

GOLAN

The UNDOF Journal



October - December 2011
No. 129



DEAR READER !

It is my honor to present the new edition of GOLAN, The UNDOF Journal. With all its efforts the editorial team again can provide a magazine full of insight into the mission of UNDOF.

For their contributions I would like to thank the entire editorial team, the unit press officers, and volunteer writers. We had to bid farewell to our colleagues of HRVCON, LtI Ivan Salopek, of the MP Platoon, Maj Varun Chhabra, of OGG, Capt Aki Harju and the Force Photographer & Editor WO I Wolfgang Grebien. In the course of scheduled routine rotations they had been replaced so we can warmly welcome our new Unit Press Officers LtI Tihomir Kastmiller, Capt Bonifacio Agas, Capt Wietse Van den Berge and SSgt Gernot Payer of the respective offices.

In this edition it gives me great pleasure to present articles such as the Ambassadors and Military Attachés visit to UNDOF, the UNDOF Ultimate Challenge,



Our team: Günther, Stefan, Reona, Gernot

Contingents Medal Parades, the newly-implemented Focal Point for Women, and much more.

Capt Kreiml Günther

Yours sincerely,
Capt Kreiml Günther, SOPR

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Front (Page 1): Ambassadors at OP 51
Photo by WO I Wolfgang Grebien

Back (Page 24): Syrian shepherd with his flocks
Photo by WO I Wolfgang Grebien

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Force Commander's Message

Dear Warrior Peacekeepers!

Time continues to race by in the Golan! In my last Golan Journal message to you, we were watching the summer end, and we were making plans to ready ourselves for the cooler winter months, and as I write this, Christmas is approaching. The tempo we have maintained together is most impressive, and I am proud to add that despite the many demands on our time, efforts and attention, everyone in the UNDOF Team has risen to the challenge and ensured the maintenance of peace in the Golan. I hope that you are equally as proud as I am. Despite recent rotations, there has been no abatement in our progress, and in fact, from my perspective, I have seen the new additions to the UNDOF Team build on the successes of those before them and I am so happy to see things continually moving forward. I am so proud to be the Force Commander of such a fantastic group of dedicated and highly motivated Warrior Peacekeepers.



During the season of Christmas and the New Year, I see the sacrifices that all of you, and all of your families make. The hard work, constant hours, long days, weeks and months can be challenging, and I note that in addition to this, you and those that you love back home further endure the additional strain of separation. It is my sincere wish that you are able to take the time to visit your families, perhaps not precisely during the Christmas season, but close to it. For those unable to visit their families, as we must maintain operations here in the Golan, I urge you to ensure you keep close contact with your families, and let them know that you, and I, appreciate your joint sacrifices. As you know, I always say "once you have been a member of UNDOF, you always remain a member of the UNDOF Team" and I should also add that your families are an essential part of this team.

Our mission and mandate have not gotten any easier in light of recent events; in fact, I believe they have become more complex and there are even more challenging days ahead. I urge every member of the UNDOF Team, both military and civilian, to focus on safety and security of yourselves and of one another. From something as simple as offering advice and sharing any and all information, to being vigilant on patrol or anywhere in the region, we depend on each other, and not just the leadership remains responsible for our collective good. We depend on each and every one to do their part and take an active role in ensuring the overall safety and security of everyone in Team UNDOF. This vigilance will pay great dividends, and continue to provide the stability that is so crucial in this region. The eyes of the world are upon us and we must look after one another and rise to new challenges every day.

I cannot thank you all enough. You serve as an inspiration to UNDOF, the host nations, your own countries and me personally. The teamwork evident amongst the Military Contingents, the Military Observers of the OGG and the national and international civilian staff, and who make up this strong, cohesive Team we call UNDOF, serves as an example to all. Keep up the excellent work and I wish you a happy and prosperous 2012!

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

One Mission, One Team, One Goal

Thank you, Danke, Salamat, Dhanyavad, Hvala, Arigato!!

Major General Natalio C. Ecarma III
Force Commander UNDOF

Chief of Staff Words

Fellow Peacekeepers!



This is the fourth and last time that I have the privilege to address you, the UNDOF soldiers and civilian staff – but also our experts from OGG – with some final lines in our Golan Jour-

nal, the unique voice of the peacekeepers on the Golan Heights. Time has passed by at a very rapid pace, or better at a high operational tempo, as I enter the last month of my tenure as your Chief of Staff. Having said this, it is time and appropriate to reflect over the challenges of the year 2011 and to focus upon the times to come for UNDOF.

The peace in the region is very fragile indeed, as recent events in Israel, Gaza, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria have proven. The geopolitical landslide in the Middle East challenged UNDOF and its mandate in 2011 like never before. The wave of the so called Arab Spring swept over Syria and its neighboring countries, and also impacted the Area of Operations of UNDOF. UNDOF and OGG peacekeepers have been confronted with the most serious incidents not only on the NAKBA and NAKSA Day in the Area of Separation and in the Area of Limitation since its establishment in 1974. Having said this, it is obvious and has already been proven that due to the recent developments in the region and the international and diplomatic actions taken, UNDOF gained more strategic importance than ever before in keeping the peace along the ceasefire line on the Golan Heights.

However, UNDOF always bearing its mandate in mind, faced these challenges with composure and continued to keep the peace with all its expertise, ways and means available, and offered its good services in order to serve the people and peace on the Golan Heights. As a consequence of the current tense situation and the upcoming operational challenges, we have to keep the pace of our operational tempo and to conduct our missions patiently and cautiously.

But UNDOF has not only been successful to keep the peace on the Golan Heights during these unique times. No, besides this operational environment we revised and updated all the strategic and operational documents of UNDOF and our Contingency Plans in order to keep our peacekeepers safe, accomplish our mission and to have answers for future challenging situations.

This performance and harmonized staff work was only possible due to the trust and teamwork within the UNDOF Senior Mission Leadership Team. It was indeed my honor and pleasure that I have contributed and been part of this well selected team during this unique era and I have no doubts that UNDOF will achieve the milestones of the UNDOF vision “Going Green, Lean and Digital”. This will be a demanding and challenging project for the next five years, not only because of the uncertain situation in the Middle East but also due to upcoming budget constraints.

Having said this I am convinced that these united efforts of the new Senior Mission Leadership Team will operationally prepare and make UNDOF fit for the future challenges of its mandate.

Now time comes to bid goodbye to my excellent colleagues at UNDOF and OGG, military and civilian, international and national, and all I can honestly confess is that I enjoyed each and every moment here with you, both professionally and personally, in large measure due to the unique camaraderie and the instant and utmost support extended by one and all. Finally I must express my special thanks to my team, the branch heads, the Force Provost Marshall, the Commanding Officer of the FHQs-Company and the COS-Office, who have worked hard day and night to meet my operational demands to make things happen.

For the last time I urge all of you as you go about your work, to always keep in mind the importance of what we do and to strive individually to do your very best for peace in the Golan Heights.

*I wish you all the very best in all your future endeavors.
God speed and good luck. Auf Wiedersehen!*

“One Mission – One Team – One Goal”

Colonel Martin Dorfer, Chief of Staff UNDOF

Visits to UNDOF

by LtCdr Reona Aso, DMPIO



UNHQ Operational Assessment Team visited Camp Faouar (17th -22nd Oct 2011)



H. E. Maria Kunz, Austrian Ambassador, visited Camp Faouar and attended the Medal Parade of AUSBATT (26th Oct 2011)



Mr. Toshihiro Aiki, Japanese Minister and Chargés d'affaires ad interim, visited Camp Ziouani and attended the Joint Medal Parade of LOGBATT and J-CON Day (15th Dec 2011)



MGen Juha Kilpiä, Chief of Staff and Head of Mission UNTSO, visited Camp Faouar and attended the Change of Command of Chief OGG (19th Dec 2011)



LtGen Günter Höfler, Commander of Austrian Armed Forces, visited Camp Faouar and met with FC UNDOF (22nd Dec 2011)

- 28 members from 26 countries visited Camp Ziouani at Defense Attachés Day on A-Side (18th Oct 2011)
- 16 members from 13 countries visited Camp Ziouani at Ambassadors Day on A-Side (20th Oct 2011)
- 24 members from 18 countries visited Camp Faouar at Defense Attachés Day on B-Side (1st Nov 2011)
- 31 members from 23 countries visited Camp Faouar at Ambassadors Day on B-Side (3rd Nov 2011)
- 29 members from International IDF Liaison Course visited Camp Ziouani (28th Nov 2011)



The new Chief Military Personnel Officer (CMPO)

LtCol Eliglen Villaflores was born on 13th December 1968 in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines. He is a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), and was subsequently commissioned as an Army Officer upon his graduation in 1992.

He began his career with the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne) serving in various capacities as Team leader, Company XO and as CO of the 32nd Special Forces Company. He also served as the Operations Officer, G3, of the Special Forces Regiment and later became the Commandant of the Special Forces School.

His previous assignments include Staff Officer in the Education and Training in General HQs, Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence in Training and Doctrines Command, Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel, G1, Special Operations Command, Operations and Security Officer of the Commanding General of the Philippine Army, and Team Leader of the Army Parachute Team.

He underwent various military and civilian schoolings. Among other trainings are Special Forces Operations, Airborne and Jump Master, Military Freefall, and Infantry Captains Career Course at the US Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia, USA. He also holds a Masters Degree in Human Resource Management from the University of Newcastle in New South Wales, Australia.

His awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Star, Bronze Cross medal, and various Military Merit Medals for Combat and in Admin. He enjoys Skydiving, Scuba diving and sightseeing activities. He is married to Jeanette and their union is blessed with two children – Elijean and Elijah.



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

LtCol Bernd Huber was born on 25th May 1964 in Salzburg, Austria. He joined the Austrian Armed Forces in 1983 and graduated from the Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt in 1992 as an Engineer. He served in an Engineer Battalion for 14 years, beginning as a Platoon Leader before becoming a Battalion Staff Officer. From 2000 to 2001 he was part of the last Austrian contingent in UNFICYP until the section was handed over to the Slovakian Army. In 2006 he joined the Joint Austrian Armed Forces Support Division, serving in the Command and Planning Section.

LtCol Huber lives in Salzburg, is married to Renate and they have a 14 year old son, Daniel. His hobbies include skiing and listening to music.



The new Force Provost Marshal (FPM)

Maj Roland Reinprecht was born on 16th Oct 1973 in the south of Austria. He joined the Armed Forces in 1991 when he was called to duty in Carinthia, Austria. He became interested in the military way of life and started his career with the Infantry in 1994. He graduated from the Military Academy in Wr. Neustadt in 2003, and was commissioned into the Honor Guards in Vienna. He completed the Military Police Course in 2005 and shortly thereafter joined UNDOF for his first tour as a member of the Military Police section.

Since 2008, he has been designated Team Leader of the Close Protection Team in the Military Police Battalion in Austria, and is now serving on his second tour with the Military Police in UNDOF. Maj Reinprecht is married and has one child.



The new DCO AUSBATT/NCC HRVCON

Maj Ivica Brajković was born on 1st Oct 1971 in Otočac, Lika, Croatia. He finished primary and secondary school in Otočac where he lived until the beginning of the Homeland war. He joined the Army in 1991 as an artillery NCO and served as squad leader until 1992 when he became commander of a mortar artillery battery, and where he was promoted to First Lieutenant. Two years later he became an anti-tank battery commander and was promoted to Captain. After the Homeland war he served as DCO of an artillery battalion and finished higher officer school in Zagreb.

In 2002 he finished two mountain guide courses in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. In 2003, following the reorganization of the Croatian Army, he worked as brigade staff officer in Karlovac and went to Command and Staff College, where he graduated in 2008 and was promoted to Major. He was assigned as an artillery battalion commander in the Guard Motorized Brigade and was posted to the Military Training Centre near Slunj till November 2011. UNDOF is the first multinational mission for Maj Brajković.

He is married to his wife Sanja and they have two children, Tomislav (12) and Petra (11). His hobbies are cycling, hiking, table tennis and football. In his free time he also enjoys bike riding and motor bike club assemblies.



The new Chief Observer Group Golan (COGG)

LtCol Sean Nashrudi was born in Tehran, Iran, on 1st Jan 1965, and was later raised in Montreal, Canada. He joined the Canadian Forces as a Reserve Infantry Officer in 1993 and went on to serve as the Commanding Officer of the Royal Montreal Regiment, from 2009 to 2011.

He has participated in four operational tours. In 2002, as part of the NATO/SFOR operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, later, in 2004, as part of the NATO/ISAF mission in Afghanistan, and later in 2005-2006, he served as part of the Operation Enduring Freedom/CJSTOF in Southern Afghanistan. Lastly, in 2008, he served, as part of the UN/MONUC operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In addition, LtCol Nashrudi has also instructed at the NATO Schools in Germany and the Netherlands.

LtCol Nashrudi enjoys skiing, hiking, snow-shoeing, and swimming, while pursuing a life long struggle towards French Language proficiency.



The new Chief Information Technology Section (CITS)

The new Chief Information Technology Section, Mr. Benjamin Hodzic is a native of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He began his United Nations career with UNMIBH in 1998 as an ICT technician in Sarajevo.

In 2004, he relocated to Afghanistan and worked with the UN Assistance Mission (UNAMA) as OiC of Telecommunications Networking. In 2005, Mr. Hodzic accepted an assignment to The Hague working in ICT with the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia. In 2006, he was assigned to UNDOF and has worked with ICTS (formerly CITS) utilizing his skills in ICT networking. On 1st Jan 2012, Mr Hodzic has been promoted to the position of UNDOF Chief IT Section.

He is married to Adeviija and has a 12 year old son, Timur, who is in school in Cyprus. He is currently completing an MSc degree and enjoys travelling and sport.

UN Day celebrated in UNDOF

The UN Day was established to highlight the aims and achievements of the United Nations. The day marks the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter, with the day being celebrated since 1948.

UNDOF celebrated a joint festivity on 13th Oct 2011, where all contingents and civilian staff presented cultural traditions and culinary delights. The Austrian peacekeepers demonstrated their skills through a demonstration of the popular ice stock sports, folk music, and a breathtaking acrobatic rescue rappelling performance. The Indian and Philippine Contingents presented some of their finest folklore dances and traditional music, where colorfully dressed dancers twirled around the dance floor in delightful harmony. This was fol-

lowed by a very humorous Japanese Samurai sketch, and a fascinating martial arts performance. The official celebration culminated with all participants and guests standing side by side, singing, "We Are The World", in a very inspiring moment. The Force Commander, MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III closed the event with a heart-felt address emphasizing: "UNDOF is just a small Mission compared to others, but bears a large responsibility. Let us use this opportunity to celebrate our common efforts for peace in these demanding times."

Following the formalities, all participants enthusiastically visited each of the cultural tents, highlighting the many fine cultural traditions that comprise the UNDOF peacekeepers and civilian employees. On display was a tremendous variety of traditional clothes, uniforms and artifacts, as well as many culinary specialties served with pride. All participants enjoyed the rest of the day socializing with friends and comrades in the true UNDOF spirit: **One Mission – One Team – One goal!**

*Article by Capt Günther Kreiml, SOPR
Photos by WO I Wolfgang Grebien*



Bricklaying Ceremony at UNDOF HQ

The Force Commander UNDOF, together with the Chief of Mission Support and other project co-workers conducted a ceremonial bricklaying, and opened one of the most ambitious UNDOF construction projects, which will result in a 'greener' and more economical office facility.

On 25th Oct 2011, civilian and military members of UNDOF gathered in order to witness this meaningful moment in the history of the mission's headquarters. The ceremony began with the introduction of the most essential contributors of the multinational mixed military and civilian engineering team, who have been working on the plans of the project for several past months. The FC, MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III, accompanied by the CMS, Mr. Bernhard Lee, laid the final symbolic brick as the foundation of lasting and successful peace-keeping. The brick was then blessed and consecrated by Muslim, Roman Catholic, Japanese and Hindi blessing rituals.

The new office building is a rectangular shaped structure, consisting of two stories and will be situated at the heart of Camp Faouar next to the mission's headquarters building. It will accommodate four UNDOF Sections; Finance, Personnel & Training, Procurement, and General Services, totalling 52 UN personnel. The building will be equipped with state of the art communications & IT equipment, a small cafeteria-style facility, and a conference room. It will be built with insulated concrete blocks and fitted with a state of the art VRF-System for cooling and heating which will save hundreds of thousands of dollars over its useful life.

Article by Capt Günther Kreiml, SOPR
Photos by WO I Wolfgang Grebien



The FC participating in the Indian blessing ritual



Force Commander and Chief Mission support laying the bricks



The new building site next to the UNDOF HQ building

The UNDOF Ultimate Challenge

On 21st Oct 2011 ten teams participating in the UNDOF Ultimate Challenge skills competition once again stood as an example of UNDOF leadership, followership, discipline, esprit-de-corps, and the iron will to excel.



Participants had to hurdle an obstacle course before the shooting competition

The UNDOF Ultimate Challenge (UUC) is scheduled bi-annually during the spring and autumn as a one-day competitive event that tests both individual and team skills at various stands. The aim of the UUC is to test basic military skills reflecting UNDOF tasks through the medium of a physically and mentally demanding competition between teams drawn from all major contingents. It is a competition to promote 'Esprit de Corps' among all those who contribute to the UNDOF Mission, and as such, teams were composed in a mix of ranks and nationalities.

On the day of the event, the

teams fiercely competed in nine tasks, namely: Grenade throwing, rifle shooting, endurance run, land navigation, first aid management, rodeo driving, weapons proficiency, raft and rowing, and obstacle course. Overcoming all barriers, both physically and mentally, all teams completed the events with a remarkable display of physical strength, grit, and teamwork.

Many comrades were ready at the various stands to enthusiastically encourage their fellow peacekeepers toward achieving their best possible performance. The witnesses could literally sense the intensity and determination of the competi-

tors as they pushed themselves to the limit.

The overall winning team was honored with the perpetual trophy, passed to the victors with each successive UUC competition. However, following the vision of the Force Commander MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III, each participant felt a winner, not so much because of the awards, but from the pride in having competed side by side with team mates from other contingents.

*Article by Capt Günther Kreiml, SOPR
Photos by WO1 Wolfgang Grebner*



The eight kilometers endurance run - hot and dusty



Women and men alike...



Teamwork was the key to master the raft and rowing task



...giving their best to succeed



The overall winners - exultant and happy

Ambassadors and Military Attach

Force Commander MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III briefed the diplomatic community of the host nations on incidents, activities and developments of UNDOF.

The situational update and UNDOF outlook for the diplomats and military attachés accredited to the mission host nations has been a tradition for many years. Every autumn the Force Commander provides a presentation on UNDOF's accomplishments and future goals to foster positive relations with the diplomatic corps and make them aware of the achievements and challenges in the mission area. On the 18th of October the Chief of Staff, Col Martin Dorfer hosted 29 Military attachés and on the 20th, MGen Ecarma welcomed 18 ambassadors and embassy staff at Camp Ziouani.

The days started with a reception hosted by LOGBATT with a display of vehicles, weapons, uniforms and other UNDOF assets presented by Indian, Filipino and Japanese soldiers. The morning continued with a briefing on the activities and developments in and around UNDOF during the past year. The incidents of 15th May and 5th June 2011, where Palestinian protestors tried to overcome the Israeli fences

and obstacles along the cease-fire line, had been a primary topic of discussion following the brief-

as UNDOF. The days concluded with lunch hosted by PHILBATT, with lively discussion between hon-



The equipment display striking a chord with the honorable guests

ings. To give the diplomats a better understanding of the incidents our guests visited UNTSO Observation Post 51 and the Mt. Bental lookout point to receive a detailed account of the events and the conclusions drawn by the host nations as well

ored guests and UNDOF personnel. The Syrian-based military attachés and diplomatic corps received their briefings on the 1st and 3rd of November. The sequence of events at Camp Faouar followed that of Camp Ziouani, but with a reception



Briefings by the FC in Camp Ziouani and at OP 51 informed about the UNDOF mission

és to the host nations visit UNDOF



Terrain briefing at Mt. Bental



Terrain briefing in PHILBATT area

hosted by AUSBATT and displays organized by the Austrian, Croatian and Force Headquarters Companies.

To explain the unusual events of May and June, our guests were briefed at the so-called Family Shouting Place in the vicinity of Pos 16 in AUSBATT's 3rd Company area of responsibility and at PHILBATT Outpost 60A near Qunaitra. On the 3rd of November

our guests braved strong winds and heavy gusts of rain with a smile, with thanks to AUSBATT for providing wet weather jackets. The visits concluded with a hot lunch at the Austrian Officers Club, where honorable guests enjoyed a bowl of soup, leaving the harsh weather conditions outside.

Nevertheless, the guests were provided a clear understanding of the mission peacekeepers must ful-

fill under all conditions. The diplomatic corps and military attachés were very appreciative of their introduction to UNDOF and situational updates, leaving their tour with a clear understanding of the many difficulties and challenges faced by our peacekeepers.

*Article by Maj Stefan Eder, SSO M/PR
Photos by WO I Wolfgang Grebien*



The military attachés at Posn 51

Austrian National Day on the Golan Heights

On 26th Oct 2011 about 100 guests accepted the invitation of the Austrian peacekeepers to Camp Faouar on the occasion to attend the Medal Award Ceremony and AUSBATT showcase.

Medal Parade

With Austrian and Croatian peacekeepers lined up and ready for inspection, Maj Josef Honeder reported at 11 o'clock to the Force Commander, MGen Natalio Ecarma III. Following the anthems of both nations, the CO AUSBATT LtCol Andreas Schiffbänker and the NCC HRVCON Maj Mario Maslov welcomed the distinguished guests and visitors. Every peacekeeper who served at least three months in the UNDOF mission was decorated with the UN-medal.

In subsequent speeches the Austrian NCC, Col Martin Dorfer, as well as the Austrian Ambassador to Syria, H.E. Maria Kunz, emphasized the great performance of the mustered troops in the service of peace. They referred to the fragile and uncertain situation in the mission area and the specific operational challenges in the current environment. MGen Ecarma addressed the audience in articulate German and Croatian, expressing his appreciation for the accomplished work.

Guests visited state exhibition

At nine show booths the peacekeepers of the respective Austrian states presented various delicacies of the Austrian cuisine. A video display informed about the Austrian country and its people while all guests of the event could demonstrate their knowledge about the Austrian culture in the Austria-Quiz.

Throughout the day there was a good atmosphere. Austrian and Philippine peacekeeper were dancing the so called Landler, the Indians and Croats the so called Polka, both traditional Austrian dances. The Austrian folk music artists Pibersteiner contributed significantly with their performance, to the intercultural exchange and overall success of this event.

*Article by Maj Otmar Fasching, Ops Info
Photos by Sgt Markus Weiss
and WO I Wolfgang Grebien*



Troops lined up at the parade square



FC awarding the medals to the Austrian peacekeepers



The "Pibersteiner" performing in Camp Faouar

Commander of Austrian Armed Forces visits AUTCON

The Austrian UNDOF peacekeepers were honored by a visit of LtGen Günter Höfler just before the eve of Christmas. In spite of his busy schedule, the Commander of the Armed Forces took the opportunity for personal talks with many of the Austrian soldiers.

Christmas army postal service

The commander of the Armed Forces not only had supply goods but also the Christmas trees with him. His airplane delivered also the long expected army post, with the remarkable weight of one and a half tons. Due to the discontinued army postal service, caused by the changed situation in the mission area, Austrian personnel have been long deprived. Now thanks to the General and the C-130 "Hercules" airplane all the Christmas presents were delivered right on time. In order to make Christmas mail from the mission area reach also the families back home in Austria a special cargo transport was organized.

Ideal morale of the troops

In his speech at the parade, LtGen Höfler thanked the soldiers for their commitment in Austria's longest lasting mission abroad. He appreciated the high morale of the troops as so many soldiers of the Contingent preferred to stay in the mission area rather than going home on vacation during the Christmas season. With pride he mentioned that Austria with its 1400 soldiers on missions abroad is a leading country in Europe in ratio to its population. Lastly every single soldier received a CD with Christmas carols as a gift.

Advent prayer

In the evening many Austrian peacekeepers joined an Advent prayer that was held in Damascus at the so called Paulustor, a holy place in the old city of Damascus. Later a reception was given at the Austrian Embassy which concluded LtGen Höfler's troop inspection visit.

*Article by Maj Otmar Fasching, Ops Info/AB
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer*



The Field Post Master handling Christmas mail



AUSBATT welcomes LtGen Höfler



LtGen Höfler hands over Christmas gifts

Marriage between the lines A tale of love and humanity



Love is a much splendid fabric of human life and it finds its way even between lovers of a folk separated by war within the UNDOF Area of Separation (AOS) here in the Golan Heights.



UNDOF peacekeepers support...

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNDOF, and the Mission's host governments worked together to facilitate a marriage request between two sets of couple from Druze communities living and separated by the ceasefire line in the

Golan Heights last November 2011. LOGBATT prepared the venue. The PHILBATT medical team was on standby alert at the wedding site with the Press and Information Officer of the unit as UNDOF's official photographer. The prevailing security situation made the task difficult. The day's activity started in fine weather but later changed as rain showered heavily, with extreme cold wind from the peak of Mount Hermon starting to blow. In this nasty weather, the activity pushed through moving the venue inside the UNDOF Military Police Detachment's receiving room.

The scene is very romantic as the first bride in her beautiful white wedding gown walked with

her family and friends amidst rain towards the MP checkpoint called Charlie Gate, a place neutral of dispute. Tears of bliss and happiness gently poured from the eyes of the wedding couple and their families. The groom, his family, the ICRC and UN personnel were waiting for the bride at the gate. Hugs and kisses from the lovers and their separated families and relatives enveloped the place; it is a spectacular scene of love and hope. The matrimony was simple; the two couples consecutively shared their marriage vows. It was a sweet moment, and seemingly a reunion of relatives. The Force Commander, MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III joined the ceremony and extended his congratulations to the newly wed couples.

*Article & photos by
Capt Celeste Frank L. Sayson, PIO/PhB*



...the ICRC managed humanitarian crossing



Once in a life time opportunity for the families to meet

UNDOF institutes a Focal Point for Women

On 21st Nov 2011 Maj Teresita Delos Reyes, PHILBATT Senior Medical Officer, was designated as UNDOF's Focal Point for Women and her designated alternate is Ms. Vesna Kardos, Head Procurement Unit II.



The UN General Assembly Resolution 59/164 titled "Improvement of the Status of Women in the UN System," reaffirmed the long-standing goal of gender balance. In April 2008, the Secretary General wrote a letter to all Senior Managers announcing the urgent goal of achieving a 50/50 gender distribution in all categories of posts within the UN system. As part of this initiative, all departments and missions were required to appoint a Focal Point for Women (FPFW) who will support the heads of department and mission in achieving gender balance.

Basically, the role of the UN FPFW is to promote greater awareness of gender issues and a gender-sensitive work environment at the UN Headquarters and in the missions; provide advocacy and counsel to female staff; monitor progress towards the achievement of gender targets; contribute to the development and realization of gender targets as set out in the human resources action plan and the senior manager's compact; and, advise in the staff selection process with a view to ensure that the goal of reaching gender balance is taken into account.

To jump start the UNDOF Women Work plan for 2012, the UNDOF FPFW organized an activity with the theme: "Women of UNDOF: An Afternoon with the Force Commander." The activity was held at Pos 60 on 19th Dec 2011 with the FC as keynote speaker. Except those on duty, a total of 40 female personnel from the Philippine, Indian, Croatian and Austrian Contingents attended the event.

Maj Teresita Delos Reyes gave lectures on "Justice for Women" followed by an open forum. The activity was capped by a message from the Force Commander underlining the role of female peacekeepers in UNDOF. The next activity will be a workshop for all UNDOF women to come up with a work plan for 2012 to better address women's issue.



Kick-off meeting at Posn 60

*Article by LtCol Audie Mongao,
DCO PHILBATT
Photos by Capt Celeste Frank L. Sayson,
PIO PHILBATT*

Last post at Damascus

A wreath laying ceremony was organized by the British embassy at Damascus war cemetery on 13th Nov 2011 to pay tribute to the soldiers of various countries who laid down their lives in various wars. The cemetery is beautifully manicured and splendidly maintained, with separate memorials for fallen soldiers of different nationalities. The event was attended by the ambassadors and Defense Attachés from various countries. UNDOF was represented by Col Marin Dorfer, COS UNDOF. Wreaths were laid by the ambassador of India to Syria H. E. Mr V.P. Haran, LtCol Krishnan Ramachandran, NCC INDCON and LtCol R.S. Mangat, CO LOGBATT. It was a solemn occasion accompanied by a prayer service to remind all of the evil of war and to pray for world peace. It was a moment of pride for various officers present at the occasion to remember and honour their martyrs.

Article by Maj Himmat Singh, MaintO/LB



Wreath laying at the war cemetery



INDCON peacekeepers of UNDOF at the ceremony

Haifa Day - Indian Fallen Soldiers Ceremony

On 23rd Sep 1918, the Jodhpur Imperial Service Lancers, as part of the 15th Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade, in a daring daylight cavalry charge took over the fortified town of Haifa. Maj Dalpat Singh Shekhawat, MC who was leading the Jodhpur Lancers in battle fell gallantly during the charge. This is the only known occasion in history when a fortified town was captured by cavalry on the gallop.



CO INDCON laying a wreath

In view of the significance of this event to the Indian Army and to pay tribute to the valiant Indian soldiers who laid down their lives in this region during the 1st World War, a wreath laying ceremony was held at the Haifa Indian Cemetery of the Commonwealth Graves Commission. The cemetery is one of many in the region for the gallant fallen soldiers of the Indian Army. The occasion was marked by the attendance and wreath laying by the Ambassador of India to Israel, H. E. Mr Navtej Sarna and Defense Attaché of India to Israel Gp Capt Ajay Rathore, VM. Wreaths were also laid on behalf of UNDOF by LtCol R.S. Mangat, CO LOGBATT and on behalf of various Commonwealth countries by their respective Defense Attachés.

Article by Maj Ankush Goyal, OC Sigs/LB

Medal Parade of the Indian and Japanese Contingents

On 15th Dec 2011 the Indian and the Japanese Contingents carried out a joint Medal Parade in perfect coordination at Camp Ziouani.

This parade displayed the high level of integration, cooperation and coordination the contingents enjoy as they carry out their operational tasks. This Ceremony marked the completion of 90 days of service of all members of LOG-BATT to qualify for the award of this medal.

The parade was reviewed by the Force Commander UNDOF, MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III, and was commanded by the DCO LOGBATT, LtCol M.A. Khan. The guest list was comprised of military and civilian staff members of the UNDOF mission, host nation government officials and prominent

representatives of the local population. The occasion was also graced by the presence of Mr. Toshihiro Aiki, Minister Interim of Japan.

The Force Commander in his address lauded the troops of LOG-BATT for their prodigious display of military professionalism, discipline and conduct. He also conveyed his gratitude for their strenuous work in carrying out the mandate of UNDOF in the native language of the troops, which was a surprise and delight to all. The CO LOGBATT, LtCol R.S. Mangat, also expressed his gratitude to the fellow members of UNDOF for their support and called upon the LOGBATT team to continue with their excellent work. The CO J-CON, Maj S. Noshita, expressed gratitude for the close cooperation and hospitality he enjoyed from UNDOF and our hosting nations. The event finally culminated with lunch in the International Kitchen of Camp Ziouani where traditional Indian and Japanese cuisine was served with great appeal to the guests and visitors.

*Article by Maj Himmat Singh, MaintO/LB
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer*



Mr. Toshihiro Aiki, MI of Japan



MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III, FC UNDOF



LtCol R.S. Mangat, CO LOGBATT



Maj S. Noshita, CO J-CON



Indian and Japanese Contingents at the parade ground in Camp Ziouani

Vukovar March - A very special foot patrol

On 19th Sep 2011 the 7th HRVCON organized the first "Commando Patrol" called Vukovar March in commemoration of all the victims of Vukovar.



UNDOF peacekeepers marching

A Commando March is one of the most demanding tests of physical endurance and readiness, and the default standard is based on the envisioned tactical situation in combat conditions.

After the completion of tasks within the opponent's offside, a reconnaissance-sabotage unit has only one hour to pull back over a distance of 8 kilometers and to avoid capture. It is considered that the average well-trained and equipped adversary would need just about an hour to interdict an area of 8 kilometers. Due to its extraordinary complexity a

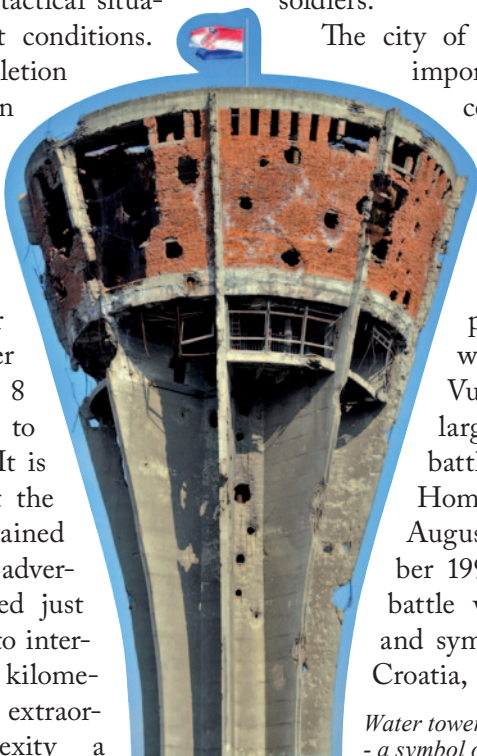
"Commando March" is considered one of the greatest challenges in all armed forces, usually mastered only by the most prepared and capable soldiers.

The city of Vukovar was an important regional center of the border between Croatia and Serbia. Vukovar had a population of around 44,600 people in 1991 when the Battle of Vukovar rose to the largest and bloodiest battle in the Croatian Homeland War from August to November 1991. Although the battle was a significant and symbolic reversal for Croatia, which has not

regained control of the city until 1998, it was also a victory for Croatia which later gained international support for its independence.

Divided into three national teams, approximately 130 UNDOF peacekeepers successfully conducted the 8 kilometer march between position 17 and position 10 in the Area of Separation. Each participant was required to carry a load of 20 pounds, composed of the personal weapon and the combat backpack with other equipment.

Difficult weather conditions had not spared the participants as alternating rain and ice and harsh wind were additional challenges to face. However, all participants successfully completed the competition, with a Croatian team taking first place. The event was concluded at position 10 with camaraderie and Croatian cuisine.



*Water tower in Vukovar
- a symbol of suffering*

*Article by Lt I Tihomir Kastmiller
Photos by Sgt Markus Weiss*

J-CON DAY event in Camp Ziouani

After busy planning and preparations, the Khetarpal Hall was full of people eagerly anticipating the biannual, Japanese cultural event of J-CON DAY.

On 15th Dec 2011 the J-CON DAY events followed the joint LOGBATT Medal Parade held in Camp Ziouani. Among the many VIPs invited were Force Commander MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III, Charge d' affair Ad Interim of Japan Mr. Toshihiro Aiki, Japanese Military Attaché to Israel Col Rio Hashimoto, IDF and local representatives, as well as many friends and other distinguished guests.

Ahead of the cultural presentation J-CON served Japanese food, showcasing Sashimi fish preparation (slicing a whole salmon) to the guests in Camp Ziouani international kitchen. The guests were seen to be smacking their lips over the Japanese cuisine such as Sushi, Tempura, fresh salmon Sashimi and so on.

Back at Khetarpal Hall J-CON demonstrated martial arts and hilarious Japanese entertainment called Ninin-Baori. The final act was a comedy based on an old tale called Momo-Taro which is a famous children's story in Japan about a boy born from a peach. The peach boy was raised by the old couple that found him, to be brave and kind. One day, the elders called on Momo-Taro to recover village treasures stolen by terrible ogres. The peach boy journeyed to the ogre's Island of Onigashima with 3 animals in company; a dog, a monkey and a pheasant. Momo-Taro triumphed in a severe and funny battle, and his colleagues retrieved the treasures from the ogres. Back in the village, peach boy was welcomed as a hero.



J-CON peacekeepers parade decorated with the UNDOF Medal

In the 2nd part of J-CON Day held at the Golan Club, J-CON set up booths with Japanese traditional crafts. Guests ordered their names in Japanese calligraphy, enjoyed the Origami folding craft, attempted to master Koma, the Japanese spinning top, and tried to secure a certificate for the skill of Kendama, a tricky Japanese cup and ball skill game.

In his address CO J-CON Maj

Noshita said: "We have tried our best to bring Japan to you." And the acknowledging applause of our distinguished guests proved the J-CON peacekeepers were highly successful.

We thank you for participating in J-CON DAY!

*Article by LT I Daisuke Tone, PO/ J-CON
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer, and
Sgt Hitoshi Matsuda, Sig/ J-CON*



In great demand - Japanese calligraphy

Serve and protect - The UNDOF Military Police

MP mobile patrols rove around the field to ensure that routes in the area of operations are safe and passable for all UN vehicles to freely perform their respective duties.

The MP Platoon supports the UNDOF Mission without partiality to a specific contingent or nationality and is tasked to guarantee that UN Regulations concerning the safety, security, discipline and conduct are strictly implemented in accordance with UNDOF SOPs. As part of enforcing road safety, routine vehicle security checks and radar checks are being conducted at various check points. A sobriety check is conducted randomly to confirm that all UN drivers are in good physical condition for safe driving.

But all measures are sometimes not enough to prevent accidents from happening. Especially during the cold and rainy winter season, where every driver of a UN vehicle is encouraged to pay extra attention to road conditions and traffic situations. This is the only way to make it safely through a route full of traps and snares on roads and patrol tracks.

Fallen leaves, wet patches and ice are only some of the superficial inconspicuous reasons that could lead to terrible and fatal accidents. Often only minor hazards on an

otherwise clear road may turn a nice ride into a tragedy.

Drivers should also keep in mind that bad weather conditions may also surprise and trap third party drivers on the road and may involve otherwise vigilant and careful UNDOF drivers in traffic accidents. So the driver's motto for the winter season in the mission area should be more than ever –

Defensive Driving!

Article and photos by WO I Erich Weiss,
MWO IC MP PI



Even when driving slowly many changing road conditions may surprise drivers

Building a strong and cohesive team in OGG

Observer Group Golan Tiberias (OGG-T) is a shining example of teamwork when conducting operations and providing support to those operations.

As the UNMOs work in relative isolation with their Observation Posts (OP) situated over a line of approximately 80 kilometers, and a range of 20 to 60 kilometers from the Outstation headquarters in Tiberias, OGG-T maintains a regular and well-designed Outstation training plan. That training develops a wide variety of skills that are essential for the UNMO's success and survival in, what may be austere and isolated conditions, as have existed in OP 73 during severe winter storms. The skills developed include an extremely well conducted first aid program that is tailored to the most likely injuries an UNMO may encounter. Driver training is also instructed by subject matter experts, to enable drivers to maintain mobility in rough terrain and bad weather, as well as be able to self-extract themselves from snow, mud, and a variety of extreme off-road possibilities, if required.

Superimposed on the outstation training plan are the individual team training plans. This team training will further develop skills and will also conduct activities that team-build. For example, Team Hermon in the north of the OGG-T Area of Operations has conducted activities

that are both physically challenging, fun and result in an enhanced level of camaraderie and team cohesion. Who would have thought that windsurfing, kayaking or paddle boating would benefit Team Hermon. Well, when the day begins



Joint off-duty activities foster team cohesion

with an hour or so of beach volleyball and is followed up by team paddleboat and kayak races, the heart rate goes up providing a physical training component. The follow-on wind surfing and kayaking worked to develop confidence in your own abilities, based on trying an activity that might be intimidating to some. The day ended with a true sense of accomplishment and a closer bond between the members of Team Hermon.

The most recent activity was OP Tango Scuba, a scuba course run for the members of OGG. This was a very well received and attended

activity. Prior to undertaking the in-water training, a comprehensive academic training period of five classes was obligatory. During the open water certification dives, the students were exposed to an abundance of local marine life, where they were able to fine-tune their buoyancy skills and a reliance on their dive-buddy. They were also able to develop their knowledge of almost every aspect of the academic phase and were able to use the dive tables to plan the dives and ensure their dives were safe.

This activity worked extremely well at developing a cohesive team among the UNMOs who attended this training. The benefits to OGG are clearly apparent in the increased positivity and the enhanced sense of teamwork of the graduates. There was no lack of humour with this course, which not only relaxed the environment, but served to provide a significant bonding experience and provides a release from stressful situations.

Congratulations to the newest Open Water Scuba Divers in OGG!!!!

Article and photos by Maj Jeremy Watts, OGG-T

