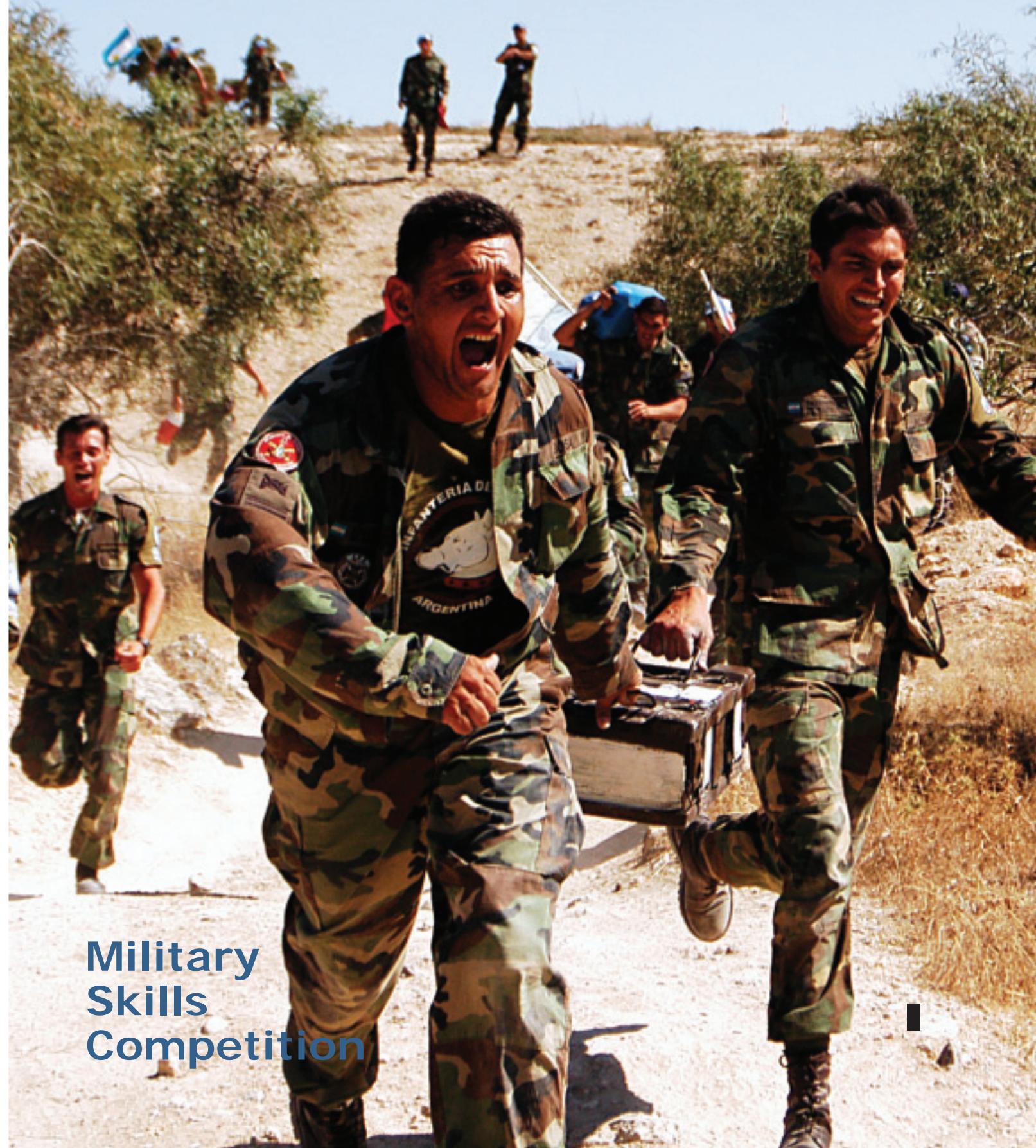


The Blue Beret

June 2006



**Military
Skills
Competition**

THE BLUE BERET

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Editorial

In extending our mandate for a further six months, the Security Council has expressed regret that "the gap between words and deeds remains too great for the Secretary-General to resume fully his good offices mission", and urged "progress towards the resumption of negotiations for a comprehensive settlement".

The Council encouraged active participation in bi-communal discussions at the technical level, under the SRSG's leadership, and welcomed resumption of CMP activities, as well as the agreement of both leaders to meet for the installation of the 3rd Member of the CMP.

The Council noted with concern "the increase in unauthorized construction of building for personal and commercial use in the buffer zone," and encouraged both sides "to engage in consultations with UNFICYP on the demarcation of the buffer zone, and to respect UNFICYP's mandate and operations in the buffer zone".

It also expressed "concern at continued disagreement over construction activity relating to the proposed additional crossing point at Ledra Street" and urged "both sides to cooperate with UNFICYP to resolve this issue".

The Council welcomed progress in demining and expressed strong support for UNFICYP's efforts "to extend operations to Turkish forces minefields in the rest of the buffer zone".

The Council also welcomed the SRSG's emphasis on "greater cohesiveness in the efforts of the United Nations family in Cyprus".

Meantime, we look ahead to the CMP meeting early next month when the two leaders join SRSG Møller in welcoming 3rd Member Christophe Girod. Immediately after comes the much anticipated visit by the SG's envoy, USG Gambari, hopefully to learn that "the gap between words and deeds" referred to in the SC Resolution has begun to narrow.

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"Still Far From Home"

For the thousands of people forced to flee their homes each year, escaping with their lives and a few belongings is often just the start of a long struggle. Once they have found safety from persecution or war, they still face enormous challenges just trying to obtain things most of us take for granted – schooling, a job, decent housing or health care.

World Refugee Day - 20 June

Hardship takes many forms, and hard choices must be made. Aid agencies with limited resources are often forced into painful prioritization exercises. Which is more important for thousands of

children in a refugee camp, a school or a health clinic? In addition to their efforts to build new lives, many refugees bear psychological and physical scars from past abuses that can endure for years, even in a completely new environment. Families who face persecution in their own country may have to live under the

Throughout their long and daunting journey from oppression and persecution to asylum and protection, and eventually to a place they can call home, refugees show incredible strength, courage and determination. Their journey is a dangerous and arduous one and every day spent in exile is a day too long.

But in every step of their journey refugees carry with them an unshakable, unrelenting hope. By hanging on to their hopes for basic survival, sustenance and protection, and for the chance to one day rebuild their lives, refugees defy all odds. As the UN Refugee Agency we continue to be impressed by the tenacious hopefulness of refugees which, in turn, motivates us to leave no stone unturned in the fulfilment of our mandate, to

daily threat of being forcibly returned. Even in asylum, a refugee may be perceived as a threat, rather than a victim, and face intolerance or hostility.

Today, the global refugee population is at its lowest level since 1980. Over the past few years, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has helped millions of people repatriate or start over in a country of asylum. UN agencies are working together to ensure that millions of people displaced within their own country, often in conditions similar to refugees, receive the assistance they need. Here too, hundreds of thousands of people, from the Russian Federation to Liberia, have been helped to go home voluntarily.

Yet as we mark World Refugee Day 2006, more than half those that UNHCR cares for around the world have spent more than five years in exile. Let this Day serve as a reminder of our responsibility to help keep hope alive among those who need it most – the millions of refugees and displaced who are still far from home.

Kofi A. Annan

protect them and to find durable solutions to their plight.

On World Refugee Day, we ask you to remember the millions of refugees under our care who are trying to pick up the pieces of once-peaceful lives. As different as they are from each other, one thing connects them all: hope for a better future and a chance to restore lasting peace to their lives.

Help us keep that flame of hope alive!

*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
 António Guterres
 20 June 2006*

Keeping the Flame of Hope Alive

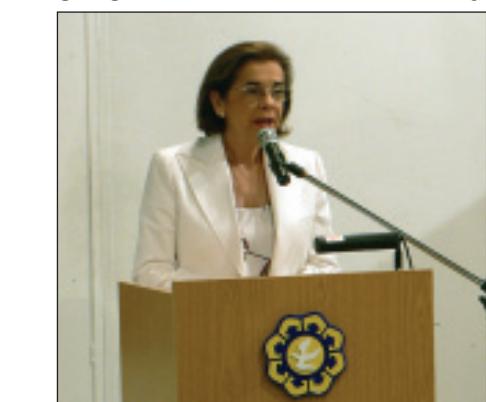


Swedish Ambassador H.E. Mr. Ingemar Lindahl making his purchases

UNHCR T-Shirt Benefit – Nicosia

UNHCR in Cyprus marked World Refugee Day with the launch of a fashion T-shirt in an effort to raise awareness of the global refugee problem as well as raise funds that will be used to benefit asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus.

The T-shirt was launched at a reception opened by Mrs. Photini Papadopoulou at the Melina Mercouri Hall in Nicosia on 22 June. Cypriot designer Kika Ioannidou took up the challenge of designing the T-shirt with all the proceeds going to UNHCR. There are currently



Mrs. Photini Papadopoulou addressing the World Refugee Day reception

600 recognised refugees and a further 12,000 asylum seekers living in Cyprus.

UNHCR Representative in Cyprus Cristina Planas said the T-shirt aims at being a "walking message" to spread awareness of the circumstances of the refugees, their rights and the overall right to a dignified life. "It aims at having much more



UNHCR Representative in Cyprus Cristina Planas (second right) at the T-shirt launch

virtue of being transmitted by the people themselves, reminding each other of being sensitive to others that are less fortunate and happy than us. Ms. Planas urged people to show their support by buying the T-shirts at designated retail outlets on the island (a list is available from UNHCR, tel: 22-359043). The proceeds from the sale of the T-shirts will benefit asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus by enhancing UNHCR's support, advocacy and supervision capacities



Looking After Planet Cyprus

Desertification, which was the theme of this year's World Environment Day, is of particular concern in Cyprus, where the water balance is increasingly negative, as a result mainly of agricultural activity, and where erosion is a major issue, as a result of mining and quarrying. Business plays a key role, both as a factor in environmental deterioration of the island, as well as holding the key to potential solutions.

For World Environment Day, UNDP's Action for Cooperation and Trust organised the "Eco Forum – World Environment Day", a three-day event from 5 to 7 June. The

event brought over 140 participants from both communities, including local and international experts, academia, NGOs, the media, decision-makers, educators and interested individuals to the Holiday Inn in Nicosia to discuss potential solutions to the problems of desertification in Cyprus. There was a strong emphasis on success stories on Corporate Environmental Responsibility within the framework of the United Nations Global Compact.

In a pre-recorded opening speech, SRSG Møller explained that both communities shared a common ecosystem, and he emphasized the need for bicultural cooperation to preserve this shared environment.

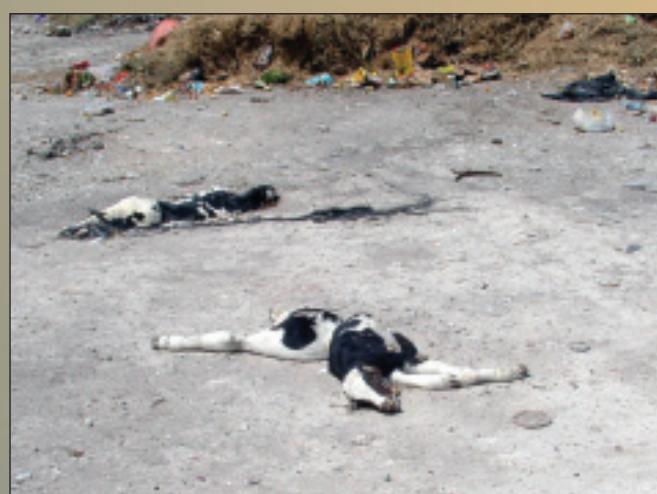
"The reality is that the two communities exist in a single, island-wide ecosystem. One that knows no boundaries. One that recognizes no division. One that awaits no settlement," Møller said.

World Environment Day was also marked by a series of clean-up operations in the buffer zone with UNFICYP linking up with local municipal officials to remove waste from a number of illegal dumping sites.

As can be seen from the photos, UNFICYP's Sector 2 peacekeepers joined forces with municipal officials from Engomi to remove waste from illegal dumping sites in the buffer zone near the new Lakatamia housing estate on the outskirts of Nicosia.

In Derynia, municipality workers under UNFICYP Sector 4 escort started working to clear rubbish dumped behind Derynia Hospital and the abandoned Kouroupi factory.

Anything from furniture to the carcasses of dead animals are deposited in these unsightly dumping sites. They are both an environmental eyesore as well as a serious health hazard. UNFICYP and the local authorities appeal to the public to desist from this illegal practice, and to show greater respect for the UN-controlled buffer zone.



Carcasses of two dead calves in the buffer zone



Municipal officials from Engomi with Sector 2 soldiers and UNPOL



Unsightly rubbish tip in the bz on the outskirts of Lakatamia



Derynia municipal workers tackled dump sites near OPs 141 and 142

This set the tone for the entire event. Nicolas Jarraud, Environmental Officer for UNDP-ACT, continued along the same lines. He stressed the need to work together to find island-wide solutions to environmental issues of common concern. Using the example of the avian influenza crisis earlier in the year, Dr. Jarraud said: "Everybody recognized that

the buffer zone would not stop contaminated birds from flying across, that the island is a single epidemiological area, and that only concerted action could keep the island safe." Dr. Jarraud also stressed the need to emphasize these solutions, rather than focusing only on the problems facing the ecology of Cyprus.

UNDP Ecoforum



There was a timely if alarming reminder on 8 June that the dry, dusty days of summer bring with them the recurring hazard of fires.

Deminers, with a fire service backup, were carrying out a carefully planned, routine control burn in minefield areas along the UNPA's Concession Road from early that morning. The purpose was to burn off surface scrub and vegetation in the minefield to make clearance work easier for subsequent demining activities.

The work proceeded without incident until strong winds sprang up around lunchtime. Fanned by the wind, the flames spread rapidly out of control. Soon they had jumped the hard top road and were threatening to cut off buildings and traffic routing in

and through the UNPA. Four vehicles from the Fire Department in the south and two vehicles from the north joined UNFICYP in fighting the fire.

Fire fighting in the buffer zone

Eventually, it was put out at about 5.30 p.m. The fire caused no injuries, but there was some damage to a number of unused buildings. Fire service vehicles and personnel remained at the scene overnight as a precaution. UNFICYP salutes and thanks the services involved and their crew for their cooperation and support.



Fire fighters from north and south helped extinguish the flames



UN vehicles refilling local fire engines

Basic Precautions Against Buffer Zone/Grass/Forest Fires

The biggest fire hazard within UNFICYP at this time of the year is dry grass and vegetation. By taking precautions and paying attention, you can prevent fires and save lives. Following some simple rules can help prevent a fire, which can rapidly get out of control and threaten life and property.

1. **Don't** throw away lit cigarettes and/or matches.
2. **Don't** smoke in offices and accommodation buildings – use designated areas.
3. **Don't** use dustbins as ashtrays in your smoking areas – use the ashtrays provided.
4. **Don't** throw away glass materials such as empty bottles or broken mirrors.
5. **Don't** park your car near dry grass or vegetation – the heat can cause a disaster.
6. **Don't** leave your vehicle engine running – always switch it off.
7. **Don't** have a barbecue anywhere other than in designated places.
8. **Don't** leave your barbecue unattended – when finished, use water or sand/soil to damp down the fire.
9. **Don't** burn sensitive material – contact UNFICYP Fire HQ, Ext 4453/4 UNPA.
10. **Don't** use water if electricity poles are involved in

the fire, especially near UNFICYP OPs – use dry powder/CO₂ fire extinguishers or fire beaters/green tree branches.

11. **Don't** start your patrol without having at least four fire beaters in your patrol vehicle (also check your 500/700 grams dry powder fire extinguisher and medical kit).
12. **Don't** risk your life to fight a fire – your life comes first. If it is safe to do so, then try and help. Otherwise, wait for the fire crew.
13. **Don't** fight buffer zone/grass/forest fires alone – always attack the fire in groups.
14. **Don't** fight buffer zone/grass fire up or down wind – always from a cross wind direction, being mindful of smoke and radiation heat.
15. **Don't** forget when fighting fires that mines are present in the buffer zone.
16. **Don't** spread buffer zone/grass/forest fire with your boots – always wash them as you leave the area.
17. **Don't** forget the fire/emergency telephone no. 22-61-4777.

Civilian fire emergency telephone numbers:
South-112 or 199
North-199

NPO





UNFICYP's Integrated Medal Parade

UNFICYP is working hard to encourage the opposing forces along the buffer zone to pull back and to unman positions in old Nicosia, SRSG Michael Møller said when addressing the integrated medal parade on 13 June. An agreement to do so would send a powerful message of hope to the population of both communities that things are moving in the right direction, the Chief of Mission declared.

UNFICYP's third integrated medal parade ceremony was held at the site of the old international airport in the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA), close to UNFICYP's headquarters in Nicosia.

Some 215 peacekeepers were presented with United Nations peacekeeping medals in the name of Secretary-General Kofi Annan at a sunset ceremony presided over by SRSG Møller and UNFICYP Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni.

The attendance included members of the diplomatic community as well as civilian and military personnel from UNFICYP and the UN agencies plus family members. The medals awarded were in recognition of the recipients' contribution as peacekeepers and peacemakers during their service with UNFICYP.



FC Maj. Gen. Barni addressing the parade

SRSG Møller introduced UNFICYP's new Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni of Argentina, to the assembled guests, giving a warm welcome to the FC and his wife, Maria Rosa, to the mission. The Chief of Mission noted that Maj. Gen. Barni is UNFICYP's 15th Force Commander.

SRSG Møller told the gathering that the medal ceremony was being held at the site of the old international airport right in the heart of what, since the traumatic events of



1974, had been known as the United Nations Protected Area. "Since then, the UNPA has been both symbol and core of the buffer zone, our area of operations, even though the opposing forces continue to disagree on the exact delineation of its ceasefire lines.

"As the SG notes in his latest report to the Security Council, the



Hungarian Ambassador H.E. Mr. Janos Kisfalvi presenting a Slovak soldier with the peacekeeping medal

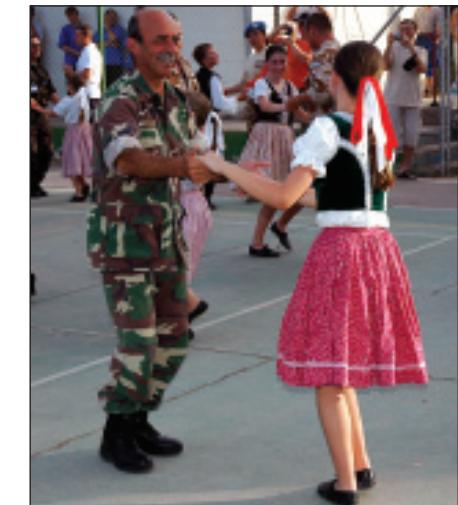
military and security situation along the ceasefire lines remains generally stable with the opposing forces showing cooperation and exercising restraint. However, the number of incidents reported in the six months covered by the latest report, though mostly minor in nature, did increase to 468 from the 397 recorded during the previous six-months.

"This does not reflect a deterioration of the situation here on island, but rather the higher incident detection rate resulting from UNFICYP's mobile concept of operations in effect since the Force down-sized to 860 in 2004. Most of these daily incidents occur in areas where the opposing forces come closest to one another, notably in the Nicosia area.

Mr. Møller said the medal recipients exemplified the highest standards of the UN Charter, and commended them for their dedicated professionalism while serving with UNFICYP. He wished those completing their tour of duty a safe trip home, a joyful reunion with families and friends and the best of luck and success in their future assignments.



Slovak Folklore lives through Children's Dances



The Force Commander takes to the floor time learning to be responsible and disciplined. We are also proud of being recognised by dance professionals, having been awarded many prizes both at home and abroad.

"We believe we will be able to share our enjoyment with you, our audiences and friends for many years to come. Thank you."

MSgt. Silvia Lojanová

Slovaks have always expressed their joys and sorrows, longings and desires through singing and dancing, folk costumes and traditions. Although the modern lifestyle is bringing in new values, Slovak folk art has remained a permanent source of inspiration to which new generations return. Children, especially, have been discovering its magic by participating in folklore ensembles like KLNKA, based at Dubravka in Bratislava and supervised by Eugen Suchon Primary School.

This group recently visited Cyprus to participate in a Children's Festival where they performed traditional Slovak dances. Under the guidance of dance teacher Ingrid Sankova and Mikulas Sivý jr., the beauty of Slovak folklore was also brought to Camp General Štefánik in Sector 4 on 5 June.

The group has been travelling both in Slovakia and worldwide since being formed in 1978. The folklore dance group has performed in various festivals, charity and social events at home and abroad. On their "small voyage around the world", the group has entertained viewers in the former Yugoslavia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Turkey, France, Italy, Spain, Mexico, Portugal, Ireland, South Africa, Canada, Tunisia, Korea, Egypt, Israel and the Island of Madeira.

Their repertoire comprises dances from various regions of Slovakia and dances of other nations including Irish, Egyptian and Balkan. In addition, the group has also been known to sing, especially Christmas carols.

As one of the children from KLNKA said: "We enjoy using our free time in this way, at the same

Visits in June



Visits this month included an office call by Members of the European Parliament (High Level Contact Group) to the Chief of Mission on 2 June (top left).

On 19 June, Brig. Gen. C.E. Perona of the Argentinian Air Force met with the Chief of Mission. The Force Commander later briefed Gen. Perona on the mission (above).

The Honorable James Short, Australian Special Envoy for Cyprus, arrived at HQ UNFICYP on 22 June, accompanied by Australian High Commissioner Garth Hunt, to make an office call on the SRSG (bottom left).



The UNFICYP Mobile Force Reserve winning team
 From left (Standing): Sgt. S. Henshaw, Bdr. C. Lambert, Sgt. I. Ruiz, Lt. B. Baldwinson
 (Kneeling): LBdr. A. Fennell and MSgt. Z. Fider

UNFICYP's Military Skills Competition

On a day when the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan marked International Peacekeepers' Day, UNFICYP peacekeepers, led by Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni, celebrated the event at the mission's twice-yearly Military Skills competition. With 10 teams in total and competitors from all three sectors, plus UNPOL, MFR and HQ UNFICYP, the stage was set for a demanding display of military prowess.

For those involved, the competition started well before 31 May. In the case of Sector 2, those selected for training had been working out since their arrival on-island in the hope of becoming one of the elite 12 selected to represent one of the sector's two six-person teams. All trained hard in areas such as vehicle recognition, UNFICYP knowledge, stripping and assembling non-issue weapons, marksmanship, and of course physical fitness.

On the morning of the event, the teams left bleary-eyed at 3.30 a.m. in order to register at EXCON by 4.15 a.m. First up was the kit check and weigh-in. All teams passed with flying colours, before dressing down to the start of the stretcher race. Undulating terrain stretching along 2.5 km of narrow tracks and serious hard work saw the teams dashing for the finish line.

A quick gulp of water and the teams were seated down to complete an individual questionnaire that wouldn't have looked out of place on the "Mastermind" programme. With that behind them, the teams went

their separate ways to complete the round robin of other stands, which tested all of the competitors' mental and physical strengths. These stands included cross country driving, incident reaction, navigation, ops information, ranges and foreign weapon stripping and assembling.

Gathering around EXCON for the final event of the day, all the talk was about who would emerge the winners. With the results a closely guarded secret, it was rumoured to be extremely tight between Sector 2, MFR and Sector 1. All would rest on one last push around the assault course. With all the teams back in, and with an excellent crowd, Sector 2 Team A started the ball rolling. The determination demonstrated by all competitors was evident as they threw themselves from obstacle to obstacle before collapsing across the line to set the mark for everyone else to follow. Quick times followed from teams from MFR and Sector 1, before the second Sector 2 team brought the whole event to a close with an excellent time, despite the heat and exhaustion of a long and tiring day.

With the final results still unclear, the teams assembled in the prize-giving area. Following congratulations from the Force Commander, the top three were announced, with MFR stealing the show, Sector 2 team A tight on their heels and Sector 1 close behind.

Celebrations followed before the competitors retired, exhausted from an excellent day and a hard fought competition.

2/Lt Kirstie Main



Motivated by what I had been told by my predecessors, 12 Battery from 12 Regiment RA, I knew when I arrived in Cyprus that I wanted to take some part in the Military Skills Competition. Participation became "full on" when I found myself nominated as the Mobile Force Reserve (MFR) Team 2i/c!

Two things started to worry me. First, training for such an arduous and demanding event at the start of the summer months on a Mediterranean island. Second, finding some way to collect an enthusiastic group of volunteers. Unsurprisingly, the latter was harder. However, I found the majority of the young soldiers in my platoon volunteered with minimal fuss. With two Argentinians, two Hungarians, one Slovakian and a massive language barrier to overcome, I met up with my Team Captain.

Lt. Benjamin Baldwinson had the task of producing a training programme for the next six weeks. Being on an operational tour, timings slipped and classrooms were getting double booked, so the programme and the team had to be flexible and roll with the punches. After extracting as much information out of 12 Regiment as we could, Lt. Baldwinson and I had a good understanding of the challenge that lay ahead.

So the training started. Due to the daytime temperatures, we started physical training at 6.30 a.m. This ranged from light trainer runs and swimming sessions, to going over the assault course. It continued until every member of the team knew exactly where they were supposed to be at any given moment. This also had to include orchestrating all the reserve members. Weekly orienteering and weighted runs were also completed, along with range days, first aid sessions and recognition training.

All too soon, the day of the event came around. I had started to wonder if we had done enough training for it. Only time would tell. On 31 May at 4.00 a.m., the day began with the weigh-in, and then we were off on the first of eight events, the stretcher race. This was won by a team from the Argentinian Contingent but we came a respectable third out of the 10 teams taking part.

Still holding our heads high, we progressed through the day, steadily climbing up the results table by scoring consistently well across a variety of stands including marksmanship, navigation, cross country driving and to finish, the assault course. The team completed (and won) this final arduous test in just over seven minutes of hard work in 35°C and bright sunshine.

When the final results were announced by the Force Commander, the MFR (3/29 {Corunna} Bty) had won by an impressive 120 points over the second place team and were proclaimed Military Skills Competition champions.

Sgt. Scott Henshaw, MFR



Professor Maria Hadjipavlou
(University of Cyprus) and Sally Anne Corcoran, UNFICYP

Cypriots Cooperate Against Trafficking

The Group was formed following UNFICYP's International Women's Day event when a panel of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot women spoke about how to join forces and combat the insidious practice of the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls in Cyprus.

Many of the panelists and participants from the original International Women's Day event – both from the private and public sectors on both sides, as well as from the international community – participated as members in the newly formed bi-communal group, whose main purpose is to combat this big, human rights problem in the small country of Cyprus. All present were activists in their own spheres, committed to women's rights.

The first meeting of the "Bi-Communal Anti-Trafficking Group" took place at the Ledra Palace Hotel on 22 June, under UNFICYP auspices, with Civil Affairs Sally Anne Corcoran in the chair.

Cypriots' Voyage of Understanding

Twelve young Cypriots will join 36 young people from other countries for a 10-day European Voyage of Understanding in August. The 48-strong crew, aged between 16 to 25 years, will board a 60-metre traditional square-rigged sailing ship at Gibraltar on 3 August and sail 1,100 km to the Mediterranean island of Minorca.

The young people will keep regular watches 24 hours a day, taking turns at steering, sail-handling, cleaning and all the other tasks necessary to keep the ship seaworthy. This unique experience will offer them the opportunity to live and work together at close quarters and to practise tolerance and communication skills. English will be spoken on board ship.

Cypriots who have sailed on similar international voyages in 2004 and 2005 have found that the experience of teamwork in a physically demanding environment is life-changing.

Simon Lavington, the project organiser and a volunteer Watch Leader aboard the ship, said: "The results in terms of increased international understanding have been heart-warming. The Cypriot crews have held reunions, given radio interviews and presentations to schools. Some of these young people and their parents are now helping to organise the Cypriot participation in this year's voyage."



Six Turkish Cypriots and six Greek Cypriots will be selected by interview for the August voyage. Further information about the project will be found at: www.sweetlemons.org.uk.

The purpose of this inaugural meeting was to establish the structure and focus of the group and to discuss recent developments and suggestions for combatting trafficking in Cyprus. All agreed that the bi-communal nature of the Group was of extreme benefit and that the different realities vis a vis trafficking on both sides of the island made the exchange of information crucial. UNFICYP will continue to support the Group's activities, whether through the facilitation of meetings at the Ledra Palace and/or by bringing in UN or international expertise on the subject of trafficking.

The group plans to gather again in the near future for a longer workshop in which the specifics for the way forward and the group dynamics will be agreed upon.

Singing for Cyprus

In Cyprus, some things change, but others frustratingly remain the same. It is almost 10 years since the Bicommunal Choir for Peace in Cyprus was formed, and today, the "for Peace" part of its name is as relevant as ever.

Many of us hoped that a solution to the Cyprus problem by now would have led to the choir performing in a wholly different environment, its existence just another aspect of normal cooperation between Cypriots at all levels, from politics to businesses to culture.

For various reasons, this was not to be. The choir's presence is all the more needed for that. It has been three years since one of the major changes in Cyprus – the opening of the crossing points. In those first months after the openings, there was a flurry of real contact between ordinary people on both sides of the island. Gradually, this interaction faded until today, it has become the exception more than the rule.

UNFICYP information assistant, Neofytos Evdokiou, a long-time member of the Bi-communal Choir for Peace in Cyprus, reflects on its role in a changing and not-so-changing Cyprus

The vessel is one of two owned by the Tall Ships Youth Trust – see: www.tallships.org. The Trust, a UK-registered charity founded in 1956, is dedicated to the personal development of young people through the crewing of Tall Ships. Voyages are organised throughout the year, in locations from the Baltic to the Caribbean, as an effective way of developing self-confidence and the ability to get on with people of differing backgrounds. "Sailing provides a great environment for breaking down barriers and encouraging friendships among opposites," said Tim Law, a Director of Tall Ships Youth Trust.

On board the ship, the young crew will be supervised by six professional officers and 12 volunteers. Maintaining a square-rigged ship to international safety standards is not cheap and the cost of each voyage is beyond the pocket of most young people. For this reason, a Cypriot team that includes representatives from Genclik Merkezi, Symfiliosi and Youth Encountering Peace has been working for several months to raise money for Cypriots to participate in the Gibraltar-to-Minorca voyage in August.

The main sponsors of the 2006 Voyage of Understanding are UNDP-Action for Cooperation and Trust, USAID and the British High Commission, Nicosia.

The choir remains one of the few exceptions to the SG's observation. When the choir sings, be it in Greek, Turkish, or whatever other language, the audience cannot tell who is Greek Cypriot and who is Turkish Cypriot. Admittedly, we once had a French member, who stuck out like a sore thumb.

When we travelled abroad on several occasions in the past to perform concerts, we made a conscious effort to share rooms with friends from "the other side".

No political arguments ever ensued from such arrangements, as far as I know. Although I did have a disagreement with my roommate – over which one of us snored the loudest!

Some things have changed for the better, some are the same, some have changed for the worse.

In the "bad old days", we could only rehearse together at Pyla. On those occasions, it was a round trip from Nicosia of over 100 km (or when we had gone abroad to perform, we found ourselves considerably more than 100 km from home!). Now our rehearsals take place unhindered every week at the Ledra Palace's bicommunal room.

Apart from our rehearsals, we can also meet up for a meal or a coffee at any time in Kyrenia, in Limassol, or if the mood takes us, even in Nicosia!

But some things are depressingly the same. The Cyprus problem remains unsolved.

Indeed, the April 2004 referendum put a strain on the choir. While no one discussed it openly, it was clear that the split between how Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots would vote, that manifested itself in society as a whole also occurred within the choir. Some Turkish Cypriot members, convinced that Greek Cypriots had made a choice in favour of living separately from Turkish Cypriots, "voted with their feet" and quit. But not all.

Thankfully, the choir has recently witnessed a new influx of both Turkish Cypriots who decided to return, and of several new Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot members, all of whom seem as determined as ever to prove that there are more things to unite Cypriots than divide them.

One new member is Turkish Cypriot conductor Kürsat Tilki, who, in the six months since joining, has made his influence felt by introducing some highly effective new arrangements of Turkish Cypriot songs previously performed by the choir. He has also enriched our repertoire by introducing new songs. As he said in a recent interview with the trilingual weekly newspaper, *Dialogue*, "We practically resurrected the choir from the dead."

Tilki says everyone in the choir favours finding a lasting solution to the Cyprus problem, a message of peace they chose to express via music. "We have lit a candle. The light will grow brighter with bicultural events organised by the youth so that the torch of peace can be carried with hope into the future."

The choir's Greek Cypriot conductor Lena Melanidou, a founder member, told the same paper: "We want to show people that through singing in unison, people can come alive and share this life. The referendum results caused a crisis for the choir which set us back enormously. The 'no' vote in the south profoundly discouraged our Turkish Cypriot members and they stayed away for quite a while."

She added: "We needed time to overcome our problems. We have to succeed for peace and friendship to succeed."

In June, the reinvigorated choir made its presence felt with four concerts – on both sides of Nicosia, in Limassol, and in Kyrenia. It was an opportunity to present a new repertoire along with an old message – that Cypriots can sing and work together.

Some things change, however. The turnout for most of the concerts was quite poor. Apart from the first performance at the Nicosia Municipal Theatre, all the other venues were only half full. Three years ago, when the choir gave a similar series of concerts just after the opening of the crossing points, it sang to packed audiences.

Perhaps that fact that this time round, the performances coincided with televised World Cup matches also affected attendance. Still, the conclusion has to be that the widespread enthusiasm that existed three years ago seems to have ebbed.

But other things stay the same. Those who did attend were as enthusiastic as ever in their applause for Cypriots so united in performance that one cannot tell who has Greek or who has Turkish as a mother tongue.

Some things change. The choir always used to end its performances with the words of Turkish Cypriot poet Nese Yasin, "My country has been divided into two/which of the two should I love?", set to music by well-known Greek Cypriot composer Marios Tokas.

This time, we ended our concerts with Ode to Joy, with lyrics in Greek, Turkish and English. The anthem of the United Europe – the Europe of diverse peoples and communities joined together in political and economic union – carries an appropriate message, pointing to where the future of the island as a whole must surely lie.

The choir in concert at the Nicosia Municipal Theatre on 7 June



Bridge-building Engineers Make Their Mark

Lefka Bridge



Sector 1 Lefka crossing point site of ...



... the renovated bridge

Liri Bridge



The old culverts just south of the Famagusta Gate in Sector 2...



... get a new look

Montgomery Bridge



Patrols near Sector 2's OP 86...



... now use the newly constructed bridge

The long-term plan of the Engineering Unit based at HQ UNFICYP in the UNPA is to ensure that track conditions within each sector's AOR are safe and secure for the soldiers to patrol. These tracks often fall into a bad state of repair, particularly during the rainy season when landslides can cause heavy damage. These repairs are not simple, easy tasks, and are usually tackled during the dry summer months.

One major problem existed at the Lefka crossing point in Sector 1's AOR last winter when a bridge, located in a valley, fell into a very bad state of repair.

1/Lt. István Orovecz of the Engineering Unit inspected the site, and briefed Force Engineer Maj. Karol Kubica on the situation. It was decided to retain part of the old construction and rebuild the remainder as the rainy season was close. The bridge was frequently submerged and there were fears for Sector 1's patrols. In December, the reconstruction work started. Water was already flowing along the river and had to be diverted to allow the engineers a dry surface. Nevertheless, within three weeks, the bridge was totally renovated, and the river now flows uninterrupted by debris.

The engineering team then moved on to Sector 2's AOR, just south of the Famagusta Gate on the main patrol track of Sector 2's East Troop. The engineers had been called in because the original construction of

"Liri Bridge" had deteriorated and was in a hazardous condition.

An inspection of the site showed there were many problems to correct. A plan was drawn up by the Force Engineer and his assistant on 1 April. First of all, the river bed was too narrow for the speed of water flow. Rubbish was being carried down to the bridge and blocking the culverts. Both the river and bridge had to be widened. However, patrols could not be interrupted, so provision had to be made for use of the tracks during the repair works. The surface conditions were extremely bad in the area, so much so that when the bulldozer started excavating land on either side of the river to widen it, the machine sank into the soft clay and had to be hauled up, a job that took eight hours!

This bridge is part of the patrol track in the buffer zone, but it is also widely used by civilians with fields in the area. It is now easily accessible for local farmers and their machines. The bridge was opened on 10 May.

Then in June, a completely new bridge was built on the Montgomery patrol track near Sector 2's OP 86, the largest undertaking by the Engineering Unit to date. Fifty-five cubic metres of concrete and 30 culverts were required to complete the job. "And a lot of sweat too," says 1/Lt. Orovecz!

1/Lt. István Orovecz



Cutting the cake are (from the left) Ch. Insp. Antonello De Chiara, Insp. Massimo Diagora, Ch. Insp. Salvatore Masia and Insp. Marco Tupini

Commander General Luciano Gottardo, was read by Civil Affairs Police Liaison Officer Insp. Marco Tupini. He then recited the "Carabinieri's Prayer" in honour of the Italian victims in Iraq and other military and civilian victims of peacekeeping operations. A promotional film, outlining the duties and activities of the Carabinieri, was shown as well.

The UNPOL club was full to the brim. Once the film was over, guests spilled outside to the cool of the patio and a delicious spread of Italian dishes including traditional delicacies. The crowning touch was the Carabinieri's celebration cake!

There may only be four Carabinieri on island, but their presence is indeed recognised!

The Carabinieri

The "Carabinieri" is the shortened (and common) name for the "Arma dei Carabinieri", an Italian military corps of the gendarmerie type with police functions, which also serves as the Italian military police. Historically, a "Carabiniere" was a cavalry soldier armed with a carbine (rifle). Their motto is "Nei Secoli Fedeli" (Faithful for Centuries).

History

The corps was created by King Victor Emmanuel I of Savoy, with the aim of providing the Sardinian Kingdom with a police corps similar to the French Gendarmerie. After French soldiers had occupied Turin at the end of the 18th century and later abandoned it to the Savoy family, the corps of "Carabinieri Reali" was instituted under the "Regie Patenti" (Royal Patent) of 13 July 1814.

Both a military and a police corps, the "Carabinieri" have fought

in every conflict in which Italy has been involved, suffering heavy losses and being awarded many decorations for gallantry.

The "Carabinieri" recently became an armed force (alongside the Italian Army, Navy and Air Force).

In recent years, Carabinieri units have been dispatched all over the world in peacekeeping missions including in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

In 2004, 12 Carabinieri were killed in a suicide bomb attack on their base in Nasiriyah, near Basra, in southern Iraq.

At the Sea Islands Conference of the G8 in 2004, the Carabinieri were given the mandate to establish a Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) to spearhead the development of training and doctrinal standards for civilian police units attached to international peacekeeping missions.



A common phrase in the north of Italy goes:

"Se si tocca un carabiniere sulle spalle come prima cosa alla mattina, porta fortuna", which, translated, means:

"If you touch a carabiniere on the shoulder first thing in the morning, this brings you luck".

Watch out, carabinieri!



Argentina – Young at 196 Years Old!

Serving at such a huge distance from home, in a multinational environment like UNFICYP, working with great South American soldiers integrated in our Argentinian ranks, makes for a special 25 May celebration. This is why all Argentinians stationed in Cyprus feel so proud to serve on the island.

As the world's nations go, Argentina is a young country – only 196 years old last 25 May. On this day, the whole country celebrated the anniversary of the formation of its first national government in 1810.

Naturally, Argentinian soldiers stationed in Cyprus were not going to miss out on these celebrations.

Sector 1 decided that we were going to join in and contribute to the the festivities, even though we are more than 13,000 km away from home.

At 7.00 a.m. on the 25th, all Sector 1's personnel attended a parade at San Martín Camp, headed by Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni. Every Sector 1 South American component (Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Perú) was present at the parade, reflecting the brotherly spirit which links these soldiers into one integrated and united unit.

During the parade, the Argentinian flag was raised and the message of congratulations sent by the Argentinian Minister of Defence was read out. Before the end of the ceremony, Sector 1 Chaplain Father Enrique Saguier offered up a blessing for the Argentinian nation. Subsequently, all soldiers and guests tucked into a celebration breakfast, catered for all tastes.



Lt. Juan Ferrari at the guitar

and encouraging population growth with pro-immigration policies. All this took more than 100 years. Spearheading these efforts were figures such as San Martín, Belgrano, Sarmiento and many others who contributed to creating the awesome country we enjoy today.

After the First World War, the 1920s saw a major influx of immigrants from European countries to Argentina. In the post-Second World War late 1940s and early 1950s, millions of Spanish and Italian immigrants, and, in less measure, German, Polish, Ukrainian, Croatian, Welsh, Hungarian, Greek, Turkish and many other nationalities, made their way across the Atlantic. This melting pot derived from so many immigrant cultures is, perhaps, our biggest strength.

Argentinian Folklore

Later in the evening, contingent members, now relaxed and out of uniform, joined our guests to watch a folklore show. It was purely an Argentinian production, much enjoyed by all UNFICYP's South American personnel. The Argentinian families, some with children who added even more cheer to the national pride, were delighted with the show.

Soldiers from the Army and Marine Corps put on a medley of folklore songs and even ventured as far as pop music, to the audience's delight.

Meantime, a delicious spread of empanadas, pastries and Argentinian wine was laid on.

Sector 1's Argentinians particularly appreciated the fact that soldiers from Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Peru joined in the singing and dancing.

Argentinian Origins

Argentina, like much of South America, was a colony dependent on the Spanish crown. This process started after the American continent was discovered by Cristóbal Colón in 1492 and ended around 1810 with the independence of some former colonies. The "United Provinces of River Plate" (as Argentina was first known) became the first Spanish possession in America to break free of the political domination from the crown of Spain.

Since that time, Argentina grew as a nation by consolidating its territory, organising political structures



1/Cpl Celayez, wearing traditional Argentinian dress, offers empanadas to Chilean contingent members



Traditional army uniforms featured on 25 May 25. On the left, a "Patrío" (the first Argentinian regiment), and on the right, a "Granadero" (one of the strongest independence regiments, created by Gen. San Martín), with Maj. Martinet from the Argentinian Air Force in the centre

National Days in Sector 1



Capt. Carlos Beraud addresses the parade

It's well-known in UNFICYP that the Argentinian Contingent has been working alongside soldiers from other South American countries for over four years. The Paraguayan military joined Sector 1 in 2002.

On 28 March last, 15 Paraguayan soldiers, including one MOLO, arrived in Cyprus to join the Argentinian Contingent. They celebrated the 195th anniversary of Paraguayan independence on 15 May last.

An internal parade took place at Roca Camp where most of them are stationed. At 8.00 a.m., the event started with the salute of Sector 1 CO, Lt. Col. Claudio Javier Piedra-Buena. Then the Paraguayan flag was honoured while the troops sang their national hymn. Sector 1 officers, including representatives of the Chilean and Peruvian components, joined their Paraguayan colleagues.

The Paraguayan MOLO and contingent leader, Capt. Carlos Beraud, addressed the troops on his country's history. After a blessing by ARGCON chaplain Father Enrique, all shared a traditional Paraguayan breakfast.

Paraguay



Sector 1 again held an internal parade when, on 7 June, Argentinian troops stood to attention as Peruvian troops, led by Lt. Oscar Flores Silva, marched onto the parade ground at San Martín Camp and raised their flag. Simultaneously, all Peruvians renewed their oath to their nation and their flag, one of the most important events in their yearly calendar.

Peru

The Peruvian personnel who attended the ceremony were Lt. Oscar Flores Silva, WOIII Ángel Milussich Mejía, WOIII Angel Saravia Yataco, Sgt. Carlos Mora Pacco, Sgt. Eusebio Picón Flores, WOIII Rolando Orué Umeres, WOIII Hugo Damián Ferroa, Sgt. Saturnino Hurtado Lara and Sgt. Pedro Rojas Quispe.

Clearly a moving ceremony. All turned out to show their devotion to their country.

Running, Swimming, Biking for Gold!

Despite ferocious claims of ambivalence towards preparatory training, several weeks of secret race practice had taken place prior to the UNFICYP Triathlon, held on 8 June.

Starting at 6.00 a.m., 54 blurry-eyed competitors arrived at the start line. Eight teams had entered, each with six competitors. Only the fastest four times would count towards the teams' overall time.

The Triathlon started with a 400m swim in the UNPA pool, followed by 16km on bikes and ending with a 4.5km run. The route turned out to be an unpleasant surprise. The event organiser, Capt. Sheldon of Sector 2, had managed to find every hill in the UNPA and even arranged for head-on wind for the flat bits! Thankfully,



there were plenty of marshals along the route offering encouragement and much needed water.

The first team off the line (from Sector 1) clearly had their sights firmly fixed on "Gold", with WOIII Luis Neira gliding through the pool like a fish and making his first triathlon look very easy. The remainder of Sector 1's competitors followed before Anne Bursey of the PIO caused the other female members some consternation as she too cut through the water at considerable pace. Next up was the Sector 2 "A Team", who all came out of the pool in extremely fast times with Capts. Jagger and Sheldon side-by-side during the first transition. The Sector 2 "B Team" followed on and were clearly enjoying themselves on

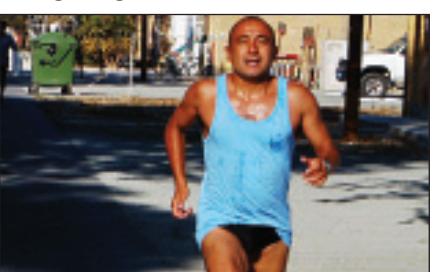


the patrol bikes. The HQ BRITCON team, with the Chief of Staff driving them on, preceded the MFR and a team from Sector 4.

Following a well-earned breakfast at the end, Force Commander Maj. Gen. R. J. Barni announced the results. Awards were given for the fastest two individual male, female and veteran competitors and to the fastest three teams. The winners are:

Team: Sector 2/Team A
Male: Capt. Sheldon
Female: Maj. Halford
Veterans: Sgt. Gumbrell

An extremely demanding race overall, everyone claimed to have enjoyed themselves – indeed, some have even expressed interest in doing it again!



Compiled by Sector 1's Capt. Mauricio Silvestre

Abusing the buffer zone

