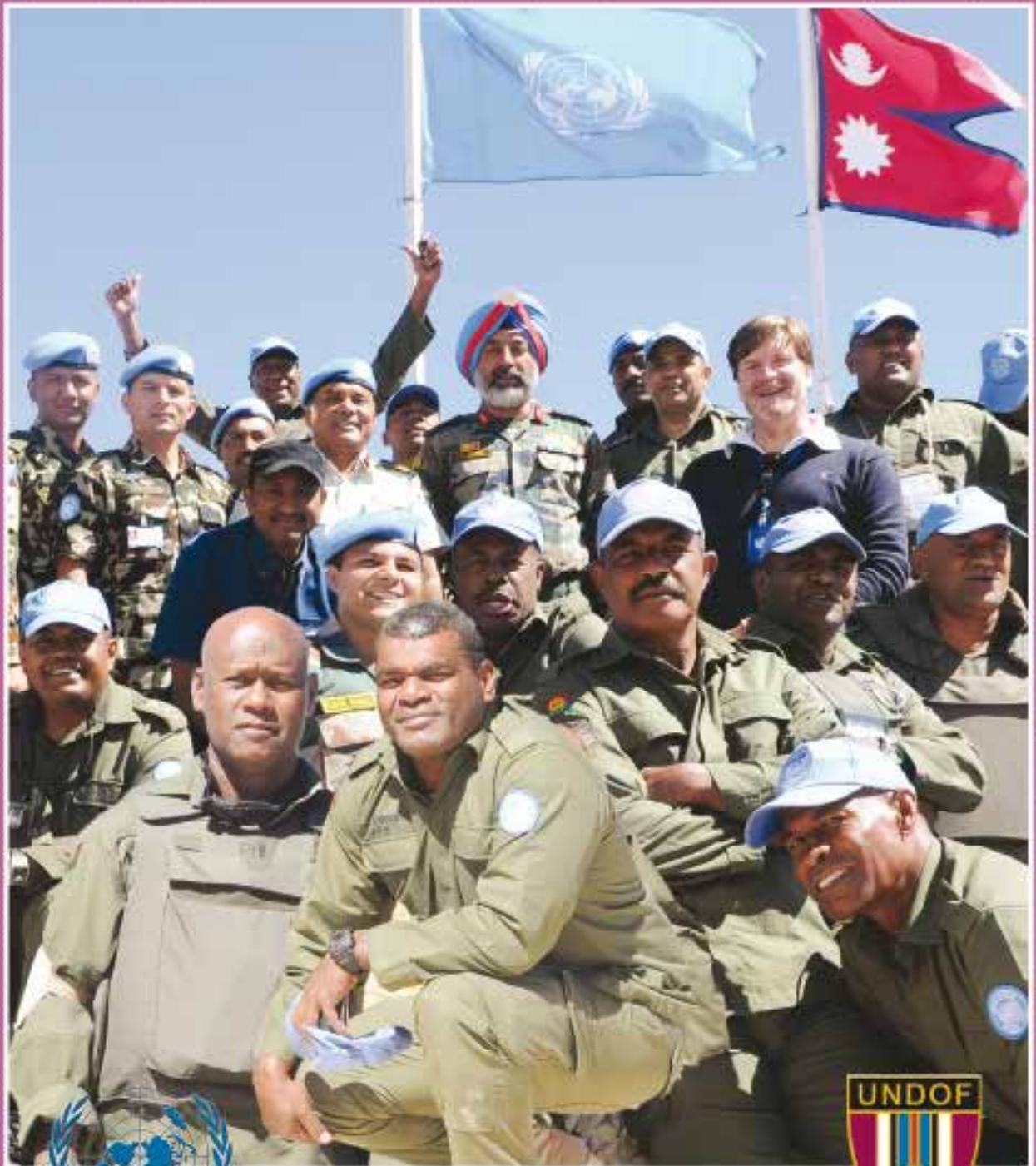


GOLAN

The UNDOF Journal



July - September 2013
No. 136



DEAR READERS!

Welcome to the 136th edition of the GOLAN – The UNDOF Journal!

To all ardent followers of this journal, as your new SOPR, it is my pleasure to introduce to you my editorial team; Maj Ned Taito, the new SSO Media/ PR and Pte Jese Sorovi, the Force Photographer; both of whom have vast experience in the media arena and through whose concerted effort has enabled the publication of this latest edition of the Golan Journal.

The UNDOF slogan “One Mission, One Team, One Goal” was put into context when UNDOF staff from other departments generously volunteered their time; despite their busy schedule, to introduce the new media team to the UNDOF system. It is people like FHO, Maj Vivek Mahajan, SO Welfare, Maj Charlotte Orda and CITs’ Mr Sharify Ali who created the first impression of the high level of teamwork in the UNDOF mission for us. Their kind and considerate gesture has enabled us to smoothly settle into our new appointments.



The new Editorial Staff

From left: SSO Media/PR, Maj Ned Taito, SO PR, Maj Deborah Wise, and Force Photographer, Pte Jese SOROVI

It is hoped that the UNDOF family will continue to work together as a team towards achieving the same mission and goals.

Stay Well and Be Blessed!

Yours sincerely,

Maj Deborah Wise
SOPR



SOPR	Editorial	2
FC UNDOF	Force Commander's Message	3
DFC UNDOF	Deputy Force Commander's Address	4
COS UNDOF	Chief of Staff's Message	5
Visits to UNDOF	Ambassadors Day	6
New People	New People in UNDOF	7
New People	New People in UNDOF	8
New People	Arrival and Departure of contingents	9
FIJIBATT	UNDOF operations back to normal	10
FIJIBATT	FIJIBATT occupies vacant outposts	11
Social Pictures	Fiji hosts first happy hour in Golan	12
Social Pictures	Farewell to UNDOF civilian staff	13
PHILBATT	PHILBATT fights back rebels	14
PHILBATT	EOD team awarded UNDOF Chief commendation	15
PHILBATT	Phillipine Peacekeepers join Phillipine Fair	16
MEDICAL	Gearing up for the challenges ahead	17
INDCON	LOGBATT medal presentation ceremony	18
INDCON	UN Peacekeeping Operations hero	19
WELFARE	Welfare trips contribute to high morale	20
ENGINEERS	Prioritisation is key to accomplishing projects	21
NEPCON	NEPCON prepares for winter/ DFC visits troops	22
SPORTS	Inter unit sports competition in UNDOF	23

Front (Page 1): Group photo on Mount Hermon
Photo by Pte Jese Sorovi

Back (Page 24): Alpine training on Mt Hermon
Photo by Pte Jese Sorovi

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Force Commander's Message

Fellow Peacekeepers!

This quarter has been characterized by the arrival of new contingents and UNDOF going up to its authorized strength of approximately 1400 peacekeepers. The internal strife in Syria continues to impact our mission restricting our freedom of movement and operations. I wish to thank governments of Fiji, Nepal and Ireland to have responded favourably to contribute troops to the mission in record time.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all contingents and staff officers who have joined us in this quarter. The Fijian representation has swelled up from 170 peacekeepers to 500 and our staying power on the positions has enhanced. The contingent has created a niche for itself and has been well accepted by the civilians and varying parties.



PhilBatt has come of age by facing warlike situations and have honed their responses. Their assertive posture has dissuaded armed opposition groups from attempts of abductions, carjacking and weapon snatching. By returning fire in self-defense on several occasions they have proved their resolve.

NepCon had responded expeditiously to our needs by contributing a Company plus strength. A hearty thank you goes to the 63 NepCon troops for their immense contribution during their two months stint in the mission. At the same time, I congratulate NepCon on taking over the arduous task of occupying the Hermon position. Only selected TCCs' have the skills and adaptability to operate under such conditions of high altitude during the winter months. With winter only few weeks away, the Mission support needs to give the desired impetus to the winter preparations at Mt Hermon.

The arrival of IreCon has enhanced our self-defense capabilities and given our TCCs' a sense of confidence on mitigation measures having been instituted. The LogBatt is also to its full complement with the induction of the Fijian heavy transport platoon. The international and national staff continues to brave the situation and give staying power to the mission.

The hard work and efforts put in by each and every member of UNDOF is commendable! Even during our trying times our enthusiasm has not weakened. We have kept this mission alive and now have the strength to say that "we are here to stay, come what may."

Lastly, my message to everyone is to always be safe, be well and be happy!

May God bring peace to the region.

Thank You, Danke, Salamat, Vinaka, Dhanyavad, Shukran, Toe Dah!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "I. Singha".

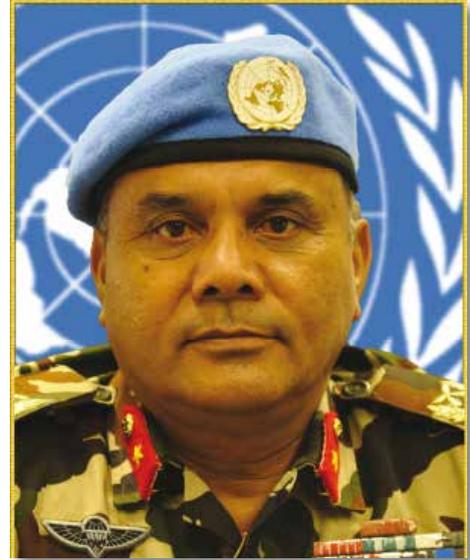
Lieutenant General Iqbal Singh Singha
Head of Mission & Force Commander UNDOF

Deputy Force Commander's Address

I am privileged to pen down a few thoughts through the Golan Journal. My deepest appreciation to the editorial committee for this commendable job.

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to all UNDOF peacekeepers for extending a warm and affectionate hospitality upon my arrival to the mission area. I feel greatly privileged and honored to be part of this UNDOF team.

Also, I am fortunate to serve as Deputy Force Commander under Lt Gen I S Singha, Head of Mission & Force Commander (UNDOF). I have no doubt that this mission will benefit immensely under his able, professional guidance and dynamic leadership. It is also indeed a pleasure and honor to be amongst truly spirited professionals of this mission, I am eager to work with all of you. Be assured that I will give my best commitment to achieve our common goal.



At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to all peacekeepers who have lost their lives serving under blue flags and for the heroic deeds across the world.

As you all know, over the previous months, situation in Syria has changed a lot. The Japanese, Croatian and Austrian contingents withdrew from the UNDOF mission and there was a need to continue with credible presence Force from other TCC's. The inclusion of new contingents, coupled with their unique and unparalleled capability as peacekeepers per se will definitely contribute to bring lasting peace in the region. Together, we shall continue to do our utmost best to pursue our mandated tasks.

Here, I would like to wish all the success to the newly inducted Fijians, Nepalese and Irish contingents and wish to commend them for fulfilling the void which was created, enhancing the capabilities of the Peace Keeping Force; and above all for living up to the high standards and expectations set by their predecessors.

Finally, my sincere appreciation for the job well done by the UNDOF personnel and I am sanguine that we shall continue to work with similar zeal and dedication in the future too. And thanks to your dedication, professionalism and commitment to achieving the mandate of this mission.

Whatever the outcome of the current situation in coming days, Golan Height, Syria should have the peace and prosperity it deserves.

May God, the Almighty bless you all in all your endeavors.

Thank you! Shukran!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hari B. Basnet".

Brigadier General Hari B. BASNET
Deputy Force Commander UNDOF

Chief of Staff Words

Warrior Peacekeepers!

Delving into the fragile security environment we are now facing, our peacekeeping effort for the past months has evidently evolved from the traditional **Monitor-Observe-Report** mission to a more deliberate and cautious implementation of our mandate, shifting the priority to force protection but maintaining a minimum peacekeeping operational blueprint to sustain UN's presence in the Golan Heights, which we all recognize as vital to the Peace and Security in the region.

As we venture into the daily challenges of peacekeeping without compromising the safety of our personnel and abiding by the parameters of Chapter 6 of the UN Charter, it has now become crucial for UNDOF leadership to develop steps that would enhance our security system that are already emplaced but needs to be tailored fit to the demands of the current situation.

Individual and unit exercises based on established SOPs has become a routine in all our Camps and Positions requiring everyone's participation and full cooperation as directed by the Force Commander himself. Our Training Branch has increased the conduct of Camp Security Drills, Shelter Occupation, Rescue and Evacuation, and Force Reaction Group (FRG) Deployment Exercise to fine tune the response of tasked units and synchronize individual reaction.

Our Force Protection Enhancement efforts focused on establishing a clear cut directive on the issuance and use of essential equipment (Radios, PPEs, and NBC Gear), outside camp movement control thru the revised Vehicle Movement Code (VMC) and organized convoy scheme, and strict monitoring system (traftrack) being facilitated by JOC. Absolutely, there should be no UNDOF personnel traveling alone in one vehicle without protective vest and movement authorization from established channel of authority.

Situational awareness and assessment of events has been given premium with the strengthening of the Mission Information Cell and enhancement of the reporting system by the Battalions operating in the AOS. This action is primarily to provide near real time information and deliver assessment vital for critical decisions by our patrollers and commanders in the field.

Aside from all of these considerations, we could always go back to the basic adage that **security is an individual responsibility**. I am very optimistic that we will be able to adapt to the constantly evolving situation in our mission area and sustain our operational momentum in the coming days.

Let me finally take this opportunity to impress a positive note to everyone by quoting the bible:

Psalm 46:1-3

"God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, Though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains tremble with its tumult."



ONE MISSION - ONE TEAM - ONE GOAL

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Colonel Cirillito Sobejana.

Colonel Cirillito Sobejana, Chief of Staff UNDOF

Ambassadors Day

On Wednesday, 25th of September, embassies from 24 nations were represented at the annual UNDOF Ambassadors day held at Camp Ziouani. The Force Commander LtGen Iqbal S. Singha welcomed and briefed the diplomats on the changes, achievements, and challenges of the mission area. They also received briefs on the operational activities and logistics matters of UNDOF.



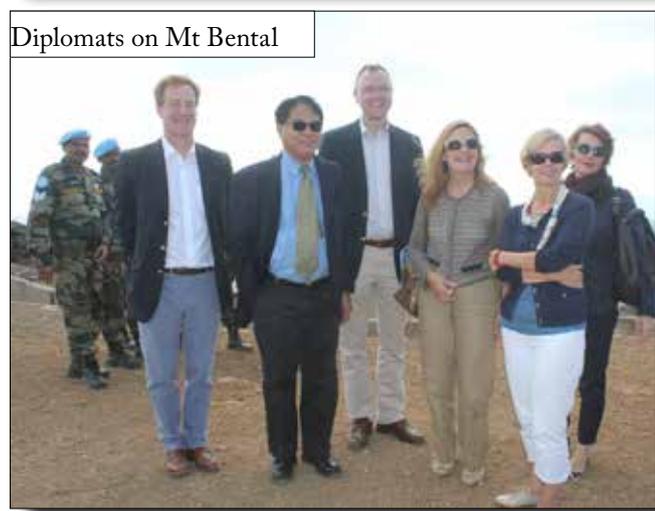
The honorable guests visited different sites on the Alpha side for a more detailed area introduction. These included; UNTSO OP 51, Mt. Bental and OP 22D.



FC greets Fiji's Ambassador to UAE, HE, Mr Robin Nair



Ambassadors on tour - OP 51



Diplomats on Mt Bental



India's Ambassador to Israel, HE, Mr Jaideep Sarkar meets soldiers from IndCon

Article by: Maj Deborah Wise
Photos by: Pte Jese Sorovi, Sgt Pablo and Maj Deborah Wise



The new Deputy Force Commander (DFC)

BrigGen Hari Bahadur Basnet was born on October 10, 1959 in Dharan, Nepal. He was commissioned in Dec 1982 and holds a Bachelor's Degree in English and Economy from St. Joseph's College Darjeeling, India and a Master's Degree in Military Science from Baluchistan University, Pakistan.

The General Officer (GO) is a graduate of Command and Staff College from Quetta, Pakistan and the National Defence University, China. He has also attended Ranger and Pathfinder course from Fort Benning, USA and Senior Command Course from War College, India. Likewise, he has attended some important seminars abroad.

In his illustrious career, he has held various important command, staff and instructional appointments. He has commanded an Independent Coy, Inf Bn, SF Bn and Inf Bde. The GO also held the coveted appointment of Director of Military Operations (DMO) at Army HQ. As DMO, he represented Nepalese Army in the Army Integration Special Technical Committee, primarily responsible for the integration of the Ex-Maoists combatants as a part of peace process in Nepal. He is decorated with the prestigious Suprabal Gorkha Dakshin Bahu-III for his meritorious services in the Army.

BrigGen Basnet has also served in three UN Peace Keeping Missions, UNIFIL (Lebanon) in 1987, UNPROFOR (Former Yugoslavia) in 1993 and MONUC(DR CONGO), as Military Observer in 2002.

He is happily married to Anupa and blessed with two sons. He is a keen sportsman and his hobbies include reading books and travelling.



The new Chief Military Personnel Officer (CMPO)

Cdr Humphery Biutilomaloma Tawake was commissioned into the Fiji Navy in 1991 after completing his officer training at the prestigious Britannia Royal Naval College in the UK. Following his commission, most of his military training was conducted in New Zealand, Australia and Britain. He is also a graduate of the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College and National Defence University of Malaysia.

Cdr Tawake has served on numerous appointments within the Fiji Navy as Gunnery Officer, Navigation Officer and Executive Officer. From 2000- 2007, he has served on four ships as Commanding Officer. He has also served in three peacekeeping missions with the MFO in Sinai Desert, UNMISSET in Timor Leste and UNAMI in Iraq. CDR Tawake has also held several administrative, support and operation staff appointments within the Fiji Navy HQ. His last appointment prior to joining UNDOF was Maritime Commander. He has also represented Fiji abroad on regional meetings which include; Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Maritime Surveillance and Maritime Search and Rescue.

He is a keen sportsman and reader of current affairs and is happily married and blessed with four children.



The new Chief Liaison Protocol Officer (CLPO)

LtCol Michael BOS was born on 23rd March 1968 in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. He joined the Netherlands Armed Forces in 1987 and graduated from Military Academy in 1992. He started his military career as a troop commander in a tank battalion and fulfilled his post as a company commander in a tank battalion as well as a team commander within a mechanized infantry battalion.

He has fulfilled posts in various branches from intelligence to civil military cooperation. He was appointed chairman operational planning group 'Redeployment Dutch Forces Uruzgan' after completing the Advanced Command and Staff Course in 2008 and later became Chief Public Affairs and Communication of the Royal Netherlands Army.

LtCol BOS was a liaison officer in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1997. In 1999 he was deployed as the spokesperson for the Dutch Contingent of KFOR in Kosovo. A few years back, in 2010 he gained experience as senior planner within the CJ5 Branch of RC South, Afghanistan.

Lt Col BOS holds an Executive Masters Degree in Security and Defence. He is married to Yvette and their union is blessed with two boys.



The new Force Medical Officer (FMO)

LtCol Teresita De Los Reyes was born on 07 November, 1962 in Quezon City, Philippines. She is a General Surgeon/Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeon. She completed her residency training and fellowship at the Armed Forces of the Philippines Medical Center.

Her previous assignments include the Fort Magsaysay Station Hospital, Camp Aquino Station Hospital and the Philippine Military Academy Station Hospital where she performed her primary duties as Executive Officer and Chief of Clinics. Her other duties were being the Chairperson of Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committee, Procurement Officer, Budget Officer, Ward Officer and Officer-In-Charge of various hospital medical sections.

In 2009, LtCol Reyes headed the Surgical Team in Station Hospital in Camp Bautista, Sulu, Philippines performing surgical operations on mass casualties during armed conflict in the area.

In 2011, she was a Senior Medical Officer of the 4th Philippine Contingent to Golan Heights (4PCGH) and was also appointed by the Force Commander as the Focal Point for Women (FPFW) of UNDOF. Prior to her appointment as Force Medical Officer, UNDOF, she served as Executive Officer/Chief of Clinics at Camp LapuLapu Station Hospital in Cebu city, Philippines.



The new CO IreCon

LtCol Brendan Delaney joined the Defence Forces in 1980 and was commissioned to the Infantry Corps. He has completed the Command and Staff Course in the Irish Defence Forces Military College and has a Bachelor of Arts (Spanish and Geography) and Master's Degree in Leadership and Defence Studies.

LtCol Delaney has held numerous command appointments as; Pl Comd, Coy Comd and Bn Comd. He served in the Army Ranger Wing and was also an instructor on Officer and NCO Career Courses in the Defence Courses Military College. He was also 2IC of the Cadet School.

Additionally, LtCol Delaney has served in the Defence Forces Headquarters as a Staff Officer.

His overseas missions include; UNIFIL, as Asst Ops Offr and as OC Bn Mobile Reserve, UNTSO (OGG and as DCOO UNTSO HQ), ISAF and East Timor.

LtCol Delaney is married to Mairead and has three children – Siobhan, Joseph and Niamh. His interests include; sea angling, orienteering and reading.



The new Force Provost Marshall (FPM)

Maj Siddhartha Basu was born on 08 December, 1979 in Calcutta. He is a second generation army officer. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy he was commissioned into the Indian Armoured Corps in December 2000.

In 2004, he volunteered for field tenure in Jammu and Kashmir in low intensity conflict (LIC) environment and gained hands on experience on conduct of tactical combat operations.

He completed the prestigious Technical Staff Officer's Course from the Military Institute of Technology and has been the recipient of Chief of Army Staff Commendation for Gallantry and GOC-in-C Northern Command Commendation for Distinguished Service in active field area. He has also been an Instructor in the School of Armoured Warfare (SAW).

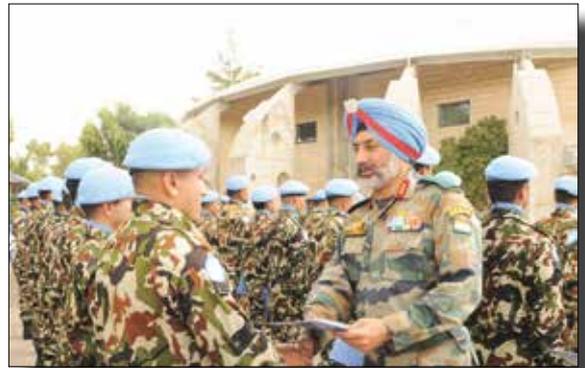
As a Cavalier, he performed the duties of Tank Troop Leader, Regt Sigs Officer and Squadron Commander. Prior to his present appointment he was performing the duties of Second in Command.

He is married to Ms Taioma Sen Sharma. His hobbies include golf, tennis, music and reading.

Arrival and Departure of Contingents



28 Sep 13 - IRECON with 115 strong pers arrived into UNDOF to takeover Force Reserve Coy.



24 Sep 13 - 63 NepCon soldiers departed UNDOF after being attached with FHQ for two months.



27 Jul 13 - Fiji main body of 318 pers arrived.

19 Jul 13 - 130 NEPCON soldiers arrived.



29 Jul 13 - Goodbye to the last of the Austrians!

UNDOF operations back to normal

The arrival of Fiji, Nepal and Ireland into the mission area has brought UNDOF operations back to normal. For a short while, UNDOF operations were on slow mode following the withdrawal of Austria in June and July. However, the cooperation and unity between the new contingents has robustly contributed to the quick recovery of UNDOF and its ability to fully achieve the UNDOF mission mandate.

The sudden withdrawal of Austrians was a challenging time for UNDOF. As they thinned out, UN observation posts were vacated, and remaining UNDOF staff took on more than one hat to ensure that necessary functions were operational. Phil Batt and IndCon stretched their manpower to cover the gap left by the Austrians and waited patiently for the arrival of its re-enforcements.

But like the saying goes “to every dark cloud there is a silver lining.” Fiji and Nepal stepped into the mission just as fast as the Austrians withdrew. They took up, adapted, and overcame the challenge, albeit difficult. With 500 strong soldiers at its disposition, Fiji Batt took up positions at 2nd Coy and 3rd Coy and re-occupied vacant outposts while NepCon under OpCon to Fiji Batt took up 1st Coy. Ireland has also arrived into the mission and has taken over the Force Headquarters further boosting morale among the peacekeepers.

In understanding that well trained soldiers are one of the fundamentals for a stable and confident mission, the contingents have undergone vigorous training after arriving into the mission area. More soldiers have qualified in the EOD training, riot control and fire training. Further, there has also been joint alpine training exercise at the highest UN position in the world, Mount Hermon, where rappelling and traverse roping skills were showcased to the Force Commander, LtGen I.S. Singha and his deputy, Brig H.B. Basnet during their line visit to Mount Hermon. This is a demonstration that the newcomers are ready to train, stay, and continue the mission regardless of the situation in Syria.



Article by: Maj Deborah Wise (SO PR)

Photos by: Pte Jese Sorovi (Force photographer)

Fiji takes over vacated UNDOF outposts

Entering into the second month of its inception into the UNDOF mission, the FijiBatt was directed to occupy Posn 32A, a location that was left vacant when the Croatians withdrew after almost four years of loyal service to the UNDOF MISSION.

On 16 August, 2013 under command of SGT U. QALO a nine member team was deployed to Posn 32A code name 'DAVETATABU'. Prior to this posting SGT U. QALO and his team were members of the BMR [Battalion Mobile Reserve] in which he was BMR Commander.

As practiced in the FijiBatt, pioneers to a location have the honors of stamping their ownership and sense of belonging in giving the location its code name. The codename signifies the identity of the pioneer location commander and where he hails from. Such practice has been a tradition in the Fiji Army. Although thousands of miles away from home the blessings and approval of the respective province chief has to be sought.

'DAVETATABU' is known as the opening passage to the island of Totoya in the Lau Group. Its name speaks for itself as the 'sacred passage'. Legend says that when passing through the passage there must be reverence to ensure a safe fare through. If not observed with reverence, three large waves follow suite as a sign of the spirits anger known to the people of Totoya as the custodians of the passage which may even capsized ships. It is also known as the final resting place of one of their great chiefs thus making it sacred.

Posn 32A is codenamed DAVETATABU where Fiji Batt Chaplain, MAJ O. BERA PUAMAU hails from back in Fiji. As one of the dangerous sea passages in Fiji one may say it is no different to Posn 32A as it is one of the most perilous outposts in the UNDOF mission because of its location. It is located at UTM 688-782 South of Teresa Hill where a SAAF unit is stationed.

Thus there is a very high chance of Posn 32A being the recipient of counter attacks from Anti-Syrian armed elements.

Article by: Capt Viliame Naisau (Coy Comd Third Coy)

Position 62 is located on the outskirts of Khan Arnabah (Kilo Alpha), and sits on the United Nations mandated Bravo Line surrounded by rolling plains with a majestic view of the Hermon Range. The PhilBatt had assumed responsibility of the location on the departure of the Croatians on 22nd October 2009. Prior to that, it was the Polish who had established the location in 1993. PhilBatt's occupation would end on the arrivals of the Fijians.

The atmosphere was mixed with both anxiety and excitement on 26 August, 2013 when two sections from the 2nd Coy, FijiBatt arrived at Position 62. This marked the end of another chapter in the deployment of PhilBatt soldiers under the command of Captain Bahiai. They would be saying goodbye to a Position that had been their home for the past few months.

The two sections from 2nd Company formerly based at Position 27 (Wainunu) split into the advance party which had three days with their Philbatt colleagues conducting the necessary handover of facilities and equipment. The main body arrived soon after. Both sections are under the command of Sgt Jese Raratabu, a seasoned SNCO with nine (9) tours which include; Lebanon, Sinai and Iraq. This will be his final tour before retiring. He is looking forward to the coming months and the challenges that will come with it.

Further, in referring to the cold nights in his location, a member of the section, Pte Ilisavani Rokoura who hails for the interior from Naitasiri on the main island of Viti Levu in Fiji said that although it is cold where he comes from in the highlands it is nothing compared to the weather here in the Golan. Further, in comparison to Pos 27, Pos 62 has less vegetation to obstruct the field of observation. Furthermore, getting to work in close proximity with the OGG personnel at OP 56 has made the part of the tour more interesting.

On the request of members of the battalion from the Yasawas, Ba, Nadi and Nadroga the position has been named Rogorogivuda, after the prominent meeting for the alliance of western provinces in Fiji.

Article by: Capt Julian Toganivalu (2IC Second Coy)





Farewell lunch for UNDOF civilians



PhilBatt fights back rebels



POS 69, Golan Heights – “Enough is enough!!!,” these were the sharp words of Lt Col Nolie L Anquillano, the Contingent Commander of the 6th Philippine Contingent to Golan Heights when they were fired upon by armed group believed to be Syrian rebels few meters away from Position 69 within the vicinity of Braika Village on 23 August 2013.

Lt Col Anquillano were in convoy with the troops of Maj Romeo Delgado Jr, the Commanding Officer of 2nd Company together with the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team led by Maj Francis A Señoron proceeding to Position 69 for the inspection of road blocks with Improvised Explosive Device (IED) emplaced along the road approximately 25 meters away from the entrance of Position 69.

Lt Col Anquillano instructed Maj Señoron and his men to immediately deactivate and recover the IEDs in order for the troops to remove the road blockades. While the EOD team is clearing the road from IEDs, the armed elements watching them from afar suddenly fired their weapons towards the UN troops that prompted them to seek cover and fire back. Exchange of gunfire has lasted for 5-7 minutes and when Lt Col Anquillano observed that the armed men stopped firing on them, he commanded the troops to cease fire. After few minutes, the troops noticed four rebels who showed up approximately 100 meters from their location. The troops signaled them to come closer for Lt Col Anquillano to talk with them. When the rebels arrived, Lt Col Anquillano conveyed his message to them through the assistance of the Arabic interpreter who was with the troops saying that the UN personnel are impartial and that they are just doing their job as peacekeepers.

“We are not your enemies, neither your friends because we are impartial and we do not side any faction. We are already fed up by the harassment that you are doing to our troops. These area is considered neutral ground and that nobody can prevent us from roaming around. Do not try to harm any of the peacekeepers, otherwise we will not hesitate to retaliate and become one of your enemies,” he said. After the conversation, the rebels shook hands with the troops, waved their hands and showed the sign of peace while going back to their fighting positions.

In the eyes of the Filipino peacekeepers, this incident is a stern warning to the rebels that though our business is peacekeeping, we have the inherent right to protect ourselves from any danger that comes our way in the performance of our duty. Indeed, this is the best thing that ever happened for PhilBatt that the peacekeepers were able to convey their message in the right time, right place and right situation. “As a soldier, we should be ready to wage war in order to achieve peace,” Lt Col Anquillano added.



Article by: Maj Noli Binbinon (MOWEL Officer, PHILBATT)

Photo by: SSgt Rolybert Pablo (Photographer, PHILBATT)

PhilBatt EOD team awarded Commendation

Camp Ziouani, Golan Heights - One Officer and five Other Ranks of the 6th Philippine Contingent to Golan Heights (6PCGH) received the Force Commander's Commendation award given by no less than the Force Commander, Lt Gen Iqbal S Singha, during the Indian Contingent's medal parade held at Camp Ziouani Parade Square last 16 August, 2013.

Maj Francis A Señoron, EOD Team Leader, TSgt Sergio L Dominguez, Sapper, SSgt Noel S Elivera, Mine Sweeper, SSgt Rockson B Oberez, EOD Operation NCO and two Support NCO, Sgt Jaylord B Reboredo and Cpl Jeffrey B Annang received the commendation for their meritorious achievements and invaluable services in the field of their expertise as bomb experts in mine detection, recovery and mine clearing conducted within the Area of Operations along the road in the vicinity of Observation Post (OP) 56 located at Jaba Village, Golan Heights on 15 August 2013 which led to the deactivation and recovery of 12 anti-tank mines composed of five TM46 and seven TM62 with 150 meters stranded wire and seven electric blasting cups.

In the speech of Lt Gen Singha, Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNDOF, he stressed his profound gratitude to the Philippine Battalion's EOD for their vast contribution to the UNDOF. "I am congratulating each and every one of the awardees for their accomplishments and contributions to UNDOF. The recovery of the IED surely spared the lives of the personnel of OP 56 including the civilian passersby from possible infliction of casualty to both peacekeepers and the local populace," Lt Gen Iqbal said.

The Force Commander Commendation is awarded to an individual who, while serving in UNDOF distinguishes himself or herself by meritorious achievement to duty.

Lt Col Nolie L Anquillano, Contingent Commander of the 6PCGH likewise thanked the awardees for making the unit known to other Contingents because of their achievements. He urged each and every one to aim the same not only for the good of the unit for humanity as well. He further recommended the EOD awardees to higher headquarters for the award of a Bronze Cross medal for their recent meritorious achievement in successfully clearing the IEDs that were blocking the road to OP 56. The said recommendation is just one of the six recommendations for Bronze Cross medal for risking their lives in several occasions.

"The achievement of the EOD Team is the achievement of the whole Contingent thus, the failure of one is also the failure of all. I therefore encourage everybody to continue to aim for more achievements and avoid failures, for whatever the 6PCGH achieves is our perpetual legacy for the Filipino nation and UNDOF," Lt Col Anquillano said.

It can be recalled that the Philbatt EOD team were able to recover a total of at least 229 Anti-Tank, 186 Anti-Personnel Landmines and numerous IED for the past nine months. The explosives were later disposed by the Philbatt EOD Team in coordination with UNDOF in order to avoid further utilization.



Article by: Maj Arnold Gasalatan (PIO, PHILBATT)

Photo by: SSgt Rolybert Pablo (Photographer, PHILBATT)

Filipino Peacekeepers join Philippine Fair

Haifa, Israel – Over a thousand Israelis and Filipinos who flocked the Castra Center in Haifa on 25 July 2013 applauded the dancers of the 6th Philippine Contingent to Golan Heights and other Filipino talented performers as they successively showed their respective presentations during the Philippine Fair which was organized by the Philippine Embassy which lasted for two days showcasing Filipino talents in music and dances. The Filipino Peacekeepers gracefully danced the Muslim Fan dance followed by the war dance which caught the attention of the viewers because of their G-string attire showing the indigenous old fashion clothing of the natives of the Cordillera region.

The audience was welcomed by Mr. Eli Kules, who started the program by welcoming and expressing his appreciation for the good relations between Israel and the Philippines. Mrs. Aviva Dankner, owner of the Castra Mall also expressed her appreciation to the Philippine Embassy for bringing the Philippine Fair to Haifa.

The Philippine Ambassador to Israel, in a short speech extended his invitation to the audience “We invite you to experience the Philippines tonight as we share with you our history through our music and dances, and through our food,” he said. “What you will see tonight will only be a small glimpse of our 7,107 islands, 120 languages, and 94 million people, but we hope that this Fair will serve as the gateway for you to learn more about our country and see more of what it can offer,” he added.



Talented performers with His Excellency Generoso D.G. Calonge, Philippine Ambassador to Israel.



Selected members of PHILBATT perform a Cordillera War dance.



6PCGH duo performs one of the Filipino Martial Arts, Pekiti-Tirsia Kali.



PhilBatt peacekeepers perform a muslim fan dance

Article by: Maj Noli Binbinon (MOWEL Officer, PHILBATT)

Photo by: SSgt Rolybert Pablo (Photographer, PHILBATT)

UNDOF medical support - Gearing up for the challenges ahead

Medical services are one of the basic needs of all personnel in any mission. In UNDOF the Force Medical Officer plans, coordinates and supervises the activities of all medical services in the mission area, thereby ensuring preventive and curative healthcare services that are humane, effective and efficient.

The confluence of events in Syria and its resultant effects on the Mission has thrown multiple challenges on the mission itself and medical support has also been effected in many ways. The Medical support and MEDEVAC capability was actually put to test during the events of Nov 2012 when the outgoing Austrian rotation was fired upon resulting in serious injuries to some soldiers. Subsequent withdrawal of JCon, HRVCon and AusBatt Medical teams left the medical support thinning out throughout the AOS until FijiBatt medical Team arrived. The demanding situation in the AOS led to the creation of a Level 1 facility in Position 80 and a level 1+ facility in CF.

The Level 1+ medical facility in camp Faouar is now nearing completion. This will ensure emergency damage control surgery as well as advance specialist medical care to stabilize seriously injured personnel for transport to Level 2/3 medical facility.

Notwithstanding the improvement in emergency facilities, hygiene and sanitation, still remains a major focus area for the medical support. The Force Hygiene Officer ensures hygiene and sanitation by frequent lecture demonstrations and checks in the kitchens, food storage areas, sanitary areas, shelters, waste disposal areas. UNDOF Laboratory ensures routine screening of samples.

The UNDOF medical support with three level 1 medical centers, a level 1+ surgical facility supported by excellent laboratory and adequate checks for health and hygiene, looks better prepared than ever to support the challenges ahead.

Article by: Maj Vivek Mahajan, (FHO)



IndCon LogBatt medal presentation ceremony

A remarkable parade with military precision was conducted on 16 August, 2013 at Camp Ziouani to present the UNDOF Medal to the 14th Rotation of IndCon LogBatt. The parade commanded by Maj Rohit Sharma, DCO, LogBatt, was reviewed by Lt Gen IS Singha, VSM, Force Commander and HOM. The guest list comprised military and civilian staff members of UNDOF and UNTSO; host nation personnel; government officials and prominent representatives of the local community. UNDOF medals were pinned on the chests of the proud recipients by the FC who was assisted by Mr Bernard Lee, CMS and Col Cirilito Sobijana, COS.

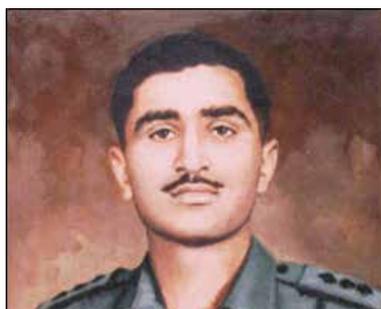
In his address, the FC lauded the troops for their display of professionalism, discipline and conduct, with a special mention of occupation of UN Positions 25 and 27 by LogBatt during the crucial period of repatriation of AutCon and subsequent induction of FijiBatt. This, he added was the first ever instance of troops from the LogBatt occupying UN Positions since the inception of UNDOF and thus a truly historic event. The Force Commander also gave away FC Commendations to 15 deserving peacekeepers from India and Philippines on this occasion.

The Commanding Officer of LogBatt, Lt Col Mumuksh Mehra in his address, conveyed to the august gathering the commitment of the LogBatt in continuing to evolve to the rapidly changing operational environment characterized by increased manning and inventory levels of the mission. He also conveyed the deep sense of pride that the Indian Contingent felt in standing up to help UNDOF see through a very critical juncture during the phase of worsening security situation in the UNDOF area of responsibility and thanked the FC for providing LogBatt this opportunity.

The event culminated with a cultural event highlighting the cultural diversity of India followed by a sumptuous lunch at the International Kitchen.



UN peacekeeping hero: Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria, Param Vir Chakra(Posthumous)



The contribution of the largest democracy in the world to UN peacekeeping goes back to its inception in the late forties. Till date India has contributed nearly 100,000 all ranks, participated in missions spread over more than 40 countries and over 120 Indian troops have made the supreme sacrifice while serving in UN missions. The country has produced war heroes like Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria, Param Vir Chakra (Posthumous) who made the supreme sacrifice while defending the UN Headquarters located at Elisabethville, Katanga, Congo in the year 1961.

Commissioned in the 1st Gorkha Rifles on 09 June 1957, he was posted to the third battalion of the Regiment. In 1961, Salaria was posted with his battalion in Katanga, Congo.

After the Belgians quit Congo, a civil war situation developed in that country. When the United Nations decided upon military intervention to retrieve the situation, India contributed a brigade of around 3000 men to the UN force. In November 1961, the UN Security Council decided to put a stop to the hostile activities of the Katangese troops in Congo. This greatly angered Tshombe, Katanga's secessionist leader and he intensified his 'hate the UN' campaign. The result was more violence against UN personnel.

On 05 December 1961, a 3/1 GR Company supported by 3-inch mortar attacked a road-block, established by the Katangese troops, between HQ Katanga command and the Elisabethville airfield at a strategic roundabout. The enemy roadblock was destroyed and the Gorkhas established a UN roadblock there. When Captain Salaria, with his platoon, tried to link up with the Gorkha Company to reinforce the roadblock, he met strong opposition in the old airfield area. The enemy held the area strongly with two armoured cars and 90 men and brought down heavy automatic and small arms fire on his force from a dug-in position on the right flank. Undeterred by the superior enemy strength and firepower, Salaria decided to take the enemy, head-on, to achieve the objective. The Gorkhas then charged the enemy with bayonets, khukris and hand-grenades. A rocket launcher supported them in the attack. In this sharp encounter, Captain Salaria and his men killed 40 of the enemy and knocked out two enemy cars. His bold action completely demoralized the enemy who fled despite numerical superiority and well-fortified positions. In the engagement, Captain Salaria was wounded in the neck by a burst of enemy automatic fire. Unmindful of the injury, he continued to fight till he collapsed due to excessive bleeding, dying subsequently of his wounds.

Captain Salaria's actions prevented the Katangese rebels from encircling the UN Headquarters in Elisabethville. His leadership, courage, unflinching devotion to duty and disregard for personal safety were in the best traditions of the Indian Army and for which Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria was posthumously awarded the highest wartime medal, Param Vir Chakra.

Article by: Maj Rohit Sharma (DCO, LOGBATT)

IndCon celebrates Ganesh Chaturthi

On September 2013, Indian LogBatt celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi - birthday of Lord Ganesha, the god of wisdom, prosperity and good fortune and traditionally invoked at the beginning of any new venture or at the start of travel. The festival lasted for 10 days with the main events on 18 and 19 September 13. A beautiful clay idol of Lord Ganesha was specially brought from India and was installed in a beautifully decorated temporary structure in the temple complex of LogBatt in Camp Ziouani. The festival serves

as a meeting ground for people and the tradition. The cultural event was celebrated with members of LogBatt, PhilBatt and FijiBatt. On the final day, there was a huge procession which culminated with the immersion of the idol in Jordan river.



Welfare trips contribute to high morale

For the past months, UNDOF peacekeepers were facing volatile and dynamic situations on the ground. All night heavy shelling, being caught in the middle of gun fires, threats of being kidnapped by the rebels, getting wounded; and being trapped in a shelter for few days, are increasingly becoming features of a routine working day for UNDOF peacekeepers.

Fortunately, it has been the mission's priority to balance work and recreation in order to maintain the state of morale and welfare of our men and women. This is why robust welfare activities have to be orchestrated to meet the needs of our men and women in the mission.

UNDOF offers sport/recreational trips to our peacekeepers to explore Syria and Israel. Both countries are rich with historical and cultural resources. However, due to crisis in Syria, we have only Israel to discover during our tour in the mission. What we missed in Syria such as the Bride of the Desert, Palmyra and the Umayyad Mosque which is one of the largest and oldest mosques in the world located in the Old City of Damascus, has been fulfilled by our trips to Israel. The vibrant and diverse history where the three religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam crisscross in one country makes a fascinating journey to Israel. From the biggest Crusade-era castle, the Nimrod Fortress in the northern part of Golan Heights, various Holy Sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jericho, we were mesmerized by the love story between the sea and the mountain in Rosh Hanikra Grottoes and grandeur of Baha'i Shrine and Garden in Haifa. Indeed, we have come to embrace the beauty and peace of Israel while in UNDOF but as the eternal saying goes "THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME", that is to be in the arms of our family and loved ones once again when we finally end our tour in UNDOF.



CEASERIA NATIONAL PARK



NIMROD FORTRESS

Article and photos by: Maj Charlotte Orda, (SO Welfare)

Prioritization is key to accomplishing projects

The Force Engineers is often challenged to accomplish tasks and projects on time. Everyday there is always a problem or complaint being brought to their attention. Most of the time the issues raised are not new. Projects that have been completed many years ago usually creep back up due to wear and tear, expansion or change in the security situation.

While most projects can be completed immediately, others take a longer time to complete. Most projects, even if it were a five minute project could lead to a "follow up" action which means that it could lead to more tasks; thus committing even more manpower, time, and money than originally anticipated. If it were a bigger project, then it may take years to complete as the project has to be completed in phases and involve lots of documentation.

To try and negate most delays, the hardworking engineers often work beyond their full "time of duty" to satisfy the needs of personnel and above all to ensure their safety and security. But most importantly, projects are prioritized and more urgent ones get the first consideration. So far, for this quarter, the Force Engineers have accomplished projects such as; the water tower construction in position 25, Hermon Base snow posts installation, replacement of generator at position 37, Camp Zioanni fuel station shed construction; position 27 freezer/cooler installation, and position 60 Garbage site re-roofing, to name a few. Many more projects are still ongoing and are expected to be completed soon.



NepCon prepares for winter on the highest UN position in the world

NEPCON occupies three positions on Mount Hermon; Hermon Base, Hermon South and Hermon Hotel which peaks at 2654m. The temperature on this mountain range has started to fall below freezing point and is expected by many to be the coldest winter in the history of Golan Heights.

Fortunately, for the soldiers for Nepal, winter and high altitudes are part of the environment in which they have been raised and trained. The Himalayan country; often referred to as the “roof of the world” because of its high elevation and “Mother of the Universe” (Sagarmatha), in reference to its most famous landmark, Mt. Everest, experiences some of the harshest weather conditions in the world. It is on these basis that the UNDOF is confident that operations by NepCon on Mt. Hermon will not be deterred by the change in weather.

It goes without saying, that if you fail to prepare you have to prepare to fail. Despite their higher adaptability to such conditions, the Nepalese soldiers have to prepare themselves mentally, physically and emotionally the worst. With the efforts of Logistics and Supplies, they have stocked up on food, water and fuel to last them through the winter season. Soon they will be fully equipped with new winter gear which includes clothing and ski equipment. In addition, there is a full time doctor available 24/7 to attend to medical conditions associated with operating in higher altitudes. Further, with the aid of engineers, winter poles have been constructed along the sides of the road to ensure that the road is not obstructed during winter. The preparation does not end here. According to NepCon Commander, Maj Rajan Dahal, preparations is still ongoing. "Although preparation is very good, we still need to complete just a few more projects before winter," he said.

Articles by: Maj Deborah Wise, SO PR
Photos by: Jese Sorovi, Force Photographer.

New DFC visits NepCon troops

The newly appointed Deputy Force Commander, BrigGen Hari Bahadur Basnet from Nepal had the opportunity to visit troops from NepCon in Mt Hermon whilst on a line tour with the Force Commander, LtGen I.S. Singha and the Commanding Officer FijiBatt, LtCol Sitiveni Qiliho on 20 September, 2013.

Members of NepCon and FIJIBATT displayed their mountaineering skills to the touring team after undergoing training conducted by qualified mountaineers in the Nepalese Company. They climbed, rappelled, and traversed; demonstrating skills on how to evacuate personnel from mountainous terrain.

A few days later, members of NepCon on attachment with the Force Reserve, stationed in Camp Faouar, put on a display for the DFC to showcase their riot control skills. Their precise drills made it hard to believe that they have only been in the mission for less than three months.

Maj Dahal briefs FC and DFC



Members of Force Reserve Coy display skills



Inter-unit competitions in UNDOF



ALPINE TRAINING ON MT HERMON

