

GOLAN

The UNDOF Journal



July - September 2012
No. 132



DEAR READERS!

The change from summer to fall saw a lot of changes within UNDOF. First we were pleased to welcome our new Force Commander MGen Singha, who took over command on 13th Aug 2012. This Change of Command ceremony became a dignified and emotional event, carefully organized and conducted by the Media and Public Relations Section of UNDOF.

UNDOF has also greeted and hosted many important visitors over the past months. The Head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, and the Military Advisor in the DPKO, LtGen Babcar Gaye visited UNDOF this summer.

An overview of welfare activities is provided in this magazine as well as the last part of our documentary series about the construction of the new office building No. 33 in Camp Faouar: moving in soon!

Last but not least I want to thank our newly engaged proofreaders Capt Scottie Morris and Capt Dean Clark from UNTSO OGG.



Our team: Alex, Ekke, Seiji and Gerry

Please have a look on our website with regularly updated news about the UNDOF mission:

www.undof.unmissions.org

Ekkehard Gröppel

Yours sincerely,
Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR



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Photo by Sgt Thomas Zöhner, Photographer AUSBATT

Back (Page 24): The Nubian ibex in the Negev desert
Photo by SSgt Gernot Payer, Force Photographer

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Force Commander's Message

Dear Gallant Peacekeepers!



It is a great privilege for me to have inherited the command of UNDOF, a prestigious, well established and historic mission. The mission has effectively ensured peace in the Golan Heights by fulfilling its mandate thanks to the diligent effort and hard work put in by all the members of UNDOF in synergy with the observers from OGG.

I have visited all the Positions and Observation Posts where our peacekeepers and MILOBs have been deployed. You all are undoubtedly committed to retaining peace in the region during trying times. All of you know your job well and are conversant with the terrain, our mandate and the ground situation.

Our mission has a lot of institutional memory emanating from the long years that some of our civilian staff have devoted here and also from the fact that many members of Austrian Battalion have had multiple tenures in UNDOF. I am sure this will turn out to be a huge asset for me and other new members of the mission. Having said that, I must add that we are passing through very challenging times as off now. Overspill of internal strife into our area of responsibility and its effect on our operations is imminent. Therefore, there is a need to shed our mindsets and rise to face the present day challenges. The situation demands robust and meaningful peacekeeping and ensuring that our freedom of movement is retained so that we continue to fulfill our mandate.

I noticed that there was very little communication between us and the local leaders and ground Commanders. We have taken a positive step towards establishing close communication with them which will ensure better coordination for sustaining peace. Peacekeepers must also make a conscious effort to pick up essentials of Arabic and be in a position to exchange pleasantries. Patience and restraint are the two biggest virtues of peace-keeping. I exhort you to be courteous with the locals and continue to mean well for the region. We must retain our impartiality at all costs and endeavour to win confidence of both the parties.

I take this opportunity to thank those who are returning to their nations and joining their families after successful completion of their tenure at UNDOF and wish them the very best for all their future endeavours. I welcome those who have joined the mission recently and wish them happy innings. I have no doubts that they will rise to the occasion in order to achieve lasting peace in the region. Remember, no matter what background, culture or nationality we belong to, our motto remains:

One Mission, One Team, One Goal

GOD SPEED

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

Chief of Staff Words

Fellow Peacekeepers!

Another three month passed by and UNDOF begins preparations for the end of the hot season in the Golan. The third quarter of this year was again full of interesting activities and challenges for the UNDOF team. After two and a half years a change of Force Commander was due. The Change of Command Ceremony was impressive. To see all our contingents lined up in their different uniforms and performing their unique military drills reinforced the diversity with brings the strength to UNDOF. “A new broom sweeps clean” is a prominent saying in Austria and it fits very well to the situation in UNDOF after MGen Singha took command. As the Chief of Staff, I very much appreciate that the new Force Commander expressed clear direction regarding his ideas and intent. This supports the normal rhythm of our mission and sets UNDOF in a sound position at the beginning of a new command.

On the operational front we still face a deteriorating situation in Syria to which we must adjust and constantly prepare for. Maintaining the professional standards in all respects is the best prevention from the current threat to UNDOF. The fact that we have succeeded so far should not be an excuse for slowing down our efforts. On the contrary, we must increase our situational awareness in order to support our mission objectives and provide appropriate protective measures.

Fortunately we had only one rotation in the last quarter; namely J-CON. This change has supported the continuation of our conduct of operations with a fresh group of Japanese Peacekeepers. This coming quarter will see the rotations of INDCON, PHILBATT, and AUSBATT; this will require a concerted effort and focus for the outgoing and the new incoming personnel to maintain our current operational tempo.

I am very happy that we still maintain the high morale of our troops through sports events and activities. AUSBATT March, Volleyball tournament and Edelweiss Run were events which were very well organized and well attended by many participants from our UNDOF family. We should keep this momentum and find the time to carry on organizing and conducting additional events in the next quarter.

On a personal note, this next quarter will be my last in UNDOF. I intend to sustain my focus on our operations and draw on all my reserves to continue my support to the mission, the Force Commander and all Peacekeepers.



“One Mission – One Team – One Goal”

Colonel Andreas Rotheneder, Chief of Staff UNDOF

Visits to UNDOF

by Capt Seiji Ito, DMPIO



Gen Jessie D. Dellosa, Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (12th Jul 2012)



Ms. Nitsana Darshan Leitner, Israel Law Center, visited with a group of students Camp Ziouani (13th Jul 2012)



Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild, Director Field Personnel Division, Department of Field Support, visited Camp Faouar and met with CMS and COS UNDOF (17th Jul 2012)



Mr. Pjer Šimunović, Croatian Ambassador, visited Camp Ziouani and Posn 22 (26th Aug 2012)



Commanding Col Eng. Mazen Ibrahim Younes, SSAD, visited Camp Faouar and met with FC UNDOF (25th September 2012)

- *Mr. Maoz Zeev, Professor at the University of California, visited Camp Ziouani (4th Jul 2012)*
- *Mr. Turkey Abu Saleh, School Teacher, visited Camp Ziouani and HQ PHILBATT (18th Jul 2012)*
- *LtGen Emmanuel T. Bautista, Commander of the Philippine Army, Armed Forces of the Philippines, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (22nd - 23rd Jul 2012)*
- *Mr. Taher Abu Salih, Religious Head of Majdal Shams, visited Camp Ziouani and attended Indian Independence Day Ceremony (24th Aug 2012)*
- *H.E. Mr. Hideo Sato, Japanese Ambassador, visited Camp Ziouani and attended Change of Command ceremony of J-CON (5th Sep 2012)*
- *LtCol Peter Lloyd Larsen, U.S. Assistant Air Attaché, visited Camp Ziouani and met with FC UNDOF (18th Sep 2012)*



The new Head of Mission and Force Commander UNDOF

Major General Iqbal Singh Singha was commissioned into The Rajputana Rifles in 1977 after four years of training at the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla and the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun. The General Officer has fulfilled a variety of command and staff appointment at all levels of command and across diverse operating environments in an illustrious career spread over 35 years.

A post graduate from Defence Services Staff College Wellington, India and the prestigious National Defence college, New Delhi, The General has two M phils to his credit in Defence and Strategic studies. He has attended Junior, Senior and Higher Command courses at Army War College, Mhow. Notable Staff appointments attained by the General are Brigadier General Staff of a Corps, Chief of Staff of an Armoured Division and General Staff Officer Grade 1 at Military Operations Directorate. He has been an instructor at Officers Training Academy and a Brigade Major of Mechanized Brigade.

Major General Singha's field and operational tenures include command of an Infantry Company, a Battalion and Brigade on the "Line of Control" in Jammu and Kashmir in low intensity conflict environment. After successful command of Napier's Rifles, his unit was conferred with Chief of Army Staff's citation for curbing terrorism in counter insurgency environment. He commanded an Infantry division in Desert and coastal areas.

Major General Singha has been decorated for his achievements and was awarded Chief of Army Staff Commendation, twice; Force Commander's Commendation and CAO's Commendation at UNMEE; and the "VISHISHT SEVA MEDAL" for distinguished service of a very high order as a Brigade Commander.

Major General Singha has been an active participant in various seminars on war fighting, human rights, human resources development and counter terrorism.

A keen sportsman, Major General Singha is fond of basketball, golf and tennis. He is married to Mrs. Baljeet and they have two sons, Rannvijay and Harmanjeet.



The new CO AUSBATT

LtCol Andreas Schiffbänker took over command of the Austrian Battalion on 26th Jul 2012 for a second time after a six month break. He was born on the 20th April 1961 in Bad Ischl and joined the Austrian Armed Forces in 1980. After graduating from the Military Academy in 1984, he served in an Infantry Regiment as Logistics Officer and Company Commander. From 1995 until his present posting, he served in various positions at the Austrian Non-commissioned Officers Academy in Enns as the Commander of the 2nd Training Division. He graduated from the National Defense College in Vienna with a Masters of Security and Defense Management in 2005.

LtCol Schiffbänker has served three times with UNDOF, once as CO AUSBATT from 2011 to 2012 and twice as Quartermaster AUSBATT from 1988 to 1989 and from 1991 to 1992. Other international assignments include: NATO in 1997 as commander of the Austrian National Support Element in Bosnia and Herzegovina; from 2000 to 2001 as a Watch Officer Joint Operation Centre KFOR; and in 2006 he served as the DCO HQ Support Group KFOR in Pristina.

LtCol Schiffbänker is married to Margarete with whom he has two children, Julia and Nadine. His hobbies are focused on all sports with his big passion being to play ice hockey.



The new CO LOGBATT

LtCol Kwardeep Sawhney was born on 31st Oct 1977. He graduated from the National Defence Academy and was commissioned from the Indian Military Academy into the Regiment of Artillery in 1998. In addition to his mandatory courses, he holds a Masters Degree in Weapon System and Technology and is a qualified Instructor in Gunnery. He is also qualified on the Technical Staff Officers Course. He has experience in serving in various terrains ranging from deserts to high altitude areas and has operated in active Counter Insurgency Operations. During his service, he served as a Gun Position Officer, Observation Post Officer, and Battery Commander and Second in Command. For his valor and courage during his career in field, LtCol Sawhney has been awarded the "Chief of Army Staff Commendation" twice. The officer has also served as an Instructor in the "Indian Military Academy", the elite institution for Pre-Commission Training of the Officers of the Army.

LtCol Sawhney is married to Mrs. Richa and is blessed with a son. He is a keen sportsman and enjoys listening to music.



The new CO J-CON

Maj Fumihiro Kayanuma was born in Tokyo on 19th Nov 1976 and completed his junior high school in Myanmar. He joined Japan's Grand Defense Forces in 2000 after graduating from the National Defense Academy with a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering. He is also a graduate of the JGSDF Command and General Staff Course.

Maj Kayanuma began his military career as Infantry Platoon Leader over the years 2001 until 2003. In the following years from 2003 to 2006 he worked as Instructor at the Sergeant Training Unit. From 2006 throughout 2008, he served as a Regiment Plans and Training Officer.

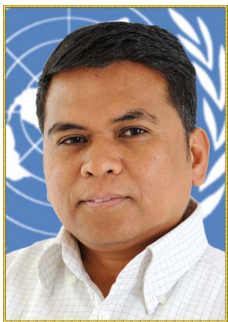
From 2008 to 2010, Maj Kayanuma completed the JGSDF Command and General Staff Course. From 2010 to 2011, he was Company Commander at the 4th Infantry Regiment. When the great earthquake shook Japan on 11th Mar 2011, he took part in the disaster relief operations as Company Commander. He was in charge of life saving and transportation. Maj Kayanuma is married to Terumi and they have a son, Tsuguru (2). Their family is presently living in Hokkaido, in the northern part of Japan. His hobbies include soccer and reading.



The new Chief Observer Group Golan Damascus (COGG-D)

LtCol Bjorn Eidsvag was born in Oslo, Norway 7th May 1959. His career started at the Officer Candidate School in 1978. His profession was until 2007 in Army Signals (CIS) after which he moved to the Logistic Branch. Highlights of his career include appointments as the Commanding Officer of both the northern and southern logistic units in Norway; CO of the Norwegian contingent in Kabul, AFG in 2008; and Senior Military Liaison Officer in UNMIK in Kosovo. He has extensive experience in the field of international cooperation with other countries armed forces, first in the CIS area and lately in the logistic one.

LtCol Eidsvag is looking forward to the challenge of his appointment as Chief OGG-D and believes that he will learn a lot from the current challenging times in Syria, and he so far finds the job very interesting. In taking his position, he remarked that he is very happy to see his UNMOs in high spirits despite the challenging times of having been moved from Damascus and now living in the - how he names it - "Golands".



The New Chief Communications Officer (CCO)

Mr. Ricardo Manalo Jr. was born on 5th Aug 1963 in Caloocan, Manila, Philippines. He graduated from Lyceum of the Philippines and has a Bachelor Degree in Electronics and Communications Engineering. His UN experience started with UNPROFOR in 1993 as an individual contractor working as a telecommunications technician in Croatia. During his time he acquired a depth of experience in support of peace keeping operations. He then joined the United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operations on 1st Aug 1996.

Following this, Mr. Manalo has served as Regional ICT Coordinator in UNMIBH in Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina from 1998 to 2003; as a Satellite Technician in UNAMA in Afghanistan in 2003; as the Chief Communications Officer in UNMOGIP in India and Pakistan from 2004 to 2007; as Outstation Support Supervisor in UNTSO from 2007 to 2009; and as Chief Communications Officer in UNSOA in Somalia and Kenya from 2009 to 2012. Effective as at 30th Jun 2012 he took over the duties and responsibility as the Chief Communications Officer in UNDOF. He is married to Rosie with whom he has three children Van Daniel (20), Vanessa Danielle (13) and Ricardo III "Vinz" (7).

LtGen Babcar Gaye visit to UNDOF

On 22nd Aug 2012, the Military Advisor to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York and former Force Commander of UNSMIS, LtGen Babcar Gaye, visited UNDOF.

LtGen Gaye was greeted with a Guard of Honor as he entered Camp Faouar from the adjacent parade square.

He was warmly welcomed by the Force Commander UNDOF, MGen I. S. Singha, at the entrance to the UNDOF Headquarters and led to a mission briefing on the current situation by the Chief of Staff UNDOF, Col Andreas Rotheneder.

LtGen Gaye was taken on a tour in the Area of Separation where he was shown the terrain and key features of interest to UNDOF. The tour also incorporated a visit to UNTSO OGG OP 72 and UNDOF Posn 37. The visit officially ended with a delicious Austrian lunch and the presentation of a memento by MGen Singha.



The new FC UNDOF welcomes the highly distinguished guest

UNDOF visited by the Under-Secretary-General

On 27th Jul 2012, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, the Head of Department of Peacekeeping Operations, visited UNDOF. The visit program was shaped to expose and update the Under-Secretary-General to the latest proceedings in the UNDOF mission.

The visit of the Under-Secretary-General began on a Friday morning, when the Commanding Officer of the Force Headquarters Company, Capt Christoph Seirer, presented an international Guard of Honor to Mr. Hervé Ladsous on his arrival at the main gate of Camp Faouar. The Under-Secretary-General, who took over from Mr. Alain Le Roy on 3rd Oct 2011 as the Head of Department of Peacekeeping Operations, was afterwards warmly welcomed by the Force Commander UNDOF, MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III. The Force Commander provided him with a detailed mission briefing that encompassed the current situation in UNDOF's Area of Responsibility.

The briefing was also attended by the Chief of Staff UNDOF, Col Andreas Rotheneder, as well as the Branch-Heads, Commanding Officers of the troop contributing nations, the Legal Advisor and the Chief OGG. Followed by a conference with the national and international Civilian Staff of UNDOF, led by the Chief Mission Support, Mr. Bernard Lee.

After a short walk "meet and greet" through the camp and lunch in the Austrian International Kitchen, Mr. Ladsous was introduced to the Area of Separation and provided with an overview of Qunaitra at AUSBATT Posn 27 and the B-Gate. In addition to that, PHILBATT Outpost 60A and UNTSO OGG OP 72 were visited.

The visit of the Under-Secretary-General was completed in the afternoon by returning to Damascus; equipped with the latest information and impressions of the UNDOF mission.

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



Mr. Ladsous and MGen Ecarma III in front of the HQ UNDOF



Line tour in Qunaitra



Monitoring at UNTSO OP 72

Welfare activities enjoy great popularity

The SO Welfare position was established in June 2009 as a new staff member of HQ UNDOF. Since that time, the importance of welfare business increased noticeably and nevertheless to the current situation with many travel restrictions implemented, the SO Welfare UNDOF was able to conduct a lot of welfare activities.

Welfare and recreational activities are indispensable. The SO Welfare is charged to make these activities possible for all UNDOF members. This challenging time in the Golan is no exception and the SO Welfare has created and implemented additional welfare opportunities. These events have been planned in a six-month cycle designed to meet the needs of UNDOF personnel and balance their operational readiness and general well-being whilst staying in the mission area. UNDOF allocated 50,000 USD of funding for the procurement and maintenance of sports equipment, support to recreational trips, marches and sport tournaments amongst the UNDOF Contingents.

UNDOF members join welfare trips

One-day trips have been organized to visit various places in the mission area primarily to learn and appreciate the history, culture and geography of the host countries. In November last year, more than 80 military and civilian UNDOF personnel participated in trips to the Nimrod Fortress, to Damascus and the Sea of Galilee. In the first two months this year, more than 120 personnel had visited different historical places as a part of organized recreation trips. It enhanced their



Jerusalem or Al Quds, at any time a special place to be discovered

cultural knowledge and improved situational awareness of the region which is essential for the performance of their duty.

In April 2012, SO Welfare conducted a trip to Jerusalem with 64 incoming soldiers from the Philippines and India, who really enjoyed the exposure to the depth of religious and cultural complexities that this city contains.

Another trip of 81 UNDOF members visited the Bahai Shrine gardens in Akko and Rosh Hanikra, which are located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea close to the Israeli-Lebanon border. The area is lined with white chalk cliff

face which opens up into spectacular grottos. The grottos are full of cavernous tunnels formed by sea action against the soft chalk rock, which now branch off in various directions, some interconnecting. More than 450 UNDOF personnel had participated in organized recreation trips to different ancient and holy places in Israel, Jordan and Egypt. This impressive amount of participation shows clearly, that Welfare business is a very important issue which is being utilized by UNDOF to great effect. This coming summer the welfare activities of all respective Contingent units are to be fully implemented.



The Indian volleyball players were the best



The Bahai Shrine gardens in Akko

International sports events organized by UNDOF

A long list of sports events has also been promoted and well-attended by the Force demonstrating the acceptance of welfare activities. A ball-hockey tournament at Camp Faouar was hosted by CANCON and participants from different teams made up from troop contributing Contingents as well as the UNDOF civilian staff and the UNTSO OGG went on to prove their skills and team work until one was proclaimed as the champion.

The established friendship and camaraderie of UNDOF Peacekeepers were exemplified in a series of sports activities in Camp Ziouani like the UNDOF basketball tournament with six different teams from the Philippine, Croatian, Japanese and Indian contingent, the Military Police and the HQ UNDOF.

The final was won by PHILBATT who beat the HQ in the Majdal Shams Gymnasium. Additionally badminton and bowling events took place with participation by bowling aficionados from PHILBATT, UNDOF HQ Staff Officers and the civilian staff. Last

May the FHQ Coy hosted its traditional UNDOF Soccer Cup at Camp Faouar's multi-purpose court with participant teams from Austria, Philippines, India, Japan and Croatia.

Marches are still popular

As the situation in the AOS is becoming more volatile, UNDOF personnel still managed to gather and participate in the various marches held in the PHILBATT and AUSBATT area. The Tamaraw March was held last March, hosted by 1st Coy/PhB with more than 100 participants as well as the Alamid March, hosted by 2nd Coy/PhB last May with a remarkable 120 participants. The AUSBATT March, leading up the steep slopes of Mount Hermon, was successfully conducted in September with 90 participating people who showed their stamina and bravery in their attempts to ascent.

A series of sports activities have been scheduled for the remaining period of the year 2012. These endeavours will undoubtedly keep up the Esprit de Corps and team work being developed amongst UNDOF personnel throughout their tour of duty.

Gym and Fitness Centres

One special project of the SO Welfare, and one near to many of in UNDOF, is the enhancement of fitness centres at various positions in the AOR. It took a lot of perseverance to negotiate approval from UNDOF authorities in support of upgrading fitness equipment. As a result of the committed and untiring support of CISS and CSO UNDOF the purchase of a suit of gym equipment amounting to 30,000 USD was finally realized. Some initial items have already been delivered and are in use at positions with more equipment on the way shortly. The welfare and recreational activities at UNDOF primarily support the combat readiness and effectiveness of our personnel. The accomplishment of UNDOF's mandated tasks depend on the state of morale of every UN-Peacekeeper. Promoting the mental and physical well-being of personnel ensures that we maintain high a level of morale in the mission area. Moreover, in these challenging times, teamwork and Esprit de Corps should remain forefront among all UNDOF personnel.

*Article and Photos by Maj Warren Munda,
SO Welfare*

Change of Command FC UNDOF

The Handover and Takeover of the Force Commander UNDOF from MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III to MGen I. S. Singha took place on 13th Aug 2012 during an impressive ceremony held on the Camp Faouar parade square.



Signing of the COC certificates

It was 09:00hrs on a warm and sunny Monday morning when the Change of Command ceremony commenced. It was the culmination of an intensive handover program that had started only a few days earlier. At the spot were several international dignitaries and guests including the Ambassador of the Republic of India, H.E. Mr. Shri V.P. Haran as well as the Ambassador of the Republic of Austria, H.E. Dr. Maria Kunz.

After having the parade handed over to the Force Commander by the Chief Operations Officer

UNDOF LtCol Robert Glanner, the parade honoured the UNDOF soldiers, who have fallen over the past 38 years, by a wreath laying ceremony at the main cenotaph. Padre Maj Cirilo Bermudez from PHIL-BATT and Cpl Satish Singh from INDCON blessed the site with their touching words in English and Sanskrit creating a warm and caring mood on the parade square.

Earlier the playing of the Philippine National Anthem, sung beautifully by a female soldier of PHIL-BATT, was followed by an address of the Chief of Staff UNDOF, Col

Andreas Rotheneder, to both the outgoing and incoming Force Commander.

The outgoing Force Commander MGen Natalio C. Ecarma III followed with an emotional farewell speech, which emphasized the remarkable contribution and the excellent cooperation between the troops of the different contributing nations within UNDOF during his tenure as the Head of Mission.

He paid special thanks to the Chief of Staff UNDOF and the Chief Mission Support, Mr. Bernard Lee, as well as the nations

who had contributed their men and women to serve as Peacekeepers.

The Handover – Take-over was next. This involved the signing of the official documents in a special ceremony under the auspice of the United Nations Banner and was followed by a speech from the Ambassador of the Republic of India. This gave way to the inauguration speech of the incoming Force Commander, MGen I. S. Singha, who praised the work of his predecessor and addressed all Contingents present at the parade in their mother tongue. “During challenging times we need to exercise greater care and restraint and ensure protection of lives and property whether it may concern local population or UN assets. We need to respect values, culture and sensitivities of both the parties concerned and must resort to truthful reporting. That is the hall-



MGen Singha and MGen Ecarma III

mark of professional peacekeeping,” MGen Singha proclaimed.

The ceremony ended with the

playing of the Indian National Anthem followed by a march-past of the Colors and troops in sight of the guests.

The event also displayed a rainbow of intercultural music played by Radio Gecko and offered a remarkable international buffet which all guests enjoyed. In the early afternoon post luncheon, MGen Ecarma III was honored by a lot of well-wishers saying farewell to their Force Commander. Finally he departed Camp Faouar for the last time.

*Article by Capt Ekkehard Gröppel, SOPR
Photos by Sgt Thomas Zöhner,
Photographer/AB*



Parade square: Troops saluting the Colors

UNDOF in the Middle of International Sports Convention

For years it is a tradition that UNDOF takes part in the International Sports Day sponsored by the A-Side. 25 UNDOF Peacekeepers joined in on the 12th Sep 2012 a two-day sports event which took place in the Negev desert.

Almost 100 Peacekeepers from different UN missions in the Middle East including UNTSO, UNDOF, UNIFIL and MFO (Multinational Force and Observer in Sinai) had the chance to display their sporting prowess. After a warm welcome by the Head of the A-Side Liaison Department, Col Yariv Shnapp, the soldiers were split up in groups to begin the competition in the various sports disciplines which included: bike spinning, kickboxing, drumming and “Zumba” (a kind of aerobic workout). Each event was animated by professional trainers and accompanied by motivating music.

UNDOF was represented by

the Force Commander, MGen I. S. Singha, who did not hesitate to show his superb skills in basketball. The 25 soldiers of all ranks from PHILBATT, AUSBATT, LOGBATT and the UNDOF Headquarters participated in team events of soccer and basketball matches. On the second day a fascinating biking tour was organized through the Negev desert which, set on an amazing natural backdrop of breathtaking landscape and fauna (see the photo on the last page, the Nubian ibex), was a unique and unforgettable event.

“This invitation was a great opportunity for us to get in contact with other UN mission members,”

LtCol Dennis Godfrey Gammad, CLPIO UNDOF mentioned at the end of the closing ceremony. The CLPIO also participated in all the sports events and congratulated the organizers for their outstanding efforts and preparation work. The Sports Convention concluded on the second day with a delightful open air buffet lunch in the desert. All participating UNDOF members returned to their various positions and offices within UNDOF with a set of unique and everlasting impressions. Most of them felt tired – but very happy.

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



Drumming in the rhythm of disco music



Biking experience indoor ...



FC UNDOF going for a score



... and outdoor in the Negev desert

Make it to the top – the call of Mount Hermon

Twice a year the AUSBATT March takes place. It gives all participants the opportunity to prove their fitness as well as their skills in patrolling through mountainous terrain. In mid-September the time has come when Mount Hermon called again.



Powerful Austrians almost succeeded



Mission accomplished: INDCON soldiers at Posn HH

Usually, it is a two day venture starting in Qunaitra at Posn 27 (2nd Coy/AB) with approximately 18 kilometers in undulated terrain to be dealt with before you finish the first stage at Posn 10 (3rd Coy/AB). But due to the prevailing situation in the AOS, the AUSBATT March had unfortunately to be cut down to the second day's challenging 22 km march in the unforgiving steep and rough terrain.

Starting at an altitude of 1,460m above sea level, at Posn 10, steep climbs over large rocks characterize the first part of this most challenging track. Having made it to the Eastern Ridge of the Hermon mountain range, you find yourself at almost 2,300 meters height where you can clearly see the top of Mount Hermon in the distance. It is here you realize that you still have two thirds of the march to complete. The last third of the track is merci-

less with a long steep, winding 9 km track taking you to the summit.

Still 90 soldiers of UNDOF set out on 14th Sep 2012 to reach Posn Hermon Hotel (HH) in the area of 1st Coy/AB. They were organized in teams of at least four in battle dress uniform. Backpacked and equipped, the patrols met in the early morning before sunrise at the starting point. There they received the final briefing before setting out at 06:00hrs with the sun's first morning light illuminating the track.

The objective though was not to be the fastest, but to stay together team wise and take every member of your team with you to the finishing line. Besides the endurance and aching legs, this patrol is perfect for team building and additionally offers you a great panorama and overwhelming impressions of nature's beauty. Only two participants could not finish. They were

picked up and given medical assistance.

All other participants successfully managed to get through and you could see the pride in the faces of each and every soldier, who crossed the finishing line at Posn Hermon Hotel, the highest permanently manned UN-position at 2,814m above sea level.

The Force Commander, MGen I. S. Singha, joined in the march on the last kilometers to share the experience of his soldiers. He gave his UNDOF Peacekeepers the honor of a short speech, congratulating the participants for their tremendous efforts and thanking the AUSBATT for the proper organization of the event.

*Article by Capt Rüdiger von Gimborn,
PIO AUSBATT*

*Photos by Capt Rüdiger von Gimborn and
Sgt Thomas Zöhner, Photographer/AB*

A Golan's Nightmare prevented by PHILBATT!

You ... me ... and everybody hope that no one will freeze to death in this very frightening time. A fight for survival in the upcoming winter season – the search for firewood.

It was a sunny and blustery day when the “wood pickers” issue in UNDOF arose. Before, units from the A-Side were uprooting bushes and trees westwards of the Truce-Line which then opened the convenient opportunity for the local people on B-Side to collect the cut wood in preparation for the upcoming winter. This opportunity often leads to violations as the wood collectors often cross the A-Line to gather wood without permission from the host nations.

It is stated in the Syrian Constitutional Law that nobody is allowed to cut any wood from living trees. Forest rangers are always patrolling to enforce this law so wood and kindling lying on the ground in sight of the wood collectors proves to be irresistible.

LtCol Ramon C. Estella, the PHILCON Contingent Commander, decided to synchronize all operational deployments of troops in PHILBATT's Area of Opera-



Syrian locals picking up pieces of woods in preparation for the upcoming winter seasons

tion by using screening operation techniques. This type of operation was conceptualized in order to allow a smooth wood picking for the populace and more importantly to prevent both sides from committing violations against the 1974 Geneva Agreement. Furthermore, it ensures the safety and security of all UN personnel in that area.

Hence, the grueling seven day-operation by PHILBATT needed the day-to-day deployment of seven Ready Reaction Patrols and three additional ones from Force Headquarters Company UNDOF. Also AUSBATT supported for two

days by cutting trees with chain-saws.

The operation could not have succeeded without the help of the B-Side local village leaders, called Muktars. The Muktars again were asked to intervene and help in solving uprising concerns that could lead to a greater problem between both sides.

Once again the Philippine Contingent successfully prevented a probable sensitive violation against the agreement. The PHILBATT Peacekeepers fulfilled their tasks and proved their skills in a very professional way – therefore worth of being part of this prestigious UN peacekeeping mission. *Salute!*



Collecting the woods monitored by PHILBATT Peacekeepers

*Article by Maj Bernadeth D. Tocloy,
PIO PHILBATT
Photos by Sgt Malou Garin*



A love to last a lifetime

The renewing of a marriage is a special act that shows the love and trust of a wife and a husband. The PHILBATT Commanding Officer and National Contingent Commander gave this promise again to his wife at a holy site in the mission area.



Solemnly celebrating Mass at the Wedding Church in Cana



than a few tears were shed. "I never knew then that someday I was going to bring my wife here to the Holy Land to celebrate our marriage again. It wasn't easy to convince Charisse to make a trip to the mission area, but after much encouraging she eventually changed her mind."

The groom said that after a period of almost 20 years, he and his wife understand what the vows truly mean. "Marriage hasn't been an easy vocation for us, but our love is still strong and God is truly present in our marriage. I urge that the excitement I see around us will be long lasting and shared with many." At the end of the religious ceremony Padre Maj Bermudez blessed the happy couple.

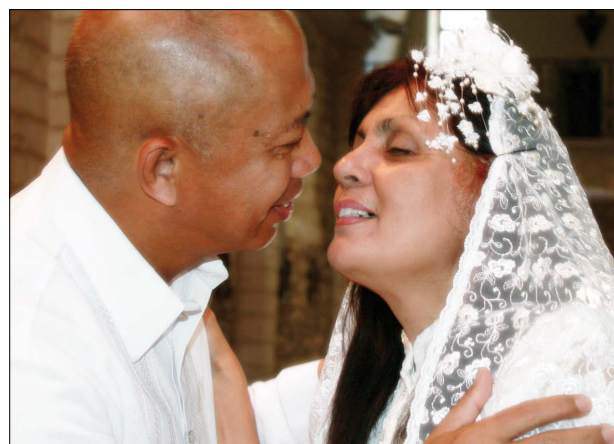
Cana is the traditional site of the wedding feast where Jesus performed his first miracle, the transformation of water into wine. In the biblical account, Jesus and his disciples were invited to a wedding and when the wine ran out Jesus turned water into wine. Cana is also mentioned in the Gospel according to John as a place where Jesus heals a royal official's son. It is also the hometown of the disciple Nathanael (also called Bartholomew). The location of Cana is 7 km in the North of Nazareth.

On 2nd Aug 2012, LtCol Ramon C. Estella, CO PHILBATT and NCC PHILCON, and his lovely wife Charisse renewed their wedding vows at the Wedding Church in Cana. After 19 years being married, they took the opportunity committing this emotional act on this special place in the Holy Land.

The Catholic ceremony was officiated by the Chaplain of PHILBATT, Maj Cirilo O. Bermudez and witnessed by the Filipino UNDOF Peacekeepers TSgt Melody Mendoza, SSgt Lida Mier, Cpl Ethyl Dimaano and Cpl Widmark Caceres.

"Like any marriage, we have ups and downs, but there have been a lot of good times when you work at it," LtCol Estella said, as he reached over and kissed his wife's hand. "There is a give and take, but she's the boss."

It was a special and moving moment for the couple and more



After saying „I do“, and renewing their vows, the couple sealed the deal with a kiss

Ramon and Charisse Estella were married last 13th Sep 1993 at Butuan City, Philippines and are blessed with two loving children.

Article by Maj Bernadeth D. Tocloy,
PIO PHILBATT
Photos by Cpl Widmark Caceres

Indian Independence Day

The 66th Independence Day was celebrated by INDCON LOGBATT on 24th Aug 2012.

The Independence Day in India is observed annually on the 15th August, commemorating its independence from British rule in 1947. India attained freedom following an independence movement noted for largely peaceful non-violent resistance.

The celebrations for this “special” Indian Independence Day commenced with the unfurling of the Indian National Flag by the Force Commander and Head of Mission UNDOF, MGen I. S. Singha. The occasion was particularly special, as the new Force Commander from India had taken command just a few days earlier. After saluting the Indian National Anthem inside the Khetarpal Hall (named after the Indian Officer Lt II Arun Khetarpal, a recipient of the Param Vir Chakra, India’s highest gallantry award), an impressive colorful exhibition of India was presented by Indian officers. They highlighted the diverse culture, religions, customs, traditions, languages, values and achievements of their home country. The presentation also

included information about the Indian Armed Forces and India’s contribution to the United Nations; India has been part of the United Nations since 1945. India is the seventh-largest country by area, the second-most populous country with over 1.2 billion people and the most populous democracy in the world. India contributes more than 7,000 military personnel to the United Nations (August 2012).

The presentation was followed by a cultural display comprising of different traditional Indian dances: “Bhangra”, a folk dance coming from the state of Punjab which has been practiced since 1880, “Lezium” from the state of Maharashtra, named after a wooden idiophone to



The show ...



... with Indian traditional dances at Khetarpal Hall



Unfurling of the Indian National Flag

which thin metal discs are fitted as well as the “Karagattam” from the state of Tamilnadu. That is a Tamil folk dance involving the balancing of clay or metal pots or other objects on the dancers head.

The host of the celebration, CO LOGBATT LtCol Rahul Doegar, welcomed the Indian Defence Attaché to Israel, Gp Capt George Thomas and his wife, the Governor of Majdal Shams and the COS UNDOF, Col Andreas Rotheneder amongst the VIP guests present.

The event culminated with a sumptuous lunch at the International Kitchen. On the menu were a host of dishes whipped up by the Indian chefs. The courses included Indian as well as specially prepared dishes to suit the tastes of all the attendees.

*Article by Maj Himmat Singh,
MAINTO LOGBATT
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer*

Indian Engineers at work

The first one's in and the last one's out - this is the motto of engineers all around the world. In the UNDOF mission also engineers have to learn to become warrior peacekeepers.

The blue helmet experience has been a challenging time that every LOGBATT engineer will cherish for the remainder of his life. With the changing security situation in the UNDOF mission area, it was important for LOGBATT soldiers to rise up to the requirements of the mission and to promptly cater for the needs of all users. With users we mean every UN unit and location within the UNDOF deployment. The engineers support all battalions and contingents, the Camps Faouar and Ziouani with their facilities and every UN position, regardless of whether in the South at Posn 80A (PHILBATT) or on the top of the Mountain at Posn Hermon Hotel (AUS-BATT). It is worth a mention that LOGBATT soldiers have to cover an area between these two UN-Positions with a linear distance of about 75 km and a height difference of more than 3,000 meters through all seasons of the year.

The key within UNDOF is to be quick to respond to tasks and to ensure all tasks are charted when complete. The various sections like Plumbing & Heating, Electrical, Air-conditioning, Refrigeration and Construction are very professional in all their endeavors. All of these sections complete much of their work outside of normal working hours to get the job done.

Indian Engineers were tasked with many different projects. A few of them had to be completed within the Area of Responsibility in construction, plumbing and various repairs. These tasks were vital to sustain the operations of UNDOF as a whole. The engineers are currently working on the placement of freezer containers for the Supply Section in Camp Ziouani and assisting in the Facility Reduction Program.

Due to the changed situation on B-Side, spares have not been very forthcoming. The ingenuity of the engineers has been a daily feature of their duties. All in all it has been a wonderful experience for Indian engineers and especially for the Chief Construction Officer of the LOGBATT the last six months. Finally, I have to mention to all LOGBATT Engineers:

“Job well done!”

Article by Capt YK Gautam, CEO LOGBATT
Photos by LOGBATT



Electrical repair done by Indian Engineers



Grounding work for freezer container



LOGBATT's efforts in the Facility Reduction Program

Out with the old, in with the new!

The Commanding Officer of the Japanese Contingent, Maj Mamoru Nanjo handed over command to his successor Maj Fumihiko Kayanuma on 5th Sep 2012. The Change of Command ceremony took place at Khetarpal Hall in Camp Ziouani.



Within a solemn atmosphere, the Change of Command was celebrated with several distinguished and international guests attending. On this sunny and clear Wednesday the outgoing and incoming Commanding Officer of J-CON welcomed the Force Commander UNDOF and Head of Mission, MGen I. S. Singha, the Ambassador of Japan to Israel, H.E. Mr. Hideo Sato, and the Defense Attaché of Japan, Col Rio Hashimoto. The CMS UNDOF, Mr. Bernard Lee and the COS UNDOF, Col Andreas Rotheneder were also welcomed to the ceremony. Furthermore, the NCCs and COs of AUSBATT, HRVCON, PHILBATT, LOGBATT and CANCON and the UNTSO Chief of OGG were present. All the VIP guests sat together on the podium of the hall facing to the viewers' area.



Maj Nanjo saying Goodbye!

The ceremony was opened by an in-marching Guard of Honor commanded by Capt Masayasu Tetsuka, followed by a cornet signal. In his farewell speech, the outgoing CO J-CON, Maj Mamoru Nanjo thanked the Force Command-

ers UNDOF, MGen Singha and MGen Ecarma III for their leadership and comradeship. He also praised the excellent work of the Japanese Peacekeepers.

In his inauguration speech, the new Commanding Officer of the 34th J-CON, Maj Fumihiko Kayanuma, emphasized in English and Japanese language, how important United Nations Peacekeeping Operations were especially in the Middle East region and promised to contribute and cooperate with UNDOF and the other contingents in the same professional manner as his predecessor. He additionally mentioned the policy of "Itto Syougou" - which means, that each person is a part of the whole and has to take responsibility by himself. Maj Kayanuma also asked each J-CON member to do his best efforts.

After the ceremony a reception was held for all guests and attendees who really enjoyed delightful



MGen Singha with H.E. Mr. Sato flanked by the outgoing and incoming CO J-CON

original Japanese food. Since 1996 J-CON has been an important and reliable partner to UNDOF and has been praised by HQ UNDOF and other foreign forces. As a part of LOGBATT with manpower of 44 soldiers, J-CON is the only unit in UNDOF equipped with heavy engineer vehicles like excavators, bulldozers and wheel-loaders. The operators fulfill their tasks for various construction works like the demolition of buildings or the repair of roads, patrol tracks or water pipes. The officers of J-CON increased by one this rotation, increasing their strength to nine. The 34th Japanese Contingent will provide its best efforts to the UNDOF mission, trying to succeed in the "Japanese tradition".

*Article by Capt Masashi Kaneko,
PIO J-CON*

*Photos by WO III Tsutomu Murakami,
HQ J-CON*

New Office Building – moving in soon

The fourth and final part to the series regarding the new office building No. 33 in Camp Faouar: the final construction phase is unveiled. In July and August no one would have guessed that the biggest challenges still lay ahead.

In recent weeks the overall building and fitting-out has culminated and the grand impact of the project and its schedule is now apparent to all. A strong hand was required to balance some tough alternatives to the original plan to continue to progress works. When you look back, the original ‘ground-breaking’ took place less than a year ago on 13th Oct 2011. It was quite an effort to deliver only eleven months after this milestone a completed building and to handover the key to the Supply Section on 14th Sep 2012. Prior to reaching this goal quite a few preliminary measures were required to be completed by several parties. For instance, UNDOF Engineering Section who coordinated the implementation of external ground works, asphaltting, and landscaping need to balance the sequence of construction so that the finishing of the interior works could be finalised without undue delay. Concurrently, the installation phase for information technology

and power services has also to be coordinated. Without a doubt, this success resides with the UNDOF CITS and the UNDOF Electrical Unit who managed to choreograph all these tradesman and supplies to achieve a great effect.

The assigned project team members spent countless hours wiring the thousands of metres of cabling throughout the building, now hidden behind plaster and ceiling panels. The accomplishment of this roll-out was undertaken under the technical eye and support of the UNDOF Battalions. AUSBATT, PHILBATT, and LOGBATT committed their best technicians to enable a successful build on time. In particular, I would like to express UNDOF’s appreciation to the contracted master builder, Mr. Grandoqa Ahmad and his team. He maintained strict control over the project and fully engagement with UNDOF over the entire construction period. At times we wondered how he could solve all the interre-

lated tasks and complex tasks spanning provision of resources to delivery of materials, asset and manpower outputs, and the building of the structures. To do this in a timely manner when taking the current circumstances into account is testament to this man’s skill. Of course, without singling out any one person from UNDOF, *“One Mission – One Team – One Goal”*, those involved did a great job and should be proud of their workmanship and the final result.

To conclude this series of articles in the UNDOF Golan Journal, I would personally like to address and thank all project team members throughout all UNDOF Sections with the follow:

“You may be justifiably proud of your services and your engagement with this construction and its realisation of the new office building No. 33. Great Performance!”

Article by Maj Roman Zaller, FCEO
Photos by SSgt Gernot Payer



The key is handed over to the Civilian Staff



A proud project is completed: Office Building No. 33

In the footsteps of the Apostle Peter

The confirmation is one of the most important parts in the life of a Christian and one of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church of Annunciation in Nazareth is a popular place for Christians to take their confirmation. Another sacred place is the Sea of Galilee, also known as the “Jesus Lake”, where an UNDOF member took confirmation.



On 2nd Sep 2012, the UNDOF Military Police special investigator and dog handler, SSgt Friederike Hölzl was confirmed in the “Benedictine Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes” in Tabgha, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. The history of the church began in the year 350 A.D. when a small oratory of the Feeding of the Five Thousand was first built on this site (Luke 9:10-17). The confirmation place is the same location where Jesus reinstated Simon Peter as head among the Apostles about 2000 years ago.

The ceremony was then conducted within a Holy Mass, held by the Benedictine Brothers on the shore of the Sea of Galilee under the beautiful blue sky. About 100 pilgrims from various countries like Belgium, Germany, Israel, Italy, Philippines, Poland and Austria



Friederike saying “Yes” to God

joined the Holy Mass. Before the confirmation ceremony took place, the Benedictine Church of Tabgha had to ask for permission from the German Bishop of Regensburg, which was granted. In a very touching ceremony the priest Father Matthias confirmed Friederike, who strengthened her believe in God and the Roman Catholic Church. WO I Erich Weiss, MP Master Warrant Officer in Charge, officiated as Friederike’s godfather during the whole confirmation.

A small delegation of the UNDOF Military Police Platoon also participated in the event together with their MP sniffer dogs. The confirmation itself was as a very emotional and personal moment for Friederike and for all the people present. Normally a confirmation is done within a church and not in such a historical place, at a younger age (normally between 13 and 15 years) and together with family members. At the end of the Holy Mass Father Matthias emphasized the importance of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in the region. Finally he said a blessing.

Article and photos by WO I Herbert Bachmayer, UNDOF MP Investigator



Confirmation ceremony at the “Jesus Lake”

Chief's Challenge: "Not a normal Day on the Line"

The OGG-T consists of about 45 civilian and specialist military officers. To become an OGG-member and United Nations Military Observer (UNMO), a comprehensive assessment must be passed.

Within OGG-T, there is always a steady stream of UNMOs and staff arriving each month, to join the team. To ensure that UNMOs, who all come from different nationalities and backgrounds, achieve a baseline standard in proficiency, new UNMOs undergo a month long period of training and assessment, commonly known as the "Chief's Challenge".

From a new UNMO's perspective, induction into OGG-T takes about eight days of training in both Jerusalem, at UNTSO Headquarters and Tiberias at OGG-T Headquarters, before the UNMO ventures out into the Area of Operations (AOO). Induction training focuses heavily on UN policies, procedures, safety, security, administration and logistical issues. Once the theoretical phase is over, the "On the Job Training" commences. This sees new UNMOs (Juniors) paired with experienced UNMOs (Seniors), who are sent out into the AOO to man the Observation Posts and conduct mobile patrolling throughout the region. Because the OPs are positioned along the Alpha-Line, these duties are known as "Working on the Line".

Juniors are also required to undertake night studies to learn military equipment recognition,

mission essential tasks and medical responses for their summative operational effectiveness test: the "Chief's Challenge". That is a five hour long testing sequence that cov-



Call for UNDOF medical evacuation

ers the normal daily tasking of an OGG-T UNMO.

The test begins with a simulated visit by a high ranking officer that requires the UNMO to deliver safety and security briefings and an



Documenting the medical situation

operational overview of the Golan Region, allowing the knowledge to be checked. This is followed by

a two hour long area patrol of the AOO where the aspirant has to demonstrate local knowledge of features, operational trends as well as A-Side capabilities and units. Furthermore he will be given several scenarios, ranging from military equipment violations and unusual activities, through to emergency response scenarios.

The patrol usually culminates in a life-threatening vehicle accident or serious injury scenario that requires First Aid to be provided. The medical emergency is conducted in real time with the UNMOs being required to manage local traffic, call for assistance and treat simulated casualties.

Finally the UNMOs enter the final phase of "Chief's Challenge" that involves an hour long questioning session upon the OP platform by the Training Officer and Team Leader, commonly known as the "Spanish Inquisition". Each UNMO is expected to know all emergency procedures and mandated reporting requirements to enable him to perform effectively. Failure to achieve the required standard means a retest, which is feared by all new UNMOs.

*Article by Capt Alex Rubin,
Training Officer OGG-T
Photos by Capt Andrew Thomas,
UNMO OGG-T*

The Nubian ibex (*Capra nubiana*) in the Negev desert

