

GOLAN

The UNDOF Journal



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DEAR READERS!

It is my pleasure to present the new edition of the highly awaited Golan Journal. As the Editor in Chief, I bring to you two years experience in the mission in UNDOF Headquarters, and I am feeling like I am back home again. In Austria, I have been the Media and Press Officer of the Officers' Society in Steiermark (Styria) for the past ten years, as well as I am currently employed as the Public Relations Officer in the Styrian Militia Infantry Battalion.

In this edition, as a highlight we present the celebration of the 38th anniversary of UNDOF, a remarkable event commemorated by all UNDOF personnel. Furthermore you will see new impressions of our UNDOF competition, the Ultimate Challenge, including the female soldiers' point of view. In addition, the third part of our Construction Engineer series concerning the new office building in Camp Faouar and an amazing story about the successful search of a missing child in the area by our Filipino comrades is also presented. Finally I thank all press officers from



Our team: Gernot, Ekke, Alex, Seiji

AUSBATT, PHILBATT, LOGBATT, J-CON, HRVCON, OGG and MP for their valuable contributions, our Master of Photography, SSgt Gernot Payer, for his layout creativity and Maj Chris Catry and LCdr Peter Rohe for their support in proofreading all articles.

I wish you an enjoyable read!

Ekkehard Gröppel

Yours sincerely,
Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR



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Front (Page 1): Japanese soldiers performing at the UNDOF Day
Photo by SSgt Gernot Payer

Back (Page 24): UNDOF patrol through Khan Arnabe village
Photo by SSgt Gernot Payer

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Force Commander's Message

Dear Warrior Peacekeepers!



I remain extremely proud of everyone in the UNDOF Team, and am impressed by the hard work, dedication, cooperation and camaraderie you have all displayed. You inspire me as you demonstrate what can be accomplished through teamwork.

The months have slipped away very quickly and already the warm summer sun is upon us. The more time I spend in the Golan, the quicker it seems to pass; this is likely because of the high operational tempo and pace, which has constantly increased over the past year. But, I am heartened to see you all "putting your shoulders to the wheel" and meeting every challenge with success.

The incidents in Damascus, the AOS and the AOL, and throughout Syria as a whole continue to cause us all grave concern. Times are not easy and simple. We must re-double our efforts and re-dedicate ourselves to the tasks at hand. As I have said before, regardless of rank, military, civilian, or function, only we can ensure the maintenance of the mission and mandate, and ensure the collective safety of all of us in Team UNDOF. We must maintain our operational focus at all times, we must be situationally aware, we must be inquisitive and "go the extra mile" in ensuring all possible information is both gleaned and shared ensuring an "all informed net". Lastly, and I do not have to tell you this, we must cooperate and assist one another. We have each other to depend upon, and there is indeed strength in numbers in these challenging times.

I do not need to tell you that things have not been calm on the Golan. Ours is not the simple task it once was years ago in UNDOF. It is decidedly more complex. We must be innovative, and both rely on the experience of those who have served here before, and also embrace new ideas, concepts and technologies. The only limit to what we can do is our imagination. I am pleased to say that UNDOF continues to succeed and I have every confidence this will not change. The situation may call for some difficult decisions, but I know that all of you are professionals, who understand the need for them, and rest assured, they are not taken lightly. You, and your safety and security remain my top priority.

It is hard to believe that this will be my last Golan Journal message to you as Force Commander as I will hand over command in August. At times, I look back over the vast changes and activities that have occurred over the past two and a half years. But, on the other hand, like so many of you, my time here seems to have passed fleetingly. The busier you are, the faster time goes and it was no different for me. I look back with immense pride over what we have accomplished and continue to do, the advancements that UNDOF has made and continues to make. I cannot take credit for this; no one individual can, but we can hold our heads high in being part of a fantastic team. And, as I often say, "once a member of UNDOF, always a member of UNDOF", so although some of you, and I myself may leave this mission, we have all left our mark upon it, and it will always remain in our hearts. Our experiences, the things we saw and did, and most importantly, those wonderful people we met, worked with, led and followed will always be with us.

The summer has brought change, and as we have just completed the Austrian and Croatian rotations, soon, more people will rotate as individuals and depart. To those of you leaving, I wish you nothing but success in the future, good luck and Godspeed. As you return home to your families at home, don't forget your family here in the Golan. I never shall. God Bless you all.

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!

It is the second time that I have had the privilege to address the UNDOF community via this journal since becoming Chief of Staff. After six months in the mission I can assure all of you that I very much enjoy this assignment and in particular, the opportunity to work with all of you. As with every mission there are many positive experiences, for example when things get done in a positive way and we achieve improvements in different fields. On the other hand UNDOF has evolved over time into a very demanding mission, leaving very little time for relaxation.

Regarding the security situation in Syria, all assessments indicate that it is very unlikely to improve over the next six months, rather the opposite. The consequences for UNDOF will be multiple. We need to raise our situational awareness and preparedness in order to fulfill our mission and mandate in a safe and secure manner. Focusing on training and special preparations are prerequisites for this requirement. We will continue to work on this issue, reacting appropriately to the situation. The challenge is to adapt our posture in a gradual way without overstressing our capabilities before we really need them.

Another consequence of the security situation is that our movement throughout Syria will be even more restricted. Our soldiers will be prevented from spending their leisure time outside of the camps and positions. This constitutes a challenge for commanders at all levels to prevent our soldiers from developing camp psychosis.

It may be seen as contradictory that we recently limited the Happy Hours at Camp Faouar to two per month instead of the former weekly activities. In fact, it is not. The situation in our Host Nation is such that we must respect the seriousness of the security situation and act accordingly. We should pay tribute to the situation around us and throughout the country, perform our duties in a concentrated and professional manner, and fulfill our mandate to the greatest extent possible.

It is well understood that soldiers cannot remain on high alert for six months or a year at one time. Welfare and relaxation are also important to maintaining a high state of readiness. However, duty and welfare should not be mixed. All soldiers are encouraged and should be supported to spend the necessary time for



welfare and relaxation outside the Area of Operations.

The upcoming three months will not only be the hottest of the year in the Golan Region but will also challenge UNDOF in a variety of ways. Although we will not face so many rotations of contingents as in the past, there will be one rotation which will concern the UNDOF community even more: the rotation of the Force Commander. The tour of MGen Ecarma III will come to an end in mid-August and we will then introduce his successor, the 18th Force Commander of UNDOF.

MGen Ecarma III has been in his position for two and a half years, during a very challenging time for the mission. He led us with high experience, professionalism and dedication. On behalf of his UNDOF family I would like to take the opportunity to thank him for his leadership and wish him all the best and Godspeed for the future. As he has said so many times: "Once a member of UNDOF, always a member of UNDOF". We now can apply this phrase as our fond farewell to him.

However, as we all know, the only constant in the military is change and so we will conduct a seamless handover-takeover, providing the new Force Commander the same degree of loyalty, dedication and allegiance that we have shown MGen Ecarma III.

Let me finally take the opportunity to wish all UNDOF members, who have the opportunity to take a few days of summer leave, "happy holidays" and to the others, who will be on duty for the upcoming weeks a safe time with no accidents.

"One Mission – One Team – One Goal"

Colonel Andreas Rotheneder, Chief of Staff UNDOF

Visits to UNDOF

by Capt Seiji Ito, DMPIO



LtGen Peter Devlin, the Canadian Army Commander, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (24th Apr 2012)



Mr. Hideo Jimpu, Parliamentary Vice Minister of Defense, visited Camp Ziouani and met with CMS and COS UNDOF (30th Apr 2012)



H.E. Mr. Generoso D.G. Calonge, Philippine Ambassador to Israel, visited Camp Ziouani and attended the Medal Parade Ceremony of PHILCON (16th May 2012)



The German Academy Senior Course on Security Policies visited Camp Ziouani, OP 51 and Posn 22 (1st Jun 2012)



MGen Dieter Heidecker, Deputy Commander of Austrian Armed Forces, visited Camp Faouar and the AUSBATT AOR (8th - 10th Jun 2012)

- LtGen Hiroshi Yamamoto, Commander of Central Readiness Forces, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (24th Apr 2012)
- LtGen Stuart Beare, Commander of Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command, visited Camp Ziouani and met with CMS and COS UNDOF (16th May 2012)
- Ms. Daniela Zunzer, Historian of Switzerland, visited Camp Ziouani (17th May 2012)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs students visited Camp Ziouani (6th Jun 2012)
- H.E. Mr. Hideo Sato, Japanese Ambassador, visited Camp Ziouani and attended Medal Parade Ceremony of J-CON (26th Jun 2012)



The new Chief Liaison/Protocol & Information Officer (CLPIO)

LtCol Dennis Godfrey F. Gammad was born on 6th Jun 1964 in Pampanga, Philippines. He began his military career after graduating from the Philippine Military Academy in 1990 where he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. He joined the Philippine Army as an Infantry Officer and graduated from the following career courses: Infantry Basic Officer Course, Advance Infantry Officer Course at the SAFTI Military Institute in Singapore, and the General and Command Staff Course. His career courses were further supplemented by specialized military courses including the Basic Airborne Course, Scout Ranger Course, VIP Protection Course, UN Peacekeeping Operations Training in Australia and others.

His civilian education includes the following: Instructors Development Training in Ateneo De Manila University, Project Planning, Development and Management Course in the Asian Institute of Management and holds a degree in Master in Management. LtCol Gammad has served in various capacities such as Platoon Leader, Company Commander and Staff Officer in an Infantry Battalion, as Staff Officer in Headquarters Philippine Army, and as Battalion Commander of the 36th Infantry (VALOR) Battalion under 401st Brigade of the Philippine Army. He is also a recipient of numerous awards and commendations, from both military and civilian sectors. He served in the United Nation mission area in East Timor as Company Commander from 1999 to 2000.

He is married to Mara Yasmin and blessed with daughter Zatia Denise and son Allistair Gottfrid. He is a gregarious person who enjoys playing golf, running and regularly works out in the gym.



The new Force Medical Officer (FMO)

LtCol MD Wolfram Heidinger is a well experienced medical doctor in UNDOF; he has started his fourth mission at the end of May 2012. He was born 1953 in Graz, the capital of the province Steiermark (Styria) in the South-East of Austria. Since his first engagement on the Golan Heights in 1984, he worked in his own surgery in Leibnitz. LtCol Heidinger has served in the militia in the Austrian Armed Forces for many years. He is actually in the personnel reserve.

In total he has spent four years in UNDOF as a Medical Officer, Senior Medical Officer and from 2008 to 2010 as the Force Medical Officer (FMO). From this experience he feels very much at home with the mission. As a general practitioner, the new FMO has further experience in occupational, environmental and emergency medicine. His hobbies are gardening, home improvement, music (traditional jazz, oldies, classic) but first and foremost the science of medicine.

He is a proud father of three adult children and a grandfather of a ten-year-old grandson, and a three-year-old granddaughter. He is happily married with his wife Barbara.



The new DCO AUSBATT / NCC HRVCON

Major Davor-Josip Babić was born on 9th Jul 1971 in Vinkovci, a small town in East Slavonija, Croatia. He finished primary and high school in his hometown and lived there until September 1991 when he went to the former Yugoslav National Army in Banja Luka (today in Bosnia and Herzegovina). At the beginning of the Homeland war in June 1991, he decided to escape from that army and join the newly formed Croatian Army. Following this he attended the University of Veterinary Medicine and graduated in September 1997. Thereafter he rejoined the Army. He gained International military experience during many joint exercises, especially as a Camp Marmal Force Protection DCOMM in the ISAF operation

in Afghanistan, where he was deployed from February till September 2009. After that he attended Command and Staff College graduating in 2011. Major Babić is happily married with Andjelka, and they have three children, Petar (14), Josipa (11) and Ivan Matija (8). He enjoys many sporting activities such as running and shooting, and he likes to spend his free time with his family and reading an enjoyable book.



The new Chief Observer Group Golan Damascus (COGG-D)

LtCol Grethe Stensland was born on the 3rd Jul 1956 in Norway. Her military career started at the Officer Candidate School in 1979. Her profession is in the Ordnance Branch and she served as an EOD and IED-D instructor till the mid -90s, receiving her education in both Norway and England. She worked with the NATO Committee for Women in the Armed Forces until 2003 when her engagement with the UN started. Since then she served in UNTSO (2003 - 2004) and UNMIS (Sudan, 2005 - 2006) as a Military Observer, UNAMA (Afghanistan, 2009 - 2012) as a Military Adviser before returning as COGG-D in UNTSO.

She has also served at the Finish International Center (FINCENT) as an instructor for Military Observers in Finland and the Balkans in 2007, 2008 and 2011. Her time in the mission area will be for three months only, since she received a new assignment as Section Chief at a newly established Gender Center at the Swedish International Center/Stockholm (SWEDINT) from 1st Aug 2012.

Her two daughters are looking forward to finally getting her home!



The new Chief Observer Group Golan Tiberias (COGG-T)

LtCol Honkanen started as COGG-T in March 2012 and he is also the National Senior of the Finnish Contingent. He was born on the 11th Dec 1968 in Finland. He joined the Finnish Defense Forces as a conscript in 1987 and graduated from the Military Academy in 1992. LtCol Honkanen started his career as a platoon leader and a company commander in numerous Infantry units. After finishing the General Staff Officers Course in 2002 he specialized in Logistics, serving first as the chief of planning section in Eastern Command HQ Logistics Department.

In 2006 he was the Planning Officer of Logistics in G5 Army HQ and since 2008 he has been the head of the Maintenance and Transport Section in G4 Army HQ. LtCol Honkanen has previously served in UNIFIL as the MTO of the Finnish Battalion from 1997 until 1998. He has also been an instructor in the United Nations Logistics Officers Course (UNLOC) in Sessvollmoen, Norway.

LtCol Honkanen is married to Marjaana and they have one son Tomi. The hobbies are football and ice hockey, mostly in the veteran series.



The new Chief Civilian Personnel Officer (CCPO)

Ms. Elizabeth Muchai is originally from Kenya. She holds a Bachelor of Sciences, in Landscape Architecture, from Pennsylvania State University in the US. She began her UN career in 1994 and served in various United Nations peacekeeping missions before joining UNDOF. Her first assignment was in UNAMIR, the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, as a national staff member in the Nairobi Office. From there, she proceeded to work as a UN Volunteer in Kigali, Rwanda until 1996 when the mission ended and handed over to the ICTR. She then joined UNTAES, Croatia in 1996 and was later reassigned as a Field Service staff to UNAVEM III which later became MONUA in Angola from 1997 to 1999, before being appointed to service in UNMIBH, Bosnia and Herzegovina and later UNAMA, Afghanistan during the period from 2000 to 2004. In 2004 Ms. Muchai was again reassigned to ONUCI, Cote d'Ivoire and in November 2004, she moved to UNMIS, in Sudan.

The next move in her career was to UNSCO, Israel, where she served as the Officer-in-Charge of the Personnel Section. Ms. Muchai also participated in the start-up of UNOCA, Gabon and established the Human Resources office for that mission. Her last stop before joining UNDOF was in the Field Personnel Division at the United Nations Headquarters in New York where she worked as a Human Resources Officer.



the 7th UNDOF Ultimate Challenge

On 18th May 2011 nine international teams participated in the spring event of the UNDOF Ultimate Challenge skills competition conducted by the Mission Training Cell.

Since 2009 the UNDOF Ultimate Challenge (UUC) has been held bi-annually during the spring and autumn as a one-day competitive event that tests both individual and team skills at various stands.

The main purpose of the UUC is to develop Esprit de Corps among the peacekeepers of all the troop contributing countries, MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III, Force Commander UNDOF, said in his opening speech. Therefore the mixed teams were drawn from all major contingents in order to enhance intercultural exchange and mutual understanding. It also demonstrates both individual and team skills at the various task stands.

The teams competed in nine disciplines, namely: grenade throwing, rifle shooting, endurance run, map reading and land navigation,

incident management, rodeo drive, weapons proficiency, raft and row and the obstacle course. All teams

ing Maj Christian Kopp from the Mission Training Cell. Then he appreciated the efforts and achievements of all participants who did a great job. Following the award

ceremony some of the team

leaders remarked retrospectively with their interesting statements.

Lt II Florian Dürager from FHQ Coy

said that he had the challenge of coordinating

team members from four different

nations. However, since individual

skills and knowledge vary among team members, there

was always a competent specialist to lead at each stand.

Capt Kazunari Maekawa from J-CON felt that the endurance run with an 8 km route while carrying a 9 kg rucksack plus rifle was the most challenging event. It was a significant achievement for the whole team when they had successfully finished.

AUSBATT's Military Personnel Officer, Capt Peter Schwarzinger remarked that the UUC was a good opportunity to test your physical fitness, and also to learn more in cooperating with the other contingents serving in UNDOF. "Team spirit, comradeship and fun are terms to remember in this exciting event!"

Article by Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer



completed the stands with a remarkable display of physical strength, grit, and teamwork.

The overall winning team of Capt Singh Surya Pratap (IND) was honoured with the perpetual trophy, passed to the victors with each successive UUC competition. However everyone felt like a winner competing side by side in a multinational team of peacekeepers. In his acceptance address LtCol Robert Glanner, the COO UNDOF, firstly thanked the officer in charge of organization and UUC management, SO Train-



Lt II Dürager completing the obstacle course

Women show strength at the UNDOF Ultimate Challenge

Women's strength has been historically underestimated. Myths about physical weakness have affected what women can do in many areas of life.



Women's power shown at UUC



One of seven enlisted PHILBATT women

The female Peacekeepers of UNDOF have once again demonstrated their proficiency of military skills in the latest UNDOF Ultimate Challenge. The objective of this competition was to develop camaraderie, motivate soldiers to improve their core military skills and test their level of proficiency. Another primary objective is to promote Esprit de Corps among all those who contribute to the UNDOF mission. As such, nine teams were formed from a mix of nationalities and ranks, with one female competing on each team.

On the event day, PHILBATT enlisted seven women who fiercely competed in the given tasks. Overcoming all barriers, both physically and mentally, each of them: TSgt Melody Mendoza, TSgt Marife Duldulao, Sgt Ma Lourdes Garin, Sgt Heidi Larion, Cpl Ethel Dimaano, Sgt Jovimar Villanueva and SSgt Lida Mier completed the events with a remarkable display of physical strength, resolve and teamwork.

Additionally, women from AUTCON; Sgt Gabriele Kasper and HRVCON; Sgt Maja Tominac, competed very successfully, with Sgt Tominac being a member of the winning team. However, all UUC competitors can be very proud of their accomplishments. Well done to all!

*Article by Maj Bernadeth D. Tocloy, PIO PHILBATT
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer and Cpl Widmark Caceres*



Smiling in spite of exertions



A pose with the few and chosen mighty enlisted women

New Office Building – coming alive!

“Ground Breaking” of the new office building No. 33 was the headline article of the Golan Journal several months ago. Now that we are approaching final implementation of construction work, the third part of the story can be told.

Since the solid structure was completed in April this year, the outer walls have been insulated and corrugated metal siding has been applied, which makes the building start to come alive. The protruding gable end roof has been constructed and the lightning protection system is now crowning the roof. Subsequently, the centre of engineering focus has turned toward the internal structure. This phase of installation is now well under progress, with the electrical and IT wiring process soon to cross the finish line. Both UNDOF sections will then give way to the Syrian trades of masonry, carpentry and painters to accomplish their finishing touches of interior work.

Worth mentioning is the redundancy planning and concealed wiring in the facility, which provides a second conduit system installed in every room. This will offer occupants greater flexibility in the arrangement of furnishings, as well as provide a back-up system for the future in terms of power and IT services. Some may have noticed the small metal hut adjacent to the new building, which contains a state of the art Variable Refrigerant Flow system for air conditioning and heating control. This system is up to 40% more energy efficient than common systems, and can be regulated from each room. Double-pane insulated tilt and turn windows will also be installed, making the building a highly energy efficient structure, while providing a comfortable climate zone for all users.



The roof with the lightning protection system



Air Condition & Heating – State of the Art

Although much has been already done, one of the greatest challenges remains ahead - that is the relocation of four UNDOF sections into the new work space. Through this final stage the project is being introduced to all sub-planning teams of UNDOF to determine the requirements, such as new interior furnishings and common area decorations.

Coincidentally, the areas surrounding the building are now being prepared, including landscaping and asphaltting which will enhance the final architectural appearance of the building, to be completed by mid-August. This will be revealed in the next Golan Journal.

*Article and Photos by Maj Roman Zaller
FCEO and UNDOF Project Manager*

Canada Day - Celebrating Canada's 145th Birthday

With the departure of the current Canadian contingent quickly approaching, what better time to host guests from all UNDOF contingents and Headquarters in celebrating Canada's 145th Birthday on 30th Jun 2012 (officially observed on 1st July) at the newly-renovated Canadian Senate House patio. The event was hosted by both, the UNDOF and the UNTSO Canadian Contingent Commanders, Maj Chris Catry and LtCol Sean Nashrudi.

Along with delicious Canadian-style BBQ burgers and snacks, games were provided for the entertainment of all. Maj Catry challenged everyone's Canadian trivia knowledge by way of a multiple choice quiz. After much collaboration, process of elimination, some confusion and good old guess work by all, the winner of the contest was Capt Martin Rosenberger with a score of 30 out of 40.

No Canadian party is complete without hockey in one form or another. The "shooter tutor" hockey goalie proved to be a challenging opponent for all of the novice UNDOF road hockey players, but was dominated by Mr. Christian Salby, FSA, with a perfect score of 5 out of 5 shots, followed closely by Maj Samika Shivran, SO Supply, with a score of 4 out of 5 shots.

Many thanks go to Maj Roman Zaller, WO I Erwin Schellnegger, MSgt Thomas Hochgatterer and other Construction Engineer staff for providing much needed renovation work to the Canadian patio prior to the event, making it a more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing environment for the Canadians to relax and entertain guests.

Along with Canada's national day of celebration, the purpose of the event was for the Canadian Contingent to thank and praise UNDOF personnel for their camaraderie and warm hospitality during their tour. With the Canadians comprising three HQ staff officers, it is generally acknowledged that they do not have the resources to host many large events. The Canada Day event provided the opportunity for the Canadians to reciprocate the generosity shown by all other contingents and the HQ throughout the year by hosting UNDOF in a large farewell event as the Canadians are preparing to depart the mission.

To wrap up the day's festivities, Maj Catry formally thanked the Force Commander, Chief of Staff and Contingent Commanders through the presentation of mementos on behalf of Canada, for their warm hospitality, camaraderie and assistance over the past year.

Article by LCdr Peter Rohe, SSO Pers
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer, Force Photographer



The masters of Canada Day, Maj Catry and LCdr Rohe



The Great Canadian Trivia Quiz



The winning shot at the "shooter tutor" goalie



LCdr Rohe with almost Canadians

A SPECIAL DAY FOR UNDOF

UNDOF Day was celebrated by all at Camp Faouar, marking 38 Years of Peace in the Golan Region.

On 14th Jun 2012, UNDOF personnel recognized the thousands of Peacekeepers, national staff and international staff who have served at UNDOF, celebrating 38 years of peace in the Golan region as a result of maintaining the 1974 agreement that created UNDOF. The celebration also recognized the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, and supported the Philippine Contingent in celebrating the Philippine Independence Day.

The celebration began with a prayer offered by Maj Cirilo Bermudez, PHILBATT Chaplain, followed by a moment of silence, observed by all, in memory of more than 2,900 United Nations Peacekeepers who have given their lives in the service of Peace.

The activities then kicked off with contingent performances, starting with AUSBATT, led by Capt Ekke Gröppel. The Croatian contingent performers warmed up the crowd with a traditional folk song from the region of Slavonija called Bećarac. From there an Austrian Rescue on the Mountain display was skillfully executed by mountain experienced soldiers from 1st Coy WO II Bernd Krautgasser (savior), Sgt Arnold Schnabl (safety guide) and WO I Anita Fuchs who aptly played the role as the person at mountain dis-



HRVCON performing the traditional Bećarac song

treass. Following some technical difficulties engaging the famous Austrian mountain called Manitou the demonstration was successfully completed with true Austrian resolve.



AUTCON "Rescue on the Mountain"

The Philippine Contingent, led by Capt Addonis Bañez then offered some very entertaining dances called Pasiguin (or fishnet dance) and Sayaw sa Bangko (or dance on a bench), both exciting and engaging performances for the entertainment of all.

Keeping the momentum going, the Indian Contingent, led by Maj Ankush Goyal offered the crowd the very colourful and musical Bhangra folk dance from Punjab, and the Lazim Karagattam folk dance from Tamil Nadu.

Capt Ken Hareyama then followed through with the Japanese Kenbu Sword Dance and a thrilling Karate demonstration, showing true Japanese expertise. Following a Filipino Arnis martial arts demonstration, a combined performance of the traditional Filipino Tinikling dance was then offered, which included performers from PHILBATT, and LOGBATT, with a surprise appearance by Col Andreas Rotheneder, UNDOF COS and Mr. Bernard Lee, UNDOF CMS, who thrilled the crowd with their hidden talents.



PHILBATT "Sayaw sa Bangko" performance



Capt MD Rachelle Judilla announcing on stage



Combined PHILBATT and LOGBATT Tinikling dance



INDCON "Bhangra" folk dance



J-CON Karate demonstration



The Whirling Dervish - Mr. Serdaneh's amazing show

Even the scorching heat of the day did not slow down our intrepid performers, who worked persistently to overcome the severely hot pavement. TSgt Marife Duldulao, a star Tinikling performer was quoted as saying, "The show must go on!," as she forced herself forward on burned feet.

The finale of the day was a live performance of a traditional Middle Eastern Whirling Dervish, Mr. Amer Abou Serdaneh, a Syrian performer who uses rhythm Sufism and Indonesian and Damascene echoes to display his highly charged spiritual dance.

With true UNDOF spirit, Radio Gecko staff worked their usual magic, smoothly orchestrating all accompanying music and all manner of sound support throughout the event. Following the performances, everyone, including the family members of UNDOF staff had time to explore and enjoy the colourful displays and delicious cultural dishes, making the day a truly international affair.

*Article by LCdr Peter Rohe, SSO Pers
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer, Force Photographer*

High tides in AUSBATT – visit of MGen Dieter Heidecker

Due to the situation within the Area of Operations of the Austrian Battalion and the general situation in the country, visits from Austria have become rare over the last couple of months. So it was a special honour for all Austrian soldiers to bid the Deputy Commander of the Austrian Armed Forces a warm welcome in Camp Faouar on Friday, 8th Jun 2012.

After paying a visit to the Austrian units serving in UNIFIL, MGen Dieter Heidecker travelled from Nakura to Damascus, accompanied by the Austrian military attaché. Upon arrival at Camp Faouar MGen Heidecker was introduced to all AUTCON officers at the Austrian Officers Club. Then he took the time to be updated regarding concerns of the mission and the well-being of the soldiers.

The following day he expressed his gratitude and respect for the professional performance of the contingent soldiers assembled on the parade square. He stressed that, with regard to the change in the security situation, it is even more necessary to perform duty with highest efforts and to cultivate strong fellowships. He showed great interest in what is happening in the field, as well and was thoroughly briefed on current operations and the hot spots in AUSBATT's Area of Responsibility.

Saturday evening MGen Heidecker again used the opportunity to talk to soldiers of all ranks to round up the picture and gain an impression on the feelings, needs and concerns of those who are responsible for the mission's execution in the field. In summary, it was a very rewarding visit to AUSBATT and it left the soldiers secure in the knowledge that those back home really care about how they are contributing in the service of peace.

Article by Capt Rüdiger von Gimborn, Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer



MGen Heidecker and COS UNDOF salute the Austrian flag



Austrian Officers with the high ranked visitor

"E2A" - Extreme patrolling on Mount Hermon

This patrol is well known by all AUSBATT soldiers as one of the most demanding in UNDOF's Area of Separation, covering a twelve kilometer route at 1,500 meters elevation which must be completed in five and a half hours. Additionally, the temperature was abnormally high for this first seasonal patrol.



High walls of snow along the patrol track

Saturday, 16th Jun 2012, 05:00hrs, Posn 10, 3rd Coy/AB. The patrol commander, Maj Bruno Pedretsch (CO/HQ Coy), and his team of eight soldiers from Austria and Croatia commence the first patrol of this route after the winter season. All team members were transported to the starting point, the "Water Castle" which is a water reservoir. It was

almost dawn when the nine AUSBATT soldiers started their patrol on the red-marked track. One of the reasons for the patrol was to make the soldiers of the 3rd Coy familiar with the terrain, but the most important task was the monitoring of the Area of Separation parallel to the Alpha-Line.

From there, on very rough terrain,

the patrol team surged forward through seven reporting points. Some of the rises such as the pathway to the Eastern Ridge are extremely steep, and on this particular day the thermometer pointed

to 40 degrees Celsius. Thereby, all soldiers had to carry at least three liters of bottled water in their rucksack. Furthermore personal weapons, three radios and an emergency dispensary were carried within the group. At each reporting point a ten minute break for observation was scheduled. After twelve strenuous kilometers the patrol reached Posn Hermon South at almost 2,400m above sea level.

WO I Anton Prochiner, called "Südvotta" (Austrian slang for "Father of South") and leader of Posn Hermon South, warmly welcomed the patrolling soldiers. After a long and challenging tour, Maj Pedretsch and his team felt quite pleased as they viewed the scenery while enjoying a savory lunch served by the position cook.

*Article by Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR
Photos by Capt Zdravko Milosević,
CO 3rd Coy/AB*



„Südvotta“ WO I Prochiner, SSgt Špiranec, Capt Milosević, Mjr Pedretsch, WO I Urschitz, Maj Babić, Maj Salzmann, MSgt Haider, kneeling from left Sgt Pinter and SSgt Rep

The successful search for a missing child

On 3rd April 2012, PHILBATT soldiers were called out from their position to help a Syrian family in need. A missing child had to be found safely when Filipino peacekeepers provided a great effort. An amazing story!

It started with a call from the Liaison Officer stationed at Position 80, Al Rafid Village, Golan Heights. Syrian nationals were requesting urgent help in the search for a missing boy.

No words can accurately describe the faces of Mr. Sael and Mrs. Fatema Atahan, the parents of their three year old son named Amman. According to them, the boy was wearing a red shirt and blue pants and was last seen on the Tuesday at about 18:00hrs along the patrol path in the vicinity of Al Muallaqah Village, in the Area of Operations of 2nd Coy PHILBATT.

The anxiety of the family was understandable, considering the area where the boy was lost, was very dangerous for his tender age due to the presence of wild animals and land mines. The boy's father described that the boy was with his siblings while they were herding sheep. It was too late when the eldest of the group realized that the little boy was not with them along the way home. Knowing the dangers that the little boy could encounter in the hostile environment, Maj Ray Tiongson, the Commanding Officer of 2nd Coy PHILBATT, immediately organized four patrol teams to search for the missing boy along the ceasefire line of the AOS covering the areas of Ain Kadi, Al Muallaqah and Brudjum villages and other nearby locations. Maj Tiongson would say later that although the operation was outside the UNDOF mandate, it was within their Area of Responsibility



Maj Ray Tiongson turned over the missing boy to his father

so they had to act on the basis of the duty to save life, maintain peace and protect humanity.

The Filipinos handled the situation in such a way that the troops would not be obstructed by the eagerness of the civilians to participate in the search and rescue mission. One of the teams was tasked to prevent civilian searchers from crossing the ceasefire line as well as

the minefield area. The troops knew the danger involved if the civilians were not controlled appropriately. The team untiringly monitored all movements of the civilian searchers to prevent any untoward incidents. Subsequently, the civilians returned to their homes once given assurance that the troops would search relentlessly and bring the little boy home safely.

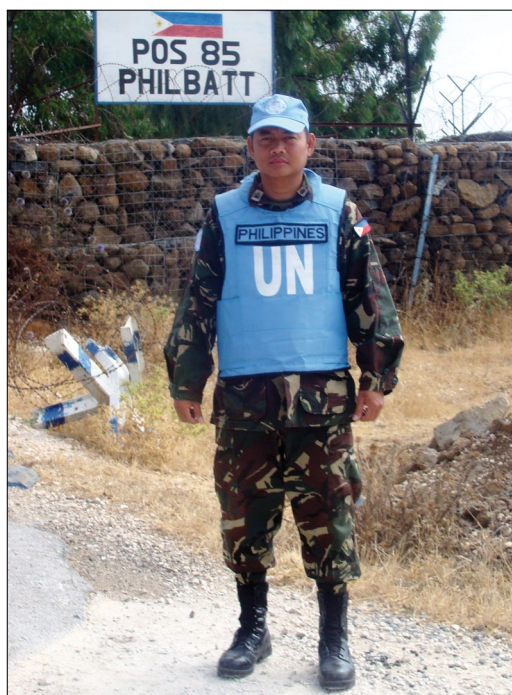


Giving medical check up to Amman

Another team of the contingent conducted a night search with the use of a SISU armoured personnel carrier, best utilized for night patrols dealing with the mine threat.

After twelve hours of searching, Amman was found early the next morning by the team led by SSgt Nelson Dolz, a member of Posn 85, 2nd Coy PHILBATT. The boy was found under an olive tree approximately seven kilometres from where he was last seen. He was immediately brought to the Medical SISU, where a complete medical check was administered by Capt MD Rachelle Judilla, the Medical Officer of 2nd Coy.

The medical check showed that the boy had stable vital



SSgt Nelson A. Dolz – Team Leader of the recovery team

signs, but that he was slightly hypothermic with a temperature of 36 degrees Celsius. Amman was cared for and was given medical clearance, allowing him to be reunited with his family. In the presence of the whole community of al Rafid Village, Amman was finally reunited with his parents, where the villagers were extremely relieved to have witnessed the successful search and rescue operation.

The Philippine Contingent once again proved their skills as part of this prestigious United Nations peacekeeping mission. *Salute!*

*Article by Maj Bernadeth D. Tocloy,
PIO PHILBATT*

Photos by Sgt Benny Tomas

Medal Parade of the Indian and Japanese Contingent

A sense of exuberance and accomplishment descended over Camp Ziouani on the 26th Jun 2012 as the 12th INDCON rotation and the 33rd J-CON rotation prepared themselves to receive the UNDOF medal. The Indian and the Japanese contingents carried out a joint Medal Parade in perfect coordination. This unique parade format displayed the high level of integration, cooperation and coordination that the contingents enjoy as they carry out their operational tasks.

Through the ages, the profession of arms has always held a place of pride in the Indian society. The officers and the men of the Indian Army are proud of their heritage and have an unmatched reputation to live up to. Their sense of commitment to duty inspires them to make sacrifices of the highest order to uphold the tradition of the Army. As in numerous and complex UN missions over the past five decades,



Indian and Japanese troops during the Medal Parade

the Indian Army can be trusted when called upon, to participate in UN peacekeeping endeavors with professional flair. This ceremony marked the completion of 90 days of service, in which all members of LOGBATT qualify for the award of the UNDOF medal.

The parade was reviewed by MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III, Force Commander and Head of Mission UNDOF, and was commanded by Maj Ashish Borgaonkar,

of Japan. The Force Commander in his address lauded the troops of the LOGBATT for their display of military professionalism, discipline and conduct. LtCol Rahul Doegar, CO LOGBATT, also expressed his gratitude to fellow members of UNDOF for their support and called upon the LOGBATT team to continue their excellent work. CO J-CON Maj Mamoru Nanjo, expressed gratitude for the close cooperation and hospitality he enjoyed from UNDOF and our hosting nations.

The parade ended with a sumptuous lunch at the International Kitchen. On the menu was a host of dishes prepared by the Indian staff members of UNDOF, host nation personnel and government officials. The occasion was also graced by the presence of His Excellency Mr. Hideo SATO, the Ambassador



His Excellency Mr. Hideo SATO attends the ceremony

*Article by Maj Himmat Singh,
MAINTO LOGBATT*

HIV and AIDS program in UNDOF: Monitoring and Evaluation



United Nations Security Council Resolution 1308 recognizes the devastating impact of HIV and AIDS on all levels of society and a link between this disease and world security and stability. This resolution emphasizes the vulnerability of the uniformed services, international peacekeeping personnel and international civilian personnel deployed in peacekeeping missions.

Just a few years ago talking about ending the AIDS epidemic in the near term seemed impossible. However, science, political support and community responses are starting to deliver clear and tangible results. Those results are yet to have full effect, but the AIDS response must be transformed. The United Nations General Assembly has set new bold targets in its historic 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS. The targets intensify our efforts to eliminate HIV and AIDS with a focus on clear, time-bound goals designed to bring about the end of HIV and to improve human health across diverse communities.

As a part of all UN peacekeeping missions, the implementation of UN Resolution 1308 on HIV and AIDS is an essential obligation. UNDOF has an officer nominated as focal point for HIV and AIDS.

The program includes:

- Availability of free distribution of male and female condoms
- Availability of post-exposure prophylaxis kits (PEP) in the mission area
- HIV and AIDS awareness lectures
- Voluntary confidential counseling and testing



Not only does this program cater to uniformed peacekeeping personnel, international civilian personnel deployed in peacekeeping at UNDOF are also taken into account. The world cannot live up to the targets and spirit of the UN General Assembly political declaration 2011 unless countries and donors commit to using the tools available, focusing them on the most effective programs and investment accordingly.

The first DPKO and UNAIDS Conference on HIV and AIDS program (Monitoring and Evaluation) was held at the Regional Training and Conference Centre at Entebbe, Uganda, from 18 to 22 Jun 2012. A total 24 representatives from 14 different missions participated. The special representative from the African Union also participated in it. Facilitators included members from UN HQ and representatives of UNAIDS. The five day schedule included brain storming lectures and group work. By the end of the seminar all participants resolved to make the program more effective using better tools for evaluation. It was unanimously agreed that prevention, treatment, care and support should be the main goal. However, to achieve this, proper monitoring and evaluation should form the objective. During a time of financial austerity and economic crisis in many parts of the world, it is essential for both donor and recipient to reaffirm their commitment to combat HIV and AIDS. At this critical juncture, it is imperative for all of us to make a strategic investment and to keep an eye on the finish line.

More to find about: www.unaids.org/en/

Article by Maj Udai Pratap Singh, SMO LOGBATT

9th HRVCON welcomed to UNDOF

The Change of Command of the Croatian contingent took place after a six month deployment of the 8th HRVCON on the Golan Heights. The ceremony itself was held on 7th Jun 2012 at Posn 10, in the area of 3rd Coy AUSBATT. The new NCC HRVCON Major Davor Josip Babić has now assumed responsibility.

It had been a very busy time during the last few days of the handover-takeover, preparing for submissions and briefings regarding the duties of the National Contingent Commander (NCC).

In his departing speech the outgoing NCC, Major Ivica Brajkovic, indicated that he had found many new comrades and friends whom he now had to leave. He thanked his Croatian soldiers for their gratitude and for a job well done. Moreover he gave thanks to the Force Commander, MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III, and the CO AUSBATT, LtCol Christian Kneissl, for their leadership "being real comrades at anytime in any case." Finally he described his feelings going home to his family who eagerly waited for him during his tenure at UNDOF.

After the Force Commander's inspection of the Guard of Honour, composed of Croatian and Austrian soldiers, the national anthem of Croatia was played with the support of Radio Gecko, the Austrian Camp Radio. The official ceremony was completed with the Force Com-



Handover the Croatian flag



Signing certificates

mander handing over the Croatian flag to Major Babić as a symbol of Croatian loyalty to UNDOF, and the handover certificates were then signed.

Major Babić said in his inauguration speech that he feels very proud to assume the duties and obligations of his new appointment which represents a great challenge and honour to him. The current contingent consists of professional soldiers from the Armoured Mechanized Guard Brigade in Slavonija, East Croatia, where he comes from. He says that it is a sign of strength and courage for Croatian soldiers to have served with Austria during the past four years at UNDOF. His intention is to follow the well-known UNDOF motto of "One Mission, one Team, one Goal."

At the end of the ceremony gifts were presented and a delicious traditional Croatian barbecue buffet was offered to all guests in a welcoming atmosphere.

*Article by Lt I Petar Guljas, DCO 3rd Coy/AB
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer*



Panoramic view of Position 10

J-CON in the performance of courage and devotion

During the months of April and May, many VIPs visited Camp Ziouani to view J-CON activities and encourage the Japanese Peacekeepers in their work.



LtGen Haruyuki Hirano with CO/J-CON

One of J-CON's honoured guests was LtGen Haruyuki Hirano, the Commanding General of the 2nd Division of Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, who visited Camp Ziouani on 24th and 25th May 2012. The 2nd Division is the home unit for members of the 33rd J-CON. Needless to say, the contingent was very happy to see their unit commander here on the Golan Heights. After a luncheon held in his honour, contingent members enjoyed talking to their guest. LtGen Hirano stayed one night at Camp Ziouani and got a taste of the J-CON daily routine. Furthermore, he provided them with words of encouragement. "It is crucial to smile constantly, because we all smile in the same language," he declared. "Additionally, we all have need of our smiles to withstand adversities." J-CON personnel were deeply impressed by the words of the high ranked VIP.

Karate Performance

Further activities in June were conducted by Japanese soldiers,

when they performed Karate and Kenbu demonstrations at the UNDOF Day event in Camp Faouar. Karate is one of the most popular martial arts. At present, 23 million people around the world practice it. Kenbu is the traditional Japanese "Sword Dance".

J-CON personnel were quite proud to share these aspects of Japanese



Karate performance

culture with their UNDOF family. Furthermore, J-CON displayed Army uniforms and traditional children's toys. The calligraphy corner was a big hit, attracting many guests who wished to have their names written on Japanese paper in Kanji Chinese characters. Moreover, J-CON provided their prized

sushi to all guests present. Many cultures are very fond of sushi and agree that this food is not only delicious but also provides good health and long lives.

UNDOF Day offered a splendid opportunity for all UNDOF personnel to meet, learn more about each other and strengthen relationships. That was a great day for all civilian and military members of UNDOF.

Medal Parade

Some days later on 26th Jun, INDCON and J-CON held their joint LOGBATT Medal Parade in Camp Ziouani. Everyone practiced enthusiastically for this event, as was evident in the final result. After the parade, a luncheon was offered in the International Kitchen. Each of the contingent cooks provided their traditional dishes for the enjoyment of all guests.

*Articles by Capt Ken Hareyama, PIO J-CON
Photos by SSgt Masaki Oide
and SSgt Kenta Sasaki*



J-CON soldiers presenting arms

The “Four Paws Force”

Since the last rotation in June 2012 much has changed in Camp Faouar concerning military working dogs. Due to the latest developments in UNDOF three further dog handlers were sent to the mission to increase safety and security in and around the camp. Now, the two female of them stay in the Military Police platoon.

SSgt Martina Planinsec and SSgt Friederike Hölzl are now serving in the Military Police platoon at C-Detachment, along with their well-trained dogs named Ronny and Xadra. Both four-legged friends underwent dual training for both safeguarding and detection of narcotics and explosives. The training to become a military working dog took place in a graduated manner in Kaisersteinbruch, Austria. There the dogs, which must have been at least twelve months old, received their first obedience and safeguarding training.

Approximately three months later they underwent special detection training. Depending on their tasks to fulfill, they also received special training in detection of drugs, explosives, weapons and ammunition and to assist in crowd and riot control. Now both handlers and dogs are fully trained and present in the mission area. That's why we have a strong sense of security knowing that our “Four Paws Force” is fully operational. *Wuff!*

*Article by SSgt Martina Planinsec and SSgt Friederike Hölzl
Photo by SSgt Gernot Payer*



The new Force Provost Marshal (FPM)

LCdr Bonifacio Agas was born on 13th Feb 1974 in the Province of La Union, Philippines. He entered the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) in 1992, graduating in 1996 with a degree of Bachelor of Science in Naval Systems Engineering and was commissioned as an Ensign into the Philippine Navy. Having completed his junior billets aboard ship from 1996 to 2000, he was assigned ashore and held various staff positions such as Chief of Research and Doctrine Development Branch, ON8, Headquarters Philippine Navy.

Thereafter, he was assigned in the PMA as Deputy Staff for Operations, Chief of Public Information Officer, Deputy Staff for Plans and Programs, Deputy Staff for Personnel and as Secretary of Academy Staff. Prior to his assignment with UNDOF, he was the Chief of Local Training Branch, OJ8 at the General Headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines. LCdr Agas is a graduate of the Defense and Resource Management Course, the PSYOPS/Civil Affairs Course and Joint Planning Course in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, USA. He is a distinguished graduate of the Naval Command and Staff Course and the Formal School Instructors Course and Curriculum Administrator Course in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, USA.

He is happily married to Marlee, a civil servant leader and they are blessed with two daughters, Betina and Biana.

Impressions of Team “Oasis”

Southernmost OPs in the Area of Responsibility of the Observer Group Golan Damascus (OGG-D), Team “Oasis” OP 57 and OP 58 are located in the natural environment of the most dangerous Syrian reptiles and insects. The life of newcomers working in the Golan Heights is not always easy...

During our induction training in Jerusalem we were told about the hazards related to snakes and insects while working at OPs. Honestly, passing through the A-B Gate, my two biggest concerns were on the one hand the influence of the ongoing local unrests on personal security, on the other the future working environment waiting for me in Damascus. Luckily the first impact with the new team has been great and I have felt immediately part of the “Oasis” family.

The friendship of all team members helps me constantly to achieve my professional objectives and provide me with precious moral support to afford every new challenge. Being part of a team where everyone is always ready to take care of each other, reduces the stress related with the tense surrounding situation and, even if the situational awareness remains high, allows everybody to carry on his mission within the best conditions.

The first coffee break with my new team members taught me that the lessons learned by the security and safety training are very important to avoid unwanted meetings with our poisonous little “friends”. When I asked for the sugar I was told that



Team “Oasis” medal with scorpion symbol



Size comparison between the scorpion and a cellphone

it was on the table inside a round little box. It is not so difficult to imagine my reaction upon opening the box to discover a large black scorpion instead to the wanted coffee-sweetener. To defend my soldier-honour I have to underline that for the first two seconds I was not aware that the “beast” was already dead... Nice joke! Now I know why the symbol of our team is a black scorpion and I am always careful in case any other little “friends” are chilling around. Stay safe!

Article and photos by Capt Fabio Omini and Capt Adolf Oosterbeek, UNMOs OGG-D Team “Oasis”



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