203 km. A monumental effort.

New Addition to the Moons



Maj. Moon fell off his bike for a third time when his wife Lindsey gave birth to their son Oliver on 17 May. Weighing in at a healthy 6 lb 3 oz, Oliver will soon be on his own bike to challenge his father!



**President Heinz
Fischer of the
Federal Republic
of Austria at the
Goshi Memorial**