

GOLAN

The UNDOF Journal



January - March 2009
No. 118



Dear Reader!

Covering the winter season of UNDOF activities here in the mission area I proudly present the new edition of the Golan Journal. With all its efforts the editorial team again can provide you - the worshiped reader - with a magazine full of fascinating insights into the mission of UNDOF.




Our team: Alexander, Günther, Taka and Gerry

For these efforts I would like to thank all the Press Officers for their contribution and say good bye to the outgoing comrades Capt Tokuhiko Oeda, Capt Yozo Akiyama, Capt Damian Zebzda and Capt Kurt Black-Sinclair. At the same time I would like to warmly welcome their successors Lt I Daisuke Nakashima, Capt Takahisa Moriya, Capt Mariusz Grzanka and Maj Hanne Olafsen into our dedicated cadre of Press Officers.

In this edition it gives me great pleasure to present articles about the honorable visit of Ambassadors and Military Attachés to UNDOF, some humanitarian activities of UNDOF peacekeepers and the challenging duty in the mountain area during wintertime.

Dip in and find out!


Yours sincerely,
Capt Günther Kreiml, SOPR

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Photos by WO II Gernot Payer, Force Photographer and Capt Günther Kreiml, SOPR

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Photo by Department of Public Information NY

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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 Media, Public Relations & Welfare Office publishes the Golan Journal quarterly. 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!

*While there is still some snow on the mountain, the warm beautiful days of summer are clearly upon us, bringing with them renewed energy and happiness. With the Gaza conflict now firmly behind us and its effect to our AOR dissipating rapidly, it is with pleasure that I use this issue of the Journal to reflect on our recent successes. It is in this vein that I would like to say: **Great job everyone!!***

I could fill many pages with examples of great work, but I would like to concentrate on a few that greatly contributed to keeping the AOS quiet in these times of great tensions. First with POLBATT, which has seen the greatest change in civilian activity. They have shown extreme flexibility and have greatly enhanced their patrolling, bringing the violation levels manifolds below historical levels. I would also particularly like to praise 2nd Coy for their handling of the shooting incident near Posn 80. Their quick and professional response was instrumental to keeping the situation from escalating.

AUSBATT was also extremely successful in the north. By their continued hard work, they were able to keep the number of violations at a very low level despite the normal seasonal growth in civilian activity. I would also like to thank all involved with the Defence Attaché and the Ambassador days for the exceptional support given, especially considering the many changes caused by the unsettled weather.

Furthermore, I would like to recognize the tremendous usefulness of our Force HQ Coy. They are a force multiplier and an extremely effective tool to enhance our presence and take care of our ever changing focal points. Their ability to quickly fulfill new tasks and to deploy to any parts of our AOS makes them a great asset to our two line battalions.

Finally, we have made great progress in enhancing the synergy between our civilian and military staff. Finding new ways to work together to enable more manpower released to the line battalions. This would not be possible without the dedication of everyone in the HQ and the tremendous adaptability of LOGBATT which has taken on new tasks and provided personnel to augment many of the Task Forces being established.

I would also like to welcome our new members of POLBATT and J-CON. I am very pleased to have you in our UNDOF family. As you well know by now, your predecessors did an exceptional job. It is your turn now to pick up where they have left and continue the great work. Although it will be sad to see our Polish friends depart for good at the end of their rotation, we have to remember that it is through adversity that the best growth is possible. We have to grab this opportunity and charge ahead to transform UNDOF in the most efficient and operational force possible.

In the Service of Peace, to EVERYONE in UNDOF, I say ...

*Thank you, Hvala, Danke, Merci, Dziękuję,
Arigato, Dhanyavad, Shukran, Toe Dah!*



Major General Wolfgang JILKE
Force Commander UNDOF

Chief of Staff Words

After a short and none to severe a winter, springtime is here upon us. The landscape is slowly but certainly changing in accordance with the established routine of nature. However, there is no certainty about the situation in the region. Infact, we may be living through some of the most interesting but uncertain times in the region's turbulent history.

A new Administration is in place in the United States of America. It promises to look at the world differently and whatever be their public uttering, each player in the region has its own hopes and expectations with regard to the US. We also have a new Government in Israel. Again, everyone seems to have his/her own analysis for what it implies for the future of the region. There are also impending elections in Lebanon and Iran, whose outcome again will influence the situation in the whole region in no small measure. Similarly, there are apparent and interesting developments in Egypt and Syria too.

In the Mission itself, the Polish Government has decided to pull its troops out by September, thus ending, 35 years of its outstanding contribution towards peace on the Golan Heights. It would be a challenge to fill in the void of 35 years of operational experience. The other dynamics in the Area of Separation are also undergoing a frenetic change with planned developmental activities involving new towns/villages, communication infrastructure, agricultural/horticultural farms, water reservoirs canal systems etc. In its wake, it is bringing in more and more people into the Area of Separation. By itself, it is the

most potent indicator of UNDOF's success and a sign of continued confidence in its ability to maintain the prevailing peace and quiet in the region. However, to the discerning, it brings in added operational challenges, since it enhances the chances of accidental/deliberate adversarial contact between the Syrian Civilians and the Israeli Defence Forces across the A-Line. As we all understand, it doesn't take much in this region for an otherwise small tactical incident to blow up into a major crisis with strategic implications.

Therefore, as I foresee it, a major proportion of our operational focus in future will increasingly be directed towards managing issues with regard to the civilian population in the area of responsibility. A beginning has already been made in this regard with establishment of a formal forum for interaction between our designated personnel and the local administration. Our budget for 2009-2010 also caters for a Civil Affairs Officer.

However, the above operational challenge will require much more than that. It will require that each one of the soldiers is not only aware of the situation but also of the grave implications of simple incidents



like shepherds/farmers crossing the A-Line and approaching the Technical Fence. It will require a dedicated effort from all ranks to ensure that any kind of confrontational situation between both sides across the A-Line is prevented. I am confident, each one of us will be up to the challenge.

Best Wishes,

Colonel Ganesh Singh Bisht
Chief of Staff UNDOF

Visits to UNDOF by Capt Takahisa Moriya, DMPIO



H. E. Ms. Kunz Maria, Ambassador of Austria to Syria, visited Camp Faouar and UNDOF Positions (2nd Jan 2009)



H. E. Mr. Glenn Davidson, Ambassador of Canada to Syria, visited UNDOF Positions and the GOLAN hospital in Quneitra (20th Jan 2009)



LtGen Shibata Mikio, Commanding General, central Readiness Force, Japan Ground Self Defense Force, supervised J-CON and evaluated its performance of mandated tasks (2nd - 5th Feb 2009).



Mr. Altman-Schevitz Jan Samson and 28 friends of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung visited Camp Ziouani (13th Mar 2009)



LtGen Kruljac Mladen, Commanding General, Croatia Land forces, supervised CROCON and evaluated its performance of mandated tasks under Austrian command (16th - 19th Mar 2009)

- Mr. Lukacs Yehuda, Ph.D. Faculty Director in George Mason University, and 21 students visited Camp Ziouani (16th Jan 2009)
- H. E. Mr. Takeuchi Haruhisa, Ambassador of Japan to Syria, attended the J-CON Day (9th Feb 2009)
- H. E. V.P. Haran, Ambassador of India to Syria, visited Camp Faouar and UNDOF Positions (13th Feb 2009)
- Col Sprawka Stanislaw, Chief of Division, Staff, Operational Command, Supervised POLBATT rotation and evaluated its performance of mandated tasks (5th - 19th Mar 2009)
- On invitation of the Force Commander, 15 Military Attachés visited Camp Faouar, Posn Hermon Base, Posn Hermon South and Posn 12 (23rd Mar 2009)
- On invitation of the Force Commander, 21 Ambassadors visited Camp Faouar, Posn 10, Posn 16 and Posn 17 (24th Mar 2009)
- Ms. Manuel Susan, the Chief of Peace and Security Section of the Department of Public Information from United Nations in New York, visited Camp Faouar, Posn 16 and Posn 27 (27th - 29th Mar 2009)

New People in UNDOF



The new CLPIO

LtCol Gerhard Luger arrived in the mission area on 18th January 2009 and assumed the responsibilities of the Chief Liaison Protocol & Information Officer (CLPIO). He was born in 1966 and joined the Austrian Armed Forces in 1986 as an infantry soldier. In 1990 he graduated from the Military Academy as a Logistics Officer. He served in various places in Austria as platoon leader, company commander and staff officer in a logistic battalion. In 2000 he was assigned the Deputy Chief Logistics Officer of a mechanized brigade. Because of his main interest in computers and electronics, he changed his specialization to signals officer and S6. Since 2004 he was assigned as the S6 in the same brigade. He joined several missions abroad and some international exercises.

He served 21 months in UNDOF HQ in 1999/00 as ITO CF, 13 months within KFOR as Commander of the Austrian National Support Element in 2002/03, and 6 months in Bosnia Herzegovina as Deputy Chief G6 of the Multinational Brigade (NORTH) in 2005/06. He is married to Catherine and lives in the capital of the province of Lower Austria.



The new CO/AUSBATT

LtCol Armin Lehner was born on 31st Mar 1962 in Austria. He joined the Army in 1980 and graduated in 1984 from the Military Academy in Wr. Neustadt as an Infantry Officer. LtCol Lehner was posted to the 42nd Infantry Regiment in Freistadt and in 1986 to the 41st Infantry Regiment in Enns.

From 1994 on LtCol Lehner has held several appointments in various command and staff positions at the Austrian NCO Academy, and currently holds the office of Commander of the 1st Training Division at the NCO Academy.

LtCol Lehner has wide and diverse operational experience. He has served in several UN, OSCE and NATO missions. In 1988/89 he was the Company Commander of the 2nd Coy of AUSBATT. He then served as the Senior Staff Officer Operations (SSO-Ops) from 1992-1994 in UNDOF HQ. In 1997/98 he served with UNTSO; first with OGG-Damascus and then in Team Sierra with the Observer Group Lebanon. In 1998/99 he served within OSCE in Kosovo in the Kosovo Verification Mission and from April to October 2000 he joined KFOR 2 in the Multinational Brigade South. In 2005/06 he served as COGG-T with UNTSO.

He graduated the National Defense College in Vienna with a Master's of Security and Defense Management in 2004 and a Master's of Business and Administration in 2007.



The new CO/J-CON

Maj Shinichi Takagi was born on 5th April 1973, in Japan's Ishikawa prefecture. He now lives in Hokkaido, with his family. Maj Takagi graduated from Japan's National Defense Academy in 1997, with a Bachelors Degree in Mechanical Engineering. He then joined Officer Candidate Course and was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in 1998.

Maj Takagi's military career posts include Rifle Platoon Leader, Intelligence Platoon Leader in the 26th Infantry Regiment (1998-2004), TO in Guard CO of #1 IRAQ Humanitarian Reconstruction Support GP (2004) and Infantry Instructor at Fuji School (2004/05). Between the years 2005-2007, Maj Takagi attended the Command and General Staff Course and was then assigned as CO Commander of 6th Infantry Regiment. Prior to his present command post as 27th J-CON CO, Maj Takagi was assigned as G-3 staff of 5th Brigade. Maj Takagi is married to Kyoko and he has a two-year-old son, Kouki, and a newborn daughter, Misaki. His hobbies include Karate, Soccer and Stag Beetle Breeding.



The new COGG

Cdr Matti Vainionpää was born on 29th February 1960 in Kauhajoki, Finland. After compulsory service he joined the Military Academy and graduated as a coast artillery officer in 1983 and fulfilled his duties as a Deputy Company Commander in Turku Coast Artillery Regiment in the west coast of Finland. He served as a Commanding Officer of the coast artillery units and as a Chief of Logistics Coast Artillery Battalion in 1989-1995. Vainionpää studied in the General Staff College 1995-1997 and was posted to Turku Coast Artillery Regiment as a Chief of Operations. He served as Battalion Commander in the Archipelago Sea Naval Command from 1998 to 2001.

His first UN Mission was in Kosovo as Senior Military Liaison Officer in Prizren Regional HQ of UNMIK in 2001/02.

In 2002-2005 Cdr Vainionpää served as Chief of Personnel of the Archipelago Sea Naval Command in Turku and from 2005 to 2006 he worked 18 months in Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, the last assignment as Chief Liaison Officer to Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. After returning back to Finland, Cdr Vainionpää served as ACOS (Personnel) in the Finnish Navy Command in 2007/08.



The new COGG-D

LtCol Martin Van de Ven was born in Tilburg in The Netherlands in 1957. After graduating from the Royal Military Academy in 1981, he served as a platoon and deputy company commander in the Army Corps. In 1984, his international experience started in Lebanon (UNIFIL, Dutch Infantry Company). After appointments as an instructor in the Training Command and as a company commander and staff officer in the Army Corps, in 1991 he was involved in the operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq. The same year he deployed to Yugoslavia with the first EC Monitor Mission. After staff appointments in the Army Staff and the 43rd Mechanized Brigade, he served with UNPROFOR in Central Bosnia in 1993/94. After this, he was a movement specialist for expeditionary operations for several years. As a LtCol he was Safety Advisor Dangerous Goods, the Dutch LO in the German Einsatzführungskommando, Operational Commander of the Defense M&T Organization and Policy Advisor Operational Logistics in the Defense Staff.

LtCol Van de Ven likes running, working out, is a Master Scuba Diver and enjoys the good things of life, together with his wife Marianne and their foster son Gianni of five.



The new COGG-T

LtCol Frank O'Reilly is from Ireland and has 34 years service with the Defense Forces. His background as a junior officer is Infantry Corps with service in infantry units both at home and abroad. On promotion to Commandant he moved to Defense Forces HQ and gained experience in both Operations and Logistics Sections of the HQ. Prior to service with UNTSO he served as the Staff Officer responsible for Logistic Support to Defense Forces, Ireland contingents serving in Bosnia & Herzegovina, KFOR in Kosovo and Afghanistan. His UN missions include three tours of duty with UNIFIL.

In 1984 he served as a Staff Officer with CMPO UNIFIL HQ, in 1990 as DCO of an Infantry Coy, IRISHBATT and in 1994/95 as Commander of the Battalion Mobile Reserve (BMR), IRISHBATT. He also has service with OSCE, SFOR and KFOR.

Lt Col O'Reilly joined UNTSO in Sep 2007 and served 6 months with Observer Group Lebanon (OGL) as a line UNMO. In Mar 2008 he was promoted from Comdt to LtCol. From Mar 2008 he served for 12 months with Observer Group Golan – Damascus (OGG-D) firstly as a line UNMO, then as Deputy Chief and later as A/Chief OGG-D. In Mar 2009 he took over the appointment of Chief Observer Group Golan – Tiberias (COGG-T) for 12 months. He is married to Rita and has two children Cillian and Aideen. In his spare time he enjoys running, cycling and hill walking.

Women power in UNDOF Part I

On the occasion of the International Women's Day and the International Day of UN Peacekeepers with this year's topic "Women in UN Peacekeeping" on 8th Mar and 29th May 2009 we will have a closer look at the efforts women make in the mission of UNDOF.

The Charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco in 1945, was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right. Since then, the Organization has helped create a historic legacy of internationally agreed strategies, standards, programs and goals to advance the status of women worldwide. Over the years, United Nations action for the advancement of women has taken four clear directions: promotion of legal measures; mobilization of public opinion and international action; training and research, including the compilation of gender desegregated statistics; and direct assistance to disadvantaged groups.

Since it becomes more and more common that women serve in the military forces all around the world, it is not surprising that women are also providing essential service in UNDOF.



India

Maj Rakhi Saraf



Function:

Staff Officer for logistic matters' liaison between military and civil staff.

"It is usual in the Indian Army that women are serving in support and supply units only and not in fighting arms. Since there are only a few female soldiers serving in missions like UNDOF, I would appreciate something like an organized network, a kind of best practice platform, between the serving women in Middle East missions, because it was a challenge for me to integrate myself into this work environment. It would be helpful to have an exchange of experience," she said.



Austria

MSgt Silvia Pfalzer



Function:

Deputy Camp NCO, responsible for fire prevention, fire-fighting and arrangement of the duty roster of the craftsmen.

"I have been a professional soldier for almost ten years, with mission experience in Kosovo and Bosnia. I enjoy and am proud of being part of this multinational UN peacekeeping mission. Even if it is sometime a challenge to establish oneself in such a men dominated field of work," she stated. Additional to her normal duty she is a volunteer with the AUSBATT fire brigade. Also, because she is a military driving instructor in possession of almost every available driving license, she acts as driving master for UNDOF's armored personnel carriers.



SSgt Monika Willegger

Function:

Military Police HQ Investigator dealing with traffic accident including injuries, criminal acts including UN personnel or UN property and crime reading

"As a professional soldier I have served in the Austrian Military Police Special Investigation Unit for about seven years and I have special investigations experience in Kosovo and in Bosnia," she said. When asked for the reactions of male comrades to a female MP soldier she stated: "I never had problems with getting acceptance or authority. Some of the comrades are ashamed and at the same time proud of getting a violation ticket from a female MP soldier. But for the local civilians present at a traffic accident I'm sometimes an attraction with my blonde hair and they ask to have pictures taken with me."

The medical crew in Camp Faouar includes two female doctors and two nurses who have civil professions and are serving in a peacekeeping mission for the first time.



Victoria, Margarete and Ariane in the treatment room

Ms. Margarete Quantschnig and Ms. Victoria Melchior, state-qualified nurses and Ms. Dr. Sigrid Gallent and Ms. Dr. Ariane Knauer, who usually work in civil hospitals, volunteered at the Austrian Armed Forces for UNDOF. They are responsible for the care of in- and out-patients as well as for local civilians in case of emergency. Victoria mentioned: "To work at a Medical Center on mission is completely different to working in a hospital, but I love this chance to gain experience acting very flexible in the unusual environment of a UN Peacekeeping Mission," stressing her pleasure about the very good working climate with her colleagues she has to live with almost around the clock for a whole year.

Margarete said: "I like to work here in UNDOF so much, that I'm thinking about coming again for a second tour, even when I'm sometimes dismayed at the burn on young civilian children we have to treat."

Dr. Knauer has been working in civil hospitals for about six years and she has a special training in tropical medicine and practiced also in Thailand. "For me the biggest challenges in this peacekeeping mission are the circumstances of life in our military organized camp. I'm used to a wide range of disease patterns but the social aspects of this mission are unfamiliar and new to me," she stated.

Dr. Gallent, who has been a civilian physician for more than 32 years mostly working in preventive medicine, was unsure of the soundness of her decision to serve in UNDOF when she first arrived in the mission area. "Enjoying a raised standard of living in Austria, I was not used to the modest circumstances of a camp. But after a few week of familiarization, I found my place among the comrades and now I really enjoy to cope with the challenges of UNDOF," she said.

...to be continued in edition No. 119

Article and photos by Capt Günther Kreiml

“Apple Crossing” – One of the humanitarian challenges for soldiers!

In early 2009 Operation “Apple Crossing” started on 17th Feb in the Quneitra area. At 10:00hrs the first truck crossed the demarcation line between the gates and went through the Area of Separation.



Apples were loaded on A-Side...



...and crossed the B-Gate in ICRC trucks

On the Israeli occupied Golan there are many apple farmers, mostly Syrian Druze and some Jewish settlers. Most of the population there lives at least partially on

sides agreed but wanted the operation to be carried out under the auspices of a neutral organization. The ICRC was involved in the negotiation and the logistics and provided three trucks and drivers to shuttle between A- and B-Gate. UNDOF's role was to mediate between the

to 2005 when 4000 tons of apples where shipped to the B-Side. In 2006 about 5000 tons were shipped and in 2007 the number climbed to 7600 tons. In 2008 the apple crossing was cancelled due to a poor harvest. This year 8000 tons of apples were authorized for the crossing.

Many interested spectators on both sides arrived at the gates to watch the beginning of this very special event. BGen Darwish, the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate and the Governor of Quneitra showed their support and interest.

The ICRC had coordinators on both sides and UNDOF troops were well prepared to assist this important operation which was scheduled for six weeks and concluded on 31st Mar 2009.



The first apples for ICRC members...

apples. Due to overproduction, the Syrian Druze farmers once asked whether they could sell part of their harvest in Syria.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) – with UNDOF's support and mediation – negotiated with both the Syrian and the Israeli authorities. Finally both



...and official authorities

two sides to setup a detailed plan for the operation and to ensure smooth movement between the gates. This annual event goes back

*Article by LtCol Gerhard Luger,
Chief Liaison Protocol &
Information Officer (CLPIO)
Photos by Capt Günther Kreiml, SOPR*

Indian contingent celebrated Republic Day

The aura in Camp Ziouani (CZ) was full of enthusiasm as the Indian contingent was preparing for a grand occasion in the form of celebrating their Republic Day which was evident on the faces of INDCON soldiers which were beaming with joy and pride.



FC followed interestedly the ceremony



Every visitor got a colorful turban



INDCON peacekeepers lined up at parade square

The day started with flag unfurling ceremony by National Senior and Chief of Staff Col G.S. Bisht. The National Flag was then given salutes by smartly turned out officers and soldiers, which was witnessed by Force Commander MGen Wolfgang Jilke and other dignitaries. The Force Commander in his address touched briefly upon the Indian Republic Day, which was then covered in detail by Col Bisht and CO INDCON LtCol Gopal Kapoor.



The "Bhangra" dance

This event was followed by an "India Presentation" which showed the guests various colors and facets of India which included history, geography, modern India, tourism and of course the "Military Might", which left the audience mesmerized and spellbound.

The international kitchen was waiting for the guests with its spicy Indian culinary delights, and when guests reached there they were greeted with the characteristic Indian turban and colorful and energetic "Bhangra" dance.

*Article by Maj Vishal Vikram Singh,
SMO*

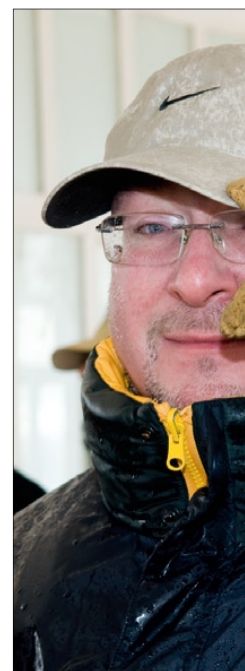
Photos by Cpl Sant Kumar

Military Attaché's Day and A

Two days which could not be more different but having the same effect - to b



The Military Attachés



Freezing

The Force Commander (FC) UNDOF MGen Wolfgang Jilke received 14 Military Attachés and 21 Ambassadors at Camp Faouar to present a very special tour of the UNDOF Operations on 23rd and 24th of March.



Arrival at Posn Hermon Base

FC's intention was to make the distinguished visitors familiar with the special conditions and circumstances for UNDOF's peacekeepers in the area of Mount Hermon in

winter. The weather contributed its share to make the meaning of this tangible especially for the Ambassadors on the second day of the remarkable visit; heavy snowfall and rain alternated with blue sky and sunshine almost every minute.

Nevertheless the Military Attachés started the tour after a briefing about UNDOF winter operations and proceeded via convoy to Position 12 in AUSBATT 1st Company's Area of Responsibility. They were received by CO AUSBATT LtCol Lehner and the Commander of 1st Coy Capt Muckenhammer.

Equipped with additional warm winter clothes provided by the Austrians the travel was continued uphill to Posn Hermon Base and Hermon South in a convoy of 3 over snow-vehicles. Obviously pleased, the Military Attachés enjoyed the

ride uncovering amazing views on the landscape. And they were even more impressed by the mobile and static displays and presentations of some of the types of operations and equipment necessary to fulfill the mandate of UNDOF in the moun-



1st Coy briefing at Posn Hermon South

tain area. From kinds of patrolling via snowmobile, snow shoes or skis to the special equipment necessary to survive in the trappy terrain and a man made snow cave which can be

Ambassador's Day at UNDOF

...e unforgettable impressive to the diplomatic representatives visiting UNDOF.



...but happy



The Ambassador's

used as bivouac in emergency case the 1st Coy showed a wide range of their abilities.

Back down at Posn 12 the special guests enjoyed Austrian hospitality and traditional Austrian food and beverages before the convoy moved



Storming weather at the Shouting place

like a white snake though the valleys to Camp Faouar again.

The Ambassadors visiting UNDOF the following day were not as lucky with the weather. Although

it was planned to present them UNDOF's winter operations in the same manner as it was done for the Military Attachés, wind speeds of about 100 km/h, heavy snowfall and zero visibility made traveling on the mountain too dangerous.

The alternative was to move to Posn 10 and Posn 16 in the vicinity of the so called Family Shouting Place. But even there, getting excellent briefings from the Commander of the Croatian 3rd Coy of AUS-BATT Capt Fiala and the Leader of Posn 16 WO II Dumbović, the honorable visitors felt a sample of what it means for peacekeepers to serve in the mountain area in the winter. Ice cold winds whipped alternating rain and snow down on the Ambassadors.

After a short visit to Posn 17 the tour ended with hot drinks and

pastries in the Austrian Officers Club at Camp Faouar. Despite the bad weather conditions the distinguished guests enjoyed their visit to UNDOF and gained some new impressions of peacekeeping during wintertime.



3rd Coy briefing at Posn 17

Article by Capt Günther Kreiml, SOPR
Photos by Sgt Maximilian Helm,
OpsInfoAsst/Photographer
WO II Gernot Payer,
Force Photographer

Peacekeeping in the snow covered mountains

Heavy snow falls, bad visibility, wind speeds of around 150 km/h and temperatures below minus 20°C are the conditions peacekeepers face in the Mount Hermon area in winter.

The 1st Coy/AUSBATT deployed in the mountain area of UNDOF must fulfill its tasks all year, even when snow heights in winter up to ten meters make a combat service support within the coy nearly impossible and the proficient drivers of the over snow-vehicles face a big challenge.



Search and rescue exercise

Duty in the 1st Coy is not only physically demanding but also very psychologically strenuous. Due to the bad weather conditions the soldiers often cannot leave their positions for several weeks. This requires cooperative work, close comradeship within the position crew and a

high level of mental strength in every single soldier.

Movement in the high-alpine regions such as the Mt Hermon area requires proper preparation and education. The use of skis, snow shoes, avalanche searching equipment and various climbing gear has to be practiced as well as the handling of maps, altimeter and GPS devices. These skills are put into practice through search, rescue and evacuation exercises.

All positions are self-supporting for food for about 30 days. Fresh rations will be delivered once a week to the positions, if the weather is good. Without the support and the flexibility of the 1st Coy Supply Group, located in Camp Faouar, fulfilling these tasks is impossible. Water is made on each position



Training with avalanche searching equipment

except Posn 12 by melted snow and additional chlorine.

But duty in the 1st coy also offers some nice moments. A ski patrol during good weather lets you feel the beauty of the nature and the silence of the mountains. A healthy working climate and special comradeship are the characteristics of the 1st Coy.

*Article and Photos by
Capt Werner Muckenhammer
OIC 1st Coy/AUSBATT*



Posn Hermon Base (2240m) - view from the nearest peak the so-called "Hausberg"

Back again at Posn 22!

In March 2003 Posn 22 was handed over to our comrades from POLBATT. Now six years later AUSBATT returned to the only UNDOF position located on A-Side.



Outgoing Polish peacekeepers of Posn 22

Under the supervision of the Force Commander MGen Wolfgang Jilke the hand over ceremony from POLBATT to AUSBATT was celebrated. He stated that this was only an organizational procedure because everybody who is wearing the blue beret, irrelevant his origin is serving in the same mission and is the same UN soldier. According to that every soldier that served before and will serve after on this position is a member of the big UNDOF family.

Posn 22 is unique because, except for Camp Ziouani, it is the only position on A-Side. This brings some organizational and operational challenges that have to be met. This Position is located on the border of the so called A1 Zone which is a demilitarized zone. This means that Israeli Defense Forces are only allowed to enter under special circumstances. Another aspect for the soldiers serving on this position is that after 17:00hrs the gates are closed and they are cut off the rest of



A present for comrades and friends

AUSBATT. In a case of emergency comrades from Camp Ziouani provide them with assistance.

Once more the soldiers under the blue banner demonstrated effectively that international cooperation is working inside UNDOF for a better and peaceful world.

One Team, One Mission, One Message!

*Article by Capt Martin Malinowski,
OpsInfo AUSBATT*

*Photos by Sgt Maximilian Helm,
OpsInfoAsst/Photographer*



The new crew of Posn 22 with CO/AUSBATT and OIC 2nd Coy

Change of Command in Polish Battalion

On Friday 13th Mar 2009, in the presence of Force Commander UNDOF, Change of Command ceremony took place on the parade square in Camp Ziouani.



Incoming CO LtCol Mariusz Jurek with POLBATT's standard



Signing the protocols of handover-takeover of duties

Since the morning this day in the camp of POLBATT a nervous atmosphere prevailed in connection with such an important event as the Change of Command. This is because the 30th Rotation Polish Military Contingent had already finished its mandatory tasks formally and practically and the 31st Rotation was taking over full responsibility for operational tasks. In spite of anxiousness, each soldier who participated in preparing the ceremony had known what he should do and it was certain that everything was properly organized.

The celebration was honored with the presence of many distinguished guests: H. E. Ms. Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska, the Polish Ambassador in Tel Aviv and Col Zdzisław Sprawka, Head of Polish Delegation from Operational Command. Also the Commanding Officers of others Military Contingents, peacekeepers and numerous arrived civilian staff participated at the Change of Command ceremony. At 10:45hrs, 15 minutes before the

scheduled start of the ceremony, the POLBATT troops took their places on the parade square. It was a sign that FC UNDOF MGen Wolfgang Jilke would soon appear in Camp Ziouani. A Change of Command ceremony can take place only with the FC's presence as he signed the appropriate certificate between outgoing CO LtCol Dariusz Adamczyk and incoming CO LtCol Mariusz Jurek. After outgoing CO's report to FC, MGen Jilke greeted all soldiers in Polish: "*Czolem żołnierze!*" Peacekeepers, which arrived to the Golan Heights the first time, were very surprised and delighted about that. Handing over the POLBATT's standard to the new CO was the culminating point of solemnity. After that, at 11:30hrs the protocols of handover/takeover of duties took place and then following the tradition an olive tree was planted as a symbol of peace. For the soldiers from the

31st Rotation the next six months will be a time of strenuous work in order to continue maintaining peace in the region, which has been successfully carried out for 35 years.



Honor Coy during the military parade

Half-yearly duty under the "Blue Flag" of the United Nations is a very short period in a mission's life. In the life of each soldier it's a time of fulfilling new tasks and gaining a lot of experience, which is quite different than the daily military life in homeland.

*Article and photos by
Capt Mariusz Grzanka, PressO/PB*

Charitable action in Khan Arnabeh

In addition to the fact that Polish peacekeepers' main effort is to lead operations in the POLBATT Area of Responsibility, they also support the local community.

On 15th Jan 2009 ten wheelchairs and twenty hearing aids were donated to handicapped children in Khan Arnabeh at the Quneitra Governor's Office. The money to purchase these items was donated by the Polish Embassy.

Polish peacekeepers have bought wheelchairs and hearing aids, cared for the shipping of the gear and prepared it for the donation ceremony. In addition soldiers from the Polish Military Contingent collected sweets, drinks and other special gifts for the children.

The ceremony was headed by the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Syria Mr. Michał



Wheelchairs donated by the Polish Embassy

Murkociński, the Governor of Qunaitra Province Dr. Riad Hejab and POLBATT's Chief of Staff Maj Tomasz Kondrusik. Many representatives of the local government were present with Syrian TV, families and friends of the disabled children. When receiving such essential equipment and many other presents the children were very happy and it gave great pleasure to the Polish peacekeepers to see all the joyful, smiling faces. This gratitude gave new motivation to helping improve the lives of local inhabitants within the mission of UNDOF.

*Article and Photos by
Capt Damian Zebzda, PressO/PB*



Grateful applause for the donors



Presents for the children



Smiling faces of children gives new motivation to peacekeepers

J-CON Change of Command

Maj Munenori Fujita hands over the command of J-CON to his successor Maj Shinichi Takagi.

On 4th March 2009, J-CON held their Change of Command ceremony at Camp Ziouani. The outgoing 26th CO, Maj Munenori Fujita, handed over the command of J-CON to the incoming 27th CO, Maj Shinichi Takagi. In honor of this ceremony, FC MGen Wolfgang Jilke, The First Secretary & Counselor of Japanese Embassy in Israel, Mr. Tatsuhumi Nishioka, UNDOF branch heads, contingent COs, hosting nation's representatives and many special guests arrived to celebrate this great and significant event.

Maj Fujita and Maj Takagi both sang the handover/takeover protocol. Maj Fujita sincerely expressed his gratitude for the partnership, very close cooperation and excellent hospitality of UNDOF. Then he praised the outgoing members of the 26th J-CON for completing their mission safely and encouraged the new contingent members.

The new 27th CO, Maj Takagi, expressed his appreciation to Maj Fujita and his soldiers for the completion of their successful mission



Shaking hands firmly - Maj Fujita, MGen Jilke, Maj Takagi

and their contribution to UNDOF operations. Then he declared that the 27th Rotation of J-CON would rise to the high level their Japanese predecessors have set over these past 13 years, since the first Japanese rotation was sent to this mission. He also declared that they, as military professionals, will do their best at the highest level of performance in order to sustain UNDOF operations. His rotation motto is:

“Challenged spirits, sincerity and devotion”.

Following the official part of the ceremony, a reception was held at A-Line Club in a pleasant atmosphere and everyone enjoyed themselves.

*Article by Capt Akihito Kondo,
DCO/J-CON*

*Photos by SSgt Kaoru Omura,
Signal Sgt/J-CON*



FC UNDOF with Mr. Tatsuhumi Nishioka



The soldiers of 26th and 27th Rotation of J-CON

The J-CON Day

True to the theme of this festival “FLAME”, which represents soldier’s enthusiasm similar to fire, Japanese Soldiers performed powerful SHODO, KARATE, JUKENDO, JUDO and YOSAKOI.

On 9th February 2009, just a week before J-CON rotation, J-CON Day was held in Camp Ziouani. The Force Commander MGen Wolfgang Jilke, the Counselor of the Japanese Embassy Mr. Mitamura, the Military Attaché Col Shimazu, and many guests participated in this festival commenced in the KHETAPAL HALL with an outstanding stage show.

The audience was impressed by the dynamic exhibition of each martial art, like smashing the board in KARATE, body flips of JUDO and the heated exhibition match of JUKENDO. The main stage of dance was YOSAKOI, a very energetic dance combination of traditional dance style with modern music.

After the stage show the participants enjoyed Japanese food and learned about aspects of Japanese culture in the big hall of the gymnasium. Japanese YAKITORI and SUSHI as well as many other foods were very popular and everyone had great relish over these.

In one corner the participants could have their name written in KANJI by a Japanese calligrapher. In an other corner the participants enjoyed several kinds of cultural events such as having a photo taken wearing a Japanese KIMONO costume.

Throughout this festive day, J-CON and fellow participants strengthened their cultural relationship and understanding with each other. In addition, another purpose of this festival was to express appreciation from 26th J-CON to all soldiers and staff serving for the UNDOF mission. Thank you very much, we will never forget you!

*Article by Capt Tokuhiro Oeda
Adjt /PressO /J-CON
Photos by WO II Gernot Payer
Force Photographer*



Spectators in the KHETAPAL HALL



The traditional YOSAKOI dance



Japanese archer demonstrate their skills

1500 People at the Family Shouting Place

On Valentine's Day there is a kind of love shown by the separated families at the Family Shouting Place for more than 30 years; proclaiming their love through megaphones and seeing loved ones through binoculars.



The crowded Family Shouting Place next to Posn 16 on B-Side

Along the A-line between the small towns Hadar and Majdal Shams close to Posn 16, around 900 people gathered from B-Side and 600 on the A-Side. This is the first of two big annual gatherings with the second in mid-April. Beside such big events at the Family Shouting Place families with children and young love couples frequently arrive for meetings. Majdal Shams is the largest populated town on the Golan under control of A-Side authority, and the village Hadar under B-Side authority. In these towns the majority populations are Druze separated by less than five kilometers.

"Our task was to secure the position and to show the presence and the UN Flag. We watch out, like each day, that there is no violation by crossing the A-line," says WO II Dalibor Dumbovic, the commander of Posn 16 which is located near the

Family Shouting Place. To ensure the safety of all the people at this event, Posn 16 was significantly strengthened by a Rapid Reaction Group.

People living on the B-Side are very proud and sensitive to the historical significance of the Shouting Place and have invested money and effort to build a covered terrace. On the A-Side people come together on the terraces of commercial buildings. In the 1980's these meetings were, as today with the presence of the UN, more intimate because they were held down in the valley just separated by barbed wire and the technical fence so the relatives from both sides were closer. These events are organized by the International Red Cross organized since 1975, and in these days they were the only way of communication between people from the two sides, because there was no direct connection by telephone or mail.

*Article and photos by
WO III Matuza Slaven,
PersNCO 3rd Coy 2nd CROCON*



People gathering in Majdal Shams on A-Side

The 3rd Coy exercise “Merkat Scout”

Croatian soldiers of the 3rd Coy of AUSBATT organized and conducted a two-day exercise called “Merkat Scout” with the aim of rehearsing responses to possible scenarios in the UNDOF mission.

The Exercise “Merkat Scout” was organized by the 3rd Company with Capt Zdenko Fiala at the helm with the assistance and support of all elements in AUSBATT.

It all started with “Green alert” on the occasion of increased military and diplomatic pressure in the Area of Separation (AOS). The exercise scenario led us from monitoring patrols, which found mines on the patrol route to three armed local soldiers, who tried to walk into the AOS. The situation escalated at Posn 17 where a group of aggressive local residents demonstrated against the UN. This led to “Scorpion alert” and the Rapid Reaction Group (RRG) quickly arrived to help the position members, who had been blocked by the



“Shelter Alert”

demonstrators into their position.

Dark smoke rose above Posn 16 initiating “NBC 3 alert” for this position, while at Posn 10 due to a loud detonation and suspected artillery attack on OP 71, a “Shelter alert” was initiated. The Medi-

cal Team was sent to OP 71 to provide emergency medical assistance to one injured peacekeeper and had responded quickly to a tip that a vehicle landed off the road. A quick diagnosis resulted in injuries with head wound, unconsciousness and bleeding. The Medical Team was also involved when one member of a foot patrol broke his leg and had to be evacuated from the demanding terrain.

The whole exercise was conducted in addition to all regular duties, including patrols that are conducted in accordance

with the weekly schedule. The after-action analysis led to the conclusion that it was a great success and only a few points required improvement.

Article and photos by
WO III Matuza Slaven,
PersNCO 3rd Coy 2nd CROCON



Demonstration of “local residents”



Demonstrating force with the SISU

Safe driving in UNDOF

During the last month members of UNDOF may have noticed more MP alcohol checkpoints and speed checkpoints than usual. This is part of the increased focus on safe driving in the UNDOF mission.

The majority of UN accidents within the mission area is preventable and often due to speeding, driver inattention or carelessness. Sticking to the speed limits and driving with proper care and attention to the traffic and weather conditions would prevent accidents like that one occurred on 19th March 2009. At about 15:30hrs three UNDOF soldiers on duty coming from Posn 12 were heading to Camp Faouar. About 500 meters after the Posn 12, reaching a from melt water wet double bend, the driver lost control of the Toyota 4-Runner. Furthermore, the vehicle got off the asphalt road, caught a slight height, rolled over above the terrain edge down the flank of the hill and stopped lying up side down on a dirt road. All involved soldiers were wearing their seatbelts what most probably saved their lives. After being checked in the Medical Centre in Camp Faouar amazingly no injuries were reported. Recovery and EOD Team did a challenging job on the spot to salvage the heavily damaged wreck.



Accident near Pos 12...



...luckily no one was injured!

Luckily no one was injured or killed in this accident although it could have been very different. The driving regulations are not set to hinder UNDOF members, but as a way to keep them safe and alive. Only by driving defensively and safely drivers will ensure they have done all they can to prevent an accident.

*Article by WO I Erich Weiss
MWO IC MPPI*



Remember that the MP Platoon is a **“SERVICE and SECURITY INSTITUTION”** with a view to safeguard life, healthiness and safety for all UNDOF members!!!

UN crucial for peace

In February he got the job. In March he visited Golan Heights. Meet the new Head of Mission UNTSO, MGen Robert Mood.



MGen Mood being briefed at OP 58

After one month as Head of Mission UNTSO, MGen Robert Mood, has no doubts: *"Israel and her Arab neighbors are able to live in peace."* He adds the fact that it is the five countries themselves; Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan, who have to find the solutions and accomplish them. *"Our job is to help them. Either you are living at Gaza or in Israel, the way to a sustainable peace settlement is through the children and youth, health and safety – something they have to work for,"* Mood states.

From 10th to 15th of March the new COS UNTSO MGen Mood, visited Damascus and the Golan Heights, which has been the center of conflict during the last 60 years. *"One small spark can have serious military consequences. So far Golan is calm and quiet, which is a success! It gives the politics time to settle, for a possible peace – that makes UN's presence on the*

Golan crucial," he says and underlines the fact that the formula for peace cannot always be counted in the amount of actions, but has to be achieved through political means.

Before the Gaza-war there were positive talks between the parties. The new US administration represents now a new ability. *"But they can't do magic. The situation in the Middle East will not be less complicated just because of the Obama-administration. However, it gives new possibilities for Israel and Syria, adding new dynamic in the region,"* MGen Mood says.

Even though MGen Mood is a knowledgeable and experienced high ranking officer, he was surprised about his first impression of Syria's capital. *"I had some negative thoughts before I came, I have to admit. When you watch the news, you get a narrow and unbalanced reality. It is easy to get a picture of a closed soci-*

ety, an enemy to the rest. But Damascus itself is modern and friendly, with safe streets."

He states that the western part of the world has to be careful creating enemy pictures and fear of the unknown. *"It's dangerous when the politicians create this enemy picture, which affects people's opinion. These kinds of pictures are often just a small piece of the whole picture."*

In Norway, MGen Mood is known as a "straight forward" officer who speaks up when necessary. *"In my former job as Chief of the Norwegian Army my responsibility was to give the politicians*

and population a clear situation of what's going on, but as COS UNTSO it is more important to be there when needed than having a proactive way of managing," he says and continues, *"I admit that I am impatient, but I will work along with the system, not against it. That gives the best results, rather than turn everything upside down and change all."*

The 50-year old General has been busy his first month, and his schedule reflects just six days at his office in HQ Jerusalem. *"The mission area is my office. Be out with the observers, who are doing the job, gives me first hand information and knowledge – that gives me much more satisfaction than sitting in my office handling papers!"*

Article and photo by
Maj Hanne Olafsen,
MIO OGG HQ



WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING: THE POWER TO EMPOWER

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers - 29 May 2009

