

GOLAN

The UNDOF Journal

Issue ¹¹100¹²

July - September 2004



Dear Reader!

This Year seems to be a Year of remembrances and anniversaries in our mission. After 30 Years of UNDOF some months ago we celebrate in this edition 25 Years of "Golan-Journal" and its 100th issue. You will find in nearly every page something relating to the past of that magazine. So You can imagine the long time of the UN staying on the Golan and its journalistic company.

I for myself am very proud to participate in the birth of number 100. And I am very proud and happy to have had the opportunity to be the editor in this important Year for UNDOF, to be editor of five issues of the "Golan Journal".

These were very important experiences for me and my future live as a journalist.

For that editor's message is a farewell every time, it is now up to me to say Good bye. A Year went by very quickly and I enjoyed this work as a Military Public Information Officer very much. My Deputy, Capt Daisuke Horiguchi, will stay and also the Force-Photographer, WO II Gernot Payer. They both guarantee the standard of that journal. I am very thankful to them for their professional job they do and their helping hand.



Maj Stefan May
MPIO UNDOF



I wish You all the best for the future and for that region that it will get the peace it longs for such a long time! To my successor - good luck!

God bless You and Good bye!

MPIO	Editorial	2
FC UNDOF	Force Commander's Message	3
COS UNDOF	COS Words/ Visits to UNDOF	4
New People	New People in UNDOF	5
Engineering	Team Radome - Page 1	6
Engineering	Team Radome - Page 2	7
AUSBATT	Inspection by the Minister of Defence	8
AUSBATT	Shooting Competition 2004	9
CANCON	TF Golan Curling Club	10
CANCON	Canadians Remember Lost Peacekeepers	11
J-CON	Club Fuji / Softball league in CZ	12
Anniversary	Congratulations on the 25 Year Jubilee	13
Anniversary	Golan Journal Collection - Page 1	14
Anniversary	Golan Journal Collection - Page 2	15
Anniversary	Looking back on 100 issues	16
SLOVCON	Family Shouting Place	17
POLBATT	Polish Armed Forces Day	18
POLBATT	Medal Parade / New UNDOF vehicles	19
MP-Platoon	Life between the Lines	20
OGG	OGG-T Social	21
Civilian Staff	Human Resources Managment Section	22
Miscellaneous	When Joy and Sorrow meet	23
We about us	Radio GECKO - "Only" 10	24
Recreation	Jordan - a country of history	25
History	The Hedjaz railway - ... also 100 ... Page 1	26
History	The Hedjaz railway - ... also 100 ... Page 2	27

Front (Page 1): GOLAN the UNDOF Journal / Special Edition 100
Graphic and Design by WO II Gernot Payer

Back (Page 28): In the Soukh Hamidiyeh
Photo by Col Andreas Safranmüller

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The Golan Journal is the magazine of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and it is intended to provide information about the Force and events within it which are of interest to its members. The UNDOF Military Public Affairs Office publishes the Golan Journal every third month. While articles and photographs are welcomed from all members of the Force, the view and opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily coincide with those of the United Nations or the Force Commander.

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Force Commander's Message

Dear Fellow Peacekeepers,

I am delighted, once again, to have this opportunity to address you in what is the 100th issue of our Golan Journal. It is also the 25th anniversary of the magazine. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Editor and Staff for their dedicated work in the production of such a riveting issue, while at the same time not forgetting you, the devoted contributors and readers, without whom this famous milestone could not have been achieved.

While peace continues

a group of children who had strayed into a minefield. Indeed, minefields and mine activity continue to be a cause for concern in our AOR. I would like to remind all peacekeepers of the ever present danger of mines. Always remember your training and use your common sense.

On a lighter note, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all the newly arrived



granted and underestimate the significant contribution of this magazine to UNDOF down through the years. Each issue brings new faces, new places and new activities, while highlighting different traditions, cultures and achievements.

I would first like to say how delighted I am to have the opportunity to participate in the birth of UNDOF's own magazine, the GOLAN NEWS. I wish it every possible success and a long and fruitful career. For the efficiency of any military organization, it is essential to develop an Esprit de corps. The GOLAN NEWS should help to further integrate the members of the Force and to form this Esprit de corps...

Number 1 (July 1979), "Address of the Officer in Charge", Col Guenther Greindl.

to prevail here on the Golan, in recent days there have been many troubling events and atrocities in this region and in the wider world. It seems that children are increasingly becoming the innocent victims of terrorism and conflicts. Even here on the Golan recently, an UNDOF EOD Team from POLBATT had to rescue

peacekeepers of UNDOF and OGG. Welcome to the Golan peacekeeping family. You have arrived at a very interesting and challenging time in this region. As it happens, you are also just in time for the beginning of the season of AOS marches run by our battalions, so I hope to see you out there!

It is easy to take for

May I wish the Golan Journal, many more years of continued success!

*Thank you
Danke
Arigato*

*Ďiakujem
Dziękuję
Merci*

Major General B. N. SHARMA
Force Commander UNDOF

COS Words

Comrades of UNDOF!

I can hardly believe that it has been almost three months ago, when I took over my position in the Force. I remember that day very well. I had enjoyed a very intensive and useful handover from my predecessor, Col. Hidiroglou, to whom I am still thankful. I also had experienced a kind welcome from you. I grew aware that the coming year will be quite a challenging one for all of us. Yes, it is the last year of the so-called modernization phase. Much has been achieved in the last years, and I congratulate those who have been here before me on their performance and dedication to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of this Mission.

Much is still outstanding. There is much construction going on. The draw down of positions will demand our attention. The improvement of communications is ongoing.

The improvement of security of UN personnel and facilities will keep us busy. The UNDOF rules and regulations will be reviewed and renewed. There is need to enhance the training efforts and the interaction between the military units and their administrative support. It is indeed impossible to name all the challenges that we – that you all – face currently. Will we succeed? Will the following contingents blame us for having done our work halfheartedly? Well, speaking for myself, I promise to give the best. I also hope I can rely on your commitment to giving your day a meaning, to assisting one another, to fulfilling our mandate in order to give the people of our host countries the chance for peace.



Actually, I count on you and I deem myself lucky for having the chance to serve with you in this Mission under the wise leadership of our Force Commander.

Finally, I want to congratulate UNDOF on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the first issue of the Golan Journal. This is the 100th issue of this Journal and I wholeheartedly thank the editorial team for their successful work.

I wish you all the best for the next months!

*Col Andreas Safranmüller
COS UNDOF*

Visits to UNDOF



On 28 August a delegation of the Foreign Ministry of South Africa visited UNDOF (here at Shouting Place near Hadar).



The ICRC invited on 1 September syrian children to Quneitra, also to show them the danger of mines. The Austrian EOD-Team demonstrates at POSN 27 some mines, which can still be found in this area.

New People in UNDOF

The new CO CANCON

LtCol Shawn Myers joined the Canadian Forces in 1982. After completing a degree in Physics and Computer Science at Royal Roads Military College in Victoria in 1986, he was posted to Base Maintenance Lahr, in Canadian Forces Europe.

In 1995, he served on his first tour of duty, first as the Military Assistant to the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPF) in Zagreb, Croatia for six months, and then immediately afterwards as the Chief Planner in UNPF HQ. On his return in 1996, LtCol Myers was posted to NDHQ as a staff officer in the Director General Land Equipment Program Management (DGLPM).

In 1999, on promotion to his current rank, he served his third tour of duty, from December 1999 to June 2000, as the Commanding Officer of the National Support Element for Roto 1 in Kosovo.

In 2001, LtCol Myers was posted to NDHQ as Director Land Equipment Resource Management 4 in DGLPM. Since 2003, he has been employed on the Land Staff in Combat Service Support Capability Development.

LtCol Myers is married to Anneliese and has two children, Tammy and Steven.



The new CO J-CON

Maj Katsuhiko Tokunaga was born in Kumamoto prefecture of the Southern part of Japan. His Military career began in 1992 after graduating the National Defense Academy in Japan.

He graduated from the Ground Self Defense Force Officers Candidate School in 1992, and was then appointed to 46th Infantry Regiment Rifle Platoon Leader in Camp Kaitaichi, Hiro-



shima. In 1993, he was promoted to 2Lt and then completed the Infantry Basic Officers Course. In 1994, he was promoted to 1Lt during which he completed Ranger Officers Course, Infantry Advance Officers Course and promoted CPT in 1998. In 2002, he completed the Command and General Staff Course. After his graduation, he was assigned 3rd com-pany commander of 42nd Infantry Regiment in Camp Kitakumamoto, Kumamoto.

In 2003, he completed two courses, "Humanitarian Challenge" and "Human Rights", of PPC (Pearson Peacekeeping Center) in Canada and promoted to Major. After that, he was assigned to Command the 18th Japanese Contingent in UNDOF.

Maj Tokunaga is married with two daughters, and they live in the Kumamoto prefecture.

The new CO POLBATT

LtCol Rajmund Tomasz Andrzejczak was born in Świdnica Śląska on the 29th of December 1967. His military career started in 1991 just after graduating from High School of the Armored Forces in Poland. After graduation, from 1991 to 1996 he served as the platoon leader in 2nd Mechanized Regiment and next as the tank company CO in 15th Mechanized Brigade. In the same year he finished the Officers' Advanced Course and started his service as the operations and intelligence officer in 4th Suwalska Armored Cavalry Brigade in Orzysz and afterwards as COS of the Lithuanian Polish Battalion LITPOLBAT. In 1999 – 2001 he studied and graduated from the Military Academy Brno in Czech Republic (National Defence Management, combat employment of troops).

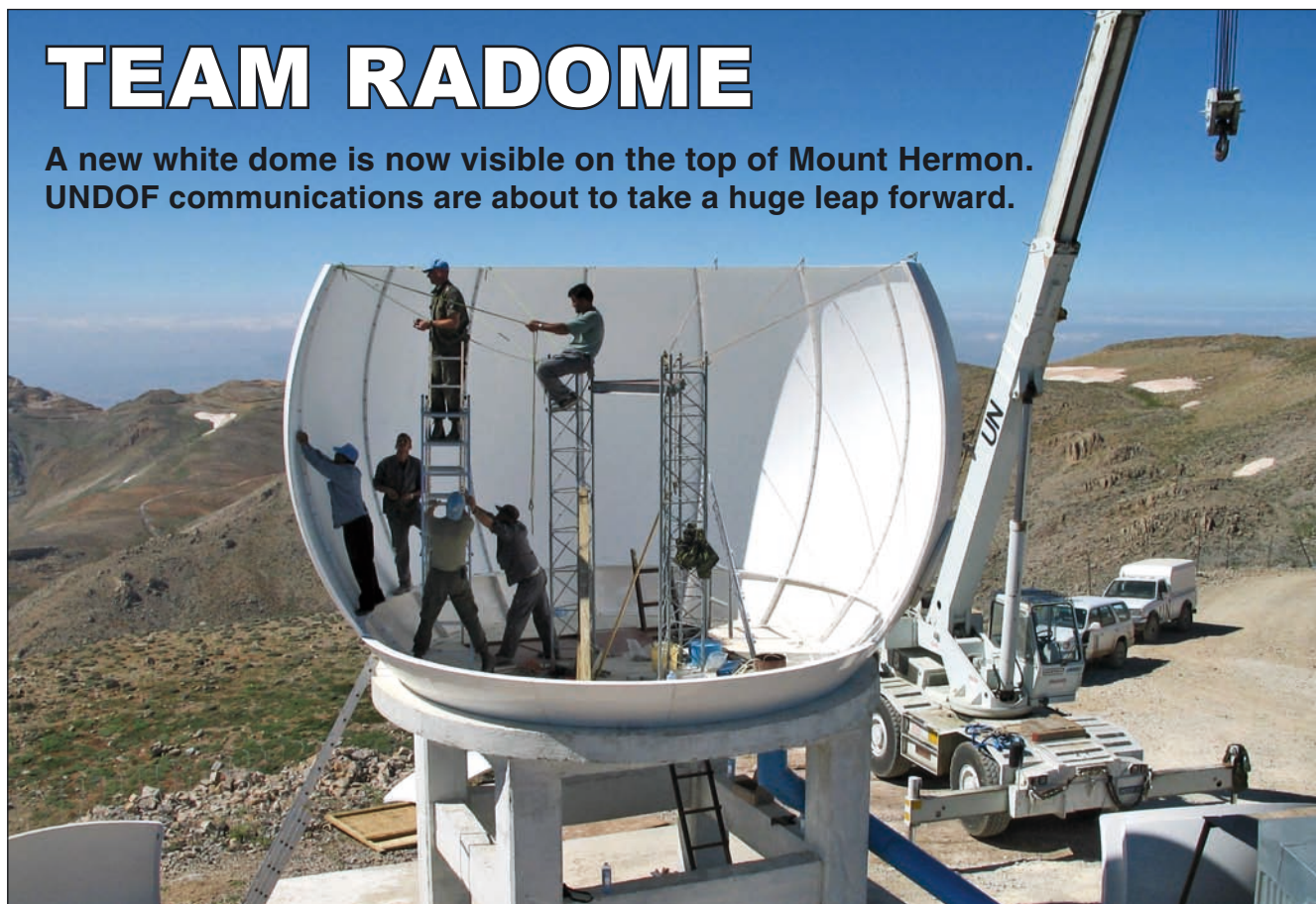
Currently he is 1st Krechowicki Lancers Armored Battalion CO in 15th Mechanized Brigade since 2003.

LtCol Andrzejczak is married and has two daughters, his hobbies include history of warfare, painting, armor plastic modeling and music.



TEAM RADOME

A new white dome is now visible on the top of Mount Hermon. UNDOF communications are about to take a huge leap forward.



This June, 'Team Radome', a multinational group consisting of personnel from UNDOF HQ Engineers, AUSBATT Cable Team, LOGBATT Signalers, J-CON heavy equipment, CITS personnel and AUSBATT 1st Coy soldiers completed a very challenging and unique project, the construction of a six-meter diameter fiberglass radome at Hermon South.

Communications are vital to the UNDOF mission. For the last thirty years, microwave and VHF equipment has been housed in a variety of temporary facilities on Mount Hermon, most recently in a pair of shipping containers anchored to the ground with cables. However, the extreme weather with winds up to 250kph and driving snow and

ice have repeatedly damaged the communications equipment. In 2001, it was decided that the mission needed a more permanent solution to ensure safe, secure and reliable communications.

The answer was to build a permanent communications building to house the electron-

ics and a radome to protect the microwave dishes and antennas. The project was designed in-house by the UNDOF HQ Engineering team working in close partnership with the technical specialists and end-users in CITS. The design was completed and tendered for contract in spring 2003. The winning bidder was Al-Gam-mal Contracting Group.

During the summer of 2003, the contractor built the communications building and the foundations for the radome. The communications building is 34m² and includes a battery room and equipment room housing radios, telecommunications switching equipment and computers. The radome foundation contains 110 cubic meters of concrete and stands

The most important projects FCO is handling currently include the installation of central heating in Camp Faouar and positions... Future projects include construction of a Maintenance Garage in CANLOG and the paving in Camp Faouar and Camp Ziouani...

Number 31,
(April - June 1985),
Force Construction Office

six meters above the ground. Due to the late arrival of the radome and the onset of winter, the construction of the radome itself had to be delayed until 2004. Despite this, CITS were able to occupy the communications building, leaving the microwave dishes to spend one more year in their leaky old sea containers.

Once the snow melted and the road was again clear, plans were made for the final and most dramatic phase of the project, the erection of the radome itself. 'Team Radome' was assembled and tasks assigned. The first task, transporting the radome components fell to J-CON Heavy Equipment. Under the leadership of Maj Sawasaki, on Monday 21 June 04 three J-CON trucks collected the large crates at Camp Ziouani. At the same time, the crane drove to Hermon South to unload the crates and assist in the assembly of the radome. Due to the steep grades, it took the crane over six hours to get there!

An advance team of HQ Engineers led by Sgt Wienerroither arrived at Hermon South on the morning of Tuesday 22 June 2004 to begin the vital task of assembling the radome base. Fourteen fiberglass panels had to be assembled and precisely



The winter 2003 delayed the project



The dome in summer 2004

aligned to provide a solid, level and perfectly round base for further construction. The base was then bolted into the concrete foundation using hardened steel anchor bolts driven 20cm into the concrete foundation.

'Team Radome':

Capt K. Mould, Team Leader (Canada, HQ Engr)
Sgt A. Wienerroither (Austria, HQ Engr)
Sgt T. Berger (Austria, HQ Engr)
Mr. Jamal Al Beida (Syria, HQ Engr)
Mr. Ibrahim Khouder (Syria, HQ Engr)
Mr. Ahmed Diab Faiad (Syria, HQ Engr)
Mr. Manoj Bhatnagar (India, HQ Engr)
Capt R. Nicholls (Canada, LOGBATT)
MCpl R. Ferland (Canada, LOGBATT)
Cpl B. Slaney (Canada, LOGBATT)
MSgt V. Bernhart (Austria, Cable Team)
Sgt G. Fuchs (Austria, Cable Team)
Sgt J. Eismayr (Austria, Cable Team)
Sgt H. Pernuttsch (Austria, Cable Team)
Mr. Siggi Sigurbjornsson (Iceland, CITS)
Mr. Dilraj Gurung (Nepal, CITS)
Maj Sawasaki Masaichi (Japan, Hvy Eqpt)
MSgt Kirayama Minoru (Japan, Hvy Eqpt)
SFC Urata Takeshi (Japan, Hvy Eqpt)
WOII Slawomir Walczuk (Poland, HQ Engr)
WOI Robert Trixl (Austria, Posn Cdr HS)
Cpl Thomas Ruby (Austria, Cook HS)

The 'big push' came on Wednesday 23 June 2004. The main part of the team, eighteen personnel, augmented by AUSBATT 1st Coy began work at 07:00am. Assembly of the large vertical panels took about four hours. An eight-

man team, led by Sgt Wienerroither, worked on top of the foundation while the AUSBATT Cable team and the LOGBATT Signalers uncrate components, delivered pan-

els and directed J-CON crane operations from the ground.

The work had to proceed extremely quickly, because until the radome was completely assembled it was vulnerable to being ripped apart by the wind. Luck was with us, as the winds remained very calm with only occasional light breezes.

By 01:00pm, the second row of panels was in place and sufficient bolts in place to allow for a short meal break. AUSBATT 1st Coy outdid themselves with outstanding hospitality and assistance, special thanks to Cpl Thomas Ruby for the great food. There is nothing like hard work and high altitude to work up an appetite.

Soon back to work, the dome was secure by 5pm. A smaller team from the HQ Engineers returned on Thursday with taller scaffolding to secure the last remaining bolts on the top of the dome.

A big thanks goes out to the entire team. It was a true multi-national effort. **Well Done!**

By Capt Kerry Mould

Inspection of AUSBATT by the Minister of Defense



MGen Höfler, Ambassador Dr. Schramek and MOD Platter inspect the troops

From July 12 to July 13, the Austrian Minister of Defense, Mr. Günther Platter visited and our famous camp-combo "Over and Out". As he has also musical ambitions, he played



MOD Platter live on stage

ager Lt Thomas Stöcklöcker. During this event 17 children from the district of Quneitra received much needed hearing aids and a wheelchair.

The money for these goods had been collected from AUSBATT, the Austrian Embassy and the Chair-woman of the Austrian-Syrian charity organization, Mrs. Magda

About 50% of the soldiers of all ranks have been on almost constant duty at their positions the last 3 months and have not had the opportunity to visit Damascus or Lake Tiberias since the beginning of June. In spite of the overstretched deployment I intend to put all my efforts into providing a few days of recreation to all soldiers...

Number 1 (July 1979), "CO's Corner" (LtCol Fridolin Gigacher)

AUSBATT for an inspection due to the 30th anniversary of the Austrian Battalion on the Golan Heights. After his arrival in Camp Faouar, he emphasized the importance of all Austrian soldiers serving in the mission area for 30 years. AUSBATT was one of the main contingents that built up this mission after arriving here from Egypt (UNEF II) as the first UN soldiers.

After a courtesy call to the FC, our Minister attended an Austrian evening in the welfare city with barbeque, raffle

CCR's "Proud Mary" on the guitar live on stage.



Charity event in Khan Arnabeh

On the next day, the Minister took part in a charity event in Khan Arnabeh, which had been organized by the PX Man-

Kreitner. Everyone was touched when they received flowers from the children looked into their eyes when they received what they needed so necessarily.

After a short visit of Posn 27 the Minister met the Syrian Minister of Defense in Damascus and made sure that Austrian soldiers will remain in UNDOF as long as this mission exists.

Text: Capt Patrick Kremer

Pics: Sgt Thomas Aigner

The “Edelweiss”-Coy Clears off

The Champions of the Inter-Contingent Shooting Competition 2004

On 22nd July the annual U N D O F Inter-Contingent Shooting exercise took place at the shooting range Mazra At Bayt Jinn. Between 15 teams out of all contingents, one team of the 1st Coy/AUSBATT, the so-called “Edelweiss”-Coy participated. Among all teams it was the only one with an officer – the 2iC of the Coy, Capt Tauschek together with MSgt Brugger, Sgt Buchleitner and Cpl Siegl.



100% power - the goal was to win the competition

every round hit its target. That's why this team in the end was the winning team.

The closing ceremony was officiated by the Force Commander, MGen B. N. Sharma, who congratulated everyone and stressed the well-done performance of all teams. After

leaving the shooting range, the winning team was warmly welcomed by the guard of honour at Hermon Base. Some voices whispered there was a very good party at the mountain this evening.

Team	Running time	Unmarked targets	Targets after 1st	Fire without command	Fire after "Stop Fire"	Target was not hit	Lost equipment	Time	Rank
AUCON 1st COY Cpl Tauschek (Officer) MSgt BRUGGER Werner Sgt BUCHLEITNER Tobias Cpl SIEGL Markus	02 : 56 - 17	16	88	0	0	0	0	0 : 11 : 34	1
AUCON 2nd COY Sgt HENNINGER (Officer) MSgt HAJEK Thorsten Cpl SCHNEIDERL Martin Sgt BEISER Christian	02 : 59 - 44	12	89	0	0	0	0	0 : 11 : 59	2
AUCON 3rd COY MSgt RACARD Herbert Sgt BAIRD Michael MSgt MÖNSCHER Christian Cpl GERNERHARDT Siegfried	03 : 02 - 51	10	90	0	0	0	0	0 : 12 : 10	3
AUCON 4 MSgt CLARK Kevin Cpl POWERS Brandon Cpl BARTON Joseph Cpl COOTE Terry	03 : 17 - 59	12	88	0	0	0	0	0 : 17 : 14	4
AUCON 5 MSgt RABOLD Thoralf Sgt UHATA Takanobu Sgt FUKUSHIMA Kazuhiko Sgt HIRAKAWA Norio	03 : 38 - 34	11	85	0	0	0	0	0 : 32 : 41	5

The evaluation

the responsible organizer WO I Wohlkönig – number 6. Number 6 seemed to be good for the team, because they were first able to observe some other teams on the track.

All spectators had the same opinion: Team number 6 did a very good job. The running time was the second best of all teams, but the shooting on the falling plates was the best:



The winners from 1st Coy

During the internal Coy-competition, the guys from the 1st Coy saw the shooting range for their first time (normally they're using a shooting range on Mt. Hermon area). On the day of the competition they arrived early in the morn-

*Text: Sgt Buchleitner Tobias, D/PosLdr
Hermon Hotel (2814m)
English: Capt Kremer P.
Pics: All 1st Coy/AB*

...In his speech made before a large number of guests, Col GREINDL, praised the excellent work performed by the soldiers of AUSBATT. In addition to their normal duties they had assumed, on the departure of IRANBATT, responsibility for an additional 6 Positions...

Number 2 (September 1979),
"Medalparade AUSBATT"

TF GOLAN CURLING CLUB

DONATIONS to both sides of the ceasefireline

The Curling Club was founded in 1974 and curiously enough has nothing to do with the sport of Curling. It is a voluntary organization that helps to raise funds for charities.

Curling Club donations are supported through such activities as Pizza Nights, 50/50 Draws, Ball and Chain event and a Mount Bental Walk. Significant funds have been raised over the years by and from our soldiers.

The Curling Club then makes cash donations, of equal amounts, to one charity in Syria and one in Israel. The generosity of our soldiers has enabled us to make a major donation to each charity two

Hospital in Israel.

On 11 August 2004, members from the Task Force Golan Curling Club travelled



Curling Club at the donation

to the Children's Cancer Clinic of Afula Hospital to donate monies raised over the past six months. This clinic is one

was Dr. Yossi Horowitz, who explained that the clinic specialized in treating children with several types of cancer. In most cases, survival rates of patients are as high as 95% due to the work of the clinic.

The Curling Club's next round of donations to both the orphanage and the cancer clinic is planned for November 2004. Club members are looking forward to visiting our friends again in both Damascus and Afula.

The club has every expectation that the generosity of our soldiers will again allow us to make a significant donation to both.

Article by PO2 W. Dymond

On 27 May FINNCOY called us out to play soccer. Our team showed the FINNS the finer points of down field football tackling, rugger serums and hockey checking. This game we won 1-0 though. Being high on this win we accepted the next challenge – a game of Sauna. Here the Canadians melted against the determined Finn onslaught...

Number 2 (July 1979), "Camp Ziouani - Challenge Cup"

and even three times per year. Currently the club supports an orphanage in Syria and a children's cancer clinic in Israel. Plans are being made for the club to help fund future initiatives to support these worthy institutions in support of children.

In Syria, the Club presently supports the Convent Saint-Paul Dans Les Murs, a Christian Orphanage and Rest Home in Damascus. A few years ago, the Curling Club started supporting the Children's Cancer Clinic of Afula

of the few in Israel that specializes in child cancer care. The donation of \$2000.00 USD was part of the ongoing support provided to the clinic by the Curling Club. On hand to make the presentation were the President of the Curling Club, MCpl Sandy Kelly and the Treasurer, Cpl Pat Walker. Receiving the donation on behalf of the clinic was Mr. Paul Zelas, one of the clinic's founding members. Also on hand

On 16 June 1982 FC UNDOF was approached by UNDP Representative in Damascus, Mr. Thompson, and was requested to assist in organizing convoys carrying relief goods to Lebanon... Twenty vehicles, including MP-escort, manned by Finnish and Canadian military personnel were loaded with about 45 tons of relief stores such as blankets, medicines and tents...

Number 18 (May-July 1982), UNDOF relief convoys to Lebanon

Canadians Remember Lost Peacekeepers



MCpl Lowerison and MCpl Cowley stand with Remembrance Wreaths in foreground.

On 9 August 2004 the UNDOF Force Commander, MGen B.N. Sharma, and His Excellence Mr. B.J. Davis, Canadian Ambassador to Syria, joined with members of Canadian Task Force Golan to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the crash of UN Flight 51.

On 9 August 1974 a Canadian Buffalo transport aircraft was on a routine re-supply flight, from Beirut to Damascus, for Canadian peacekeepers in the

Golan Heights. Flight 51 was carrying five crew members and four passengers;

Capt G.G. Foster, Capt K.B. Mirau, Capt R.B. Wicks, MWO G. Landry, A/MWO C.B.

Korejwo, MCpl R.C. Spencer, Cpl M.H.T. Kennington, Cpl M.W. Simpson and Cpl B.K. Stringer.

All were members of the Canadian Armed Forces. At



Honour Guard during Remembrance Ceremony

1150 hours on 9 August 1974, while on final approach into Damascus, the aircraft went down killing all on board. This remains the largest single-day loss of life in Canada's peace-

keeping history.

To commemorate this event, a solemn remembrance ceremony was held in the outskirts of the Syrian town of Ad Dimas at the site where crash debris was recovered. The ceremony included scripture reading, prayer, a personal message from the Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, and two minutes of silence at the exact time of the crash. Attending VIPs then laid wreaths on behalf of the

United Nations, Canada and the Canadian Forces. Soldiers of Task Force Golan then laid individual wreaths, for each of the fallen.

This ceremony both honoured the sacrifice by those nine Canadian peacekeepers who gave their lives and served as a reminder to all of the dangers involved with peacekeeping duties. Canada has participated in 54 peacekeeping operations since 1947 involving

130,000 Canadian Forces members. More than 130 Canadian soldiers have given their lives in the service of peace.

Article by Capt J.D.E. Duquette

Photos by LS Leblanc

Welcome to Club Fuji



Club Fuji is located in Camp FAOUAR and run by the Japanese Contingent. The club is named after the famous Mt. Fuji, the symbol of Japan. The 1st Japanese Contingent opened Club Fuji back in 1996, and it has served many UNDOF soldiers since. Club Fuji is smaller than the other UNDOF clubs, suitable for 20-25 people at a time, most known for the

Karaoke and Japanese sake. We are proud to say that we have karaoke CDs from Austria, Canada, USA as well as from Japan. Unfortunately we do not have CDs from Poland and Slovakia but everyone still manages to sing, dance and have a great time together!

In Japan there are three options for sake drinking, depending on the temperature and season. Sake is served either at room-temperature, cold or hot. Here on the Golan we usually drink hot sake during the cold season and cold sake during the hot summer months. Because cold sake on a hot day can seem like a nice cool drink from the fridge, be

extra careful or you'll be waking up with a hangover the next day!

Club Fuji is open to all ranks, every Wednesday and Friday; we hope to see you there!

Enjoy.

By Maj Masaichi Sawasaki

...After long discussions, hard work and careful preparation, JAPCON has arrived in the mission area three months ago. Soldiers are becoming used to the area and their jobs...

We are looking forward to good relations with all – not only for business – but also off-duty. Please drop in anytime. We are waiting for you with Japanese tea during daytime and with Japanese Sake at night...

Number 65 (March-April 1996), "Introduction of JAPCON"

Softball league in CZ

In Camp Ziouani, we conduct softball league by a mixed team from CANCON and J-CON. It started in the middle of July. Before that we had played many games with each platoon/section team. So this is our first experience playing with another contingent on the same team. The match is conducted 2 times a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays. We play every match in a very pleasant mood.

In my opinion, characteristics of each contingent - CANCON and J-CON - are Power and skill. I am always amazed at the power of

CANCON. The softball seems to be a ball of table tennis especially when it goes over



The mixed softball team from CANCON and J-CON

the fence. And ball disappears to the inside of the shooting range. I watched such a situation several times. It would be the CANADIAN version of Barry BONDS. Compared with

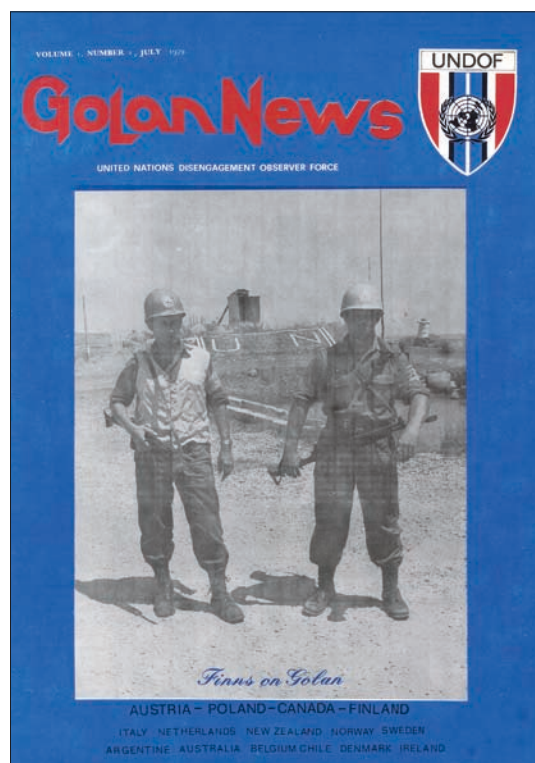
that, J-CON would be said to be like Ichiro, who has skillful bat control, positive base running and steady-going defense. This may be a little bit exaggerated.

Each characteristic appears in every match, and a match moves by the good mood and intensity. The match will become incandescent day by day, we suggest playing pleasantly and fostering good fellowship between CANCON and J-CON.

Everyday anytime, don't hesitate to talk with us about playing sports. We in J-CON are looking forward to playing sports with other contingents.

By SFC K. Yamamoto

Congratulations on the 25 Year Jubilee



The first edition of the "Golan News"

My name is Leif Lundberg and I am now a retired Maj(R), Royal Danish Army, so why am I writing this? The case is that I had the honour of starting and being the managing editor of the first three issues of the UNDOF Journal - at that time called GOLAN NEWS - back in 1979.

I came to OGG-Damascus in March 1978 and served for half a year as an UNMO on the Golan. After that I came to UNDOF HQ to serve as FWO. During my job as such I found out that there was a need of a magazine that could tie the units serving on the Golan better together and inform them about what was happening in the area and to the units.

I brought the idea to the Force Commander, General Hannes Philipp, who bought

the idea and said: Go.

General Philipp left the area in April so it was under the new CO, Col Guenther Greindl, the Golan News was born and a new job as MPIO was established for me.

It was not an easy birth. Firstly because I knew very little about layout and printing possibilities in Damascus. At Christmas time the year before I had had some UNDOF Xmas cards printed at a printing house in Damascus so I went there and with the help of an interpreter we

reached an agreement and decided to give it a try.

The layouts were made by me, page by page, in A4 format. Headlines were set up with Letraset transfer letters, and so were the ornaments. The texts were written on a poor and very old typewriter and some things were drawn by hand.

In the printing house the text was first put into a »sats«, letter by letter, by people not knowing one word in English, then printed the old fashioned way, cut out and glued up on a big sheet of paper in accordance with the first layouts and so was the rest of the pages.



Maj(R) Lundberg in his office 1979

We had agreed on using only two colours, red and blue, apart from black.

The first issue was absolutely not a masterpiece, on the contrary, but it was a start. Some of the mistakes were corrected in issues number 2 and 3.

In February 1980 I was replaced by the Irish CMDT J. Ahern, so I could return to my homeland knowing that

the continuing editing would be in good hands for the coming months, but I could not imagine that it would survive for 25 year or more, and that UNDOF would still be on the Golan Heights well into the new millenium.



Maj(R) Lundberg today

I am very proud to see that »my baby« has become a very handsome and good-looking 25 year old grown up and I would hereby like to wish UNDOF and The Golan Journal all the best of luck on its way into its perhaps next 25 years.

*Maj(R) Leif Lundberg
Odense, Denmark*

All previous issues:



No. 01

No. 02

No. 03

No. 04

No. 05

No. 06

No. 07

No. 08

No.



No. 18

No. 19

No. 20

No. 21

No. 22

No. 23

No. 24

No. 25

No.



No. 35

No. 36

No. 37

No. 38

No. 39

No. 40

No. 41

No. 42

No.



No. 52

No. 53

No. 54

No. 55

No. 56

No. 57

No. 58

No. 59

No.



No. 69

No. 70

No. 71

No. 72

No. 73

No. 74

No. 75

No. 76

No.



No. 86

No. 87

No. 88

No. 89

No. 90

No. 91

No. 92

No. 93

No.



No. 9 No. 10 No. 11 No. 12 No. 13 No. 14 No. 15 No. 16 No. 17



No. 26 No. 27 No. 28 No. 29 No. 30 No. 31 No. 32 No. 33 No. 34



No. 43 No. 44 No. 45 No. 46 No. 47 No. 48 No. 49 No. 50 No. 51



No. 60 No. 61 No. 62 No. 63 No. 64 No. 65 No. 66 No. 67 No. 68



No. 77 No. 78 No. 79 No. 80 No. 81 No. 82 No. 83 No. 84 No. 85



No. 94 No. 95 No. 96 No. 97 No. 98 No. 98-SE No. 99 No. 100



Looking back on 100 issues

Three file cabinets are our archives of the "Golan-Journal" in our office. One reaches the realization by running over the hundreds of pages that first of all it is surprising that our Journal did not change much from the basics.



Last fine tuning on the Golan Journal 100

In the beginning it told of the medal parades, the welcomes and farewells in our mission, of the recreational destinations and unfortu-

than A4, but the so-called letter-format, as you have it in your hands today, was introduced with number 7. For many editions the articles were written in the languages of the troop contributing countries (German, Polish and Finish, and also French on the Canadian page) with an English translation. There were also bigger pictures and less text. But with the change of the rhythm in 1983 from

cuss the current edition and the contents of the next. Last step is the layout of articles and photos by the MPIO-Assistant - who is also the Force Photographer - utilizing the programs of Adobe *InDesign* and *Photoshop*. Then he travels with only one CD to our printing house in Haifa. After about ten days the new edition is ready for distribution. Each time it's an exciting moment when we hold this new journal in our hands. AOS-Marches and speeches, dart championships and changes of command, stamp corners

Once again the editorial team had no easy task. Some promised entries did not show up and some of the contributions just made the deadline... For the next edition: Golan Journal No. 50 we ask all of YOU out there in the AOS to contribute to the cause...

Number 49 (January - April 1991), "Dear Readers of the Golan Journal"

nately also of the people who died in the service of peace.

Beginning with the first edition, each contingent has their space for information. OGG was also part of the journal from the very beginning. Only the appearance was quite different. There were only three colors (black, blue and red) for a long time. With number 30 a colored cover was introduced, and in the 1990s cautiously color came also to the other pages. Number 80 (autumn 1999) was the first issue totally in full color and with the familiar layout of today.

Only the first six editions were made in a size bigger

a bi-monthly magazine to a journal every quarter of a year and the slow increase of pages from 16 in the beginning to 24 and then 28 in the 1990s, the number and length of the articles (now only in English) have expanded dramatically. The name changed from "Golan News" to "GOLAN, the UNDOF Journal" with edition number 24.

And today? Some days after the distribution of a new edition (1700 pieces each), the press officers of the contingents, of MP, Civilians and OGG meet in the Austrian Officers Club in Camp Faouar with the editorial team to dis-

and reports on the visit of the UN - Secretary General (1998), the Pope (2000), of ministers, ambassadors, high ranking military personnel and artists - the "Golan Journal" is a faithful companion of UNDOF, a conscientious chronicler of all that has happened in the mission and a mirror of our colorful daily world for exactly 25 Years.

I wish the Golan Journal a great future life as long as UNDOF exists and to each of you, many informing and entertaining hours with the "Golan Journal".

Article by Maj Stefan May

Photo by Sgt Rene Alexiewicz

Family Shouting Place

The Family Shouting Place of the village Hadar near A-line is situated at 4.5 kms southwest of this village at 1,100m above sea level. The Family Shouting Place for the Druze Village Majdal Shams is 300m west of the A-side. At least once a week, families from both sides (Hadar and Majdal villages) talk to each other

via loudspeakers to arrange weddings; or simply to discuss family issues. Both villages, Hadar and Majdal Shams are Druze villages whose people are ethnic minorities belonging to a religious community. They are typically muslims but with their own customs and traditions.

The cease-fire line suddenly tore the local Druze community apart, which also inadvertently separated some fam-



The Family Shouting Place - close to Posn 16

ilies. The Shouting Place was deemed the only possible way to exchange news, to meet separated members of families, or to discuss family affairs.

One Druze rule is not being allowed to marry other than another Druze. To be a Druze is not a question of choice but of a birth. In 1974 the Israeli side agreed to the so called "family shouting" in order for families to "meet" every second week under UN supervision. This

practice was unfortunately ended after some problems occurred; however it was resumed in 1987 and to this day, "family- shouting" has taken place there regularly. The ground around the position 16 is also used for family-shouting.

With the advent of mobile phones and internet, family shouting has become rare and younger Druzes now prefer these modes of communication for those separated from each other by the artificial barrier.

However, the Family Shouting Place in the vicinity of position 16 still exists and those from the B side who wish to communicate this way will always be welcome to do so and will be provided the assistance they need.

Article by the crew of position 16

...When the last Austrian soldiers have left Positions 31, 32 and 33, normal routine could be started in full responsibility by the newly integrated Peace Keepers. Initial problems like communication with the home country or delivery of Slovak Newspapers could soon be solved, which will grately benefit the next "generation"...

Number 74 (March-June 1998), First article of SLOVCON

The history of the Pentagon goes back to the early eighties when there was the first thought to move the HQ out of Damascus, the main reason being the steep increase of costs for all the rented buildings and premises in down town Damascus... On the 18th of November 1994, the Pentagon was officially opened by the FC MGen R. Misztal.

Number 59 (December 1994), "History and facts of the new UNDOF-HQ-Building"

The United Nations Beach Club Gaza is open all year round and an ideal place to get away, relax and have fun any time of the year...

Number 29 (October - December 1984), United Nations Beach Club Gaza

POLISH ARMED FORCES DAY

Army Day is celebrated in lots of countries. Nations, strongly affected from wars, waged in the 19th and 20th centuries, nations, who suffered from occupations, or lost their independence, give Army Day its particular character.

SOME OF HISTORY

So was it in the Polish Second Republic, that - as any of the countries resurrecting after the First World War - had to wage stubborn fights for keeping regained independence. In 1923, the Minister of Arms in the Polish government, appreciating the military meaning and moral implication of the young army victory, established Soldier's Day on the 15th of August, where in 1920 the Poles crushed the Red Army attack on Warsaw.

During the whole period between the wars, Soldier's Day was accepted to show the attitudes of an individual, his heroism, generosity, concerns and successes, with pointing the mission, that every soldier fulfills on the battlefield and with the underlining theme that the consciousness of the

aim of the fight often enables him to beat a stronger enemy. The celebrations have always had the character of a reciprocal holiday of the army and the society.

Recollecting a great victory gave hope in time of despair and the belief in resurrection of a strong, sovereign Poland. After the Second World War,

took place, for the first time since the end of the Second World War. It is a holiday memorializing one of the greatest victories of Polish arms, the military success with a great meaning for state history and with consequences, widely spreading over country borders.

It is, at the same time, the holiday, that pays homage to soldiers of all units, to people of various political views, who, in the time of the independence threat, were linked by the common desire of defending their homeland.

The Polish Army Day - August 15th is particularly

significant for the soldiers. Orders and distinctions are awarded and appointments to successive military ranks are made on that day.

Also, the formal sentry dispatch and laying of wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Warsaw take place with the participation of the Polish Army Honorary Guard, sub - units representing all types of armed forces and the orchestra.

*Text and pictures by
Capt Jaroslaw Barczewski*



HE Janusz Omietanski



High rank guests watch the ceremony

Medal Parade XXI Rotation



FC UNDOF presents the medal to WO I D. Tobola

A great day for the whole contingent

Along with the day of Polish Army - on August 13th, 2004 POLBATT celebrated a Medal Parade. The ceremony gathered: FC - MGen Bala N. Sharma, H.E. Mr. Janusz Omietanski - Charge d'Affairs Polish Embassy in Israel, UNDOF COS - Col

Andreas Safranmüller, CO's from UNDOF contingents and many other distinguished guests. After the addresses, a march past took place. At the end of the official events on the Parade Square, guests could visit the POLBATT Traditional Hall and the exhibi-

tion of POLBATT equipment. After that all attendants were invited to a reception where they could taste the delicious food prepared by a team of cooks led by the Capt Mariusz Kujawa.

*Text and pictures by
Capt Jaroslaw Barczewski*

The new UNDOF vehicles arrival

According to the UNDOF VEHICLE REPLACEMENT PLAN a group of drivers from AUSBATT and POLBATT under the command of Capt Krzysztof Golabek from HQ UNDOF and the technical supervision of POLBATT's MTO - Capt Karol Daszkiewicz took part in an unusual



The first drivers of the "PRADO"

event.

On September the 15th and 16th they picked up 29 new cars - Toyota PRADO from Tartous Harbour. After receiving cars from harbor terminal and filling them with fuel UNDOF soldiers have driven them to the authorized service station, where Toyota personnel serviced cars. Then

in three columns, cars safely drove to Camp Faouar. Over the organizational side of this undertaking Pauli Paananen and Ghassan Al-Mufti held the responsibility. Currently



New UNDOF vehicles in Tartous

all Toyota cars in UNDOF are in the exchange process.

We wish safe driving to every car user.

*Text and pictures by
Capt Jaroslaw Barczewski*

...Drivers... compose the largest group of the contingent. Their work is very hard as 45 tons of drinkable water is commonly delivered from Camp Faouar to 21 OP's every day...

Number 23 (April - June 1983), Thirty Years of Polish Army service under the Blue Flag

“C” Gate: Life between the Lines

Charlie Gate began its life back in 1974 as Position 28. Originally commanded by AUSBATT, it was handed over to the UNDOF Military Police in 1992.

The appropriately named Charlie Detachment is manned by the UNDOF Military Police Platoon. Charlie Detachment is the smallest of the MP Detachments numbering 7 personnel and 1 vehicle. However, it also has the least amount of territory to cover.

sives, searches of vehicles and baggage crossing the AOS and seizing of contraband/unauthorised items.

They maintain close and daily liaison with the IDF Liaison Officers at the „A“ Gate and the SSAD Liaison Officers at the „B“ Gate. In the course



Students crossing at “C” Gate



MP assisting with a wedding

It's responsible for the territory between “A” Gate and “B” Gate. Their job is maintaining

of their searches/inspections they are looking for the following unauthorized items:

East to West: spare tires and filled jerry cans not sealed by UN in an approved manner, fresh fruits and vegetables and any other agricultural and botanical products, water (except in sealed bottles), private arms and illegal drugs.

On other occasions they are much busier. These are the special crossings where they assist in International Committee of the Red Cross/ Crescent (ICRC) handovers/ crossings and meetings (Students or Druze pilgrims crossings, weddings and medical crossings).

Travelling the beautiful Golan on horseback is something special. Members of the Military Police conducted a survey and learned that horses are very useful and effective when the territory shows its roughness and wilderness in all its beauty...

Number 87 (April - June 2001), “Mounted Military Police”

control of movement between the „A“ and „B“ Gates.

As part of this they ensure that all persons attempting to cross are in possession of the proper documentation and/or are on a daily crossing list. They conduct spot checks, dog checks for drugs and explo-

West to East: video cameras goods obviously manufactured in Israel and items with Hebrew markings, books with Israeli origin, with Hebrew written outside and books (like travel guides) about Israel only. Pornographic magazines and videos.

They assist with communications, shelter, personnel and traffic control, as well as ensuring essential UN traffic can still cross the Area of Separation.

*Article by: SSgt Rudi Hauer
Photos: Capt Paul Mellema*

OGG-T Social

Spring is a season of new beginnings, and for me, my new beginning was arriving (breaking out of) my 27-hour flight here to UNTSO on 14 March.

The great thing about travel is not so much that you get to see a new country, but that you get to look at your own country through new eyes. And, having arrived at Observer Group Golan – Damascus (OGG-D) from New Zealand as a first-time United Nations Military Observer (UNMO) only two months ago, my eyes are still very, very new.

Number 91 (April – June 2002), "Kiwi on the Golan"

Being a young Kiwi lad with very few stories of old from New Zealand history to tell (any decent British pub was built prior to the founding of New Zealand 160 years ago),



Blast wall construction OP55

I have been wide-eyed and like a sponge taking in everything the Middle East has to offer. But already it is not the archeological ruins or war his-

tory that is standing out in my mind - it is the other UNMOs that I have met and their families. The social life of OGG-T remains alive and well and provides great chances for lasting friendships.

It seems like after only a few more months I will be able to walk from house to house across Europe when I begin to travel at the end of my year here.

The evening of my first day at the station consisted of a big get together at the MAC house, for no particular reason other than a good time. Leading up to the short speech by the Chief of Station and our introductions, I was mentally reminding myself over and over to s-p-e-a-k s-l-o-w-l-y, and I thought I had done a good job. But

alas, afterwards I was met by many UNMOs and wives who, without fail, asked me questions about myself that were totally different from what

I had just said! Well at least I didn't raise the expectations on the Kiwis that follow me.

At the start of summer, OGG-T held its biannual family day and lunch at the OP. I only witnessed the 'white



FtLt Rob Arrowsmith resting at the Jordan River

train' of UN vehicles ferrying people up and back from Tiberias, as I was at the same time biking around Lake Tiberias with LtCol Hermann Walzl from Austria.

It's a great ride - hard enough to be a challenge but achievable for anyone with average fitness. All along the way you will find places to stop and look at archeological forms, or stop for a refreshing swim in the lake.

For those interested, good quality bikes can be hired from hotels at the southern end of Tiberias, and the ride takes between two and four hours.

*Article by FtLt Rob Arrowsmith
Kiwi UNMO
OGG-T*

Human Resources Management and Travel Section

We present in this edition one of the key Administrative sections that is responsible for human resources management and provision of travel services in UNDOF.



Mr. Harbir Singh and Ms. Noi Jirapokakul with their assistants

The Section comprises of the following staff members:

Harbir Singh as its Chief, Niramol (Noi) Jirapokakul as his deputy. Rafia Zubeidi, Rasha Al-Abed, Jancit Idrees, Mounir Al-Haj and Stella

- personnel administration of approximately 150 civilian staff members; recruitment of national staff; requests for exit/entry permits; arranging official travel of all civilian staff for home-leave, education

ern Sahara, and Congo. We have successfully achieved and maintained the lowest vacancy rate. We believe in gender equality and respect for diversity. After completing over 26 years of successful and

criticism from various quarters.

During the past year there has been a large turn-over of international staff and some of our national staff have been granted international appointment status to other missions. We presently have seven national staff serving on temporary missions in Haiti, West-

The international staff provides administrative and support services to the military component of UNDOF. There are currently 31 international civilian staff serving with UNDOF and others on temporary assignment with other peacekeeping missions...

Number 84, (July - September 2000), "International Civilian Staff"

Srou assist them.

Since we do not market or sell a product, the main "pillar" of our office is Teamwork and the ability of its staff to react in a cheerful and prompt manner. Among a million other things, our office is responsible for various human resources functions such as

grant travel, training courses, and travel of military members of UNDOF on compassionate and medical grounds.

With the introduction of very rigorous recruitment criteria we are now able to employ the best of the best. This competitive, fair and transparent system occasionally brings in

challenging service with the United Nations (9 years with UNDOF), I am retiring at the end of September 2004 and would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to all our civilian and military colleagues for their support.

Article: Harbir Singh

Photo: WO II Gernot Payer

When Joy and Sorrow meet

Her name is Manja, and she is 26 years old. She is sitting beside her father in a big sitting room and looks pale. In a few weeks she will marry her cousin, the 27 year old Najm. He lives in Majdal-Shams, on the A-Side, she is at home in Sahnaja on B-Side, near Damascus.



Manja

Najm

Some years ago they met for the first time, when he came to Syria to study in the capital and visited his relatives. Two years ago they saw each other for the last time. Since then they are in contact by e-mail.

The family supports the wedding, says the father. They all belong to the religious group of the Druze. Some days later a big party for hundreds of people is held in Sahnaja: Manja in the long white wedding dress is the focus of the loud and long event: Nearly the whole town has come to offer congratulations. Sweets are prepared, and the people dance in the middle of the big banquet hall in a wide circle, carrying their neighbours on their shoulders. And all agree: The man is missing.

A day in June in Majdal-Shams: In one of the houses, interlocked at the slope, the family of the fiancé, a smart young dentist, is living. All members are awaiting the

day of the wedding, looking forward to the new girl in the family whom they do not know personally yet. After the wedding at the gate there will be a great wedding-party for 800 people in Majdal-Shams.

Day of joy and sorrow

In the morning of the 16th August busses and decorated cars approach A-Gate and B-Gate. Then both groups have to wait until the administra-



Just married...

wire, which marks the mine-field behind her.

It is lunchtime and the ceremony can start: The bride and the groom are allowed to take 15 persons each from their own families to the event between the gates, at Charlie-detachment, the position of the UN-military police. People, who did not see their relatives from the other side for decades embrace their beloved ones with tears. They have one hour to be together, then they

have to part. Further meetings are only possible in Jordan, where both can go. The Druze families do it once a year.

At 1300 hours the point of no return has come: Again the members of the families embrace and have to say goodbye for a long time. Manja is weeping as she says farewell to her sisters, her father and her mother. Again and again another relative wants to embrace her, but Najm, her husband, pulls her away to the A-Gate, towards their common future.

Text: Maj Stefan May



Wedding ceremony in Sahnaja

tive procedures are finished. It is the moment, when Manja and her relatives realize that the moment for the last fare-



well is not far. Manja, again in her wide wedding dress, very beautiful, with much jewellery and a small crown, is sitting quiet in front of the barbed

“Only” 10

Ten years ago Maj Anton Rettenbacher, today commercial attaché in Singapore, had the idea of producing radio editions for UNDOF. Next year Radio Gecko will celebrate its anniversary. The first chief of Radio Gecko remembers the beginning:



One evening, shortly after my arrival at the mission on my second assignment as a Force Welfare Officer in 1995, I was with friends at the San-Pub (Medical Pub). We were listening to the same old CD for quite some time and at this moment the idea for a radio station with UNDOF struck me. Listening to the same old music was boring.

As the UN was facing financial constraints, I had to find sponsors for the necessary equipment and tools. After sending a fax to the Chairman of Deutsche Welle, we got a transmitter from Bayrischer Rundfunk in Munich as a permanent personal loan to me.

Since my office was in a container and there was plenty of space available I installed the radio equipment there, such as a mixing board, music CDs and CD-player, which also belonged to me, the stereo (property of UNDOF) and two microphones (property of AUSBATT). Luckily there was Klaus Poluk from AUSBATT who used to work for Radio Uno, a private radio station in Austria. Klaus was more than happy to train a handful of people who wanted to volunteer to work at the station.

The 5th of December 1995

was an eventful day that marked my effort in running the radio station. The FC Gen. Koster, CAO Antonio Bautista, CO AUSBATT LtCol Lindner and other members were present when Radio UNO went live on the air for the first time at 3pm transmitted on 95.90 FM.



During the day we broadcasted music from a CD-changer only interrupted by news during lunch hour that was read by either Klaus or myself. In the evening the radio aired different programs. Later Radio Gecko moved to a new location. Through the sales of Radio Gecko T-Shirts and sponsors from the UN and AUSBATT PX we were able to acquire brand new equipment such as CD-players designed for a radio station, a new mixing board, headphones and microphones.

Since its first establishment in 1995 Radio Gecko became an institution in UNDOF. Soon after Polish, Canadian and Japanese UN-members joined the Austrians' radio team. On a personal note Radio Gecko was a personal achievement for me and the rest of my team.

To see it grow from a small radio that first started from an idea born in the Sun Pub to what it has become today is quite fulfilling and makes me proud.

I would like to wish Radio Gecko and its team success and I am looking forward to celebrating together its 10-year anniversary.

Article by Anton Rettenbacher

Radio Gecko Today

Ten years after its founding Radio Gecko is very vivid: About 20 moderators from Austria, Canada, Japan and Poland send editions every day between 19 and 23 hours. During the rest of the time professional radio stations in the German language are going on air with Radio Gecko by means of satellite. Besides the radio-makers provide several events of UNDOF with music or only technical equipment - Medal parades, AOS-marches, celebrations -, but also parties of the international community in Syria.

Just now Radio Gecko tries to extend the transmitting power to reach all positions of UNDOF. The permission of the Syrian Authorities is still outstanding. Very soon Radio Gecko can be met all over the world, on its web-page, which might become a window of UNDOF to the public in the future: www.radio-gecko.com

Article by Maj Stefan May

Jordan, a country of history

Amman is not love at first glance; it is not love at second glance. After hours of driving and searching for a hotel one only wants to come out of that town. A town, where one loses orientation immediately, surprisingly even when the sun is shining.

It also takes time and some involuntary bypasses to leave the capital of Jordan, built on seven hills, but in the meantime spreading over more than a dozen hills.

Going north, after an hour's drive, the antique town of Gerasa (Jerash today) is reached, one of the most pre-



Center of the historic Gerasa

served Roman excavations in the world. One can stroll along the 800 meter long main street Cardo, look at the ruins of the buildings to the left and to the right and imagine by which means the people 2000 years ago could make it possible to erect the huge columns. A day easily passes by when visiting Gerasa with the two theatres, four relicts of churches, with its elegant forum and the Ionic columns around it. During summertime the town of stones is very vivid: Then a famous festival takes place. Every evening the ruins are background for artistic performances.

Some kilometers away you can find a testimonial of another time: Qala'at ar-Rabad,

also a very well preserved castle near the village of Ajloun, where the soldiers of Saladin fought against the Crusaders.

A Highway to the past

If you decide to go south from Amman, take the King's Highway. It is the ancient street of salesmen, pilgrims and armies from the south of the Arabic peninsula to the Mediterranean Sea. It is not surprising that one can find cultural sights all the way. For instance Mount Nebo, the hill, where Moses died, after having a last look to the Promised Land on the other side of the Jordan. When there is a good view, one can see even the roofs of Jerusalem from the church on the hilltop.

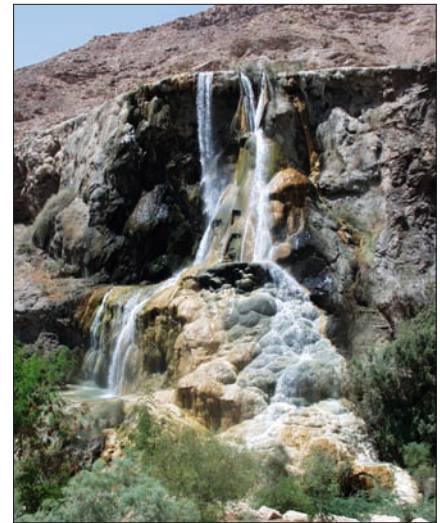
In Madaba, a typical Bedouin market place, the visitor can find many colorful



The King's Highway to Amman

mosaics of the Byzantine periods. If not afraid to drive about 15 kilometers to the west in the direction of the Dead Sea, one would reach Hammamat Ma'an, a resort with mineral hot water. It rushes over the rocks down in huge waterfalls

into pools, where the people like to take a very warm bath in the middle of nature. It



Hot bathes under the waterfall

makes you feel comfortable, but also a bit tired for the rest of the tour.

Castles on the way to Petra

The ride shows you the old Crusader castles of Kerak and Shobak, but before that you must cross two lonesome valleys, engraved upon a barren and rocky plateau without any foliage, in which the street leads down in mighty curves and up on the other side.

Take your time, when you drive along the King's Highway, you need more than a day to reach Petra, the most famous sight in Jordan, the old Nabatean capital, growing out of the rocks of red sandstone. But that 2000 year old architectural miracle is worth its own story...

Text and photos: Maj Stefan May



... *also 100* ...



100 years ago the first part of the famous Hedjaz-railway was opened. The purpose was to bring pilgrims to the holy towns of Islam.



The old Hedjaz railway station in Damascus

Between stones and pools of oil, the rails not really visible in the high grass, a diesel-locomotive with a yellow post-wagon and a four-axle-passenger-car, made of wood and with battered platforms on each end, are waiting in the morning sun. For sure this is the museum train, better take a photo of it. After a few minutes this train rolls to platform one: It is not a museum train, it is the regular train from Damascus to Amman, two times a week leaving the capital of Syria for the capital of Jordan. Duration of the travel according to the timetable: 10 hours, more than double the time of a ride by car. The famous Hedjaz railway is still alive, but very weak - charming but weak.

The Damascus main station is a nice old summer house, hidden in the south of

Damascus, with ivy around the windows, behind which one gets the tickets in a slow and complicated procedure for 150 Syrian Pounds. Before departure time about a dozen freight wagons are attached to the train. Then it starts, between the houses of the outskirts of the town, like a plough through heaps of garbage and dust.

In the open land, under the steady sun, the train rumbles and lurches at not more than 40 km/h. There are not many passengers. Only two families, the women wearing dark scarves, with several big black plastic bags are sitting in the compartments of the groaning passenger wagon, built in Belgium 1906. It is a wagon from the beginning of the Hedjaz-railway, named after the landscape around Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

Turkey's first railway network

At the end of the 19th century the Sultan of the Turkish Empire began to build up a railway network. To make it easier for the Moslem pilgrims to reach the holy towns of Mecca and Medina, he planned a railway line from Damascus through the desert. For constructing the 1463 kilometers long project with a 1050 Millimeter narrow gauge, he engaged a German engineer from Saxony who managed to complete it in eight years between 1901 and 1908. The Hedjaz-Railway remained the only Turkish railway, free from debt in the end, because it was built exclusively by donations from Moslems all over the world.

On 1 September 1904 the first part of the Hedjaz-railway between Damascus and Ma'an was opened in a festive way. Many forests of the region disappeared in these years because they were used for sleepers. Passenger wagons were ordered all over Europe, even a Mosque-Wagon was built, with a two meterhigh Minaret. Steam locomotives were bought in Germany, which one can find until today - in the depots of Damascus and Daara or as metallic ruins in the Saudi Arabian desert. During the pilgrim season up to three trains daily, left Damascus for Medina, taking about 350 passengers each, running 50



At noon in Daara

hours to four days. That was a big advantage in comparison with the camel-caravans, which needed 30 to 40 days by riding 13 hours per day. It is reported that in 1914 up to 70.000 pilgrims used the train.

Pilgrim trains and military trains

But the Hedjaz-railway never reached Mecca itself, the construction was stopped in Medina because of World War I. In these days the railways above all were of strategic importance: The German engineer had to construct connecting lines through the Yarmuk-valley to the harbor of Haifa, from north to south of Palestine and even in the Sinai. Because the railway network now was used for military purposes it became a main target of the Arabs, revolting against the Turkish Empire.

The Arabs were supported by the British and led by the famous Lawrence of Arabia, who was responsible for most attacks against the railway line. And despite the fact that Lawrence caused much damage to it, the Hedjaz-railway worked until the last days of the war in 1918. With the end of the Turkish Empire also the idea of a railway

network in the Middle East found an end. Only the fragment between Damascus and Amman remains until today, unnoticed by the public.

A three hours stop at the border

After four hours of traveling to the utmost south of Syria the train stops at Daara, the border station to Jordan, at noon. Only half an hour to wait for changing trains says the conductor and collects the passports. It is not half an hour, it becomes three hours of waiting in the sun, in front of the station, near a roaring compressor, because the building is just under renovation, between Jordan families with much luggage



On its way towards Amman

and inexpensive purchases of things around them: eggs, potatoes, fruits. A little boy does not get tired of offering chewing gum from a dirty box all of the time.

At two in the afternoon the train from the other

side approaches: A yellow machine, built in Chicago for the "Jordan Hedjaz Railways", in front and behind quite as old passenger wagons as the others. After an hour of checking passports and luggage the Jordan train leaves Daara, the ten freight wagons from Damascus are still attached. The passenger cars have no compartments; the people are sitting on opposite sides along the windows, like in old tramcars and look out to the monotonous landscape, while the train stumbles down the hills.

Two donkeys between the rails escape a collision by the skin of their teeth. It is becoming evening, the train passes a giant petrol depot like an animal of another world. After some minutes it reaches the last town before Amman, runs along a street, passes a market where tiny lamps under small roofs shine on fruits and vegetables which are arranged into little mountains.

In a curve the conductor grabs from the platform and catches an apple. Already in the darkness, at about half past eight in the evening, after twelve hours of traveling, Amman is reached at a romantic old station building behind trees, like hundred years ago, somewhere far away from the infrastructure one is used from a railway station.

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