

The Blue Beret

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Safeguarding the
cultural heritage
of Cyprus



THE BLUE BERET

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Editorial

Just over one year ago, hopes for a solution in Cyprus got a tremendous boost when preparations began for a new round of peace talks between the leaders of the island's main communities. Spring 2008 brought renewal not only in nature, but also in a long-stagnant peace process. Spring 2009 sees tempered popular enthusiasm about the ongoing negotiations, but no less interest from Cypriots and an international community eager to see one of contemporary history's most intractable problems finally solved. As of this writing, Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat are moving from a discussion of questions related to how the European Union's laws and regulations would apply in a future united Cyprus, to matters connected to the economy post-settlement.

With almost all the attention focused on the negotiations, it is easy to forget that UNFICYP and the UN family continue to work to maintain peace on the island, bring Cypriots from across the divide together, help preserve Cyprus' cultural heritage and assist vulnerable people. In this issue of Blue Beret we have stories touching on all those aspects of the work of the UN family here, as well as some more personal notes on life in our particular "community". From facilitating the activities of the bi-communal committee working to preserve the island's many monuments and traditions to drawing attention to the plight of people fleeing their countries to leading by example in the area of environmental conservation, members of the UN team have been keeping quite busy in the past year.

In this issue we also have a story on the British Territorial Army unit that has just ended its duty with UNFICYP. We'd like to take this opportunity to bid goodbye to all the peacekeepers who "rotated" out of Cyprus in the last weeks of March and thank them for a job well done.

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Front Cover: Safeguarding the cultural heritage of Cyprus.

Back Cover: Pupils dance to Cypriot folk music at event on cultural heritage.



Preserving the Past to Build the Future

The Cyprus peace process has many facets, including joint efforts to preserve the island's historical legacy. The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage is one such initiative.

The Committee was set up last in April last year as part of measures to usher in peace talks. In its year of operation has been active in the protection and preservation of the island's heritage. The panel has also identified ways of fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and awareness of the rich cultural diversity of the island particularly among the younger generations of the two communities.

"We believe that respect for the preservation of cultural and religious sites is an integral part of the ongoing process of improving relations between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots," according to the group's mission statement.

"It is our firm belief that only when we look at diversity and equality of cultures as a source of strength and only when we embrace the view that individual cultures genuinely prosper and progress when they come into contact with other cultures then we can say that the tide in Cyprus has inexorably turned in favour of peace and reconciliation."

The Committee's decisions include the compilation of the entire list of immovable cultural heritage of Cyprus. An ad hoc working group was established and has already started its work to create a complete list of immovable cultural heritage on the island. The Committee has also decided to start two restoration pilot projects, namely the Arnavut Mosque and the Archangel Michael Church. A working group comprising Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot experts has been established to undertake the preliminary studies and prepare the budget estimation for that initiative. Within the framework of promoting intercultural edu-

cation as a means of fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and awareness of the rich cultural diversity of the island the committee has also decided to create an educational interactive programme that would give the opportunity to the younger generation of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots to learn about each other and the cultural heritage of the island (see following page).

The Committee has agreed to establish a mechanism, namely "The Advisory Board for Preservation, Physical Protection and Restoration of Immovable Cultural Heritage of Cyprus" for the protection of cultural heritage on both sides of the island. The Special Representative of Secretary-General and head of UNFICYP, Taya-Brook Zerihoun, announced, on behalf of the leaders of the two communities, the decision to set up the Board on 28 January 2009.

The Advisory Board will provide a mutually acceptable mechanism for the implementation of practical measures for the proper maintenance, preservation, physical protection and restoration of immovable cultural heritage of Cyprus. The mechanism would allow for the practical aspects of preservation to be considered in a non-political manner so that practical measures can be taken to improve the situation on the ground. Taking a hands-on approach, the Committee has undertaken a number of site visits to monuments of cultural importance on both sides of the island, identifying possible projects that the Advisory Board could take up. One such visit was to the old part of Famagusta, on 10 March, where Committee members inspected the historical monuments of the medieval and Ottoman periods.

By Netha Kreouzos



Members of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage on a visit to the walled city of Famagusta

Bridging the Divide with Culture

The work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage includes activities like its visit to Droschias High School in Larnaca on 18 March, part of the group's awareness programme involving schools in both communities.

At the event, titled "Culture, a Bridge for Reconciliation of Peoples," the Technical Committee's co-chairmen introduced students and teachers to their work, stressing the importance of Cyprus' cultural heritage not only for the island's future generations but for Europe and the world.

They were followed by a musical performance by Greek Cypriot composer and singer Adamos Katsantonis and Turkish Cypriot composer and singer Yiltan Tasçi. The two musicians, who have collaborated on several CD's with pro-peace songs as well as traditional Cypriot folk songs, performed in Greek and Turkish. The pupils enthusiastically received their songs for peace, but it was the traditional Cypriot folk songs that got the pupils on their feet and dancing together with the two singers.

Inspector for Secondary Education Panayiotis Mavros said the event promoted the target of the Education Ministry for the current school year, which is to create a culture of reconciliation and cooperation with Turkish Cypriots for the reunification of the island. He said, "Droschias High School and its teachers are the torch and road map for all those who hesitate in promoting this goal."

"In great struggles there are always a few that pioneer the way because it is not easy to see the light in the dark. Droschias Gymnasium certainly is a pioneer in this struggle for the good of all," Mavros said.

Greek Cypriot co-Chairman Takis Hadjidemetriou, said visiting the school is within the mandate of the committee and particularly the objective that refers to cultivating a climate of mutual respect for the cultural heritage of Cyprus by all its residents independent of race or religion.

"The issue of culture is an ethical and spiritual one and involves everybody. Even more so because we are accountable to future generations and humanity as a whole," he said

Hadjidemetriou said what we destroyed we must rebuild together in a spirit of mutual respect and common effort. "It is in this spirit that the technical committee operates. We have started certain projects to save cultural heritage and in the near future have a programme to restore Byzantine and Ottoman monuments that need immediate intervention," he said.

Addressing the students, Turkish Cypriot co-Chairman Fuat Azimli pointed out that the heritage that survives from the past is often unique and irreplaceable, which places responsibility of preservation on the current generation. "The cultural heritage of Cyprus emanates from diverse and rich cultures and civilizations which have populated the island throughout history and it is this common heritage of humanity regardless of origin which should be preserved and protected," he said. "As a Committee, we believe that respect for preservation of cultural and

religious sites is an integral part of the ongoing process of improving relations between the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots," he said. Azimli also outlined the key decisions taken by the committee to date which include the compilation of a complete list of the island's cultural heritage, two restoration pilot projects and the decision to establish an Advisory Board for the Preservation, Physical Protection and Restoration of Immovable Cultural Heritage.

The Technical Committee is also planning a visit in the near future to a Turkish Cypriot High School to present their work and promote greater awareness of the two communities' shared cultural heritage.

By Netha Kreouzos



Fuat Azimli



Takis Hadjidemetriou



Pupils at Droschias High School in Larnaca attend event on Cyprus' cultural heritage



Inspector Panayiotis Mavrou dances with pupils.



Musicians Yiltan Tasçi (left) and Adamos Katsantonis perform peace and traditional folk songs.



Photos by Christos Theodorides

1st Territorial Army Peacekeeping Deployment

For the first time since taking over responsibility of the buffer zone area of Nicosia in 1993, all of the British contingent's peacekeepers in Sector 2 have been drawn from the Territorial Army (TA). British TA soldiers are volunteers who undergo military training in their spare time either as part of a formed local unit or as specialists in a professional field. TA members have a minimum commitment to serve 27 training days per year, with specialists only required to serve 19 days. Members of the TA have a full-time job or career, which in some cases provides skills and expertise that are directly transferable to a specialist military role, such as National Health Service employees serving in TA Army Medical Services units.

However, this is the first time the TA has been deployed to a peacekeeping mission on its own rather than as an attachment to a regular unit. All TA personnel have their civilian jobs protected to a limited extent by law should they be compulsorily mobilised.

The UNFICYP tour is considered compulsory mobilisation. The idea of deploying part time or "weekend soldiers" to a peacekeeping mission sparked concerns that they would not have the required skills and experience to deal with potentially volatile situations that may arise while on peacekeeping duty. Even though Cyprus is considered a "peaceful mission", it nonetheless has a 180km buffer zone running across the island separating two opposing forces that needs to be patrolled. UNFICYP also supports the fullest possible resumption of normal civilian activity in the buffer zone and to this end, it facilitates the resumption of farming in the buffer zone where safe, and assists both communities on matters related to the supply of electricity

and water across the lines. Any incident that arises must be quickly and efficiently dealt with, without allowing tensions to escalate. Many TA peacekeepers argue that their civilian life experiences and better communication skills equip them to deal with civilian communities in a less antagonistic manner and thus swiftly defuse any tensions. LCPL Jules Smith, who has been in the TA for the last seven years, studied politics at University. In civilian life she works as a National Health Service clinic coordinator. This is seemingly far removed from life as a soldier and being a section commander of a troop that patrols a buffer zone between two opposing forces. Not according to Smith, however.

"The roles are not that dissimilar," she says. "As clinic coordinator I have to organize clinics and arrange schedules' ensuring everyone is where they are supposed to be when they are supposed to be. Here I am a section commander where I am looking after people, organising them, making sure they are where they are supposed to be when they are supposed to be there. Obviously, patrolling the buffer zone is very different, but I enjoy it because I am not stuck in an office all day."

Certain duties may seem monotonous at times, but it is important to look at the bigger picture, she says, giving the example of the tasks they are assigned during the meetings of the two Cypriot leaders in the United Nations Protected Area on an almost weekly basis. "It may appear the same each time, but when you think about what it is we are actually doing - securing the environment for peace talks to move forward - we are a small cog in a big wheel."

While her degree in politics was never much use in her civilian life, she says, here as a peacekeeper it has helped her understand the complexities of the Cyprus problem. Smith admits that regular soldiers may be more disciplined on the "soldiering" side. But, she adds, the advantages of the TA soldiers are that they have life experiences but also better communication skills particularly in dealing with the public.

There is also greater understanding of what it means to be a UN peacekeeper, she says. "We understand the negative impact of excessive force or an aggressive stance towards the civilian population -- for instance, going into full battle gear to face the civilian population when there is no real risk." Commenting on how the UN brings together to work for peace soldiers from different nations that may have in the past fought one another, like the British and the Argentineans, she says this has helped changed many of her own fellow soldiers views. "Many people had opinions before coming because of the history between the two nations with the Falklands, but



LCPL Jules Smith (left) CPL Neil Gribbin(right)



Lt Neil Bowdler and his bride Clare

when they were actually working with the Argentineans a lot of people's opinions changed as there hasn't been any animosity," she says. "I think people thought it will be them against us, but it hasn't been that at all, quite the opposite." Lt Neil Bowdler, 38 is a veteran of the TA having been a part of it for the last 21 years. His experience in Cyprus has been unique he says and has given him new skills that he can take back to his civilian job as an environmental project manager for a local authority - dealing with waste services including recycling.

Bowdler says his role as an officer in the TA goes hand in hand with his civilian job as a manager. "The one complements the other. A good officer can bring to his military responsibilities, his civilian skills," he said adding that this tour of duty has further enhanced his skills. Bowdler refers to an everyday example of customer complaints he deals with in his civilian job, noting that the way he defuses tensions or resolves issues can be brought into the military side of things when dealing with a potentially tense situation. His military experience here has also taught him something he will take back to his civilian job, which is to make certain you have the whole picture before taking any action. Stopping to think and getting all the facts first because any action will have a reaction or consequence to the mission as a whole.

Bowdler says it will be a memorable tour of duty not only because he served as a UN peacekeeper with the first TA contingent, but also because he took the opportunity to get married. His wife Clare flew to Cyprus while he was on recreational leave for a small wedding in Paphos. CPL Neil Gribbin works for computer giant DELL as a project manager. He says his employer was quite happy to release

him for TA duties. He says Cyprus is unlike previous tours of duty, during which, in many instances, he was in a direct conflict zone. Gribbin has served in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. He believes the edge the soldiers from the TA have over their regular army counterparts is their maturity and life experiences which enable them to have a broader outlook. Gribbin says he would consider returning if he was asked to and would definitely recommend it.

Signaller Stephani Morris, 21 has been in the TA for three years and says she initially joined because she was looking for new experiences and a challenge where she could test her limits. In civilian life she is a personal assistant for a mortgaging outsourcing company in Glasgow. Her employer was impressed that she was part of the TA she says and understood that the time-keeping, teamwork and other skills from her military life would enhance her efficiency and were a benefit to her civilian job. Morris says by being in the TA she has the best of both worlds. As a peacekeeper it has been a whole new experience for her where she has been patrolling the buffer zone on foot in the day and at night in a vehicle.

Kingsman Jason Lewicki is an insurance broker who with his over 10 years experience in the field was not easily parted with by his employers; however they were obliged to let him go as the TA deployment to Cyprus was a compulsory mobilisation. Also as his civilian pay is higher than what he would receive in the army, the Ministry of Defence matched his civilian salary so that he does not lose out. Lewicki says although being in the TA can be seen as a part-time soldier, he points out that it is no less serious than being in the regular army. The members of the TA's 32 Signal Regiment Group, which wrapped its six-month tour in Cyprus at the end of March, agree that their experience has demonstrated the value of a diversity of skills in peacekeeping duties.

By Netha Kreouzos



Signaller Stephani Morris (centre) flanked by her fellow TA Peacekeepers

Talat Visits CMP Laboratory



H.E. Mehmet Ali Talat (second right) with CMP members Elias Georgiades (far right), Gülden Plümer Küçük (second left) and Christophe Girod.

The problem of the missing is a humanitarian issue and not a political one to be exploited, Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat said after visiting the Anthropological Laboratory of the Committee on Missing Persons in the United Nations Protected Area of the old Nicosia International Airport on 23 February 2009.

Talat said that the missing persons issue has been in the spotlight for some time and that he is constantly trying to keep it separate from politics. "The Turkish Cypriot side is doing whatever it can to support this programme," said Talat. "And to prove it, we have

carried out this visit. As you know, this is a humanitarian issue and we will not exploit it politically. We have succeeded in this and through this success, the programme is doing well."

The Turkish Cypriot side, he added, supports efforts to find and identify the missing persons by contributing money and manpower, while a large part of the excavations have taken place in the north. "The Turkish Cypriot side will continue to support efforts to find out what happened to the missing persons, both materially and morally," said Talat. "I won't say that an end will be given to the pain of those who lost their relatives, but we feel that we must do what is necessary so these people can at least find peace and we will all work in this direction."

During his visit Talat donated \$50,000 towards the work of the CMP.

A statement issued by the CMP points out that this latest donation will contribute to the ongoing implementation of the CMP project on the Exhumation, Identification and Return of Remains of Missing Persons in Cyprus.

The CMP is striving to locate, exhume, identify and return the remains of as many individuals as possible in order to bring an end to the painful uncertainty which has affected so many families for so many years.

To date, the remains of over 486 missing persons have been exhumed, while 136 have been identified and returned to the families concerned.

Speedy Reaction Key to Safety

UNFICYP's Mobile Force Reserve is the missions "rapid response unit". Lt Merritt recounts an incident that demonstrates how the MFR help's keep the UN family safe.

"The Mobile Force Reserve was alerted on 15 January at 11.50 a.m. that a white vehicle had been spotted near the old Airport Road with the driver collapsed over the wheel of his vehicle .

"Immediately, the Joint Operations Centre(JOC)was informed and the MFR's Quick Reaction Force was dispatched to the scene, along with the UNFICYP medical team and ambulance. The JOC then alerted the Force Military Police Unit, which immediately detailed two police officers to cordon off the scene while the UN Senior Fire Officer was also dispatched to the scene in line with Road Traffic Accident guidelines.

"The medical team gave the driver emergency treatment before transferring him by UN Ambulance to the local hospital. It was subsequently learnt that the driver, had suffered a heart attack and required a week-long stay in hospital.

"The MFR QRF, UN Ambulance and the MFR Duty Officer's reactions to the incident followed agreed procedures for such situations. The QRF split into two teams, cordoning off the area and diverting traffic whilst looking for any suspicious causes to the accident. "The Duty Officer assisted the duty medic in establishing the cause of the injured casualty's problem and provided immediate first aid. Situation Reports of the nature of the incident and the exact map grid location were provided by the Duty Officer to the guardroom and JOC.

"The JOC Duty Officer was therefore able to find the

incident scene and take photographs of what had happened in case of further investigations.

"On arrival of the FMPU, details of the incident and the patient's condition were passed to the Military Police Officers, who then took charge of the situation.

"The patient's car was secured by Force Military Police Unit and the key held at the Military Police Station until he was well enough to recover the vehicle.

"The incident is an excellent example of how the various departments and teams within UNPA all work together to deal with incidents and ensure the safe and secure running of the camp and wider UN community."



The Humanitarian Dimension of Migration and Asylum

The situation of migrants and asylum seekers is becoming increasingly topical in Cyprus.

Leaving your country by force is undoubtedly a severely traumatizing experience, especially when the loss of close family members or friends is involved. Added to this are the anxieties of facing the unknown, especially when you have to flee without documents, entrusting your hopes for the future to someone you don't know -- often a smuggler -- and taking the risk of being injured or even killed. The testimonies of people on the move, including refugees, who have survived against great odds show that this traumatic experience can leave indelible marks.

Organizations like the Council of Europe and UNHCR have consistently pointed to the need to address through a constructive dialogue with all parties involved -- including government officials and the police -- the humanitarian dimension of this phenomenon. The humanitarian dimension, which is often obscured by the debate over "illegal migration", is illustrated by the case of two Iraqi families that made the news in Cyprus last December.

Fleeing persecution and insecurity in Iraq, they came to Cyprus to seek a safe life. While crossing the UN-controlled buffer zone, they were injured by landmines. The first accident at the beginning of December involved a family of five. The father stepped on a landmine that blew off part of his right foot; fragments from the explosion injured his four-year-old son, his wife and one other child. Two weeks later another accident, again involving an Iraqi family, cost a man his right foot. As is always the case, behind the headlines and dry facts about people crossing irregularly from the north to the south, there are personal stories of tragedy, courage, and compassion. "When the mine went off, at first I realized nothing", said Ali, 35 years old. "I thought that it was the police firing at us in order to arrest us; it was only after a while that I started feeling the pain and seeing the endless blood pouring from my foot which opened up completely". Ali, a Palestinian from Iraq, recounted his own horror as if he was describing a film. Ali was dumped by a smuggler somewhere in the buffer zone,

only to be collected later on by the police, which transferred him to hospital in Larnaca. There the doctors had to amputate his leg. "It could have been worse... I could be dead now," he whispers, and hugs his three year old boy who plays with his red car, his only toy. Similarly, Mr. Said*, 52 from Iraq, had the courage to put a plastic bag around his injured leg until the time the smuggler transferred him and the family to the hospital (and then disappeared). Mr. Said's right foot has been saved. Ali is already undergoing physiotherapy and he will soon be getting an artificial leg. Said is still undergoing medical treatment for his injured heel. He has to keep his leg raised all day and night until he is able to walk again. "The doctors told me it will take one year," he said. Both families are thankful to the Government. The Ministry of Health, abiding by its legal obligations towards refugees, covered the expenses for special treatment at the private hospital in order to save Said's leg. A Cypriot parliamentarian has visited Said and his family.

When doctors decided to amputate his leg because the particular treatment needed to save his leg was not available at the hospital, the lawmaker intervened with the Government in order to transfer Said to a private hospital. Said and his family are also receiving invaluable help from two Cypriots: a priest in Larnaca and a 65-year-old man in Limassol who prefers to remain anonymous. Father P, a Christian Orthodox priest brought up in Jerusalem, recalls that when he first met him at the hospital, Said was very weak and suffering from low morale. "Now, after the operation, he has regained his self-confidence and he hopes again," said Father P, who speaks Arabic and who continues to visit the family. "What they need from us is to show them love", said Father P. "They need to feel that they are welcomed that they have someone to share their fears, to feel they are not alone".

Father P assists many other Arabic speakers as well; he translates for patients at the hospital, he escorts parents at Greek-speaking schools who wish to find more about their children's progress and he is ready to assist in any other way. For Father P, helping people in need regardless of their religion should come

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The Humanitarian Dimension of Migration and Asylum (continued)



naturally. He sees it as obligation towards his fellow human beings. "In the same way I, a Christian, was welcomed and well treated by Muslim people in Jerusalem, it's now my turn, as a good Christian and a human being, to reciprocate." Mr George, a pensioner, said he had heard about Ali's case the day his mother – a refugee from Asia Minor – died. "I felt like caring for a person in need, which I thought of as a gift for the soul of my mother," he said. The old man now often travels over from Limassol to visit his new Palestinian friends in Larnaca. He wants to help and has opened a bank account for the family, depositing money each month to help them get by. And he thinks to the future, examining the possibility of vocational training for Ali, which would allow him to once more become a breadwinner. "We had a very good life once in Iraq: job, house, car, friends, but we had to leave everything behind and go," says Said who decided to leave only when a car bomb he believed was targeting him killed his 16-year-old daughter instead. "From that moment on, I realized that Iraq is over for me and the rest of my family," he says, before bursting into tears. Similarly Ali recalls the good times back in Iraq, but discrimination and constant threats and killings of Palestinians by insurgent groups left him without any other option than to flee. Paying the smuggler \$20,000 was the only way out, the two families felt. Indeed, this is the reality for many asylum seekers, who in the absence of any legal means to seek refuge in another country resort to unscrupulous smugglers. Both Ali and Said express the same wish for their families: a good education for their children, health and a life of peace. They say the solidarity they have experienced so far in Cyprus gives the reason to hope for a dignified life. Practical support from society is welcomed and encouraged, of course, but it can only complement – not replace – governmental obligations, including help in rehabilitation and reintegration.

**changed for protection reasons*

UNHCR Representation in Cyprus, February 2009

Pointing the Way to a Greener Future

Parked outside UNHCR's office in UNFICYP's Blue Beret Camp is a brand new black Toyota Prius – the first hybrid vehicle in a UNHCR fleet numbering several thousand vehicles around the world. The acquisition of the fuel-efficient vehicle underlines the office's desire to take an active role in raising awareness on environmental issues – cutting harmful pollution while saving on fuel bills, according to the refugee agency's representative in Cyprus.

"Choosing a hybrid car for its transportation needs, the Cyprus Representation aims not only at reducing its environmental footprint but also serve as an example for public and private vehicle procurement," – said Cristina Planas.

"Although the current generation of hybrid vehicles cannot be used in all locations where UNHCR operates, they are a real alternative for our offices in urban locations," said Goran Stojanovski, a supply officer in UNHCR's Supply Management Service in Budapest. And the choice of hybrid models available is expanding rapidly.

Hybrid cars use both a traditional petrol-powered engine and an electric motor powered by a battery. Since the battery is continuously recharged by the petrol engine, a hybrid car does not need to be plugged into a power source like an all-electric vehicle.

Typically a hybrid car will use the electric motor around town and at low speeds – or to give additional power for acceleration and climbing a hill – while the petrol motor is used for longer, faster journeys. When

braking or coasting to a stop, the hybrid's electric motor produces electricity that is stored in its battery.

Since hybrid cars are at the forefront of technology, incorporating the latest developments, they incorporate the latest safety and comforts as well as producing fewer emissions and slashing fuel bills.

The carbon-dioxide emissions by the model bought by the Cyprus office are about 55 percent less than other cars of the same class equipped with emissions-control devices. Reducing the production of carbon dioxide is essential to slowing climate change.

The Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which groups the heads of all the UN agencies, has committed to making the United Nations climate neutral, first by reducing emissions and then through carbon off-set mechanisms.



Mr Kypros Kyprianou, UNHCR driver



Bicommunal Art Exhibition

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, opened the third UNFICYP bi-communal art exhibition on 4 February, lauding the work of Cypriot photographers Voula Tsangarides and Veli Kaymaklılı.

Mr. Zerihoun called the photographs on display in UNFICYP's headquarters "inspiring", and he reiterated the mission's commitment to promote the works of up and coming artists from the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. He added that the photographs should be appreciated on their own obvious merit, and not merely as political symbols.

Veli Kaymaklılı was first introduced to the magic of the camera at the tender age of fourteen by his elder brother who worked as a photo-journalist. He has since developed his own style and preferred themes which include people, nature and capturing through his lens the villages of Cyprus which he says "are part of what makes him who he is". He says that his choice of subject matter is influenced by the story they can tell. For him a face or a scene in nature must have character which is portrayed in his photographs. A firm believer in lifelong learning Veli continues to study philosophy and photographic art. He also says he learns through the work of his fellow artists.

Voula Tsangarides' background is in marketing communications and public relations, internationally and in Cyprus. Photographic art is her passion and her work is inspired by her travels abroad and across the island. Her philosophy is "All people are gifted; it's just a matter of believing and then accepting". "There really are no limits to one's own potential", she says. "I take photographs on my travels so that I can share with others the diversity and astonishing beauty that our world is made up of".



SRSG Zerihoun with artists Voula Tsangarides (right) and Veli Kaymaklılı (left).

The exhibition will be on display in the UNFICYP headquarters lobby until May 2009.

To visit, please contact :unficyppublic-information-office@un.org.

By Netha Kreouzos

Australian Bushfires

The mission's new UN Police officers turned their traditional "Mug In", or informal induction, on 13 March into an occasion to collect funds for victims of the recent bushfires in Australia, raising Members of the Australian UN Police Contingent scrambled just a few days before the "Mug In", selling tickets and hunting for objects that could be raffled or auctioned to raise money. They got a good response from all UN police, as well as the military and civilian staff of UNFICYP. In addition, the general community donated both funds and gifts generously.

The Australian High Commission in Cyprus was also actively involved with donations of some of the gifts. High Commissioner Evan Williams was present on the

night to personally draw the tickets and present some of the prizes to the winners.

Before the raffle, Deputy Commander of UN Police Phil Spence spoke about the fires and their impact on the people of the areas affected.

Among the items auctioned off, the Australian Police version of the "Slouch Hat" was much sought after by international colleagues. Also, on the night, and after giving individually, the Irish and Dutch Police Contingents donated a large amount of money and additional gifts.

The proceeds of the night were donated to the Red Cross in aid of the bushfire victims.



UNFICYP Medal Parades

February and March saw the holding of three medal parades to acknowledge the contribution of UNFICYP peacekeepers over the past six months. The 2009 UNFICYP Winter Medal Parade, the largest of the three, was held on 13 February in the area of the old Nicosia Airport. The Mobile Force Reserve (MFR) peacekeepers responsible for the organisation of that event were decorated at a second parade, held on 13 March. Meanwhile, Sector 1 (west of Nicosia) held its medal parade on 5 March in San Martin camp. On that occasion, 104 soldiers from the Argentinean contingent – and associated peacekeepers from Brazil, Chile and Paraguay, as well as members of UNFLIGHT -- received their medals. The Winter Medal Parade involved a week of preparations, involving support operations and infrastructure. Special Representative Taye-Brook Zerihoun and Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez Debernardi addressed the parade, which saw the attendance of many senior diplomats, including representatives of the troop contributing countries.

The highlight for many of the medal recipients were the post-medal day celebrations during which the three sectors put on traditional food and drinks from their home countries. This was a unique opportunity for all ranks across the mission to come together and share experiences from the previous six months.



The Force Commander attended and inspected the MFR Medal Parade and delivered a much welcomed "thank you" in appreciation of the efforts of the unit. Medals were presented to the multi-national contingent troops by the Force Commander, assisted by CO Sector 2 Lt. Col. Jenkins and the Chief Operations Officer, Lt. Col. Beldi.

The Sector 1 Medal Parade was presided over by the Force Commander and attended by members of the diplomatic community, military attaches and other special guests. This was followed by a reception where traditional dishes were offered to the sounds of South American music.



The MFR led by the Commanding Officer Maj. Simon Smith, marched past and saluted the Force Commander to symbolise the end of a successful tour. After the parade, the MFR held a tour party in the International Bar which was attended by the Force Commander and senior UN officers, providing an opportunity for the junior ranks to share their tour experiences and memorable moments.

Talks Gather Momentum



Special Representative of the Secretary-General Taye-Brook Zerihoun (right), Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez Debernardi, followed by Assistant to the Force Commander Jamie Humphreys inspect the parade.

The 2009 UNFICYP Winter Medal Parade on 13 February in the area of old Nicosia Airport paid tribute to the peacekeepers from all sectors

and contingents who had served in Cyprus over the previous six months. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Taye-Brook Zerihoun addressed the parade, pointing out that the blue berets being honoured had served in Cyprus at a particularly auspicious time, namely the launch of a renewed effort last year to reach a comprehensive settlement on the island. Zerihoun provided an overview of the peace process, recalling that Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat initiated last September formal negotiations towards a comprehensive agreement on the basis of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality. "It took vision, political courage and commitment on the part of the two leaders to finally sit down and start charting a path leading to a future reunited and peaceful Cyprus," he said.

Since then, the talks have gathered momentum and made good progress, Zerihoun said, pointing out that earlier that day another round of negotiations had taken place not far from where the medal parade was being held. "To be sure, the road ahead is fraught with uncertainty and hard choices. But the determination and good will of the two leaders and

their supporters have made the prospects of success for this reinvigorated peace process as good as ever," he said. As much progress as there has been, much more remains to be done. In fact, the most contentious and emotive issues are yet to be agreed on. It is perhaps on those issues the two sides will be faced with the inevitable trade-offs and historic compromises they will need to make in order to reach a settlement. Tough as these choices and decisions will be, it is essential to keep in mind that the peace process is not a zero-sum game; one side's gain is not necessarily the other side's loss. A just settlement will help unshackle the tremendous potential and capacity of this beautiful island and make it a stronger and more prosperous home for all its citizens. There is indeed good reason to strive for the larger good, to look beyond the past, to the common and promising future that awaits all Cypriots, Greek and Turkish

Cypriots alike," Zerihoun said.

The Special Representative stressed that as the parties pursue the peace process, they can count

on the continued support and assistance of the United Nations.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has consistently underscored that the role of the United Nations is to assist and facilitate this Cypriot-owned process, expressing the conviction that successful peace agreements are those that are

negotiated and agreed to by the concerned parties themselves. The Special Representative recalled that

in his last report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General stressed that UNFICYP continues to play a vital role on the island, both as a stabilizing factor on the ground and as a source of critical support for his good offices mission.

"That, in the first instance, is a tribute to our peacekeepers and to all the men and women of UNFICYP who continue to show admirable dedication and vigilance in effectively implementing the UN mandate in Cyprus - the peacekeeping as well as the good offices," Zerihoun said. "I feel privileged to have this opportunity to award you this evening the United Nations Peacekeeping Medal on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations," he said.

"It took vision, political courage and commitment on the part of the two leaders to finally sit down and start charting a path leading to a future reunited and peaceful Cyprus"

"...prospects of success for this reinvigorated peace process as good as ever..."

HQ Engineer Platoon on track

UNFICYP's Engineers: Doing the Heavy Lifting there's a lot more than meets the eye in running a camp like Blue Beret, where UNFICYP's headquarters are housed. Sergeant Vladimir Baran describes how the Slovak Engineering Platoon helps keep things moving.

"Apart from the oversize trucks, trailers and loaders we drive or walk past at HQ, not many notice the daily work of the Force Engineers in the buffer zone. Maintaining the 520 km patrol track that runs through the buffer zone is the main task of the engineers in support of the UN mandate. But the work also includes

things like repairing bridges and upgrading helipads.

"The repair of Mendieta bridge, the regular cleaning of culverts after heavy rains and the work to make possible the milestone reopening of Ledra



Street last year reminds us of the contribution these soldiers make to everyone's life on the island and redefines and broadens the engineers' slogan, 'For the soldiers'.

"Most of the time the men do not experience the comforts of an office, working outdoors exposed to the sun and the elements, pouring concrete, building car shelters and carrying out emergency excavations during frequent water and electrical breakdowns.

"Engineering, a very specific occupation, requires professionals, who acquire their skills during years of practicing a particular job. Most of the heavy equipment operators had worked before in construction companies and have years of experience with a variety of equipment, enabling them in most cases to operate more than one specific piece of machinery. "In May, Sector 4, in which the leading nation is the Slovak contingent, will undertake a rotation to bring in new troops who will work, we hope, no less satisfactorily than the outgoing men and women engineers. As Chief of Staff Col. Gerard Hughes has said: 'Although Cyprus is a holiday destination, the soldiers here are definitely not on holiday'".

SSgt. Vladimir Baran



Force Commander's Commendation

A short parade ceremony was held on 20 March to mark the presentation of the Force Commander's Commendations to 29 members of the military force. The ceremony was held in the presence of the Chief of Mission, in the courtyard at the rear of the UNFICYP HQ in front of a combined audience of Military, UNPOL and civilian staff.

The Force Commander delivered a short speech of congratulations in recognition of their significant achievement and then each of the recipients was presented personally with their commendation. All those who had received commendations were then invited to join the UNFICYP senior staff for their weekly complimentary breakfast, and had the chance to share their experiences of working in the buffer zone.

The FC Commendations are awarded as a means of recognition of valuable, distinguished or courageous service, above and beyond their normal duties, to the Force by UNFICYP personnel.



New Vehicles Join UNFICYP Fleet

With the closing of the UN mission in Nepal in October 2008, UNFICYP inherited 31 nearly new vehicles. The lot included 4x4s, 16-seater minibuses and a left-hand drive fork-lift. The vehicles left Nepal in late December 2008 and arrived at Limassol Port and were offloaded on 6 February 2009. A group of volunteers from ISS/Transport Unit, Sector 2 and MFR drove the vehicles from Limassol to Nicosia in two long convoys over a two-day period.



Convoy from Limassol to Nicosia



Volunteer drivers

Lucky, the MFR mascot

Lucky is the MFR dog, who has been looked after for about 10 years by each unit that arrives at the mission.

Responsibility for looking after Lucky lies with 3 Platoon. These include feeding and looking after her general wellbeing. On a daily basis, she runs with the troops during their PT sessions, and likes to go on patrols, keeping a beady eye out for any changes. In her down time, Lucky loves nothing better than sunbathing. Location is no obstacle for Lucky as her favourite place is the road outside the MFR guard room, which helps with traffic calming measures. Lucky has helped keep vermin down with her own method of extermination - I'll let your imagination guess what she does.

For sure, the stories that Lucky could tell after 10 years would be wide-ranging and wonderful, and no doubt the stuff of Roald Dahl, if only she could talk...

From the MFR unit Oct 08 - Apr 09 we wish her well with the incoming MFR unit Apr 09 - Oct 09, and may she continue to bring happiness to them as well.

By Sgt. J. Millington



Sport

General San Martín Cross-Country Run



UNPOL. Female presence was mandatory with at least one woman in the four-member teams. In addition all "free-lance" runners were welcome for individual classification.

The cross-country race was an 8 km run from the Lefka Cross (next to OP 18) to San Martín Camp over very difficult terrain. On the day, conditions turned out to be very good. Rain had been forecast, however competitors found themselves running across the hilly buffer zone in bright sunshine.

On arrival at the finish line, competitors were welcomed by Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez, Chief of Staff Col. Gerard Hughes and CO Sector 1 Lt. Col. Raul Fajoo.

The General San Martín cross-country run took place this year on 25 February. The competition was attended by teams from all Sectors, the MFR and

Following the prize presentation, guests and participants shared a relaxing lunch at the Sector 1 Officers' Mess.

Strongman Competition

On 17 February, the strongest UNFICYP soldiers met in Camp General Stefanik in Famagusta for the annual "Strongman Competition".

The event consisted of three disciplines – the benchpress with weights equal to the contestant's body-weight; the benchpress with the maximum weight (both of which took place in the gym); and last the tyre turnovers, which took place outside the gym.

Five teams took part, Sector 1; Sector 2; Sector 4; the MFR team; and the HQ-MFR team. After a tough competition, HQ-MFR team came out on top.

Force Commander Rear Admiral Mario Debernardi came to support all participants, together with CO Sector 4 Lt. Col. Jaroslav Schonvicky. Prizes were presented by Sector 4's DCO Lt. Col. Bela Berena.

Following the contest, participants were invited to a sumptuous lunch provided by Sector 4's master chefs which was enjoyed very much by all.



HQ-MFR, the winning team: From the left: Lt. Laszlo Kovacs, Sgt. Ludovit Kantor, SSgt. Andrej Milovcik and MCpl. Gyula Zabó.

Police Commissioners meet in New York

The fourth annual Police Commissioners' Conference, which took place at UN HQ New York between 11 and 13 February 2009 saw the participation of police Commissioners from all 18 peacekeeping missions including UNFICYP.

The conference was organised under the auspices of the Police Division, Department of Peacekeeping Operations. While in New York, the participants met with Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon (see right) and discussed their respective mission experiences.



Xenios Scores a Bullseye

When Xenios was a little boy, there was no Internet or video games. Children created their own imaginary worlds.

In Xenios' neighbourhood he and his friends played Roman Centurions, with swords, spears and bows and arrows. Xenios was chief bow and arrow maker, using the branches from date palms (he had noticed their flexibility when weighed down by heavy bunches of dates).

Indeed, it was while playing Roman soldier in the streets of Nicosia's Kaimakli area that Xenios Xenophontos, a driver in UNFICYP's Transport Unit, discovered his fascination and later passion for archery.

As a father, Xenios would tell his young son, Sotiris, the stories of his childhood, showing him how to make bows and arrows. Sotiris wanted to learn the real thing. Xenios took his son to an archery club, which he also joined. They both could now indulge their natural talent and love for the sport. In those days, Cyprus held its own national competitions and Sotiris won the under-16's title two years running. Xenios himself has competed successfully in national and international tournaments.

He has participated in International games in Cyprus, Slovakia, Greece, San Marino and the Czech Republic and he won the bronze medal in the 2001 Aphrodite Cup held in Cyprus and bronze again in the 2004 Small States of Europe in which seven countries participated and is justly very proud of his achievements. Xenios is now a coach, and considered a very good one – he can train students up to national level and to compete in the Olympics. He can He aims to become a professional coach, and has already played a large part in training the Cyprus No 1, Mimi El Helali, in the "Recurve" class. Mimi is a silver medallist in an international competition and Xenios feels sure she is destined to represent Cyprus in the Olympic Games.

Although Xenios has recently neglected his own training in favour of coaching, his new bow had arrived in time to enter a two day competition held at the Nicosia club at the end of March. I went along to watch him and Mimi in action and was immediately struck by the range of competitors, from beginners to experienced archers; children and adults; male and female all focused in a highly disciplined sport where posture, strength, a cool temperament and a very steady hand are the name of the game.

At the close of competition, Mimi comfortably retains first position and Xenios third in the Cyprus league tables; two names to look out for in a future Olympics.

By Christine Iacovou



Xenios poses with his new Compound Bow



Xenios stops for a snack after winning Bronze in 2004

Two Rear Admirals in the Service of Peace

Over the weekend of 20-21 February, the French Naval Ship (FNS) De Grasse was docked in Limassol Port. The French ship serves as the Maritime Headquarters of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force Commander, Rear Admiral Jean Louis Kerignard, deployed in support of peacekeeping operations in Lebanon. Rear Admiral Mario Sanchez Debernardi, was invited on board on 20 February to attend a reception hosted by the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force Commander. During this reception our own Force Commander (FC) was able to present the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force Commander with a framed picture to commemorate the extremely rare occasion of two UN Rear Admirals deployed together in Cyprus. The following day the FC was able to reacquaint himself with life at sea as he joined the UNIFIL crew as they set sail from Limassol for a short sea voyage out into the Mediterranean. During the short voyage the FC was able to experience first hand the conditions faced by the UNIFIL floating peacekeepers as he was given a comprehensive guided tour of the French Frigate by the ships captain, Captain Xavier Baudouard. After two hours sailing, the Force Commander flew back to Limassol aboard a UNIFIL

helicopter. As a Peruvian marine the FC relished the opportunity to be back at sea and expressed his sincere thanks to the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force for facilitating such a unique opportunity; two Rear Admirals, from different countries, serving on different missions joined together under the UN flag in the service of peace.



Rear Adm Jean Louis Kerignard and Rear Adm Mario Sanchez during the cocktail reception on board FNS De Grasse.

Humanitarian Initiative

Senior Medical Officer of Sector-4 Maj Marián Zdycha M.D. organized a blood drive on 23 February at north Nicosia General Hospital where Slovak peacekeepers volunteered to donate blood.

After a routine medical check-up six Slovak soldiers gave blood in what is Sector 4's fourteenth organised blood donation in support of the local community. Dr. Zdycha said: "I am personally more than happy that our soldiers are so willing to help people that need blood. This is also a very good example of the help and humanitarian support the peacekeepers give to the local community. I am proud of our soldiers and I would like to thank them all for participating in this humanitarian effort". Further blood donations are planned for the future.

Capt. Marián Filip



Medical assistants from Transfusion Blood Unit – North Nicosia with soldiers from SLOVCON.

Recycling in the UNPA



Recycling is a key component of modern waste management, part of the "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" waste hierarchy.

UNFICYP headquarters has now arranged for recycling facilities within the UNPA at the following locations:

- International Cafeteria for glass, paper, plastic and cans;
- Opposite the UN Gym for glass, plastic and cans; and
- Outside the PIO Office for paper.

Please use the facilities now being provided to dispose of items that can be recycled and help UNFICYP to achieve the Secretary-General's goal of "Greening the UN".

New Faces

Force Signal Officer



Lt. Col. Horacio Carlos Ghiosi arrived in UNFICYP on 4 February 2009, taking over from Maj. Alberto Cohen as Force Signal Officer. Ghiosi joined the Argentinean Air Force 27 years ago and in 1989 completed the Signal Officer course and has been stationed at several Air Brigades and Major Commands as Signal Officer. In 1996 he started working in IT and Communications projects within the Air Force and parallel to this began his university studies

for a bachelor degree in computer science. He also has a bachelor degree in Air and Airspace Administration. In 2006 he obtained an MBA in Audit Systems. This is his second tour of duty in UNFICYP having served as the first Argentinean Force Signal Officer in 2005 taking over from the Finnish officer that had previously held the post. Ghiosi is married to Maria Florencia. They have a daughter Agustina (15) and a son Santiago (6) who are here in Cyprus with him. His hobbies include tennis, music, football and travelling with the family.

MPIO

Incoming Military Public Information Officer - Captain Tomas Dano arrived in UNFICYP on 17 March. He was born on 28 April 1977 in Topolcany, Slovakia. He joined the Slovak Military academy in 1995 and after graduating in military systems management with specialization in Nuclear Biological and Chemical defence in 2000 he began to serve in the Slovak Republic Armed Forces as NBC-reconnaissance platoon commander. He served in a number of command positions up until 2004 when he became a Staff Officer at the operation and planning branch of the Slovak Land Forces HQ where he focused on NBC

and training. From 2006, he worked on the implementation of international disarmament commitments of the Slovak Republic within the Verification Centre at the Defence Ministry till his arrival in Cyprus. Tomas is married to Miroslava and they have a one year old daughter Lucia. He loves reading, ball and water sports, biking and travelling.



Force Photographer



Sgt. Pavol Kubis, the new UNFICYP Force Photographer, comes from a small town in eastern Slovakia called Stara Lubovna Pavol joined the army in 1997 as a cadet at NCO school in Liptovsky Mikulas. After he graduated from the NCO

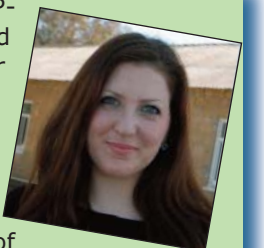
school, he held several positions in the Slovak army, including tank platoon commander and reconnaissance platoon sergeant.

Pavol is married to Viera, and they have two sons, Pavol (five) and Lukas (four). His hobbies are sport, reading and, of course, photography.

Roussa

Roussa Demosthenous joined UNFICYP as the new Records Clerk in the Civil Affairs Branch on 3 March. Born in Cyprus on 23 November 1976, she lived and studied in Hungary from 1995 to 2001 where she received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences in Budapest. On returning to Cyprus, she was offered an Administrative and Research post at the University of Cyprus' Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service. From 2004 to 2007 she was appointed by the Cyprus Ministry of Education as an Educational Psychologist for Children with Special Needs. In 2007 she took up the post of

Administrative Assistant in UNDP-UNCT, supporting the registry and archive processes, while further facilitating the organisation of official visits and workshops. Roussa is currently working on her Thesis (Final Year Project) pursuing a Master of Arts in International Relations from the University of Nicosia. In her free time she practices diversity photography in outdoor portraits and landscape and enjoys spending time with her family and friends.



SO2 Policy & Planning



Maj. Attila Jori, SO2 Ops (Policy/Planning), arrived in Cyprus on 17 March. He was born in Hungary, on 27 May 1969. He joined the Hungarian Army when he started military studies in the Air Defence Military College in Kyiv (Ukraine). He graduated in 1993 as a radio engineer and served in different appointments in the Hungarian Air

Defence. In 2001 he transferred to the Signal Command and worked as Staff Officer, later as COS. Maj. Jori attended the NATO Staff Officer Course in 2004 and from 2006 he served as Commander of the Main Communication and IT Centre battalion. Maj. Jori is married to Agnes and they have two children, Melinda (12) and Nikolett (10). His hobbies include going out on excursions and listening rock music.

Pupils dance to Cypriot folk music at event on cultural heritage.

