The Blue Beret

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Downer arrives as talks are announced

Serving UNFICYP's civilian, military and police personnel

The Blue Beret

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Editorial

International attention is focused once again on Cyprus as the leaders of the island's two main communities start fully-fledged talks. Hopes are high that this latest effort at reaching a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus problem will yield that elusive result. Those hopes are well founded: conditions for finding an agreement have not been as good as they are now for many years.

The leaders on both sides of the divide are believed sincerely to want a solution, and work to prepare the talks, although halting at times, has been quite productive. The international community, with the United Nations at the forefront, has pledged its full support to the peace process.

The flip side of the optimism surrounding the peace talks is a feeling that the window of opportunity now open may not remain so forever.

The importance of making the current bid for peace the good one has become all the more evident in light of recent developments in places not that far away from this island. A settlement in Cyprus should result not only in greater stability in the region, a commodity not in oversupply. It would also demonstrate that the barriers seemingly posed by history, culture and language are surmountable and can even be turned into assets when people who share a homeland consciously and freely decide to build a common future of peace and prosperity. This is not some naïve dream, but neither is it a foregone conclusion.

Therein lies the challenge for Cyprus.

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UN optimistic on direct talks

Mehmet Ali Talat (left) warmly greeting Demetris Christofias on arrival at the SRSG's residence for their 25 July meeting

The Secretary-General's newly appointed Special Adviser on Cyprus, Alexander Downer, has said he is encouraged about prospects for peace negotiations following his meetings with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders at the end of July.

Downer, who visited the island on 27-29 July, was briefed by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun and other senior UNFICYP officials before meeting with the two leaders.

Downer told a news briefing at Nicosia's Ledra Palace Hotel on 29 July that developments over the past months have fostered "a genuine sense that prospects have perhaps never been better to achieve a comprehensive settlement, favourable to all Cypriots".

He said: "Clearly, you have two leaders who are sincere in their commitment and in their engagement to move forward together towards a comprehensive settlement, and this commitment, evident through their joint statements of their recent meetings, have defined the parameters of the solution and the end game, and they have given the process a good deal of momentum."

Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat are due to start full-fledged negotiations on September 3 with Downer as special envoy. "It is looking quite promising, but there is no doubt that this is a very difficult process for them," Downer said of his meetings with the two leaders. "One of the things that impressed me is the way there is convergence on quite a number of issues, but of course there are many unresolved issues still to be addressed." So far, he said, the process had got off to a good start and was being handled very well.

"It is a process that needs to move forward constructively and as quickly as is practical," he said. "This process is under the auspices of the UN, but the UN role is to provide help as best we can and we look forward to doing that."

Asked whether he had a timeframe in mind for a solution, Downer added: "This is not a process anyone would like to see roll on endlessly."

Christofias and Talat agreed at a meeting on 25 July to start full direct talks aimed at finding a solution to the Cyprus problem. In a joint statement following that meeting, the leaders declared that the agreed solution will be put to separate simultaneous referendums.

The leaders also approved a package of measures to improve in the immediate term the daily life of Cypriots on both sides of the divided island. The measures address matters related to environment, cultural heritage, crisis management, crime and criminal matters. And to facilitate contact between them, the leaders agreed to establish a secure hotline.

It was their second meeting in the same month. On 1 July, Christofias and Talat met for four and a half hours at the residence of SRSG Zerihoun to review progress in the working groups and technical committees and to clarify the basis for new talks.

They discussed the issues of single sovereignty and citizenship which they agreed in principle. They also agreed to discuss the details of their implementation during the full-fledged negotiations.

Special Adviser on Cyprus Alexander Downer with SRSG Zerihoun briefing the media on 29 July

Leaders announce direct talks, list further confidence steps

SRSG Zerihoun receives Demetris Christofias outside his residence in the UNPA

Friendly rapport between Mehmet Ali Talat (second left) and Demetris Christofias (right) with their aides Ozdil Nami (left) and George Iacovou (second right)

SRSG Zerihoun receives Mehmet Ali Talat outside his residence in the UNPA

Leaders get down to business, facilitated by SRSG Zerihoun (centre)

Leaders Demetris Christofias and Mehmet Ali Talat agreed on 25 July to launch fully-fledged negotiations on the Cyprus problem on 3 September 2008. They also approved a further package of measures aimed at improving the daily life of Cypriots in both communities. The measures involve environmental issues, cultural heritage, crisis management, crime and criminal matters.

The full list of measures as announced appear below.

Package of measures approved by the leaders: 25 July 2008

A. ENVIRONMENT:

1. Cooperation for the elimination of illegal dumping sites and the rehabilitation of the affected areas within the buffer zone
2. Cooperation for exchange of experience and information between environmental experts
3. Cooperation for the prevention of wildfires
4. Waste management – treatment-recycling
5. Awareness raising measures for water saving
6. Cooperation for the establishment of a common approach on mining and quarrying activities in Cyprus
7. Biodiversity and nature protection
8. Marine and maritime pollution management and control
9. Chemical pollution management and control
10. Asbestos pollution management and control
11. Historical pollution management and control

B. CULTURAL HERITAGE:

12. Compilation of the entire list of immovable cultural heritage of Cyprus
13. Decision on two restoration pilot projects
14. Guidelines to the ad hoc working group for the development of an interactive educational computer programme

C. CRISIS MANAGEMENT:

15. Mechanisms for cooperation in crisis situation

D. CRIME AND CRIMINAL MATTERS:

16. Recommendation on Exchanging Information and Intelligence on Crime and Criminal Matters

These measures follow an initial set of steps announced in June.

Pascoe: Cyprus can make it

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe expressed his optimism that the process for negotiations on the Cyprus problem was moving forward.

Speaking at a press conference at Ledra Palace on 18 June, Pascoe said: "I was extremely impressed with the two leaders. I think they are people that are very committed to moving forward and to finally resolving the Cyprus problem and getting a unified Cyprus." He pointed out that the United Nations and the entire world community is solidly behind them and the direction in which they are heading.

Pascoe said Cyprus is a "hot issue internationally", and that there are "huge expectations that Cyprus will make it this time".

"The leaders have the full backing of the international community and that's where the process should be centered to see where it goes. We want to make it work, and the sooner the better," Pascoe said.

Referring to the work of the technical committees and working groups, Pascoe said that despite the doubters, the working groups and the technical committees are doing very well.

Aides unveil measures to ease daily life

SRSG Tayé-Brook Zerihoun (centre) with Ozdil Nami (left), representative of the Turkish Cypriot leader, and George Iacovou (right), representative of the Greek Cypriot leader

George Iacovou and Ozdil Nami, the representatives of the two leaders, held a joint news conference with Special Representative of the Secretary–General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun to announce a first set of measures agreed by the committees and working groups that prepared the groundwork for direct talks.

Unveiling the measures, Zerihoun said: "Some of the technical committees and working groups have made more progress than others, but what is important is that the process remains engaged and on track." He said, "the momentum of the process has not slowed. In fact, it's producing tangible results".

The agreements made include putting in place a mechanism that will allow ambulances to cross without delay in emergency situations, issuing road safety leaflets for handing out at crossing points, cooperation on waste issues, the establishment of a joint health committee, and the adoption of joint educational programmes on cultural heritage and the environment.

Funding for all of the agreed projects will be borne by both sides.

De-miners – clearing a path for peace

Deminers at work in Athienou clearing a minefield in the buffer zone

The United Nations patrolled buffer zone in Cyprus extends over 180 km from east to west and covers 3 per cent of the island's territory, a large portion of which is fertile farming land.

UNFICYP supports the fullest possible resumption of normal civilian activity in the buffer zone, keeping in mind that this is still an area under permanent armed watch by military on both sides. To this end, it facilitates the return of farming in the buffer zone where safe. However until recently, much of this land was inaccessible as it was deemed unsafe due to the minefields left over from the 1974 period.

In 2004, the United Nations Development Programme's Partnership for the Future – Mine Action Centre began, with the help of UNFICYP, to de-mine the buffer zone. The European Union has to date provided nine million euros for the project, part of humanitarian efforts to clear landmines and unexploded ordnance from Cyprus.

Over 40 minefields have been cleared, with over five million square metres of land released so far. A total of 4,441 mines have been cleared, including 2,258 anti-personnel mines and 2,182 anti-tank mines.

Much of the de-mining work in Cyprus is being done by professionals recruited in Africa. They have seen first-hand the devastating effects of war and more specifically the destruction caused by mines in their own countries. Their training and experience has been called on to undertake the dangerous task of making Cyprus mine free.

The **Blue Beret** accompanied a team of de-miners on a typical day at work in a minefield in the buffer zone area of Athienou that, if you didn't know was mined, would appear pretty innocuous. By 7:30 a.m., the de-miners are already in the minefield, painstakingly checking metre by metre of land. Team leader Felisberto Novele, 48, from Mozambique had already detailed work for his eight-man team to do.

Felisberto explains that being a de-miner involves calculated risks and strict adherence to safety regulations and procedures. He concedes it's still a large risk, but his men from Zimbabwe and Mozambique are professionals and have consciously made the choice to do this job.

Nevertheless, just how dangerous their task is was seen when a member of the de-mining team from Mozambique lost the lower part of his leg earlier this year (May) when he stepped on an unmarked Turkish landmine in the buffer zone north of Athienou towards the Tymbou area.

What is the motivation? A large pay packet? Their salaries stand at around $600 a month plus board and lodging, which is decent compared to what some would make back home – but money does not explain everything.

Felisberto says he has been de-mining for nine years, first starting in Mozambique after the war when members of the two warring groups were called to train as de-miners to free the land of mines in a joint effort as a confidence building measure for the redevelopment of their country.

He says emphatically that he is proud to be a de-miner and strongly opposes landmines, having seen first hand the devastation they can cause. "I am proud to be a de-miner because our efforts are to guarantee the new generations of the future a safer world. What we need now is to rebuild schools and hospitals in this world, not lay down mines. The land cleared can give way for these institutions and that is why I am proud," he says.

He says he would feel great satisfaction if he heard that on the land he and his team have cleared in Cyprus a recreation centre, school or other community project was being developed for the benefit of the Cypriot people. Felisberto is a family man with a wife and eight children between the ages of 22 and four, as well as his widowed mother, to take care of with the salary he earns as a de-miner.

Finding work as a de-miner in Mozambique is now becoming harder explains Mick Raine, Project Manager, because the problem with mines in Mozambique to a large extent has been resolved so there is now a surplus of de-miners. One way of utilising this skilled workforce is foreign companies undertaking contracts to de-mine abroad, hiring them because if they were to seek experienced de-miners in Europe or the UK or Cyprus for example, it would be extremely difficult. But Mozambique has them.

And this Felisberto says is an advantage for him because he is able to travel through his work and experience other countries like Cyprus where he has been working for the last three years.

Edward Rhappozzoh, 31 from Zimbabwe, a qualified medic trained in emergency care, joined the de-mining team in January this year. His work is to take care of the health of the de-miners, seeing them when they are sick and tending to any complaints they may have. He does not enter the minefield while the team is at work, but is aware of the positions of each de-miner so that if he is called in, he knows exactly where to go to give assistance.

Edward says he has a basic knowledge of what de-mining entails and attends some of the de-miners classes to increase his knowledge of the work they do.

He says it is a risk for them to enter the minefield every day, but he has seen how professionally they work, sticking rigidly to strict rules on standard operating procedures to reduce the chances of any accident occurring.

Referring to the accident where a Mozambiquan de-miner lost the lower part of his limb, Edward says this kind of accident causes trauma not only to the victim but his colleagues as well, and requires counselling which he offers to the de-miners to help them get over the shock and get back into the field to continue working.

Edward, who is married with two children, a son (two) and daughter (five), says he enjoys Cyprus where he has made many friends outside of his work colleagues.

Raymond Kapamutengu, 31, trained as a de-miner in Zimbabwe and started working in Mozambique seven years ago. He has also worked in Iraq, Baghdad for three months, which he said was rather frightening at times because they not only had to deal with the mines and unexploded ordnance, but were under tight security, escorted wherever they went for fear of ambush attacks.

In the seven years he has been de-mining, he has never been in an accident, nor has he suffered any injuries. He describes his work in minefields as "like somebody who gets up in the morning, gets into his car and takes all the precautions. It is intense work – if you think about the danger of it, you will not be able to work. Put safety first and then the rest will come."

Raymond says he will continue de-mining as long as he can, but if he finds something better at home, he will stop and stay with his wife and two-year-old son. "For now, I have to work to put food on the table for my family," he says, noting that with the extremely difficult political situation in Zimbabwe, he can just about meet his family's basic needs working as a de-miner.

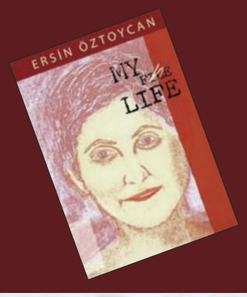
Coming to work in Cyprus held a pleasant surprise for Raymond, as he managed to track down and reunite with a childhood friend, Costas. Raymond says he grew up on Costas's father's farm in Zimbabwe where his parents worked as labourers.

Joao Queniate Biasse, 26, began his career as a de-miner in 2003 in Mozambique, and was recruited to come to Cyprus in 2005 where he has helped de-mine a significant number of minefields. Joao admits that he does experience fear at times when he is in the minefield because, he says, "I don't know when I am going to have an accident. But I have to work to survive, and this is what I do best."

The thought of entering a minefield may be terrifying at times, but "sometimes, what you can come across in a minefield can scare you even more than the mines," he says, recounting how in minefield 2,357 in Nicosia, they had to deal with a large number of snakes and vipers. "When the viper suddenly appears in your path, you have to keep cool and control your immediate impulse to run in any direction away from it, because you can only move backwards in the cleared path," he explains. "It also takes you by surprise because it's not what you are looking for or expecting to see. Decisions need to be taken in a matter of seconds and the team leader needs to be called for assistance and to warn the other de-miners."

However, a more traumatising experience for him as a de-miner was in the Gaza Province in Masingiri where, at the tender age of 21, he was faced with human skeletons strewn across a minefield they had to clear. "The first days were quite emotional, knowing people had been killed and there was always a risk I could be killed too. I had to be brave though, to be able to earn a salary and feed my family."

Netha Kreouzos



My File Life

Ersin Oztoycan first started working with the United Nations Force in Cyprus in July 2003. She was employed on a part-time basis to assist in the re-establishment of UNFICYP's Limassol office, set up to assist the problems faced by Turkish Cypriots residing in the Turkish quarters of the Limassol area.

Very soon, the Turkish Cypriot and "Roma" (gypsy) women took Ersin to their hearts. They found her warm personality very appealing, and this encouraged many of them to visit the office on a weekly basis, whereupon Ersin would do her best to assist them with the numerous problems they had to deal with, including form filling, medical problems, ID paperwork, housing problems, schooling for their children, etc.

In December 2003, four posts for Information Assistants opened at HQ UNFICYP's Civil Affairs Branch, two for Greek Cypriots and two for Turkish Cypriots. Ersin applied and was accepted. She started work alongside Turkish Cypriot Yasa Yeşilada and Greek Cypriots Netha Kreouzos and Loukia Vassiliou. All were employed to support the additional workload encountered by this Headquarters when the Good Offices opened at the beginning of the Cyprus talks in 2004.

Working in the same office as they did, it was fortunate that they all got on so well together. The ladies, in particular, struck up a strong rapport and used to go out for lunch together almost every day. They would discuss the similarities and differences between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot cultures and lifestyles. Loukia and Yasa were

Force Commander Rear Admiral Sanchez with Chief of Mission Zerihoun

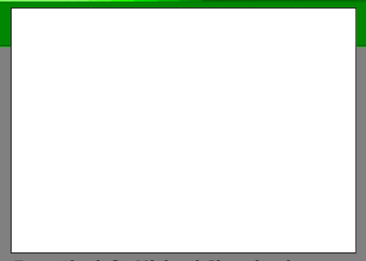
Ersin during her presentation with Netha behind her

Cypriot born, but Ersin and Netha had arrived in Cyprus as adults from the UK and South Africa respectively. They found that although their roots, their religions and their cultures were different, they had much in common. Slowly, the two got to know each other's families, and once the gates were opened on 23 April 2003, that made life a lot easier for them to socialize.

In January 2006, Netha was transferred from the Interpreters' office in the Civil Affairs Branch to the Public Information Office, followed by Ersin in December 2007. This is when I really got to know these two women.

Ersin has always suffered from dyslexia, although she didn't realize this until her son Serkan was diagnosed with the same condition at the age of five. Ersin worked hard to ensure he received the correct tuition in the UK. But when her husband Birol moved his business to northern Cyprus in 1996, she had another battle to face. By this time, her second child, daughter Cemo, was also diagnosed with dyslexia. On arrival, Ersin could find nobody in the north aware of this problem, so in her normal, persistent way, she investigated the situation and, with the help of the Cyprus Dyslexia Association located in the south of the island, established and became President of the NCDA in the north.

At the beginning of 2005, cancer reared its ugly head. After the initial shock, Ersin said she had long thought about writing a book on her life so that one day, her future grandchildren and their children too would know who she was. However she was intimidated by the fact that she suffers from dyslexia. By then, those of us in the PIO had come to know Ersin; she is a very practical woman, and she does not procrastinate! We strongly encouraged her



From the left: Michael Charalambous, Necip Tözün and Nurettin Hasan from UNFICYP's International Cafeteria

to go ahead, and she did. Little by little, she beavered away at the weekends, and those of us close to her waited for Monday mornings when she would appear with the next chapter. We couldn't wait for the follow-up.

In a nutshell, her autobiography is a dyslexic's account of being raised a Turkish Cypriot in north London, not knowing her real father, her struggles at school, a teenage romance constrained by cultural traditions that triumphed in marriage and family, struggles with the local authorities to get help for her dyslexic children (realising that she herself was dyslexic), leaving the U.K. to return to family roots in north Cyprus where, determined to ensure her children got every opportunity, she set about establishing a dyslexic association in the north while building strong bridges with the Greek Cypriot association in the south, and much, much more...

On 23 June, Ersin's book was launched in Nicosia in the presence of the island's two first ladies, Elsi Christofias and Oya Talat, a remarkable tribute to the resilience and resourcefulness of its author. Elsi Christofias pointed out that problems such as dyslexia do not recognize national differences and stressed that through her action, Ersin has managed to limit and reduce the problems of dyslexics on the island. Both Elsi Christofias and Oya Talat drew attention to the political situation and praised Ersin's efforts which have united the two dyslexic societies on the island. Oya Talat stressed that initiatives

Ersin with her oncologist, Dr. Constantinos Constantinou

Oya Talat warmly greets Elsi Christofias with Ersin happily looking on

like this should be strongly encouraged, and stated that one day, Ersin will likely become the island's most famous dyslexic!

The Ledra Palace's bicommunal rooms were full. UNFICYP's Chief of Mission Tayé-Brook Zerihoun was present, as was Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez Debernardi, as well as diplomats, members of the press, colleagues, friends and, of course, family. Netha introduced the book and after the first ladies spoke, Mr. Costas Apostolides, past president of the Cyprus Dyslexia Association, and Mr. Ulusal Metay, vice president of the NCDA, both sung Ersin's praises. Netha then read some extracts from the book, and Ersin explained them and answered questions from the audience. The presentation was followed by a sumptuous reception, sponsored by UNFICYP's International Cafeteria's Necip Tözün and organised by his manager, Michael Charalambous.

"My (~~Life~~) File" is a wonderful human interest story. It is about a staff member in the UNFICYP Public Information Office who, with the support and encouragement of her Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot and international colleagues, sat down one day and began writing an account of her life.

I came to Cyprus over 30 years ago with the idea that the two communities were completely separate and non-communicative. Having spent the last few years working alongside Ersin and Netha, I promise you that this is not the case.

Ersin's book has been a real achievement, and the launch was the cherry on the cake. It has been an honour to work with these two Cypriots, and I'm proud to call them my friends.

We are now all waiting for the next edition…

MT

Ersin with her colleagues Netha (left) and Miriam

UNFICYP integrated medal parade

Sector 4's Slovak Contingent march on

The Hungarians from Sector 4

The Argentinian Contingent from Sector 1

The UNFICYP medal was introduced in 1964 for a minimum of 90 days duty in Cyprus. To date, in the interest of regional peace and security, 171,970 medals have been awarded since the start of the mission, and on 19 June, UNFICYP held its summer military Medal Parade in the United Nations Protected Area, Nicosia.

After some consideration regarding the location, it was finally decided to hold the parade inside the UN Flight hangar – not very inviting, one might think, but it turned out to be ideal. The parade commenced at 2.00 p.m. which, on any average summer's day in Cyprus, is a hot time of day. After a lot of hard work and pulling together from all involved throughout the mission, the hangar was transformed into the parade square, with APC Tacticas placed in the corners and national flags flying high. Soon enough, a drab and uninviting hangar was transformed into an ideal setting. All that remained was to practise the parade on location.

On parade were soldiers from Sector 1 consisting of officers and soldiers predominantly from Argentina but with representation from Chile and Paraguay. Sector 2 consisted of soldiers from the British Contingent of 7 Transport Regiment RLC, while Sector 4 consisted of Slovakian and Hungarian soldiers. Thus, pulling together a parade with all these different nationalities and drill styles was no small feat.

After a lot tweaking, rehearsals and finally, a simple format, the only thing left was for some intensive practice, practice, and a little more practice. After these rehearsals, we were ready to practise with the band, due to arrive on the morning of the parade. As luck would have it, the first rehearsal with the band took place simultaneously with the Chief of Staff's inspection, which proved to be a disaster, but we pulled together and, after all our hard work, we could only hope for the best.

The time was fast approaching and guests began to arrive, whereupon the soldiers where becoming visibly anxious. The Royal Air Force military band began to play and saw the Hungarian and Slovakian Contingents march on from Sector 4, led on by Capts. Ballock and Svikruha respectively. Sector 2 soon followed under the command of Sgt. Jones and finally Sector 1 was led on by Maj. Wendeburg.

Once on parade, nerves were replaced by duty and a large measure of pride as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Chief of Mission Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez Debernardi and various national representatives decorated the soldiers with their well deserved UN medal. Maj. Dan McNeil's gave a running commentary to the professional sounds from the band.

Looking back, it was indeed a stirring event for all involved, and I was truly honoured to be chosen as the Parade Commander. Once each soldier had been presented with his/her medal, the Force Commander addressed the parade with some inspirational words.

As with all official events such as this, there was a wonderful selection of food and delicacies from all principal UNFICYP nations. It seemed everyone was sampling traditional dishes from each sector in true multinational hospitality. During the festivities, it was considered a wonderful opportunity for the guests and soldiers to informally chat and celebrate the mission and parade.

At the conclusion, it was generally agreed the event was a complete success, and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone in attendance.

W02 Jacquie Barlow
Parade Commander

Chief of Mission Tayé-Brook Zerihoun with Force Commander Rear Admiral Sanchez

The British of Sector 2 stand to attention

The Royal Air Force military band

UNFICYP summer military skills competition

The UNFICYP summer Military Skills Competition was held on 4 June 2008, and is considered to be one of the main events on the UNFICYP calendar.

This year, 10 teams competed with A and B teams from each sector and the remaining teams coming from the FMPU (Force Military Police Unit), the MFR (Mobile Force Reserve), UNPOL (United Nations Police), and last, but not least, HQ UNFICYP.

Due to the heat of the region, an early start was essential and the first challenge of the day was a gruelling Endurance March. As soon as all teams had registered, were "weighed-in" and had received their safety brief, they headed to the start line en masse.

Following words of encouragement by Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez Debernardi, the starting gun went off at 5.45 a.m. and 60 personnel, complete with rucksacks and weapons, began battling for position. As is the military way, you should always expect the unexpected. The unexpected in this case came in the form of 10 "burdens" in the shape of heavy wooden stretchers. Each team had to pick up their stretcher before racing the last 800 m to the finish line.

As soon as all teams had completed the march, they were given grid references and a military skills stand matrix, which they were expected to follow to cover the next six events. These events covered a wide range of military knowledge including command tasks, map reading, cross country driving, operational information, weapons handling and incident reaction.

Over the next six hours, the teams were required to navigate from stand to stand within a fixed time limit receiving penalty points if they arrived late at any stand. The heat of the day became the biggest hurdle, and teams were actually glad to reach their next stand, hoping to grab a quick rest and some water before continuing with being put through their paces.

All teams had a lot of support but were for the most part drowned out as a result of the drums, whistles and cymbals used by the zealous Argentinian supporters who followed their respective teams around all day.

If a full day of being tested in the sun was not bad enough, the final stand – the dreaded assault course – loomed large. Additionally, as many teams were close in points, this final stand would decide the winners from the losers.

As each team arrived back at the competition headquarters, a PTI (Physical Training Instructor) was assigned to take them through the last gruelling ordeal. Each team had to carry an ammunition box full of sand and a jerrycan full of water. A final twist was that each obstacle had its own set of rules, and the burdens they carried either went over, under or through these obstacles with penalty points awarded for any infractions of the rules.

With the day coming to a close, all teams paraded in front of the Force Commander who gave his praise and admiration for the effort all teams displayed throughout this hot and demanding day. But every competition must have a winner and for the fourth year running, the Argentinian's A team reigned supreme, with second place going to the Sector 2 A team and third place going to the Argentinian B team.

After a hard day under the Mediterranean sun, every soldier needs two things: a curry and a beer! These were provided by the Sector 2 chefs and the MFR bar. No sooner had the Military Skills trophy made its presence felt in UNPA, it was taken straight back to Sector 1.

Looking on the bright side, at least we never have to polish it – well, not this year at least.

SSgt. Leslie Patrick

COP Woodpecker

Approximately 200 military and police personnel took part in Contingency Operational Plan Woodpecker on 3 July. This exercise, which practised crowd control, took place near OP 39, close to the village of Dhenia in Sector 1's area of control. Personnel from Sector 1, UNPOL, MFR, UN Flight and the FMPU participated.

The scenario was villagers arguing with Sector 1's peacekeepers, demanding the right to work inside the buffer zone. The crowd then got out of control, so reserves from the other UNFICYP units were called in. One person was injured during the scuffles, so UN Flight's Hughes 500 helicopter landed at a temporary helipad and evacuated the injured man from the scene.

Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez Debernardi oversaw the whole operation, as well as the Commanding Officers of Sectors 1, 2 and 4 and other senior staff. The whole event, which commenced at 7.00 a.m., lasted approximately six hours.

Following the exercise, the Force Commander congratulated all participants on a successful event.

Above: Practising riot control

Left: The Force Commander congratulating participants on a successful exercise

Exercise Long Look

On 10 and 11 June 2008, Sgts. Al Hamilton and Russ Iliffe from the Royal Australian Corps of Military Police visited the Force Military Police Unit, as part of an island orientation whilst deployed with the UK Armed Forces on Exercise LONG LOOK.

Exercise LONG LOOK is a tri-service exchange between the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The aim of this annual, four-month Exercise is to broaden the military experience and knowledge of the individuals selected and to further the inter-operability of the three Commonwealth armies.

The whistle-stop 20-hour tour of UNFICYP commenced by being hosted in the International Police Club in the evening of 10 June. Shortly after dawn next morning, we were given an insight into the history and working practices of the mission by the Force Provost Marshal, Maj. Iain Watt and his team. This set the scene for an informative overview of military operations within Sector 2's area of responsibility, where we were hosted by WO2 Dave Proven, the Continuity Warrant Officer. Upon our return to the UNPA, we had the opportunity to meet and conduct a short patrol with multi-national personnel within the FMPU and observe them in their daily duties, before moving on to the UK Sovereign Bases Area for the remainder of our time in Cyprus.

From an outsider's point of view, we were initially surprised that there was still a UN mission operating within Cyprus. What was immediately apparent was the hard work and demanding standards shown by members of the mission. This seems to go largely unnoticed outside this Theatre, and certainly within the British Armed Forces, judging by the brief we had received prior to our visit. It was a real pleasure seeing multi-national personnel working so closely together, professionally in a politically sensitive environment, despite the many obvious barriers.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all who assisted in our visit programme.

Sgts. Al Hamilton and Russ Iliffe, RACMP, with members of the FMPU

Wax On – Wax Off!

Early in May, a message was forwarded through the UNFICYP Bulletin Board from the U.S. Marine House about the sudden illness which had struck the son of one of their employees. As a result, Patrick, 22, needed a kidney transplant and happily, a relative was willing to donate a kidney in an operation planned for June. But until then, he required vital dialysis costing $150 dollars a day (€96.44). His mother, Theresa, was finding it very difficult to keep up with the costs, and she found herself in the unbelievable and terrifying position of losing her son if she couldn't pay for the treatment in advance.

Fleur Jennings, a member of the Australian UNPOL contingent, and Deputy Senior Police Adviser John Farrelly immediately took up the challenge to raise money to help Patrick's situation – and it didn't take them long to come up with a very entertaining idea.

Most of us know that an UNPOL mug-out is always something to look forward to, but the party held on 9 May was an exception because John (DSPA), 1/Lt. Gustavo Quintana (Argentina, UNPOL) and our own Niels Petersen (Transport Unit) all volunteered to have their chests waxed – in public – for money.

The UNPOL Bar was packed! The atmosphere was electric! It was heart-warming to witness hundreds of euros eagerly donated for the opportunity to take part in the ritual. All three men were surrounded by beautiful women, but the dream was abruptly shattered when they realised that all they really wanted to do was painfully rip their chest hair out with the aid of a wax covered strip. Aaah!

Cheers and applause greeted each "strip", and it was generally agreed by all who witnessed the spectacle that the agonised screams and in some cases blood were well worth the money and a good evening's entertainment.

The girls were quite rightly satisfied that justice had been served, and the men were just happy it wasn't them suffering under torture.

The evening was a huge success and our three triumphant heroes should be very proud for helping to raise an incredible €1,212. Worth all the pain and future discomfort they are surely going to suffer as the hair grows back!

During the evening, a cheque for €500 was presented to the organisers by the Mobile Force Reserve (MFR) who donated this incredible amount from a previous fund raising effort. That is a total of €1,712 – enough to pay for 17 days of treatment for Patrick.

DSPA John Farrelly, sporting a chest as smooth as a male model, had this to say: "It was a great honour to be associated with a function which raised so much money for a very good cause. The whole event was a major success. Even though the people who supported it did not know the person to whom the money was benefitting, they knew he and his family needed it, and they dug deep into their pockets to help.

"On a personal note, I now know what it is like to suffer real pain. Having my chest waxed will never be repeated again, so I have now developed a certain sympathy for womankind. I would like to thank everybody who supported the event, and you will be glad to know that all monies collected went directly to where it was most needed."

There are many other people to thank, including Sonia Makridou who graciously gave her time, provided the wax strips and the expertise, preventing the boys from losing their nipples as well in all the excitement. Special thanks go to Fleur Jennings and her colleagues who allowed their mug-out ceremony to be hijacked for a very worthy cause, and also thanks to the organisers and bartenders for the evening.

And last but not least, to the supporters who turned up and generously gave their money in support of Patrick.

So let's wax lyrical for John, Gustavo and Niels who donated their chests for a public stripping and left with their dignity barely intact.

Christine Iacovou

N.B. None of the participants was physically or psychologically harmed in any way during the evening's events. Well, not too much.

Chief of Mission Support Frank Clancy tears a strip off Deputy Senior Police Adviser John Farrelly!

Visit to UNFICYP

On 7 July, UNFICYP Chief of Mission Tayé-Brook Zerihoun received a visit from Mr. Daniel Fried, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, accompanied by the American Ambassador H.E. Mr. Ronald L. Schlicher.

Mr. Schlicher (second left), Mr. Fried (third left) and Chief of Mission (right)

New Faces

Chief Procurement Officer

Chantal Maille was appointed UNFICYP's Chief Procurement Officer on 16 June.

Chantal is a graduate from the University of Montpellier, France and the University of London, UK.

She started her UN career in 1988 at the International Maritime Organisation in London. She served at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Secretariat (OSCE) from 1999 to 2002 as Deputy Chief of Procurement. As part of the start up team, she participated in the OSCE start-up missions in Kosovo, Belgrade, Skopje and Baku. In 2002, she joined the United Nations Headquarters Procurement Division (UNHQ/ PD) in New York as team leader for long-term air charter in support of peacekeeping. From 2004 to 2006, Chantal served in the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) from start-up to closure. Back in UNHQ/PD in January 2007, Chantal was leader for the Darfur team responsible for the establishment of a multi-function logistics service contract in support of the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

Her passions are plenty and include movie-making, swimming, music and peacekeeping procurement.

Military Assistant to the Force Commander

Maj. Jamie Humphreys took up the post of Military Assistant to the Force Commander on 11 July.

He joined the British Army in 1996 and was commissioned into the 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment in December 1997.

His initial tour was as a rifle platoon commander with 1 R IRISH in Northern Ireland. On return to England, he deployed on operations to Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland and Iraq. Within the UK, he has served as an SO3 at the Joint Services Command and Staff College, completed a nine-month tour as a Rifle Company Commander with 1 R IRISH, and completed the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land).

Maj. Humphreys is accompanied by his wife, Leah Ann, and their newborn baby daughter Ellie.

A keen sports fan, Maj. Humphreys enjoys playing rugby, running and golf (badly). As a very keen Irish rugby fan, he is looking forward to celebrating Irish success in the six nations with the Garda Contingent of UNPOL.

Turkish Forces Liaison Officer

Lt. Col. Stanislav Hudek arrived in UNFICYP on 15 July, taking up the position of Turkish Forces Liaison Officer.

This is his first UN mission. Born in Zilina in north-western Slovakia in 1957, Lt. Col. Hudek graduated from the Secondary Military School in 1976, and joined the former Czechoslovak Air Forces in Prague as a Signals NCO.

In 1986, he graduated from Zilina University and since then has held several postings with the Air Force in the role of Signals Officer. In 1993, when the former Czechoslovak Armed Forces were divided, he joined the Slovak Army as Deputy of the Parachute Regiment. In 2002 he joined the General Staff J6 Division in Bratislava.

From 2004 to 2007, he took up an appointment with NCSA (NATO CIS Support Agency) SHAPE, Belgium. On his return to Slovakia, he was posted as a Division Chief in Signal Command in Trencin.

Lt. Col. Hudek is married to Marta and they have three sons, Stanislav (26), Jan (25), Jakub (14) and a daughter Andrea (13). He loves walking, particularly in the high mountains, and enjoys playing tennis and football.

Camp General Štefánik

On 21 July, Sector 4's Slovak Contingent celebrated the 128th anniversary of one of the most outstanding personalities in the modern history of the Slovak nation.

Milan Rastislav Štefánik was a politician, diplomat, general and astronomer. Born on 22 August 1880 in Košariská, Slovakia, he moved to France and took up French citizenship in 1911. When World War I broke out, he enlisted and trained as a fighter pilot. By 1918, he held the rank of General of the French army, at the same time holding the post of Czechoslovak Minister of War. During his varied career, he became one of the founders of Czechoslovakia.

During his return home from Paris on 4 May 1919, he was killed in an aircraft accident. His tomb lies on Bradlo Hill. The President of the Slovak Republic appointed Štefánik General in Memoriam on 7 May 2004.

In honour of this Slovak hero, the main UN camp in Famagusta, where HQ Sector 4 is located, has been named Camp General Štefánik.

Second UNFICYP Art Exhibition

Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNFICYP Chief of Mission Tayé-Brook Zerihoun opened the second UNFICYP bicommunal art exhibition on 16 July, featuring the work of local artists Ioanna Philippou and Oya Silbery.

Chief of Mission talks with Philippou (centre) and Silbery

In his opening remarks, Zerihoun pledged continued UNFICYP support for young Cypriot artists from across the island.

Paintings by Philippou and Silbery will be on display in the UNFICYP headquarters lobby until October of this year.

Archbishop visits CMP

The Anthropological Laboratory of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP) was visited on 4 July by His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus.

Following discussions with CMP representatives, the Archbishop was given a tour of the laboratory facilities and met with members of the bicommunal team of scientists working on exhuming and analyzing remains of missing individuals.

The Archbishop expressed his appreciation for the excellent work carried out at the laboratory and thanked the scientists and the CMP officials for their dedication to the task entrusted to them, which brings comfort and some relief to many Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot relatives of missing persons.

Right: The Archbishop on his tour of the laboratory

Visit of Conduct & Discipline Officer

Wayne Hayde, Chief Conduct and Discipline Unit (CCDU) for the Middle East Region, conducted a series of training sessions on prevention of sexual harassment in the work environment for all UNFICYP personnel between 14 and 17 July.

The interactive sessions highlighted the importance of maintaining a working environment where everyone is comfortable with respect to the diverse cultures of the people working for the United Nations.

Mr. Hayde explained the ST directives approved by the Secretary-General on the issue of sexual harassment and he also talked about sexual exploitation and abuse. He referred to the procedures in place for reporting and resolving such issues, both informally and through formal procedures.

UNFICYP has a conduct and discipline focal point, Maria Wilkins (Ext: 4441), to whom staff can report any cases or seek advice.

UNFICYP represented at Bastille Day parade

In recognition of 60 years of peacekeeping, soldiers from UNFICYP, UNIFIL and UNDOF were invited by French President Nicolas Sarkozy to take part in the annual Bastille Day Parade.

Although the French military and gendarmerie parade each year, individual French military units must await their turn, and most senior French soldiers will wistfully remember the two or three occasions they participated in their careers. Places for foreign troops are by invitation only, and usually honour services offered to the French state. Therefore, it was a particular honour for the United Nations Contingent to lead the parade.

An officer and five soldiers each from BRITCON and ARGCON were asked to join in the operation. A total of 10 days of training (three in Blue Beret Camp and seven in France) were conducted, enabling the troops to learn to work together and also get used to the French drill style.

Whilst training in France, the French state provided a rich programme of entertainment and cultural activities in which the peacekeepers gladly partook. Events laid on included a night out at the Lido, the famous French cabaret bar, a boat trip of the Seine river, and a tour of Versailles Palace.

On 14 July itself, therefore, the troops were ready to deliver a fine performance for the French public and international media. The importance of the event was not lost on the contingent as cheering crowds greeted their passage. They were further rewarded by being hosted by the Mayor of Paris and other Parisians.

UNFICYP Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez Debernardi was also invited to attend the Bastille Day parade as a guest of the French President, and both he and his Military Assistant were particularly well hosted throughout. He joined the Force Commanders of UNIFIL and UNDOF in a very impressive programme. As well as having the honour of watching the parade from the Presidential stand, the Force Commander was treated to receptions held by the French Defence Minister, the French Chief of Defence Staff and a very impressive post parade reception in the Palais de l'Élysée, hosted by the President and Madame Carla Sarkozy.

This unique opportunity highlighted the importance of peacekeeping missions, and it definitely succeeded in bringing the two UNFICYP contingents even closer together.

Capt. T. Hiroshi

Argentinian Independence Day in Sector 1

On 9 July, Sector 1 celebrated the 192nd anniversary of Argentina's Independence. Celebrations took place in San Martin Camp, Skouriotissa, presided over by the Special Representative of the General-Secretary Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, accompanied by Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sánchez Debernardi and Commanding Officer Sector 1 Lt. Col. Edgardo Calvi.

Guests included police, military and civilian members of UNFICYP, some of whom were accompanied by their families.

The celebration began with a military parade of personnel from Sector 1, the Mobile Force Reserve, UN Flight and the Force Military Police Unit. Commander ARGCON referred to the events of 1816 with special reference to General San Martín, Argentina's father figure.

The ceremony ended with a parade of troops who marched past and saluted the Special Representative of the General-Secretary and other senior staff.

From the left: CO Sector 1, the SRSG and the FC

From the parade square, peacekeepers and their guests walked to the reception area, which had been decorated in traditional Pampas style, where Argentinian delicacies and wine were served to the sounds of music.

Handle the sun *with care*

Outdoor activities can be challenging when the temperature soars. Peacekeepers, civilian, military and police, should always remember to drink enough fluids and wear proper clothing in this hot, Cyprus summer. You might not notice the temperature rising — but your body will. If you are outdoors in the heat, use caution and common sense to prevent heat-related illnesses.

How hot weather affects your body

Under normal conditions, your skin, blood vessels and perspiration level adjust to the heat. But these natural cooling systems may fail if you're exposed to high temperatures and humidity for too long. The result may be a heat-related illness, such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

How to avoid heat-related illnesses

To keep it cool, keep these basic precautions in mind:

- Take it slow. If you're used to exercising indoors or in cooler weather, take it easy at first. As your body adapts to the heat, gradually increase the length and intensity of your workouts. If you have a chronic medical condition or take medication, ask your doctor if you need to take additional precautions.
- Drink plenty of fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty. Your body's ability to sweat and cool down depends on adequate rehydration. If you're planning to exercise for longer than one hour, consider sports drinks instead. These drinks can replace the sodium, chloride and potassium you lose through sweating. Avoid drinks that contain caffeine or alcohol, which actually promote fluid loss.
- Dress appropriately. Lightweight, loose-fitting clothing promotes sweat evaporation and cooling. Avoid dark colours, which can absorb the heat. A light-coloured hat can limit your exposure to the sun.
- Avoid the midday sun.
- Always wear sunscreen. A sunburn decreases your body's ability to cool itself.

Heatstroke: First aid

Heatstroke is the most severe of the heat-related problems, often resulting from exercise or heavy work in hot environments combined with inadequate fluid intake.

Young children, older adults, people who are obese and people born with an impaired ability to sweat are at high risk of heatstroke. Other risk factors include dehydration, alcohol use, cardiovascular disease and certain medications.

What makes heatstroke severe and potentially life-threatening is that the body's normal mechanisms for dealing with heat stress, such as sweating and temperature control, are lost. The main sign of heatstroke is a markedly elevated body temperature — generally greater than 104°F (40°C) — with changes in mental status ranging from personality changes to confusion and coma. Skin may be hot and dry — although if heatstroke is caused by exertion, the skin may be moist.

Other signs and symptoms may include:

- Rapid heartbeat
- Rapid and shallow breathing
- Elevated or lowered blood pressure
- Cessation of sweating
- Irritability, confusion or unconsciousness
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Headache
- Nausea
- Fainting, which may be the first sign in older adults

If you suspect heatstroke:

- Move the person out of the sun.
- Dial 2261-4444 or call for emergency medical assistance.
- Cover the person with damp sheets or by spraying with cool water. Direct air onto the person with a fan or newspaper.
- Have the person drink cool water, if he or she is able.

In summertime, the living isn't always easy for our animal friends. Dogs and cats can suffer from the same problems that humans do, such as over-heating, dehydration and even sunburn. Keep in mind the following precautions:

- Never leave your pet alone in a vehicle, even with the windows open — hyperthermia can be fatal. Parking in the shade offers little protection.
- Always carry a gallon thermos filled with cold, fresh water when traveling with an animal.
- Provide fresh water and plenty of shade for animals kept outdoors; a properly constructed doghouse serves best. Bring your pet inside during the heat of the day to rest in the cool.
- Good grooming can stave off summer skin problems, especially for dogs with heavy coats. Shaving the hair to a one-inch length — never down to the skin, which robs them of protection from the sun — helps prevent overheating.
- Do not apply any sunscreen or insect repellent product to your pet that is not labelled specifically for use on animals.
- Stay alert for signs of overheating in pets, which include excessive panting, drooling and mild weakness, along with an elevated body temperature.