



DEAR READERS!

Facing Christmas time and the end of 2012, UNDOF has successfully fulfilled its mandate for the past year. As an official means of internal and external communication, the Golan Journal documents events, proceedings and happenings, often from a personal view, that is worth to write and read. But it should be more than only a reporting magazine, due to the current situation and the challenges we are facing. At the end of November we had to deal with extremely dangerous incidents suffered by UNDOF peacekeepers, when Austrian soldiers came under fire while going in a convoy during a rotation transport.

Our achievements have been highlighted in the following articles; The Operational Work in UNDOF by Operations Officer Capt Sandeep Kumar, Christmas Events by Maj Nishant Kalra, in addition to contributions from our Military Chaplains from AUSBATT, PHILBATT, as well as a beautiful true story about The Magic of a Child's Photograph which was taken 30



Our team: Alex, Ekke, Seiji and Martin

years ago by our former UNDOF Force Photographer, and much more to read...

Enjoy the magazine and a happy New Year!



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

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Force Commander's Message

Dear Gallant Peacekeepers!

We enter the New Year after overcoming the challenges faced in the previous year that had a direct effect on our operations. I am sure that we have come out stronger and will continue to fulfil the mandate of UNDOF.

The last quarter of previous year was very dynamic and the peace-keepers from OGG and UNDOF confronted restrictions to their movements in addition to coming under fire. I would like to commend the two line battalions and OGG observers to have evolved with the situation and met the security challenges in a befitting manner.



The period also witnessed rotation of both line battalions simultaneously and induction of Staff Officers from Croatia.

We had the unfortunate incident in which our troops were fired upon and two of them sustained serious injuries. I thank everyone associated with the evacuation of the soldiers including Syrian and Israeli authorities. It is due to their efforts that the injured are back with their families safe and sound. I would also like to thank both parties for being forthcoming and cooperating during trying times. The art of performing mandated tasks lies in having our eyes and ears ahead and appreciating the likely situation well in time.

The national and the international staff of UNDOF have continued their sterling performance and coped up well with the dynamic changes in the region. I am sanguine they are geared up for meeting all future challenges. I am glad we have continued with our sports competitions and marches in spite of the worsening situation. We have organised the A-side Ambassador and Defence Attaches Day commendably. We had three important visits of dignitaries to our Headquarters, first of ASG Mr. Edmont Mulet followed closely by DSS team and Deputy MILAD MGen Jean Baillaud. The visitors were impressed with the manner in which we were handling the situation and were more than willing to resort to force accretion.

I would also like to thank the Japanese Contingent as this period marks the culmination of their 17 years contribution to UNDOF. They have performed commendably and we wish them happy reunion with their families. The ably led INDCON has smilingly taken on additional logistical responsibility as well as provided a platoon as FHQ reserve. I had the opportunity to visit all Observation Posts and positions of the mission during Christmas and am glad to see the way the new contingents have settled down. This was the most memorable Christmas celebration of my life. I would like to wish all peacekeepers and their families a very HAPPY NEW YEAR. May the new year bring cheer, good health and prosperity to everyone and peace to the region. We are passing through historical moments and enter the New Year with the resolve to continue ensuring peace in the Golan Heights.

God Speed in all your endeavours,

Thank You, Danke, Salamat, Hvala, Arigato, Dhanyavad, Shukran, Toe Dah!

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

Chief of Staff Words

Fellow Peacekeepers!

At the end of my Tour of Duty in UNDOF, this is the fourth and last time to address you in the Golan Journal.

It was not the first time that I worked within a multicultural environment but it was again challenging and a great opportunity for me to get new impressions and experiences.

We had to deal with unexpected circumstances which extremely influenced UNDOF's routine business and the fulfillment of our mandate at the Golan Heights. During the last twelve months, precarious situations increased and got tenser especially in the recent past.



The developing situation inside our Area of Limitation started up with single incidents and changed more and more to extreme once mirrored inside the Area of Separation, which never happened before in UNDOF's history.

The threat on UN personnel reached a high level and unfortunately climaxed when a shooting attack on an UNDOF convoy took place during the AUTCON rotation at the end of November. Worthy to mention, that I had the distinguished privilege to serve under two Force Commanders, MGen Ecarma and MGen Singha. General Singha, Sir, I want to express my deepest thanks to you for your outstanding leadership as Force Commander and Head of Mission. It was a big honor for me to serve as UNDOF Chief of Staff under your command.

Last but not least, I thank all UN peacekeepers from Austria, India, the Philippines, Japan, and Canada for their great support, commitment and loyalty and maintaining the highest professional standards. It was a great pleasure for me to having served as your Chief of Staff, but now I am looking forward going home and reuniting with my family.

I wish you all the best for your future time in UNDOF and a safe return to your home countries, always keeping in mind our motto:

"One Mission - One Team - One Goal"

Colonel Andreas Rotheneder, Chief of Staff UNDOF

Visits to UNDOF

by Capt Seiji Ito, DMPIO



Mr. Reiichiro Takahashi, Director-General, Japan Internal Peace Cooperation Headquarters, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (11th - 12th Oct 2012)



Mr. Hon. Jejomar C. Binay, Vice President Republic of the Philippines, visited Camp Ziouani (26th Oct 2012)



Col Evans Charles, US School of Advanced Military Studies, visited Camp Ziouani (26th Oct 2012)



Mr. Motohiro Ono, Japan Parliamentary Vice Minister of Defense, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (6th Nov 2012)



MGen Jean Baillaud, acting Deputy Military Adviser for Peacekeeping Operations, visited UNDOF and met with FC UNDOF (11th - 13th Dec 2012)

- MGen Kimihito Iwamura, Vice Commander of Japanese Central Readiness Force, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (11th - 12th Oct 2012)
- Mr. Michael Ryan, Delegation of European Union, visited Camp Faouar (23rd Oct 2012)
- BGen Michael Pearson, Canadian Joint Operations Command, visited Camp Ziouani (11th Nov 2012)
- Mr. Paul Farrell, Chief Peacekeeping Operations Support Section, and Mr. Mohammed Sarker, Senior Security Coordinations Command, visited Camp Faouar and met with CMS UNDOF (12th - 16th Nov 2012)
- LtCol Micky Attiach, IDF Liaison Course, visited Camp Ziouani (21st Nov 2012)



The new Chief Military Personnel Officer (CMPO)

LtCol Predrag Popović was born on 19th Jan 1962 in Croatia. He is a graduate of the Air Force Technical Military Academy and has begun his military career as an Engineer of Aeronautics serving as platoon and Company Commander from 1983 to 1991. Then he joined the Croatian Homeland War and continued his military career as a Logistics Assistant to AFB Commander, AFB Supply-Support Battalion Commander, Logistics Officer G4, Operations Officer G3 and Chief of AFB OC. Further on, he served as a Senior Advisor on Bilateral Defence Cooperation in Croatian MOD, Defence Policy Directorate, then as a Senior Advisor on Multilateral Defence Cooperation and finally as a Deputy Chief

of International Defence Cooperation Department. He underwent several military courses, Logistics Executive Development Course in Fort Lee (USA), Staff Officer Course, International Military Observer Course, UN CIMIC Course and Staff Officer Course for NATO and UN PSO, all in Croatia. He served in two UN missions, UNMEE from 2005 to 2006 as a Team Leader, and in UNMIS from 2008 to 2009 as a Staff Officer with special assignment given by Civil-Military Mission Leadership. LtCol Popović is married and has two daughters and a son. He enjoys reading books related to social psychology, interpersonal relationships and communication, human brain, mind, consciousness, philosophy, physics, and various religious books. He also enjoys learning about cultural and other differences among various populations. He enjoys sport activities, cooking and many other simple things. In short, he enjoys the life.



The new Force Provost Marshal (FPM)

Maj Ompal Singh was born on 2nd Nov 1976 in Meerut, India. He graduated from the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun on 24th Jun 2000 and was commissioned into the 51st Armored Regiment, as a young subaltern he had the privilege of commanding his tank troop in Deserts of Rajasthan as part of Operation Parakram. He commanded a saber squadron on the Western front and also participated in counter insurgency operations in the North of India. As a third generation cavalier, he had the honor of serving as the Aidde-Camp to the Governor of Himachal Pradesh, India for two years. Maj Ompal Singh is a graduate of prestigious Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, India. He is happily

married to Squadron Leader Ms. Deepika Singh who is serving in the Indian Air Force and presently stationed in North-India with their 10 months old son Niehal Singh. Maj Ompal Singh is a keen golfer with special love for Indian Sufi Ghazal songs, a voracious reader and loves to venture to new places.



The new Chief Observer Group Golan (COGG)

LtCol Robert Duggan was born in England on 19th Jan 1965. He enlisted in the Irish Defence Forces in November 1982 as an officer cadet and was commissioned into the Cavalry Corps in April 1984. He holds a Bachelor Degree in Physical Education with Mathematics and also holds a Masters of Arts Degree in Leadership, Management & Defence Studies. In Ireland, he has commanded Cavalry, Infantry and Logistics units. He has also served at Defence Forces Headquarters in the Human Resources Branch. He has previous five tours of duty in UN service in UNIFIL, UNMIL in Liberia and MONUSCO in Democratic Republic of Congo. He has also served with ECMM in Bosnia Herzegovina,

OSCE in Georgia and at ISAF HQ in Afghanistan. LtCol Duggan lives in South Kilkenny with his wife Rose and their three sons, Adam, Evan and Samuel. He is a keen athlete and has retired to the sport of triathlon. His hobbies include hill walking, indoor soccer and fly fishing.



The new CO AUSBATT

LtCol Paul Schneider was born on 13th Mar 1965 in Lilienfeld, Austria. From 1986 to 1989 he attended the Military Academy and was promoted in September 1989. His first assignment as Platoon Commander initiated his career as an Engineer Officer, containing all commanding levels up to Commanding Officer of a battalion. He graduated from the National Defense College in Vienna with a Master degree in defense and security management in 2004. He has served as Platoon Commander and Contingent Construction Engineer Officer with AUSBATT/UNDOF, as Engineer Officer with ATHUM/ALBA in Albania and as Chief Tactical Operation Center of the MNTF NORTH/EUFOR 1

in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From 2005 to 2006 he was Project Officer in the support of the Austrian Presidency preceding the European Union. From 2006 to 2010 he was assigned as the Future Operations Coordinator to the German Bundeswehr Response Force Operations Command. Currently, LtCol Schneider is Section Chief within the General Directorate IV in the Ministry of Defense in Austria, thereby responsible for the mission preparation of AUT military contingents to international operations. He is married, father of three children and he likes sports, literature and biking.



The new CO PHILBATT

LtCol Nolie L. Anquillano was born on 12th Nov 1967 in Roxas, Isabela, Philippines. He is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Criminology in 1988 at the Manuel L. Quezon University in Manila. He joined the Philippine Army and graduated from the Armed Forces of the Philippines Officer Candidate School in 1990. He has undergone various military schoolings such as Basic Airborne Course, Infantry Officer Basic and Advance Courses, Junior Officer Close Country Instructor's Training and Command and General Staff Course. He holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the Development Academy of the Philippines. In 2006 LtCol Anquillano served in MINUSTAH as

Administrative Officer of 3rd Philippine Contingent to Haiti. In 2010, he became the Battalion Commander of the 50th Infantry "Defender of Democracy" Battalion of the 5th Infantry Division, Philippine Army. The officer was awarded with various medals such as Gold Cross, Bronze Cross, Silver Wing, Military Merit and Commendation Medals. He is also a recipient of the Command and General Staff Course (CGSC) Honor Graduate Award. LtCol Anquillano is happily married to Anabel, and they are blessed with two daughters; Lee Ann Farah and Liana Marie.



The new CO HRVCON

Major Mile Vukičević was born on 1st Feb 1970 in Drniš, a small town in Central Dalmatia, Croatia. He finished primary and high school in his hometown and he lived there until September 1989 when he attended Traffic Science on Zagreb University. He participated in the new formed Croatian Army as voluntary from 1991 to 1992. After he graduated on the University Traffic Science Zagreb 1994 he rejoined the Army. During his military carrier he attended Basic Military School, Advance Military School and graduated on Command and Staff College in Zagreb 2006. Except participation in many multinational military exercises in Croatia, this is his first foreign mission abroad. Maj Vukičević is happily mar-

ried with Anita, and they have three children, Ante (15), Teo (12) and Hrvoje (11). He prefers sport activities like running and skiing.

Mr. Edmont Mulet's visit to UNDOF

The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations in New York, Mr. Edmont Mulet, visited Camp Faouar on 9th and 10th Nov 2012. To get the newest information about the UNDOF mission, he met with civilian and military staff for two days.

r. Mulet's visit to Syria started on Friday morning with a warm welcome by the Chief of Staff UNDOF, Col Andreas Rotheneder, who welcomed the honorable guest at the Lebanese border and accompanied him to the Force Commander's Residence in Damascus. There Mr. Mulet was greeted by the Force Commander UNDOF, MGen I. S. Singha.

On the first day, meetings with a representative of UNSMIS, the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate and the Syrian Minister of Defense were scheduled within the dense visit program. The day ended with a delightful dinner hosted by the Force Commander in the Austrian Officers Club in Camp Faouar together with the Chief of Staff, the Branch Heads and Commanding Officers of UNDOF.

Next day morning Mr. Mulet was officially saluted with an international Guard of Honor, which was brought to the guest's attention at the parade square, commanded by Capt Florian Dürager from the FHQ Company. The rainy day began with a morning update in the conference room of the Headquarters building followed by a detailed information briefing about the current situation and the latest proceedings during the last weeks in UNDOF's Area of Responsibility. Then it happened the first time in the mission history, that four dedicated UNDOF peacekeepers were

honored by the Assistant Secretary-General for their deserts each with a Letter of Recommendation signed by FC UNDOF.

Then, the visit program provided Mr. Mulet with an OGG Briefing at UNTSO OP 72 done by COGG LtCol Robert Duggan followed by an introduction at AUSBATT Posn 37. Continuing the line tour program, the commander of the 2nd Coy AUSBATT, Maj Michael Fedl, provided Mr. Mulet the "Hospital Roof Briefing" on the former Golan Hospital in Qunaitra, close to the vicinity of Posn 27.

Afterwards it followed a visit in the area of the 1st Coy PHIL-BATT at Posn 60, where the company commander, Maj Nestor Visario, gave an instruction briefing about static, mobile and night operations.

With his return to the Lebanese border, the visit of the Assistant Secretary-General was completed at early afternoon. Mr. Mulet left UNDOF with actual and current impressions of the Golan Heights mission and its situation.

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



OGG Briefing at UNTSO OP 72



Mr. Mulet at AUSBATT Posn 27



With Filipino officers at Posn 60



Awarding the Letter of Recommendation

When Force Commander played Santa

MGen Singha brought goodies for everyone and even rode a sleigh! Although he is younger than Santa Claus, he played the part perfectly.

Chifting from Toyota Land Cruiser to the Pisten-Bully and then to the Snow-Scooter, he was extremely excited to bring some cheer to his soldiers' faces on Christmas Eve, by meeting them and celebrating with them. The Force Commander UNDOF. MGen I. S. Singha in his usual manner visited all UNDOF positions and UNTSO observation posts over a period of four days

during Christmas celebrations. I say "usual manner" because com-



Fixing the Christmas tree star at Posn Hermon Base

to one of the positions, he told me how important it was to be with the

soldiers, especially when the times are bad.

We visited all locations and took wine, champagne and chocolates for the troops. The boys were very happy to see their Force Commander and welcomed him with a lot of zeal. We attended a



With the Snow-Scooter to Posn Hermon South

ing from the same unit as him, I am very aware of his style of leadership. He loves to be with his men in both good and bad times. We were just about to start from UNDOF HQ when we heard two very loud sounds of artillery shells landing somewhere close. It wasn't a very auspicious sign to begin and like a good Military Assistant (I like to believe so), I advised him against travelling. But the General wouldn't change his mind. Enroute

Holy Mass at Posn 27 and even got a present from the Padre! We enjoyed some traditional spiced wine, warm stuffed apple and wonderful cakes. At Posn 10, we had the customary Croatian Christmas cake. The Filipinos had organized a very entertaining show which

included singing Christmas carols and parlor games at Posn 60. In the evening, the FC attended the Christmas Dinner in the Austrian International Kitchen in Camp Faouar and thereafter he headed to Camp Ziouani to attend the Christmas Mass with PHILBATT.

Christmas is usually celebrated at home with the closest of friends and family and that is the beauty of serving in

UNDOF. It is a huge family which celebrated the festival together and for the FC and me, it ended up being the best Christmas ever.

Merry Christmas! Frohe Weihnachten! Maligayang Pasko!

Article by Maj Nishant Kalra, Military Assistant to FC UNDOF Photos by AUSBATT and PHILCON



Christmas wishes at Posn 80

Christmas celebrations against all the odds

Yet again the peace of Christmas was shattered by bloody attacks on Christians and their services; and this may explain, in part, the somber mood among UNDOF staff who were celebrating Christmas Eve in Camp Faouar on 24th Dec 2012.

few hours after Pope Benedict XVI has mourned the gruesome terrorist attacks in Nigeria, more than six other persons were killed during a Christmas Holy Mass in the north of that African country. Inside Syria also Christians experienced the most strange and difficult Christmas season, as the ambassador of the Holy See, Monsignore Mario Zenari, confirmed in Damascus. Even on the Golan Heights the situation was very uncertain. But other countries have different customs, as the common Austrian proverb goes. In a foreign country, witnessing a severe conflict and frequent restriction of movements,



we, the UN peacekeepers are still here fulfilling our tasks and duties in a consummate manner. Different nations, religions and mentalities meet each other every day. Within such unfamiliar circumstances Christmas is received differently than the normal ceremonies back home. The "Advent" period here, is no

longer the quiet oeriod observed in commemortion of the coming of Christ into the world. Every day we are



Holy Mass in St. Pauls Church in Camp Faouar

confronted with dramatic situations in Syria and with our own eyes and ears we become witnesses of ongoing battles. Artillery and tanks around Camp Faouar do not really support the inner feeling for Christmas. Do think of the situation in November, when Austrian soldiers were purposely attacked and wounded



UNDOF Padres united: Maj Ciño and Military Chaplain Kaspar

on their way home, while driving to the airport in Damascus. We consider it a miracle that no more serious injuries were inflicted, and we think that it was a real Christmas gift. In such a precarious and dangerous situation not only UNDOF members but also the Military Chaplain is emotionally in a different mood, if not scarred. Nonetheless, Christmas Eve and the following days were celebrated beautifully and heartily in Camp Faouar and also at different AUSBATT units inside our Area of Separation. I have overlooked many courageous deeds of our comrades in this mission and was deeply impressed. Many of them came close to my heart, it is my great honor to serve in this mission.

I therefore wish all UNDOF soldiers in the Golan Heights luck and the blessing of God Almighty!

Article by Padre Raphael Sascha Kaspar, Chaplain/AB Photos by SSgt Martin Austerhuber, Force Photographer

Christmas Eve: The Spirit of Sharing

Christmas is one of the most awaited seasons of the year for the entire Christendom. But the joy and gladness are commonly shared by many, Christians and non-Christians alike simply because the true essence of the celebration is the spirit of sharing.

Tfeel privileged to celebrate Christmas here in Golan Heights having in mind that the first Christmas which had been celebrated more than two thousand years ago took place just nearby. To me, it is spiritually enriching to spend Christmas solely with the comrades in UNDOF mission. In PHILBATT, Camp Ziouani, we braced the cold winter at the break of dawn for nine consecutive days to celebrate the Mass dubbed as "Misa de Gallo" which is part of our Filipino tradition, as a spiritual preparation for the birthday of the Savior. Masses were also conducted in different PHILBATT positions together with our very own commander, LtCol Nolie Anguillano.

The Christmas caroling performed by some PHILBATT and INDCON members on the two nights before Christmas Day, gave us an avenue to share our varied customs and traditions. It was a beautiful experience of fun and camaraderie filled with smiles and hospitality as we sang Christmas songs in different languages and tempo from barracks to barracks. The caroling started from the officers' mess hall of LOGBATT with the presence of INDCON and J-CON officers as hosts. The caroling group was grateful for the gesture of reciprocity, when the generous hosts offered the group hot coffee and tea, cookies, cakes and tokens. On the following evening the group went also to the PHILBATT contingent quarters.

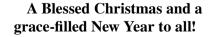
And finally the midnight joint celebration in Camp Ziouani on Christmas Eve, which started with the solemn Mass at the church and culminated with a simple get-together party at the international kitchen, was attended by no less than the Force Commander UNDOF, MGen I. S. Singha and his lovely wife, Mrs. Baljeet. The occasion blessed us with the gift of unity as one UNDOF peacekeepers are working hand in hand in pursuit of peace. It was a special gathering of fellow peacekeepers from different contingents and countries. Notwithstanding our varied cultures and creeds, but God made us one as his children. How unique and captivating the way we can share our time and energy to give honor to the newborn Child, Iesus who is the Prince of Peace!

Our prayers were not only for those who were physically present

during that day but also for UNDOF family in its entirety. It is the air of Christmas. the blessing of the day and the spirit



of sacrifice, that make many of us feel more obliged and committed to fulfill our mandated tasks. May Christmas's spirit of sharing and loving sustain our commitment for peace amidst the difficult challenges and prevailing situations that we are now in. We further pray that our collective efforts and day to day endeavors at every level, will bring us together to meet UNDOF statement and mandate in the Golan Heights.



Article by Mai Raul Ciño. Chaplain/PhB Photo by PHILBATT



Holy Mass on Christmas Eve in church Camp Ziouani

"This is Zero, roger out!"

The Joint Operations Center, JOC, is one of the most important offices in UNDOF. Four officers from different countries work together supporting the Chief Operations Officer and informing UNDOF military and civilian personnel about daily occurrences. Follow Capt Sandeep Kumar when he explains the operational business of an Operations Officer.



Operations Officers at work led by COO and SSO Ops

he JOC is an integral part of UNDOF. It is the branch where officers and NCOs of four different nationalities work together

as a team to meet the operational challenges of the mission. The overall aim is to ensure full situational awareness through accurate moni-

> The ing. Operations Officer (COO) is the head of the Ops-Branch. his command are Officer Operations (SSO Ops) and four Operain 24-hour shifts and are responsi-

toring and report-Chief Under the Senior Staff tions Officers (Ops Officers) who work ble to monitor all ongoing operational matters. There are also four signalers also known as "Zero" who keep communication with all subordinate units and assist the Ops Officer to facilitate compliance with operational tasks during shifts.

As an Ops Officer or famously known as "Duty Officer", my experience in UNDOF had been like a roller-coaster ride. There have been shifts when there was nothing much to do and sometimes it used to be full of "surprises". However,

the latter used to be quite often as the situation rapidly deteriorated in Syria day by day.

The challenging time in the host country has certainly affected our daily routine work in the Area of Responsibility, especially the Area of Separation. In the meanwhile the JOC has become one of the "hottest" places and the Operations Branch and one of the busiest UNDOF branches due to unexpected incidents in the past, which unfortunately endangered UNDOF peacekeepers, too. Incidents, which used to be called "significant" in yesteryears, became almost routine affairs now. The last few months have been



Maj Vuk and LtCol Glanner in action

Safety Reminder Subject: JOC UNDOF From: All UNDOF and UNTSO-OGG users Date: 11/01/2013 Dear All. Be informed that due to the weather condition we are currently energiencing now, the ROADS ARE DANGEROUS due to ice, snow and thick fog Be reminded to REDUCE SPEED TO THE MINIMUM and DRIVE DEFENSIVELY. CAPT Alaric Avelino DELOS SANTOS OPS DUTY OFFICER UNDOF HQ / JOINT OPERATIONS CENTER

a testing time for us as our shifts become sleepless and with too many reports, countless phone calls, radio messages and long briefings. Sometimes we Ops Officers used to get the feeling as if we are fighting a war against papers, phone calls and Power-Point slide shows from a windowless bunker.

But there are both pros and cons of every situation you live in. The positive outcome for us under the present circumstances is the strong bonding, which we have developed amongst all JOC members. There have been many instances when you have to support each other to overcome a situation.

During the shifts, our topmost priority is timely passage of information so that the safety of all mission members travelling on the roads is ensured. Chief among our aims is to provide service and care to UN personnel and make sure that they are not present in a wrong place at a wrong time. Since safety is our primary concern, sometimes we had to issue orders, which are not liked by many in the mission. On the lighter note, sometimes we feel that we have become bad in the eyes of most of the mission members, since all the bad news, often called "funny" instructions, come from "UNDOF-JOC"

e-mail account.

As I mentioned before, there are bad and good parts in our business. The biggest challenge being faced by a Ops Officer is that his job not thereafter, the Operations Clerk in us wakes up and fights with the papers the whole night long.

Finally, on behalf of the JOC UNDOF, I would like to thank all UN members who are operating on ground and providing us timely information. We also appreciate the input of all other branches, which are supporting us to continue our professionalism under the current circumstances.

With a famous saying, which one of my colleagues in JOC once



Successful teamwork in JOC UNDOF

only became more operational but also more clerical in nature. As the present situation would have never been imagined earlier, someone during the so called "good times" in UNDOF, decided to change the personnel organization and reduce the number of staff in JOC. As a result, a single person now is preparing the clerical part of the job, a task that used to be done by two JOC members. Sometimes, we jokingly tell our comrades that the Ops Officer in us sleeps at 20:00hrs and told me: "God gives his hardest battles to his strongest soldiers," we keep up our high morale and strive hard to achieve our aim that we have learned from the beginning: "One Mission, One Team, One Goal," that is, peace in the Golan.

> Article by Capt Sandeep Kumar, Operations Officer HQ UNDOF Photos by SSqt Martin Austerhuber

A General says Goodbye!

On 28th Nov 2012 the Commander of the Austrian Joint Forces Command, LtGen Günter Höfler, visited UNDOF on his farewell tour for two days. The high ranked officer who served for six years in this commanding position, is now assigned to a new post in Brussels.

It was a sunny November morning when LtGen Günter Höfler addressed to all Austrian UN peacekeepers at Camp Faouar parade square after reporting by the

than 70 percent of the AUTCON personnel. "They bring in a lot of occupational experience also in non military matters," LtGen Höfler said. "Austria's total contribution of

1.400 soldiers present worldwide in several foreign missions is quite remarkable!"

The address of the officer became emotional at the end, when he said Goodbye to his UNDOF peacekeepers. Furthermore he thanked the National Contin-

gent Commander and Chief of Staff UNDOF, Col Andreas Rotheneder and the Commanding Officer AUSBATT, LtCol Andreas Schiffbänker for their leadership dur-



LtGen Höfler's site visit

Commanding Officer AUSBATT, LtCol Andreas Schiffbänker. "Austrians serve within UNDOF from its beginning in the year 1974. Since that, more than 26.000 Austrian

peacekeepers fulfilled their duties in a very professional and proper manner", LtGen Höfler proudly stated. He furthermore mentioned that at the end of the fourth decade of service, the mission character has completely changed and Austrians and Croatians had no option but to deal with extreme new challenges. Especially regarding the current situation, the reason of AUTCON's professionalism

and innovation come from the balanced mix of professional soldiers, regular soldiers and militiamen, who are the majority with more

Office Call with FC UNDOF

ing these challenging times. Additionally an Office Call with the Head of Mission and Force Commander UNDOF, MGen Singha,

was scheduled which lasted almost one hour. Finally, mementos were presented by the Generals to each other.

The supervision program provided the guest also a line tour to the area of 2nd Company AUSBATT. At Posn 37, detailed mission and position briefings were given by the Chief of Staff UNDOF, CO AUSBATT and the Company Commander. Afterwards LtGen Höfler could be convinced in personal conversations of the still high morale of the Austrian soldiers. At evening within the scope of dinner, an intensive round of talks with Austrian and Croatian officers in the Austrian Officers Club took place.

After six years as the Commander of the Austrian Joint Forces Command he moved to Brussels,

Belgium and took over as the representative for the Chief of General Staff of the Austrian Armed Forces and leader of the Austrian Permanent Mission to the European Union and the Partnership for Peace.

> Article by Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR Photos by SSgt Martin Austerhuber, Force Photographer and Sgt Wolfgang Rosenfelder, Photographer/AB

Ambassadors and Military Attachés Day at UNDOF

On 9th Nov 2012 a group of Ambassadors and Military Attachés visited Camp Ziouani. This event including a situational and operational update for the diplomatic corps has been a tradition in UNDOF for many years.

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The honorable guests were received by the Force Commander UNDOF, MGen I. S. Singha, at the Indian Officers Mess and had the opportunity to encounter and

with exchange UNDOF officers. At Khetarpal Hall the Force Commander gave his welcome address and introduced the visitors into the overal1 situation about UNDOF. He stressed the key pillars of our mission, highlighted that in pursuit of excellence UNDOF do not compromise the safety and security

of our peacekeepers. In addition, he assured the international community and troop contributing countries that UNDOF will not waver and will continue to ensure peace in Golan Heights during trying times. He concluded with a quote of Mahatma Gandhi: "Nonviolence is a weapon of the strong."

The morning continued by a

briefing of COO UNDOF, LtCol Robert Glanner. He provided a detailed UNDOF briefing focusing on the latest incidents and activities as well as on possible future UNDOF developments. The briefing was followed by open discussions and a question and answering session with the Force Commander.

In order to give the visitors a better understanding of the UNDOF mission they were taken by bus from

Ambassadors and Military Attachés with FC UNDOF in front of Khetarpal Hall

Camp Ziouani to UNTSO Observation Post 51 for an introduction briefing after lunch. Unfortunately, due to the security situation there, it was not possible to provide the scheduled introduction and Observation Post tour. Instead, the visitors were brought to the Mt. Bental lookout and because the weather was gracious for at least twenty minutes it was possible to show parts of UNDOF's Area of Responsibility to the Ambassadors and Military Attachés as well as brief them about proceedings and in detail on the spot. Afterwards the tour travelled back to the A-Gate for a short introduction of the crossing procedures. The event ended in Camp Ziouani with a farewell and some closing words by the INDCON Commanding Officer. This famil-

> iarization visit aims to expose Diplothe matic Community on A-Side **UNDOF** operations. The guests were appreciverv ating of their introduction to UNDOF and the situational updates. Even the bad weather could neither impair the success of this

event and nor the full satisfaction of our distinguished guests. They left UNDOF with a better understanding of the many accomplishments, difficulties and challenges faced by our UN peacekeepers.

> Article by Maj Alexander Unterweger, SSO M/PR Photo by SSgt Gernot Payer

FHQ Coy: The more - the better!

In October 2012 the Force Headquarters Company got additional manpower from the Indian Contingent for the very first time in UNDOF's history.

Regarding the current tense sit-uation and therefore more and more challenging circumstances in UNDOF, the Force Headquarters Company (FHQ Coy) was additionally reinforced by Indian troops. Due to the decision of the Force UNDOF Commander MGen Singha, the order, to strengthen UNDOF's reserve force with a third platoon, was implemented immediately.

25 soldiers from INDCON were deployed in October as the additional third FHQ Coy platoon. After the deployment, the first mission based training under the command of the new platoon leader Capt Dhiraj Mungekar was equally conducted. The training started with need to know topics like basic information about the company itself and the troop contributing contingents. Basically the new Indian platoon

got an informa-

brief of the Area of Separation and the responsibilities of the whole FHQ Coy as reserve force. Further trainings in radio communication, map reading, use of night vision

devices and the rotating duty system the unit daily works with, were eagerly practiced. Mixed patrols with experienced comrades from other platoons were conducted, to bring the third platoon step by step familiar with the new tasks. As soon as the Indian drivers were ready and

equipped with driver licenses, they were fully included in the duty system.

From November on, the third platoon showed completely operational and hundred percent ready to support the line battalions by hotspot-patrolling, sector

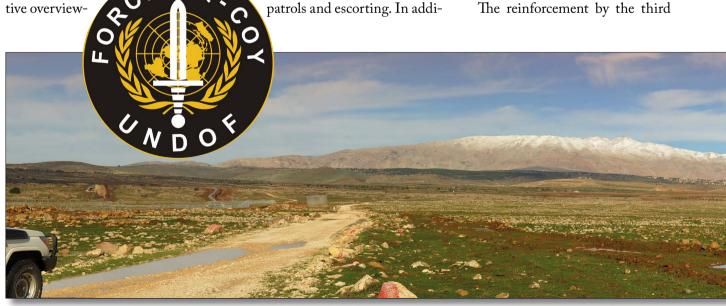
tion the third platoon will support evacuations of UN positions and Outposts or function as their reinforcement if necessary. Besides daily patrolling all over the Area of Sepa-



Roadblock in Qunaitra

ration, all FHQ Coy platoons have furthermore to know all key-areas in the Area of Limitation. The professional education and permanent training of all company members with their high flexibility keeps the whole unit as a reliable and steady force reserve for UNDOF.

The reinforcement by the third



platoon impacted not only on the personnel situation of the FHQ Coy in a positive way. The operational advantages have to be mentioned, too. With three platoons the FHQ Coy is now able to fulfill more tasks at the same time. The conduct of patrols, standby as a reserve force and additional tasks like execution of security escorts for the Force Commander or the Liaison and Monitoring Team (Military Police, Medical, Legal Adviser, Force Security Adviser), can be provided in a more qualitative and therefore professional manner.

The FHQ Coy now consists of

three platoons with 85 UN peacekeepers in total. The commander, Capt Christoph Seirer, feels very proud to serve as the over-all responsible officer in charge: "I have gotten the opportunity to unite different nations with various mentalities under our FHQ Banner. But in future, we will

face the most challenging times in UNDOF." One of these challenges happened on the AUTCON rotation day on 29th Nov 2012, when the FHQ Coy supported the evacuation



Capt Seirer briefing the platoon leaders

of incoming UN peacekeepers with RG-31 and RG-32 vehicles. 83 Austrian and 44 Croatian new incoming soldiers had to be transported from the airport Damascus, where severe shelling and fights were still going on in the vicinity. Five convoys with four armored vehicles from FHQ Coy were needed to bring all soldiers safely to Camp Faouar. "I am very proud of my brave comrades. We are one mission, one team and we have one goal for the Golan Heights," Capt Seirer stated when he relieved after the last vehi-

> Article by Capt Christoph Seirer, CO FHQ Cov Photos by SSgt Martin Austerhuber and SSgt Gernot Payer

cle successfully had arrived in the camp without further incidents.



The reinforced FHQ Coy



6th Philippine Contingent takes over **Peacekeeping Duties**

UNDOF officiated the Change of Command ceremony of PHILBATT on Monday 19th Nov 2012, held at Position 60. However, the fact remains that the 6th Philippine Contingent took over Peacekeeping efforts in the Golan Heights at indeed a difficult and challenging period.

t was the first time in PHILBATT history that Lthe Change of Command ceremony was held on B-Side due to security reasons. LtCol Ramon C. Estella, the outgoing CO PHILBATT, handed over command and responsibilities to his successor LtCol Nolie L. Anquillano, National Contingent Commander (NCC) of the 6th Philippine Contingent at the Golan Heights. The acting Force Commander UNDOF and Chief of Staff, Col Andres Rothender presided over the Change of Command ceremony and was warmly welcomed and traditionally honoured with a Philippine ribbon lei at his arrival. The outgoing NCC firstly expressed his gratitude to the Filipino women and men who had worked in a very professional manner within UNDOF during his tenure. Then LtCol Estella addressed UNDOF leading staff, under the command of the Head of Mission and Force Commander, MGen

I. S. Singha and the Chief of Staff, Col Andres Rothender. He thanked them for their guidance and wisdom that greatly contributed to the successaccomplishment of the UNDOF mission. On his part, the incoming NCC LtCol Anquilano pledged in his inauguration speech, that he would follow the remarkable footsteps of his pre-

Signing the certificates and sealing with hands

decessor because of the good guidance, and support extended by the UNDOF leading staff. He furthermore congratulated the 5th PHILCON for the mission accomplishment and thanked them for the warm wel-

come they had given him. "We will strive to fulfill our tasks in a highly competent way," he finally added. Col Rothender extended his appreciation to the outgoing contingent for a job well done during uncertain times in the Middle East in general and the Golan region in particular. "I would like to sincerely congratulate the outgoing contingent for its achievements and thank them for their contribution to the continued success of UNDOF. I wish you a safe trip home and all the best for everyone's future," the Chief of Staff guessed. To the new CO PHILBATT he addressed to der-

monstrate leadership from the beginning and lead his UN peacekeepers by example and taking care of their safety and security. "I also request you to accept our UNDOF motto; One Mission, one Team, one Goal," he ended. The event was also attended by

> the Chief Mission Support UNDOF, Mr. Bernard Lee and the Commanding Officers from AUSBATT, HRV-CON, INDCON and J-CON as well the UNTSO Chief OGG. Finally the ceremony ended with a parade and review by the Philippine Contingent followed by a reception and fellowship.

Article by Maj Arnold L. Gasalatan, PIO PHILBATT

Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer

A visit by the Vice President

The Vice President of the Philippines Mr. Jejomar Binay visited UNDOF and the Philippine Contingent on 26th Oct 2012 at Camp Ziouani. It was the second stop on his three-day visit to Israel and he felt obviously proud of PHILCON's more than three years deployment in UNDOF.

The distinguished guest started his visit by meeting with the Philippine Contingent Commander, LtCol Ramon C. Estella and PHILBATT members at Jerusalem. Then the Vice President was welcomed by a Guard of Honor at Camp Ziouani and later briefed about the UNDOF mission by NCC PHILCON followed by a meeting with FC UNDOF, MGen I. S. Singha.

"You all are our country's ambassadors of goodwill to the United Nations, and I'm proud of all your accomplishments here in the mission area, keep it up," he said. Mr. Binay addressed an audience of nearly 200 Filipino UN peacekeepers during the "Talk to the Men" gathering. He stressed that the accomplishments of the current 339 PHILCON members and all soldiers who had served at the Golan Heights before, have resulted in a greater impact on the transformation that has taken place in UNDOF almost two years. This success is directly attributed to a long line of Filipino soldiers coming from different units such as the Navy, Air Force, Marines and especially the army. "I'm very proud of all of you," Mr. Binay mentioned again before moving to shake hands and talk with the gathered PHILCON soldiers.

The Vice President spent nearly two hours meeting with the troops, including a short visit to the Military Police at C-Detachment. Finally MGen Singha presented an UNDOF remembrance plaque to Mr. Binay, after which the guest left Camp Ziouani to meet with members of the Filipino community in Beit Dani, Tel Aviv.

> Article by Maj Bernadeth D. Tocloy, PIO PHILBATT Photos by Cpl Widmark Caceres, Photographer/PhB



Guard of Honor for the Vice President



UNDOF memento from the Force Commander

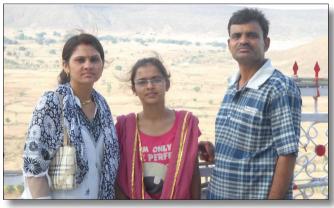


The Vice President among Filipino UN peacekeepers

From a Warrior to a Peacekeeper

To serve as an UN peacekeeper in a foreign mission is special for everyone. WO II Amar Singh Sonpure, LOGBATT Signaler, describes how he felt about the exclusive deployment to the Middle East.

still vividly remember the day when I was intimated Labout my nomination for the UN assignment at the Golan Heights. It was "Holi" - the Indian festival of colours - and the news gave me another reason to celebrate. For me personally, a dream came true to represent my home country India in an international environment as such an assignment is considered recognition of one's professional competence and personal



WO II Sonpure with his family

conduct. My family was equally excited, though their excitement had more to do with the travel and sightseeing opportunities afforded by the assignment. The next few days were spent on the internet and in trying to get in touch with people who had been on the same assignment, to find out details about UNDOF, the host nations and some places to visit. It was an exciting time for both, me and my family, with the children drawing up a list of gifts they would wish to get from the Middle East while my wife tried her earnest best to ensure that she packed everything for me she thought I would need. The most important things were a Gita (Holy Book), an Achar (Indian Pickle) but the best, a family photograph.

In May 2012, I moved from my operational location to the camping ground for UN contingents in the Indian capital, New Delhi. There, it was time to bond with the rest of the lot, who, like me, had congregated from various parts of the country. It was there that we trained extensively for our new role as UN peacekeepers. But since all of us had come from different military units, serving in terrain ranging from deserts to mountains, the time was utilized to build up the LOGABTT Esprit-de-Corps.

After completion of the pre-induction formalities and having been trained in detail about United Nations, the Blue Helmets and UNDOF, we felt ready to take on the new assignment head-on. Finally, on 28th Sep 12, we boarded the flight from Indira Gandhi International Airport at New Delhi and after almost ten hours of travel in a cramped space, we landed at Ben Gurion Airport. There we were highly awaited by the outgoing contingent followed by a warm welcome by soldiers of INDCON, J-CON and PHILBATT at Camp Ziouani to the tunes of the "Jai ho". This was our first opportunity to interact with troops from other nations and the warmth and friendliness soon made us forget our language barriers.



A signaler specialist at work

Well, so here I am, one month into my new role, facing certain challenges such as a new setup, new equipment, and language and not to forget left hand driving and learning new things with every passing hour. I look forward to do my job in the best possible way here and am sure that this exposure will enrich me both professionally and personally. With the good wishes of my family, friends, countrymen and UNDOF comrades, INDCON will add new feathers to our achievements and keep the Tricolor flying at full mast.

> Article by WO II Amar Singh Sonpure, LOGBATT Photos by LOGBATT

The Magic of a Child's Photograph

Childhood is the time that most of us keep in good and pleasant memory. It is usually the time of no worries and fun, also for a young girl in the Salvatorian Sisters' School Kindergarten in Nazareth.

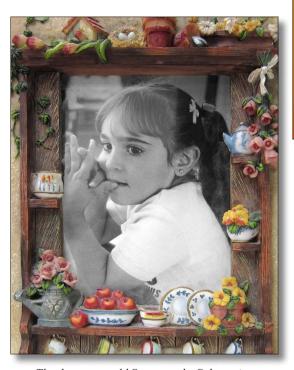
| 982 – a three-year-old girl was sitting in a classroom drifting off into thoughts and daydreams. It seemed to be a day like any other but on this day men in military uniforms with blue headgears visited the Kindergarten. They were Austrian soldiers and members of UNDOF, namely Padre Edwin and the photographer Mr. Gernot Payer. They visited the Kindergarten to celebrate a Holy Mass with the children. In addition, they exchanged some presents and took photos of the children and the whole event.

1993 - time passes by and the girl turned into a young lady. At that time she was fourteen years old and in grade eight. Sister Roswita, a nun working at the school, called her once and handed over to her a letter from abroad. The letter was written by Mr. Gernot Payer and included the picture of this young girl in the age of three in the Salvatorian Sisters' School Kindergarten. Mr. Payer introduced himself and told the story about the picture he took of her eleven years ago. The young girl was really surprised and overwhelmed. At home she showed the letter to her family and kept it afterwards with the picture in her own personal box.

2012 - the young lady is now married and a mother of two lovely daughters. She is really busy in bringing up her daughters and taking care of her husband. Therefore there is no time for daydreams any longer. Once, she checked her e-mails and her Facebook account and intuitionally decided to find out the whereabouts of the Austrian photographer. She succeeded and wrote an e-mail to Mr. Payer telling him about her intention to see him again.

November 2012 - the telephone rings and a woman in Nazareth picked up the receiver. It was a telephone call that marked the start of a friendship between two people from different parts of the world. After 30 years, when they had met the first time, Mr. Gernot Payer visited the lady and her family in Nazareth. They exchanged memories and figured out all the details about their first meeting and the magic of a child's photograph.

Actually the child was me. My name is Samar Rizek, I'm married to Elie Abu Nassar and mother of two lovely angels, Carina and Yamina. Two angels who sometimes drift off into thoughts and daydreams...



The three-year-old Samar at the Salvatorian Kindergarten in Nazareth in 1982...



...and meeting Gernot again in Nazareth in 2012

Article by Ms. Samar Rezek, Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer

HRVCON celebrates Change of Command

Change of Command ceremony and hand-over of responsibilities came after a six month deployment of the 9th Croatian Contingent. On the 27th Nov 2012, Major Mile Vukičević took over command as National Contingent Commander HRVCON and DCO AUSBATT, from Major Davor-Josip Babić.

oth, the outgoing and incoming commanders were very busy during a seven days handover-takeover period preparing themselves for the submission and collection since it was supposed to change many information and obligations. UNDOF was highly repre-

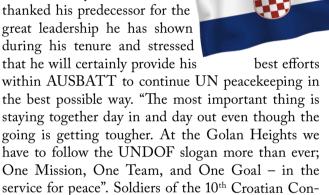


Receiving the flag from Maj Babić

sented by the Chief of Staff, Col Andreas Rotheneder on behalf of the Force Commander, and other distinguished guests like the CMS UNDOF Mr. Bernard Lee, CMPO LtCol Eliglen Villaflor as well as the Commanding Officers from all troop contributing countries and LtCol Robert Duggan, Chief OGG UNTSO. A Guard of Honor composed of Croatian and Austrian UN peacekeepers was reviewed by the Chief of Staff and the guests. After playing the Croatian national anthem, Maj Babić thanked his Austrian comrades for the excellent cooperation during the past 6 months, and particularly his HRVCON soldiers who had done their job in an outstanding manner. He pointed out that the mission and circumstances in the Area of Responsibility of the 3rd Coy/AB have changed dramatically where the once relatively calm area, has turned into a volatile one since the last few months. The official part of the event was carried out on the parade square at Posn 10 when Maj Babić handed over the Croatian banner to Col Andreas Rotheneder who in return handed it over to Maj Vukičević, as a symbol of Croatian loyalty to the UNDOF mission.

In his inaugural speech, Maj Mile Vukičević said that the new Croatian Contingent should be proud to shoulder the duties and responsibilities of

the new appointment, which are challenging but also an honor for every commander. He thanked his predecessor for the great leadership he has shown during his tenure and stressed that he will certainly provide his





Handing over the flag to Maj Vukičević

and from central Croatia around the capital Zagreb. They are officers and NCOs from all branches of the Croatian Armed Forces. 95 percent of them joined the Guard Motorize Brigade as well as the new Contingent Command.

> Article by Lt I Petar Guljas, 3rd Coy/AB Photos by SSgt Martin Austerhuber, Force Photographer

Caring for comradeship

On 10th Nov 2012 the Japanese Contingent conducted a two-day badminton tourney, in which all troop contributing contingents participated. The purpose was to encourage closer relationships and camaraderie among **UNDOF** personnel.

s per Maj Charlotte Orda, SO Welfare UNDOF, this was the very first time in UND-OF's history when J-CON hosted a badminton tournament. The original intention was to hold a Japanese traditional Sumo competition, but it seemed to be not feasible; therefore the organization staff came up with the badminton-idea which was highly appreciated by Maj Fumihiro Kayanuma, Commanding Officer J-CON. Our Senior Medical Officer Capt Dr. Yuji Kozaki officiated as over-all responsible organizer in charge of the tournament. He had the role of the planner and ceremony master and prepared a truly fantastic and unique announcing poster that was well-noted and praised by all participants.

In total ten teams participated in the badminton tournament four from J-CON, three INDCON,



two PHILBATT and one from the Croatian Contingent.

On the first tournament day the preliminary round was played when all teams were divided into

two leagues. As a result of that round, six teams proceeded to the final round on the second day. The matches were very exciting and played on a high skill level. The final match was especially thrilling, in which the Filipino team with LtCol Mamerto Losa and Capt Rey Bitalac met the IND-CON team with CO LOGBATT LtCol Kawardeep Sawhney and DCO LOGBATT Maj Sandeep Kalra. All spectators were fascinated by the powerful shots of the Indian officers and their keen badminton-techniques, which led them finally to win the tourney. A further team from INDCON with Maj Sanjay Kumar and Maj Ritesh Kohli got the third place.

The event was a great opportunity to get in contact and familiar with our UNDOF comrades from other parts of the world. All members of 34th J-CON appreciate

> the participation, cooperation and comradeship which was certainly encouraged by this occasion.

Article by Capt Masashi Kaneko, PIO J-CON Photos by J-CON and INDCON



Professional players and organizers of the badminton tourney

