

The Blue Beret

November 2004



Buffer Zone
Demining



THE BLUE BERET

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Front and Back Covers: Buffer Zone Demining

(Cover photo: courtesy of Marcos Gittis)

Demining

So finally demining has started in the buffer zone (see pages 4 and 5). Thanks to a combination of UNFICYP peacekeeping, UN Mine Action expertise, EU funding and the commitment of Cyprus to the Ottawa Convention and UN Security Council resolutions, the historic demining project got underway on 18 November.

By happy coincidence, this month also marks the opening of the "Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World". Convened by the Secretary-General and running from 30 November to 3 December, the Summit is charged with reviewing progress made in implementing the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Antipersonnel Mines in the five years since this historic international legal instrument entered into force on 1 March 1999. Today, 143 States are parties to the treaty, including Cyprus.

The Ottawa Convention prohibits the use of anti-personnel mines, calls for the destruction of existing stockpiles, and obliges States to clear mined areas and assist victims.

The Nairobi Review Conference aims to:

- Help maintain and build momentum in the mine-ban movement to finish the job
- Generate public interest and pressure to resolve the problem
- Produce ambitious yet realistic goals for the next five years.

The United Nations will help countries develop national action plans for the next five years, and has developed a guide for countries to use in drawing up their plans. Although the treaty is about anti-personnel mines, the UN does not limit its work to these devices. It also addresses anti-vehicle mines, unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. The UN is actively promoting universal participation in the treaty.

Editorial

"AIDS Epidemic Update 2004"

Women were increasingly infected with HIV and now accounted for an estimated half of the 37.2 million people worldwide living with the deadly virus, Desmond Johns, Director of the New York Office of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), told a news conference at Headquarters in late November.

Launching "AIDS Epidemic Update 2004", the joint annual report of UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation (WHO), Mr. Johns said the trend toward feminization of the disease in the last two years was particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, where 75% and 50% of HIV carriers, respectively, were women ages 15 to 24.

In other regions, he continued, where the epidemic was spread largely by intravenous drug users and female prostitutes with male clients, women made up between 25% and 40% of reported cases. In North America, HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death among African-American women ages 35 to 44, apparently the result of undisclosed high-risk sexual behaviour of their male partners.

"This demonstrates eloquently the paradox that many women face, where they are at heightened vulnerability in the face of low risk," Mr. Johns said. "So very often – because of societal norms, gender imbalance and violence against women – women are placed at risk for who they are and not so much for what they do."

The AIDS epidemic among both sexes was growing fastest in Eastern Europe, driven by rapid growth in Russia and Ukraine, and in East Asia, fuelled by a high increase in China. Infection rates in those regions had increased 40% in the past year and nine-fold over the last decade, due largely to high intravenous drug use among young people. In North America, high-risk sexual behaviour among gay men and increasingly among heterosexuals had made HIV/AIDS the third leading cause of death among African-Americans.

However, the sustained drop in the number of new infections in East Africa, particularly among young people, was cause for optimism, Mr. Johns said. He

attributed the decrease to effective HIV/AIDS education and prevention among youth. In sub-Saharan Africa overall, the epidemic was stabilizing. In Asia, despite high growth rates in China and India, overall levels remained low. In Bangladesh, Timor-Leste, Pakistan and the Philippines, where prevalence rates were low even among high-risk groups, a sustained push toward HIV prevention and treatment would avert serious epidemics in the future.

Global spending to fight the killer disease had risen from \$2 billion in 2002 to \$6.1 billion in 2004. However, that figure must increase to \$10 billion by 2005 and \$20 billion by 2007 to respond to the epidemic by scale. Funds must be spent more effectively, he said, noting that UNAIDS was working with donors to increase efficiency and avoid overlap and duplication of efforts.

Responding to a correspondent's question regarding the causes of rising infection rates in the Middle East and North Africa, Mr. Johns said the region was the least affected in the world, with very low prevalence rates. The legal framework and social and cultural make-up of those societies were fairly intolerant to sex between men and intravenous drug use, driving the epidemic underground and resulting in a small rise in cases.

As to whether rates had increased because governments were more willing to report cases, he said that the vast majority of infected people were unaware of their status and their cases went unreported. Estimates of UNAIDS and country reports alone revealed increases in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Too many governments saw AIDS statistics as a barometer of national character, making it difficult to obtain accurate figures.

Greater leadership and commitment on the part of governments was needed to the problem more forthrightly and honestly. The greater attention of the Chinese and Indian Governments to their respective countries' epidemics was encouraging. In rural areas, UNAIDS had formed partnerships with large, omnipresent companies, such as Coca-Cola, and local religious leaders to educate people in remote areas about HIV prevention and treatment.

DPKO HIV/AIDS Policy Adviser

Roxanne Bazergan, HIV/AIDS Policy Adviser in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, told the UN News Service that she works with experts deployed in the field to reduce the risk of peacekeepers either contracting or spreading HIV. Awareness-raising activities, condom distribution and related medical services also benefit nearby communities, she said.

The Security Council first took up the issue of HIV/AIDS in January 2000, adopting a landmark resolution which forms the basis for her work, as does the mandate of the 2001 UN General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS, which identified peacekeepers as a high-risk group operating in a high-risk environment.

Security Council resolutions on peacekeeping operations now mention the importance of sensitizing peacekeepers about HIV. "It's seen as an increasingly central component because of the high risk," said Ms. Bazergan, a former research fellow with King's College in London who gained experience by studying how HIV affects militaries in Africa and Asia.

The UN has policy advisers in nine missions, with a tenth being established, while all others have a focal point co-ordinating HIV response activities.

To maximize the effectiveness of their efforts, the UN peacekeeping advisers work with their partners in other UN agencies, Ms. Bazergan said, citing cooperation with the UN Population Fund (<http://www.unfpa.org>), the UN Development Fund for Women (<http://www.unifem.org>) and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (<http://www.unaids.org>).

Soldiers, she pointed out, are, "far from home, young, mobile and of a sexually active age" – all factors which could lead to unprotected sex. Further adding to the risk, peacekeepers may have to deal with people who are injured and can become infected if they do not use protective gloves.

She noted that UN peacekeepers are deployed in numerous countries with high infection rates – notably those in sub-Saharan Africa as well as Haiti – but cautioned that no place is free of HIV. "You can't hide behind a low prevalence because you still can't tell [who is infected]."

Buffer Zone Demining

Demining of the buffer zone was launched officially on 18 November. At the opening ceremony, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zbigniew Włosowicz thanked the EU for its generous support of the UNDP/Partnership for the Future Mine Action Cell project responsible for mine clearance in the buffer zone and acknowledged the role of the Government of Cyprus and the National Guard in advancing the process.

It was, he said, a most welcome collaboration between UNFICYP peacekeeping, UN Mine Action expertise, EU funding and the vision and the commitment of Cyprus to the spirit of the Ottawa Convention Treaty and UN Security Council resolutions to remove the scourge of landmines from the buffer zone and the island once and for all.

The Chief of Mission noted that every mine removed "is one less obstacle to crossing points, every mine destroyed is a step forward on the road to normalcy." He hoped it would not be long before a similar launching ceremony took place in one of the TF minefields.

Head of EU Representation in Cyprus Adriaan van der Meer said he hoped the EU-funded two-year programme would improve safety and humanitarian conditions on the island.

After ceremonially cutting the minefield fence, UNFICYP Chief and EU head each fired a controlled detonation in the minefield to the professional delight of the assembled

media, which duly recorded the explosion from a safe vantage point specially prepared for the occasion. Media were also given a display of manual (human) mine detection as, additionally, dog handlers put their canine counterparts through their paces.

Project Manager Mick Raine said the demining team planned to tackle eight NG minefields of the buffer zone's 48 minefields. The UNFICYP Spokesperson let it be known that demining discussions with "our interlocutors in the north" were moving in the "right direction". Indeed, next day, Turkish Cypriot authorities in the north issued a statement indicating that they are favourably disposed towards the demining project. The Greek Cypriot side said a decision by the north to demine their minefields in the buffer zone would be "a positive development" and contribute "to the reduction of tension".

Two British contractors are implementing the 2.5 million euros project. ArmorGroup Services is responsible for mine clearance operations. The NGO Mines Advisory Group is charged with quality control oversight to ensure that the task is carried out to international demining standards. The multi-national Armor Group team includes specialists from Bosnia, Mozambique, the UK and Zimbabwe. The Mozambican and Zimbabwean elements are professional deminers. The Bosnian element includes two dog handlers responsible for four mine detection dogs.



Bonfire Extravaganza

Saturday 5 November was the date of the annual Bonfire Extravaganza which took place, as usual, on the UNPA. The event was organised by the UN Welfare Committee to celebrate the British Bonfire Night, which also included Halloween celebrations. All proceeds go to the UN Community Fund.



The bonfire was lit at 7.30 pm, followed shortly afterwards by a spectacular firework display. There were children's musical games, followed by disco music and more Gluwein, which went down a treat.

The committee would like to thank everyone who supported the event. More than 450 people passed through the gates. The committee would also like to give a very big thank you to everyone who assisted in the setting up and running of the event which made the evening such a success.

The evening began at 6.00 pm with the food and drink stalls and HIVE Tent open for all to enjoy. The HIVE entertained the children with "bobbing the apple", "Dunkin Doughnuts" and Pinyata. There was also a children's fancy dress competition, judged by Maj. Gen. and Mrs. Figoli, which was won by Poppy Mitchell (best dressed girl) and Robert Yrjanen (best dressed boy). The HIVE also ran a "tombola" draw as well as selling toffee apples, lumi-lights, sparklers and very welcoming cups of hot tea and coffee.

The Argentinians from UN Flight ran the BBQ, producing delicious burgers, hotdogs and excellent beef rolls. They were ably supported by the Hungarian Contingent which provided mouth-watering goulash. The British Contingent completed this particular menu with a drinks tent which included an outstanding Gluwein. Local stalls were hard at work popping hot popcorn, spinning candy floss and roasting hot corn on the cob.



UNCIVPOL Medal Parade

The combined UNCIVPOL Medal Presentation was held in the UN Flight hangar on Friday 12 November 2004. Thirty-three of the 45 Civpol in the mission received their UN medals – 19 Irish, 12 Australian, one Indian and one Dutch.

The ceremony coincided with the visit to UNFICYP of Mr. Hedi Annabi, the Chief of Operations and Deputy head of DPKO, New York. He attended the function with SRSG and Chief of Mission Zbigniew Włosowicz and other dignitaries, and graciously agreed to present some of the medals.

Once again, the Argentinian Task Force Band provided stirring renditions of the National Anthems and some very danceable music during the night. Sadly, we realized it would be the last time, as they will be returning to Argentina as part of the Force 860 reduction and will not be replaced. Our thanks go to them for that night's effort and also for many similar events in the past.

The Bi-communal Youth Orchestra, consisting of young people between 12 and 20 years of age, under the baton of "Maestro" Roland Mehlia, performed three pieces during the function, to much acclaim from the audience. Another special feature of the event was the



introductory video on UNCIVPOL and its contingents, put together by Insp. Satwinder Singh Lally.

The ceremony also signalled the end of mission for five members of the 79th Australian contingent who completed their six-month tour of duty the next day, and for the Indian and Dutch recipients who leave during the first week of December. An informal "mug-out" was held at the Civpol Club for the departing Australians.

Hungarian Delegation Visits UNFICYP

Will the Hungarian participation in MFO (Multi-national Forces and Observers) really end? When and how would the HDF Transport Battalion be withdrawn from Iraq? And would one third of the Hungarian soldiers serving with UNFICYP be transported home because of the UN's decision on reduction? Such questions have been raised recently in Hungary, giving rise to conjecture.

Dr. József Fehér, MoD Administrative State Secretary, and Lt. Gen. András Havril, Deputy Chief, MoD Hungarian Defence Staff, travelled to the region with a delegation in order to put an end to uncertainty, to co-ordinate tasks and logistics and last, but not least, to conduct the annual assessment and review of missions.

They spent 14-15 October with UNFICYP and were accompanied by leading journalists from Hungary. Needless to say, the focus of their visit here was the Force reduction. On the first day, Dr. Fehér and Lt. Gen. Havril made an office call on Force Commander Maj. Gen. Hebert Figoli, and received an overall briefing from Col. Ian Sinclair, including an update on UNFICYP's review. Afterwards, they met with the Hungarian soldiers serving at HQ and for informal discussions. That same afternoon, they continued their tour to Famagusta in HQ Sector 4, where Lt. Col. Csaba Csorba briefed them on the current situation and developments.

Next day, the visitors' programme was in the Hungarian Coy AOR, starting at Camp Szent István. Following the Coy Commander's presentation, they toured the camp's duty and accommodation facilities. At company assembly, every soldier tried to get as much



From the left: Lt. Col. Csaba Csorba, Hungarian Ambassador János Kisfalvi, Lt. Gen. András Havril, Maj. Gen. Hebert Figoli, Dr. József Fehér and Brig. Gen. László Tömböl

information as possible about the future. Yet again, the UNFICYP Force reduction was the main topic. How would it impact their future careers? When would the first rotation flight take place? How would the Hungarian Army manage the situation?

Lt. Gen. Havril gave careful answers. Those repatriated early would be considered for appointments in the following HUNCON, scheduled to arrive in March 2005.

After a traditional Hungarian lunch, the visitors were escorted to UN OP-101 and had the opportunity to see real life in the buffer zone. Later that afternoon, the delegation departed the island, fully briefed and ready for any future planning.



ASG Annabi's UNFICYP Visit

DPKO Deputy Head, ASG Hedi Annabi, visited UNFICYP this month, arriving late on the 11th and departing early on 16 November. In making his first visit to the mission, Mr. Annabi took advantage of one of his infrequent opportunities to be away from UN Headquarters.

SRSG and Chief of Mission Zbigniew Włosowicz hosted a number of events at his residence, enabling Mr. Annabi to meet with senior officials from both sides, including the Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, and the Cyprus Foreign Minister Mr. George Iacovou.

ASG Annabi addressed a town hall meeting at UNFICYP headquarters following the weekly Friday morning mission-wide briefing session. He took questions from the floor on some of the specifics of the Force Review, on UN peacekeeping in general and on post-Baghdad staff and peacekeeping security issues.

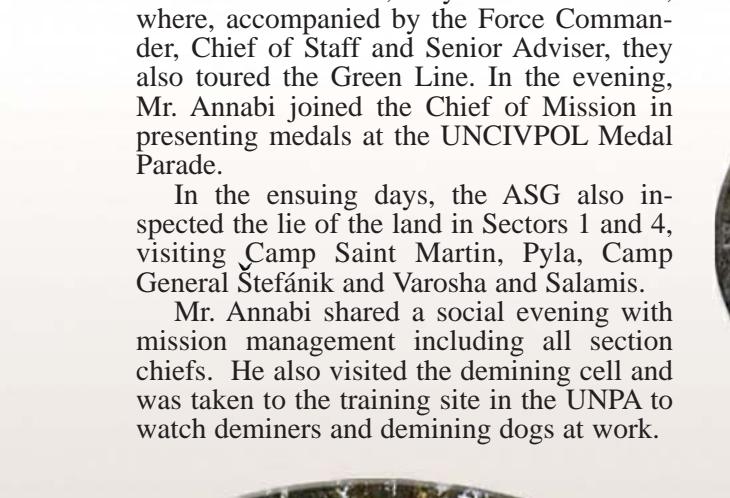
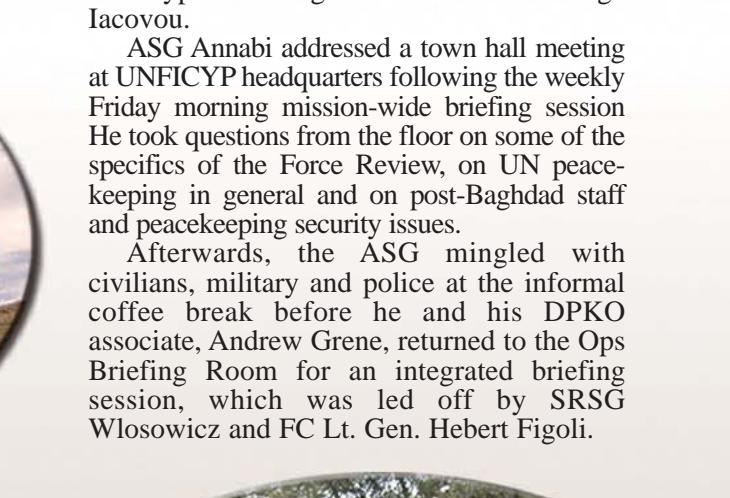
Afterwards, the ASG mingled with civilians, military and police at the informal coffee break before he and his DPKO associate, Andrew Grene, returned to the Ops Briefing Room for an integrated briefing session, which was led off by SRSG Włosowicz and FC Lt. Gen. Hebert Figoli.

Senior Staff Group members, including Senior Adviser Włodek Cibor, Chief of Staff Col. Ian Sinclair, Chief Administrative Officer Frank Clancy, UNCIVPOL Commander Carla van Maris, Spokesperson Brian Kelly, and Civil Affairs Chief Rajarathinam Kannan made brief presentations.

Escaping from the indoor world of charts and briefs, ASG Annabi and Mr. Grene began to explore the realities of the mission at ground level, starting out with an escorted tour of the UNPA by the Force Commander and the CAO. Later, they visited Sector 2, where, accompanied by the Force Commander, Chief of Staff and Senior Adviser, they also toured the Green Line. In the evening, Mr. Annabi joined the Chief of Mission in presenting medals at the UNCIVPOL Medal Parade.

In the ensuing days, the ASG also inspected the lie of the land in Sectors 1 and 4, visiting Camp Saint Martin, Pyla, Camp General Štefánik and Varosha and Salamis.

Mr. Annabi shared a social evening with mission management including all section chiefs. He also visited the demining cell and was taken to the training site in the UNPA to watch deminers and demining dogs at work.



Mobile Force Reserve Update

The MFR is the dedicated Force Commander's reserve, always ready to deploy throughout the UNFICYP Area of Operations (AO). A mechanised infantry company, equipped with Tactica Armoured Personnel Carriers, the MFR is divided into three infantry platoons and an APC platoon. The Company is fully multinational with soldiers from Argentina, Hungary, Slovakia and the UK. Maj. Nick Andrew, from UK, commands, with Capt. Martin Morelli from Argentina serving as 2IC.

As the reserve, the Company provides a crowd control and fire fighting capability. In addition, the MFR provide the security for UNPA, honour guards for UNFICYP HQ visiting VIPs and lifeguards for the UNPA pool.



Practising riot control



Maj. Nick Andrews (left) taking over as OC MFR

Because of its multinational make-up, training for the MFR is critical, especially given the recent cycle of rotations. Members of the MFR have to be familiar with their role, their new comrades and the areas they may have to operate in. Training in crowd control, fire training, navigation and shooting has been conducted in four different languages. Patrols have been conducted both by air and vehicle to familiarise commanders with the UNFICYP AO.

Fitness and sports also come into play in bonding the MFR into a cohesive unit. The MFR conducts an OC's "fun run" every Saturday morning to gauge how individual fitness is improving. A football match between Argentinians and British was won 3-1 by the Argentinian Contingent.

Sector 1's Female Support



Sgt. Florencia Santillan is a nurse in the Sector 1 Medical Centre



Cpl. Maria Oviedo is a radio operator in the Sector 1 JOC



2/Lt. Rosa Maria Molina is a nurse in the Sector 1 Medical Centre

Women have been serving in the Argentinian Armed Forces for over 40 years, but it has been during the last two decades that they were fully incorporated, when career plans for both women and men were standardized.

Today, women represent about 15% of total personnel. However, they share with the men every single task in the Army, Navy and Air Force Units throughout the country. Of course, they also serve overseas as members of Argentina's peacekeeping contingents.

At present, ten women serve the Argentinian Task Force, performing different activities such as communications, nursery, clerical work and logistics.

Operating a Communications Centre is not easy,

especially when that station serves as the liaison between the Sector and HQ UNFICYP, and more so when the link often has to be handled in a language other than one's mother tongue.

Health care may be an exhausting activity when you take into account that every Observation Post is visited periodically, and that medical assistance is a 24/7 requirement along the Sector's 81 km of Buffer Zone.

Logistics supply and clerical help are also complex tasks that require accuracy in documentation and precision in organising food delivery, transport, etc.

A professional and reliable Task Force that works for peacekeeping requires men and women who are highly motivated and dedicated to service, and eager to meet the challenges and risks that go with the job.

Sector 4 News

Medal Presentation



CO Sector 4, Lt. Col. Martin Bačko, presenting the Slovak Republic Defence Minister's peacekeeping service medal to soldiers who have served in Cyprus for six months and more. Numerals were presented to contingent members who have served more than 12 months on the island.



Sector 4's shooting skills were on display on 2 November with an exercise to determine the "best shot". Safety briefings were given prior to the exercise. Number One shot was Capt. Lubomír Gala who gained 68 points in eight shots.

Following the Swedish visit to Sector 4 on 1 September 2004, a second visit by 16 Swedish veterans took place on 3 November. The visitors were received at the main gate of Camp General Štefánik by Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Martin Bačko, who provided the group with basic information about living and working conditions of the soldiers currently serving along the buffer zone in the area once under the operational control of "SWEDCON".

The visitors were then given an operational brief by Maj. Ladislav Köblös, Senior Ops Officer, Sector 4. Following that, Maj. Iveta Kročanová took the group on a tour of the Camp. Small gifts were then presented to the visitors, who signed the Sector 4 visitors book before they departed, very happy with the tour of their old place of work.



MEDEVAC Exercise

Members of the Slovak-Hungarian-Croatian contingent recently participated in Helicrash and Medevac exercises. Led by Maj. Andras Rozsa, Sector 4 Ops Assistant, the exercises were conducted at Triglav OP-139. The main objectives were to review and validate the Aircraft Pre-Accident Plan (PAP), as well as to teach members of Sector 4 how to react in the event of an air crash.

An informative lecture by Medical Officer Capt. Ivana Lakotová was followed by Capt. Lubomír Gala's briefing on safety precautions on how to approach a helicopter. Under the skilled supervision of UN Flight, each member of a helicopter crew simulated different injuries. The participants had to approach the helicopter with stretchers so that the wounded crew could be transported by helicopter to a hospital.



Exercise scenario: a helicopter observing the BZ was forced to make an emergency landing. The nearest UN OP observed the situation and immediately informed the Sector HQ level. First on the scene to try to save the helicopter crew was the OP patrol team. The firefighters arrived within minutes and successfully extinguished the fire. The Patrol Commander assessed the situation and reported it to a higher command level. Next to arrive was the medical team. After consideration of the situation, the doctor ordered the Medevac. By the time the helicopter had arrived, the victims were ready to leave on the Medevac.



Exercise Unifying Challenge

By Maj. Chris Frazer and Ms. Deborah Unsworth

UNITED NATIONS forces pitted their skills against each other last week in a physically and mentally challenging Military Skills Competition in Nicosia.

Exercise Unifying Challenge included eight teams representing every contingent in UNFICYP and focused on the practical application of military skills used on a routine basis by all contingents deployed in Cyprus. [UNCIVPOL, hit by a virus, were non-starters.]

Hosted by Headquarters UNFICYP, the exercise contained eight elements, starting with a four-and-a-half mile march, during which the competitors carried 15.9 kg of kit and equipment.

For competitors and stand staff, this meant a dawn start with a briefing and the weighing of equipment that was to be carried throughout the day. Once the weigh-in was over, teams were led to the start of the march.

At 0630 hours, all teams set off on the circuit. Once completed, teams dispersed throughout the UNPA to complete the other events. These included a "Gun Run" where teams had to push an L200 along a 500-metre gut-wrenching course, enough to test the resolve of the hardest of competitors. The Slovakian Contingent won in a time of 5 minutes and 23 seconds.

The Patrolling, Observation, Equipment Recognition and Memory stand required teams to patrol along a given route, observing as they went. Half way along the route they were stopped and two of the team were led away and quizzed as to the items of equipment they had seen (or not seen, as the case may be).

Next up was the Navigation stand with individual team members asked to march on a bearing over a specified distance to a spot where they would find the next clue. This was then passed to the next member of the team. The overall score was determined by finding all the clues in the fastest time.

Individual and team shooting prowess were tested at the Marksmanship Stand.

The penultimate test was the Incident Reaction stand where teams were confronted with a hunting incident that had gone badly wrong. Teams had to deal with casualties resulting from the incident and effect an evacuation using either a helicopter or wheeled ambulance. They also had to show considerable situational awareness and understanding of their powers throughout the whole event.

Finally, teams assembled at EXCON for a safety brief before setting off on an Obstacle Course carrying four water jerry cans, each weighing 20 kg. MFR, despite having to contend with the worst of the weather, made up for time lost by not incurring

any penalty points to emerge victorious. MFR, considered by many as favourites, given their "home advantage", always looked strong. True to form, they had amassed an unbeatable lead of 14 points before embarking on the Obstacle Course. However, competition for second and third was tight with two teams equal second and two equal third, and everything to be determined based on how they fared over the Obstacle Course.

The outcome was: first, the Mobile Force Reserve, courageously led by Capt. "CJ" Young and inspired by Maj. Nick Andrew; second, Slovcon 1, steered by Maj. Lipka; third, HQ UNFICYP, piloted by Maj. Vavolgyi and Maj. Wright.

In the gathering twilight, the Chief Operations Officer gave a short congratulatory speech before presenting the prizes with the help of the Sector Commanders. The day finally ended with a party in the International Cafeteria, where an immaculately dressed, if slightly portly, "Neil Diamond" made an appearance during the karaoke.

Thanks to the hard work and application of teams and stand staff, the event was a complete success. The fact is that all teams produced impressive displays of courage and conviction. None gave up, battling hard to the very last and doing so with pride and a sense of humour. "The majority of the team members have never competed before and hopefully, as well as having fun, they developed group interactivity and cohesion. I'm sure they will all have learned something that they can take back to their units, and at the lowest level, it will have raised awareness between the contingents about the different forces operating here", said Maj. Frazer, the event organiser.

One competitor who certainly had her eyes opened was Sarah Staples, the only civilian team member in the competition. Part of the multi-national HQ UNFICYP team and the only female member, Sarah said she was coerced into joining by a family member before she truly understood the implications.

"A lot of people have said I'm very brave for taking part, but I am not – I was just very naïve when the plan was first suggested," she said. "Our preparations for the competition started a while ago and I was very nervous, but once we started for real, it has been such fun and I have surprised myself with some of my results."

The next Unifying Challenge is scheduled for early May 2005, soon after the troop rotation. The competition will be altered to reflect the changes that implementation of UNFICYP Force 860 Review has brought about. However, all can be assured it will continue to be as demanding.



Volleyball in the UNPA

Sector 2 emerged as UNFICYP 2004 indoor volleyball champions after an exciting five-set shoot-out with the Hungarians in the final.

Our thanks go to UN Flight for organising such a superb event. Also represented at the championship were teams from HQ UNFICYP, Sector 1, Sector 4, MFR (Teams 1 and 2), and UNCIVPOL.

The seeding supposedly favoured UN Flight, who have won the trophy many times. Sector 2 seemed to have no chance when drawn against the top seeds in the first round of the sudden death knockout format! However, despite having had just the one training session together, the team overcame early tournament jitters and big match nerves to win the first match 2-0. Gnr. "Tofi" Tovagone featured heavily in the win, as did Pte. Menya. This early triumph created an air of confidence which quickly spread throughout the team.

Enthusiastically captained by SSgt. Branley and coached by Pte. Menya under the guidance of Capt. O'Rourke, the team grew in confidence and saw off the challenge from the Slovaks in straight sets to advance to the finals against the Hungarians representing Sector 4. The team was starting to gel and there were superb displays from Gnr. "Tale" Talevinukuleka, Gnr. "Bill" Tagicakibau and even Lt. Stevens, who is more at home with a rugby ball.

The final was the most entertaining match of the championship. It had all the ingredients for a heated



encounter and it didn't disappoint, living up to hype worthy of a final. With competitive spirits running high, the desire of the players on both sides to win was there for all to see. The entire squad was involved, both on the court and off, with lots of free advice and coaching points from the sidelines (whether it was wanted or not!). It was not expected to go the full five sets, but the lads pushed it to the very end of the fifth set with great determination, before winning spectacularly 3-2.

Winner's trophy and certificate were presented to the team captain by UNFICYP Force Commander Maj. Gen. Hebert Figoli.

Charity Rowing Challenge



By kind permission of the Chief of Staff, Col. Ian Sinclair, I decided to undertake a 100 km rowing challenge. Anyone who has used the indoor rower can appreciate just how much of a challenge this was. Nevertheless, at 0700 hours on 19 November, I entered the Endorphin Club in the UNPA and, to the music of The Clash which spurred me on, I began my arduous task.

Throughout the day, taking 15-minute breaks at regular intervals, I rowed away, cheered on by a constant flow of visitors who popped in to give me moral support until 1750 hours when I finally completed the task.

I would like to thank the visitors who supported me and all colleagues who have so generously contributed to my effort. The charities receiving the money are the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, plus one local charity.

At the time of going to print, £200 has been raised.

Agros, a village in the Troodos mountain range, was the venue for the annual running competition, held on 24 October, United Nations Day! Organised by the local authorities and non-governmental institutions, the race covered a distance of 5,500 m.

This might be considered a relatively short run and therefore easy. However, because of the hilly terrain, it offered a great physical challenge, and it took a lot of effort for competitors to continue to the end.

Many runners from all over the island and UNFICYP took part. Although Sector 1 had only a small number of contenders, both men and women, many succeeded in finishing and there were several outstanding results, including two first places. Senior Master Sergeant Anibal Garro took first place in the 35-40 year category, and Senior Sergeant Oscar Sosa came first in the 30-34 year category.

UNFICYP in Agros 2004 Run

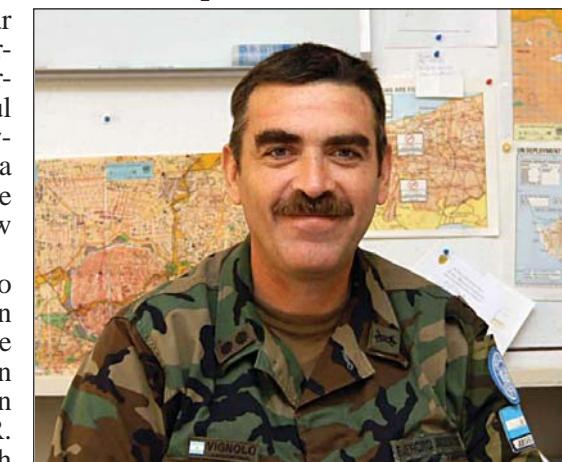


New Faces Chief Operations Officer

Lt. Col. Guillermo César Rubén Vignolo, Chief Operations Officer, was born in Corrientes, one of the most beautiful provinces of Argentina. However, he considers himself a proud citizen of Córdoba (the province where he actually grew up).

Previously, Lt. Col. Vignolo worked for the UN in 1993 on his first tour in Croatia, where he served as Adjutant and Liaison Officer of the 3rd Argentinian Army Battalion, UNPROFOR. In 1998 he deployed with UNFICYP as Operations Officer of the 11th Argentinian Task Force.

He has participated in several other international military exercises, courses and conferences, including the planning and organisation of the multinational PKO



Exercise "Cabañas 2001" developed in Argentina.

In 2003, he attended an ICTBP briefing programme run by the Land Warfare Centre, Warminster, UK. Before joining UNFICYP, he worked in the Army General Staff's Planning Department and took part in the "Argentinian Army 2025" project.

The Lt. Col. has been married to Claudia since 1985. They have four children: three boys, Paulo (17), Ayrton (15) and Ramiro (13), all are keen on playing rugby on the island (but not against the Fijians). Last, but by no means least, comes daughter Milagros (6), who runs the household!

The COO's interests include all sports (especially running), computers, travel, and horse riding. He is a qualified equestrian instructor.

Force Provost Marshal

Maj. John Watson, from Scotland, joined the Royal Military Police (RMP) in February 1975 and was commissioned as a Late Entry Officer in 1994. His international experience began during his time at RMP Close Protection Unit with the completion of a Short Term Training Team assignment in Ghana.

Thereafter, he served with 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines as the OC RMP Troop during which he received an acting com-

pany command of 160 Provost Coy RMP in Kosovo. In 2002 he assumed the appointments of OC Ops/Training Company.

Maj. Watson and his wife Jules are based in West Sussex, England. They have a daughter, Daisy (1). Maj. Watson's interests are outdoor pursuits, particularly high altitude mountain walking, canoeing and travel. However, much of his spare time lately has been taken up with renovating their houses in the south of England and south of France.



Staying Safe While Helping the Deminers

There are many obvious hazards associated with demining. Let this common sense check list be your safety guide.

1. Where demining is taking place, a safety zone will be placed around the area of operations during normal demining hours from 0700 to 1630 hours. This zone will be 100 metres around the minefield. This cordon serves to ensure not only your safety, but also the safety of the mine clearance teams. It also serves to stop interruptions to demining activities, which would otherwise prolong the work
2. During designated times of demolitions (usually 1430 to 1530 hours), the safety area will be extended to 500 m around the minefield. It is during this demolition window that people should be prepared for a number of loud explosions.
3. If requested by a member of UNFICYP to move, please heed this request as it is for your own safety.
4. Some road closures may be necessary during clearance operations so observing detour directions when requested will cut down delays, while ensuring a safer, faster clearance.
5. Demining offers a novel attraction to some people, especially teenagers and children. Your children should be told to stay away from demining operational areas for their own safety and for the safety of the deminers.
6. Wandering livestock in the area of operations are a danger to the deminers and cause delay in operations.



**Demining
is a
serious
business**