

BLUE BERET

2024



Special



Edition

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60 years in the service of peace



Commander of the Finnish Contingent in
UNFICYP Ensio Siilasvuo and UN Commander
Brigadier Wilson-Smith on
Finnish Independence Day 1964.

FOREWORD

*by António Guterres
United Nations Secretary-General*

*For sixty years, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)
has worked to help reduce tensions, resolve issues and better lives.*

*I am deeply grateful to the women and men who have dedicated their careers to this
vital Mission, and the 43 Member States that have contributed troops or police.
I honour the 187 UNFICYP peacekeepers who lost their lives in the cause of peace.*

*This milestone is also an opportunity to reaffirm the unwavering commitment of the
United Nations to both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to work with them to find
a mutually acceptable solution for the benefit of all those on the island. The United
Nations remains committed to this vital cause.*





The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, accompanies a patrol in the buffer zone in Nicosia/Lefkoşa upon his arrival in 2021.

PREFACE

by Colin Stewart

*Special Representative of the Secretary-General,
Head of UNFICYP and Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus*

Sixty years ago, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was established by Security Council resolution 186 (1964), and the first 12,000 peacekeepers serving under the flag of the United Nations were deployed in Cyprus. The same resolution recommended the Secretary-General to appoint a mediator to promote a peaceful settlement of the Cyprus issue. Alarmed by escalating intercommunal violence across the island, the Security Council had assessed that there was an urgent need to send a peacekeeping mission to Cyprus. Unfortunately, the conflict continued and, following the events of 1974, the island was divided. The threats and challenges that the island and the United Nations have faced over the last six decades have been substantial, and 187 United Nations personnel lost their lives, making the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace in Cyprus.

I would like to pay tribute to this incredible contribution – of more than 150,000 women and men from the military and police forces who have served with UNFICYP since 1964. I would also like to thank the 43 Troop and Police Contributing Countries who have deployed all these personnel for their unwavering commitment to the work of UNFICYP. Partnerships, including with Member States and regional organisations, have been critical to implementing our mandate and to achieve results.

Peacekeepers make great sacrifices and are often deployed far from their homes and families, serving at great personal risk, and at times under demanding conditions, to serve the cause of peace. The families of our peacekeepers share in this sacrifice and to them I say, thank you.

Over the past 60 years, UNFICYP has adapted to meet evolving challenges. Today, our military personnel work in an integrated team with UN police and civilian counterparts to forge strong working relationships with the communities we serve. UN peacekeepers' most fundamental role is engaging with both sides fairly and impartially to address their concerns and provide reassurances to each side. Across the buffer zone, they work with dedication and professionalism every day to prevent conflict by calming tensions.

UN peacekeepers play an essential role in helping to build and maintain a peaceful foundation for future talks on the Cyprus issue.

Over the decades, the Good Offices Mission has supported the two sides in their efforts to negotiate a lasting solution to the Cyprus issue. In the absence of formal talks, the regular weekly dialogue that I facilitate between the two sides, as well as the work done by the bicomunal technical committees, co-facilitated by the Good Offices Mission and UNFICYP, offer a vital channel for the two sides to cooperate on issues of mutual concern. The two Missions also play a crucial role in helping to bring people from the two communities together, often for the first time, to overcome mistrust and help build confidence in a shared future together. Our work with young people and womens' groups is bringing them together to work on shared challenges and develop common solutions for the future. We also strive to ensure that the eventual solution to the Cyprus issue is found in a consultative and inclusive manner.

Peacekeeping is a tool to manage conflict, prevent escalation and preserve the political space for a comprehensive solution, which can only come through political dialogue and compromise, facilitated by the Secretary-General and his Good Offices Mission. Peacekeeping on its own cannot solve the issue of the divide on the island and this is why the two Missions work closely together towards the same goal. This is what the United Nations does in Cyprus on a daily basis, and we will continue to strive to bring the parties together to find a solution. But ultimately, the decision on their future is in the hands of Cypriots themselves. Let these 60 years serve as a reminder that the Cyprus issue has gone unresolved for far too long.

UN peacekeepers are the embodiment of the spirit of international cooperation and the collective will for peace. This special edition of the Blue Beret pays tribute to peacekeepers and peacemakers that have contributed to peace efforts in Cyprus over the years. As we mark 60 years of service in Cyprus, the United Nations reaffirms its commitment to support a lasting peace across the island.

60 years in the service of peace

IN THE SERVICE OF PEACE

UNFICYP is one of the longest peace operations in the UN, set up in 1964 to prevent further fighting between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities and bring a return to normal conditions.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNFICYP

In the interest of regional peace and security, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was established on 4 March 1964 to prevent the recurrence of fighting between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and, as necessary, to help in maintaining law and order. Over the past 60 years, UNFICYP sought to work in the interest of preserving international peace and security, prevent a recurrence of fighting, contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order, and ultimately a return to normal conditions.

Initially recommended that the Force be stationed for three months with the designation of a mediator to promote a peaceful solution and an agreed settlement of the Cyprus issue, the first Commander of UNFICYP was appointed on 6 March of the same year, with the first Canadian Contingent deployed on 13 March.



Security Council decides to establish a UN force in Cyprus in 1964.

EXPANDING ITS MISSION

By 8 June 1964, the Force had reached a strength of 6,411, while the Force's responsibilities expanded further in August 1974 following events favouring Cyprus' union with Greece and a subsequent intervention by Türkiye whose troops established control over the northern part of the island. Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom now contributed to the Force, along with civilian police units from Australia, Austria, Denmark, New Zealand, and Sweden. The contingents were deployed across the island and matched their areas of responsibility (zones or districts) with the island's administrative district boundaries to facilitate a close working relationship with Cyprus government district officers and the local Turkish Cypriot leaders.

60 YEARS ONWARDS

Since the de facto ceasefire in 1974, UNFICYP supervises the ceasefire lines; provides humanitarian assistance and maintains a buffer zone known as the Green Line between the two communities, while the Head of Mission also serves as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and leads efforts to assist parties in reaching a potential settlement.

As one of the longest-running UN Peacekeeping Missions around the world, UNFICYP's 800-plus troops and 60-plus police officers deal with hundreds of incidents each year. During the last 60 years, UNFICYP has seen numerous redeployments of contingents and continues to work in the service of peace. Up to date 150,000 troops have served since its establishment in 1964 and 187 peacekeepers paid the ultimate sacrifice, losing their lives for the cause of peace.

To date 150,000 troops have served since its establishment in 1964 and 187 peacekeepers paid the ultimate sacrifice, losing their lives for the cause of peace.

CIVIL AFFAIRS

Thirty-four years after UNFICYP was established and considering that normal civilian activities resumed across the island with a military status quo, a longstanding ceasefire and the establishment of a UN-controlled buffer zone between the opposing forces, the increasing civilian nature of issues being confronted by the Mission called on the creation of a new section known today as Civil Affairs.

The roots of the Mission's Civil Affairs function can be traced back to the original mandate authorised by the Security Council resolution 186 (1964), which provided that the Force contribute to a return to normal conditions on the island. Initially mandated to provide humanitarian assistance to large numbers of the population who were displaced after the events of 1974, the Mission's Civil Affairs Section expanded on the Mission's humanitarian activities and structured its function on three main pillars of activity: civil, humanitarian and community relations.

To this end, Civil Affairs operates as a day-to-day interlocutor with authorities on both sides on issues affecting the civilian population and acts as an interface of the Mission with local civilian authorities. It also facilitates and manages the civilian use of the buffer zone for agriculture and some housing and commercial uses. On a humanitarian level, it aids Turkish Cypriots in the south and Greek Cypriots and Maronites in the north, it delivers humanitarian supplies and ensures social welfare, educational and medical needs are being met.



Finnish troops deployed in Cyprus.

In addition, the Section facilitates activities that promote harmony and trust building between the two communities. Notably, it supports the preservation of common cultural heritage, the promotion of inter-communal dialogue through cultural, sporting, and other events, and facilitates essential services for both communities through cooperation at the technical level.

Over the years, the Section has been strengthening collaboration and partnerships with women and youth groups from across the divide, as part of the United Nations broader efforts to promote civil society's participation in peacebuilding.

UN POLICE

Based in the Mission's Headquarters and at 8 further locations across the island, the United Nations Police (UNPOL) has been part of UNFICYP since 14 April 1964. To date, the component is comprised of 69 police officers from different nationalities and one civilian support staff.

UNPOL works in collaboration with the Mission's military and Civil Affairs components and contributes to the maintenance and restoration of law and order in the buffer zone. It also works closely with the Mission's military and Civil Affairs components concerning civilian activity in the buffer zone, and humanitarian matters while it also assists in the return to normal conditions.

UNPOL assists the Good Offices in the implementation of measures towards achieving a comprehensive peace agreement, through the facilitation of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, established in 2008, to launch and promote the cooperation between the local law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, under the Technical Committee, UNPOL facilitates the effective coordination of police authorities through the Joint Contact Room, an initiative that allows law enforcement officers to tackle criminal activities through a systematic exchange of information. The Joint Contact Rooms are located in Nicosia/Lefkoşa (2009) and Pyla/Pile (2022).

Civil Affairs was initially mandated to provide humanitarian assistance to large numbers of the population who were displaced after the events of 1974.

THE MILITARY

The Force's troops supervise the de facto cease fire lines established in 1974 and maintain control over the buffer zone. The troops maintain day-to-day contact with their counterparts from the opposing forces to prevent escalation of tensions within or along the buffer zone.

Despite the calm that generally has prevailed since 1974, UNFICYP records an average of 1,000 incidents in the buffer zone every year. To date, more than 150,000 troops have served in the Mission, with approximately 802 troops currently serving on a rotating basis. With the largest troop contributors being Argentina and the United Kingdom, followed by Slovakia and Hungary, military presence is spread over three sectors, Sectors 1, 2 and 4. Sector 3 ceased to exist when Canada withdrew its battalion from the Mission in 1993 and was absorbed by Sectors 2 and 4. Since 2004, the troops no longer man each observation post on a permanent basis but instead patrol the buffer zone on foot, by helicopter, vehicle, and bicycle.

The Force also has 4 central units stationed in the United Nation Protected Area on the outskirts of Nicosia/Lefkoşa that support the Mission. These include the Mobile Force Reserve Guards Headquarters (MFR), the Force Military Police Unit (FMPU), the UN Flight and the Force Engineer Headquarters unit.

*** UNFICYP's military, police and civilian components work as part of a "three-pillar" concept, developed to maximise internal collaboration on all aspects of the Mission's mandate.

UNFICYP PAYS TRIBUTE TO VETERANS FOR THEIR SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

Peacekeepers make great sacrifices and are often deployed far from their homes and families as they protect some of the world's most vulnerable communities.

Since its inception, the United Nations has seen more than two million men and women serve under its flag, in more than 70 UN peacekeeping operations around the world. Amongst these, more than 4,300 peacekeepers have sacrificed their lives in the name of peace, including 187 in UNFICYP.

Having witnessed the death of three Austrian peacekeepers working in the vicinity of the small village of Koshi in Larnaca in 1974, Austrian peacekeeper, Master Sergeant Josef Scheffenbichler is a living testament of the sacrifices peacekeepers make during their service of peace; a tragedy which still evokes difficult feelings for him to navigate.

"I was standing right here," he says as he shares his memories while sitting in the modern ambulance that now operates in the Mission's Headquarters where he was once posted as an ambulance driver some 50 years ago.

"The news that three Austrians had been killed in an air attack came in through the radio," he adds as he shakes his head.

"We drove the three bodies with our ambulance from the site to our Medical Centre in the base and after that we brought them to the Greek General Hospital. Eventually, they were transported to Larnaka airport and were flown back to Austria. We had many troubles during the war in 1974, we were working very hard during those three days," adds Scheffenbichler upon his return to the island with another nine Austrian veteran who served at different times during their Cyprus Mission.



Austrian Veteran, Master Sergeant Josef Scheffenbichler (Left).

Austria initially sent a field hospital to the island in 1964 with 54 peacekeepers. It deployed its first police officers to the island later that year and has been a contributing country ever since.

As part of the second Canadian contingent deployed to the island, George Erling Kish (Erl) arrived in the fall of 64. "We were working out of the airport in a British hangar and living in 4 person marquee tents on cement pads between the airport and Nicosia," recalls Kish. "We were initially confined to camp in order to acclimatise and eventually allowed out under



George Erling Kish (Erl) arrived in Cyprus in the fall of 1964.

time limits, travelling in twos and in uniform to identify as Canadians," he adds. As he recalls his time here, Kish mentions his memory of a special parade in honour of the raising of the newly adapted Canadian flag, which was proudly flying on the island for the first time.

"All in all, my time in Cyprus was a memorable experience, one of many I had during my 30 years of service," concludes Kish.

Since the Mission's first deployment, more than 150,000 women and men from the military and police forces of 43 Member States have served in the Mission, many of which hold strong memories of their time on the island. UN peacekeepers have long been the best chance for peace for some of the world's most vulnerable people. Their service and sacrifice – frequently under harsh and dangerous conditions – has made the Blue Helmet a symbol of hope to millions of people. "I would tell any of our peacekeepers that, first



UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix.

of all, their role is absolutely fundamental, wherever they are, whichever function they work in, their role is absolutely critical, especially today in a world that's more divided," said UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix upon his visit to the island last year. "I share my acknowledgement and gratitude for what they're doing and for the sacrifices that it entails. The reality is that peacekeeping is a dangerous proposition, and the sacrifices our peacekeepers make need to be acknowledged," he added.



Swedish veteran peacekeeper, Anders Arvidsson, was in his twenties when he was deployed to the island in 1964.



Peacekeeper John Collins stands in front of the UN vehicle in which an Australian police peacekeeper was killed when it struck a landmine in 1974.

THE TRACES OF TIME

“As a young guy, Cyprus was a tremendous experience that has followed me all of my life,” attests Swedish veteran peacekeeper, Anders Arvidsson, who was in his twenties when he was deployed to the island in 1964 as an armoured personnel carrier driver at the platoon. Having returned to the island some 30 years later, he recalls his time as part of one of the first Swedish deployments to UNFICYP as complex: “It was hard to understand what was happening on the ground, we were facing some shooting incidents between the villages; we had to go out, stop the shooting and try to solve the problems,” describes Arvidsson. When UNFICYP was established in 1964, it saw military contingents from Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, and civilian police units from Australia, Austria, Denmark, New Zealand and Sweden.

As many veterans return to the Mission and recall their time in the Mission’s longstanding history, many can remember their stations, their lines of duty and atmosphere of the time, trying to depict what has changed and what has remained the same. “There are some new buildings, some old ones have been taken away, but it is very familiar when you pass through the gate,” says Arvidsson who wears a golden necklace in the shape of Cyprus ever since he was deployed to the island. “But I do feel that things have changed, mainly that there are no hostilities between the two sides, which was common during the first ten years, from 1964 to 1974. For most of us, as veterans, it is a good feeling to see that there still exists a Force to help keep calm on the island,” adds Arvidsson.

COMMUNITY POLICING IN ACTION

More recently, John Collins served as a UN police peacekeeper when he was a member of the Australian Federal Police from May to November in 2001. Australian peacekeepers served in military and policing roles in Cyprus from 1964 to 2021. It withdrew its police contingent from the Force in 2017 and ended its military commitment in 2021, marking 57 years of service as United Nations peacekeepers in Cyprus. “What stands out most in my memory is working with the local communities. I recall having coffee shop meetings with Greek Cypriot farmers in Mammari village, and occasionally travelling to Paphos with military colleagues to meet with particularly older Turkish Cypriot women just to check on how they were, just to make sure they were okay,” recalls Collins. “For Australians in our police role, it really was community policing in action. Our role was to ensure both communities

“ I understand the dangerous work that the UN undertakes throughout the world. Even here in Cyprus. ”

could come to us, could ask us, could talk to us, but also make sure that they knew that we were looking out for their safety and that we understood what had happened and what was happening,” he adds.

Marking UNFICYP’s 60 years in service is an occasion to pay tribute to all those who have contributed to the peacekeeping efforts that have been made throughout the years.

“When I worked for the UN, it was an immensely proud opportunity that I could represent Australia and the Australian Federal Police overseas. But more recently, I have also come to understand the dangerous work that the UN undertakes throughout the world. Even here in Cyprus,” says Collins while standing at the site of a wreck of a vehicle found at the Mission’s Headquarters, in which an Australian police peacekeeper was killed when it struck a landmine in 1974. “I think it’s important to reflect not only on how we work with local communities overseas when we are with the UN, but also that there is very real dangers involved. And I think that as a country, Australia should be very proud that we have contributed to peace all around the world in peacekeeping operations,” he concludes.



Swedish veteran peacekeepers visit Camp Stefanik in Famagusta.

*** Since 2019, with the Mission’s integrated structure, community policing is facilitated under the guidance and direction of UNFICYP’s Civil Affairs Section.

MILESTONE IN PEACEKEEPING: WOMEN TAKE THE LEAD IN UNFICYP

UNFICYP was the first Mission to have women simultaneously lead its civilian, military and police components, while it also saw the first female Force Commander in UN history lead its Force.

This year will mark 24 years since the adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. The landmark resolution recognises the impact of conflict on women and calls on Member States to ensure women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It also urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all areas of peace building.

To this end, Major General Kristin Lund, who was the first female Force Commander in UNFICYP in 2014, praises the UN resolution in question and highlights the vitality of putting resolutions in practice. "Having led a military component as a woman shows that the UN puts their resolutions in practice," estimates Lund, yet she's also quick to pinpoint the

challenges she has faced as a female in the military. "Through my career I realised that as a woman, you always have to prove that you are capable; in a way, women are much more tested and that is one of the biggest challenges... At the beginning of my career, I sought for what kind of qualities I should have as an officer and the only role models I had, were men. It took about 15 years before I was strong enough to find my own philosophy as a leader and start thinking about how I would lead, how I would be perceived by my colleagues, subordinates and the Mission leadership and what my values were," says



Kristin Lund.



Ann-Kristin Kvilekval.

Lund. "I had to find out what qualities men had and realise that they were not all the same as mine. Gradually you begin to dare to speak up and fight for what you believe is right," she adds.

This is echoed by Ann-Kristin Kvilekval who was Senior Police Advisor in the Mission in 2017. "I must honestly say that I only dared to speak up and pick my fights after a certain number of years in the police force when I attained more experience. But I never compromised on my integrity, my professionalism or ethics," admits Kvilekval as she explains that in order to counter this, she encouraged female officers to apply for varying positions in the force and saw female sector commanders rise under her leadership, a trend that continues to date. Indeed, women peacekeepers in all fields of peacekeeping have proven that they can perform the same roles, to the same standards and with the same challenges as their male counterparts.

WHY WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING?

The question remains: why indeed is it so important to have an equal representation of women in peacekeeping, both at leadership levels and on the ground? In short, more women in peacekeeping means more effective peacekeeping. They improve overall peacekeeping performance, have greater access to communities, help in promoting human rights and

the protection of civilians, prevent and reduce conflict and confrontation, enable trust building and encourage women to become a meaningful part of peace and political processes. They reflect the communities they serve and inspire by serving as powerful mentors and role models. UNFICYP's Force Chief of Staff, Benedict Ramsay, attests to women's contribution in peacekeeping. "Throughout my 30-year career, I have seen a huge increase of

diversity of individuals coming into the military. And I see that as a hugely positive thing, because as a peacekeeper, you operate with and amongst people. All wars are fought between people and for the military to be able to operate effectively, it needs to be able to understand and reflect the people that it operates with. If you have a purely male force, its ability to operate within the communities that it is deployed amongst automatically cuts it off from 50% of the people; having a more balanced force will mean that you will be able to engage with the whole of society." From a police force's point of view, Kvilekval adds: "It is a fact that 50% of the population consists of women, so having female officers ensures representation.



Satu Koivu.

As women, we often see a community in a different light, and we bring different views than men do." In 2023, UNFICYP saw another woman lead its police component, Satu Koivu, who believes that the Women, Peace and Security agenda as a whole is a cross-cutting issue for everything that is done in UN peacekeeping. "As the head of the police component, my role is also to set the right tone to daily activities and women need to be involved in everything that we do. I believe that the police is a service for local communities. And that is why I feel that having more women in policing is vital. We get better access to the communities when we have a balance between men and women in the team; we can hear the voices of women and girls better, as well as the voices of men and boys, and when we can hear their voices



Former Force Commander Cheryl Pearce (Left) and Former Head of UNFICYP Elizabeth Spehar.

better, we can better respond to their needs,” reveals Koivu. Beyond that, she also attests that having more women in peacekeeping also sends messages, not only to the local communities, but both within the Organisation and externally. “I have more than 40 percent of women in the police component (2023), and we’re seen as competent and skilful colleagues. At times, it’s the first time our colleagues have this type of diversity and inclusion in policing, same goes for our military component, and I feel it sends a strong message that women can do policing and peacekeeping, serve under female command for the first time and so on. And this applies externally too; when we’re engaging with our local police services, we send messages that when you want to have competent and democratic policing, as an organisation, you need to have both genders involved. Sometimes my counterparts tease me on these issues, but I feel that that’s okay as long as we’re discussing it. Of course, gender issues and women in peacekeeping is not only about numbers, it’s about the quality and added value that we can bring to UN peacekeeping,” adds Koivu.

As the first female Force Commander in UNFICYP, Lund also estimates that as a woman in the lead, she was able to reach out to a much wider audience which meant that she was able to participate in, support and promote the ongoing peace process in Cyprus. “So many doors opened for me because people were curious about this first female Force Commander, and I went through those doors that are vital for you as a military. As a woman, I think you get a much wider perspective and comprehensive view of the entire society you are working in. You will always be invited to where men are invited to when in uniform, but in addition, you get all these other invitations to other events because you are a female.”

GROWING PARTICIPATION

According to UN Peacekeeping statistics, in 1993, women made up 1% of deployed uniformed personnel. In 2020, out of approximately 95,000 peacekeepers, women constituted 4.8% of military contingents and 10.9% of formed police units. Speaking from Camp General Stefanik in Famagusta, peacekeeper Captain Michaela Rajnohová from Slovakia who



Female UNPOL officers at one of the crossing points.

“When I was first deployed to UNFICYP, we were around ten women peacekeepers, and now, 8 years later, there are 26 of us. We also have our first woman as a contingent commander.”

has been deployed to the Mission twice, reaffirms this increase in Cyprus’ Peacekeeping Mission: “When I was first deployed to UNFICYP, we were around ten women peacekeepers, and now, 8 years later, there are 26 of us.

We also have our first woman as a contingent commander; I am very happy that we can come here without any conditions.”

Leading at a time when the Mission saw 75% of the leadership being female, Lund admits that it was the first time that she did not need to discuss the importance of gender with her leadership, “that was already in place,”

defines Lund, “what we did when we had visitors

or other military and politicians visit us, was instead of having gender issues being addressed last, we put them at the top of the agenda; and just by doing that, we were able to rise military female personnel from 4% to 8%, and UNPOL female officers from 10% to 25%. That tells you that it is possible to increase women’s participation in peacekeeping, just by the leadership focusing on the issue.”



Captain Michaela Rajnohová.

PEACEKEEPERS AT THEIR BEST

UNFICYP's military is comprised of additional key units, which provide support to the Mission's activities.

THE MOBILE FORCE RESERVE

Formed in 1997, the Mobile Force Reserve is UNFICYP's primary reserve and provides the Force Commander with a flexible and well-equipped force, that is able to respond to any situation that may arise within the buffer zone. Staffed with peacekeepers from the United Kingdom held at high-readiness and trained in a variety of tasks, from public order to incident response, the Reserve provides support to all Sectors and other elements of the Mission, including routine tasks such as patrolling.

Based in the United Nations Protected Area, the Reserve conducts security patrols and provides a 24/7 ambulance capability.

The Mobile Force Reserve is equipped with a 4x4 vehicle fleet enabling deployment anywhere in the buffer zone at short notice.

MILITARY OBSERVER LIAISON OFFICERS

There are currently twenty-eight Military Observer Liaison Officers, Sector Civilian Activity and Military Liaison Officers serving across the Mission. Military Observer Liaison Officers are not just UN Observers; they are involved at all levels across the Force, in daily negotiations and liaison functions with both opposing forces and form the backbone of the way the Mission deals with the opposing forces, be it at regimental level in the Sectors or at the highest levels in the Headquarters, in the pursuance of conflict resolution, improved communications, and confidence building. They also support Civil Affairs to provide humanitarian aid to communities left behind, return the buffer zone to normal conditions, and support all bicomunal events.

UN FLIGHT

UN Flight Unit has 3 helicopters, with 2 in operation at all times. The unit is based at the Mission's Headquarters and since 1993 it is staffed with 35 personnel from the Argentinean Air Force as an integral part of the Argentinian contingent. Using Hughes 500 and a Bell 212 helicopter, the unit conducts patrols along the buffer zone and provides logistical support for UNFICYP operations, as well as emergency assistance such as medical evacuations, as required.

More recently, specialised personnel now assist in the fight against fire, adding to the Mission's capacity of aerial operations as well as providing a quick response in case of any fire emergency within the United Nations Protected Area or outside, if necessary.



Mobile Force Reserve peacekeepers during training on incident response.



Based in Headquarters, UN Flight is staffed with 35 personnel from the Argentinian Airforce.

BLUE BERET



Mission Engineers construct, maintain and repair all facilities including camps, observation posts and patrol bases.

FORCE ENGINEERS

The Mission's engineering support is provided by the Engineering and Facilities Management whose main role is to construct, maintain and repair all facilities including camps, observation posts and patrol bases. They also provide maintenance of the patrol tracks and helicopter landing sites across the buffer zone.

The Force consists of a Senior Engineering Assistant, the Force Engineer Officer, the Force Engineers Headquarters Platoon, the Engineering and Facilities Management Workshop, and Engineering elements from each Sector. External support agencies include the Public Works Department and the Electrical Mechanical Services provided by the Republic of Cyprus.

The unit is staffed with 37 peacekeepers from Slovakia.

UN FORCE PROTECTION UNIT

The Force Protection Unit comprises of two distinct elements: the Force Military Police Unit and the United Nations Protected Area Security Platoon. Commanded by the Force Provost Marshal, the Force is, by design, a multi-national and multi-functional unit, with representation from different Troop Contributing Countries and an island-wide remit for all policing matters involving UNFICYP personnel and property.

The Unit's primary responsibilities include enforcing the Head of Mission's protection measures, conducting initial investigations into alleged cases of misconduct and criminal activity by UN personnel, to provide investigative assistance to scenes of crime occurring within the buffer zone when there is UN personnel and property involved, and support in perimeter security of the United Nations Protected Area.

The Force Protection Unit's principal tenet is to deter through proactive policing and security measures, to preserve the operational effectiveness of the Force and safeguard its personnel.

The Unit is staffed with peacekeepers from the United Kingdom, Argentina, Slovakia, Hungary, and Serbia.

MEDICAL CENTRE

The Medical Centre known as "Major General Evergisto de Vergara," is based at the Mission's Headquarters and is manned with 1 Senior Medical Officer (Argentinian), 1 Nurse (British) and 2 Medics (British) who provide First Aid and preventive medicine healthcare as well as first line primary health care, emergency resuscitation, stabilisation and evacuation of casualties to the next level of medical care on a 24/7 basis.



Military Force Reserves regularly carry out exercises both at Headquarters and around the buffer zone.



During COVID-19, Mission Support made sure that protocols, testing regimens, quarantines and isolation areas were in place so that personnel could work safely.

UNFICYP SECTORS IN THE LIMELIGHT

UNFICYP is constituted of 3 Sectors from which the Mission's mandate is implemented. Each Sector is manned by varying contributing countries, playing a vital role with their daily tasks, as well as additional activities that reach out to both communities from the buffer zone.



Argentinian peacekeepers in Sector 1 patrol one of the most mountainous regions of the island, where wildlife thrives.

SECTOR 1

THE ARGENTINIAN CONTINGENT

The presence of the Argentinian contingent in Cyprus began in 1993 when the United Nations Security Council decided that UNFICYP would be restructured into 3 battalions of 350 personnel each, in order to fulfil its mission on the island. On 25 September 1993, the first flight transporting Argentinian personnel landed at Larnaka Airport. These personnel were deployed along the western area of the buffer zone. Within a few days, Argentine military personnel were fulfilling peacekeeping tasks within Sector 1, the Force Military Police Unit (FMPU), as well as at the Headquarters. Latterly, Argentinian peacekeepers have served in the

Mission's UN Flight and the Mobile Force Reserve. Over the past 20 years, the Argentinian contingent rotated on 44 occasions, and since 1993, almost 13,000 men and women of the Argentine Army, Navy, and Air Force have served as peacekeepers on the island. During this same period, 4 Argentine peacekeepers lost their lives whilst maintaining peace on the island. In addition to the Argentinian contingent, there are other South American countries that have deployed troops within the Sector to help support UNFICYP's mandate. Today, military from Chile, Paraguay, and Brazil successfully work together, strengthening the commitment of all the Member States in supporting peace in Cyprus.



Beach cleanups are regularly organised and supported by peacekeepers from all Sectors.



Peacekeepers in Sector 2 provide logistical support to collect donations for the survivors of the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria in February 2023.

SECTOR 2 THE BRITISH CONTINGENT

The British contingent has provided a significant contribution to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus since 1964. The contingent comprises of peacekeepers deployed predominantly at the Sector 2 Headquarters in Wolseley Barracks, located in the Ledra Palace Hotel in Nicosia/Lefkoşa. The contingent also heads the Mobile Force Reserve based at the Blue Beret Camp at UNFICYP Headquarters. Additionally, the contingent provides personnel to the Force Military Police Unit. Since the start of the Mission, 63 personnel from the UK have lost their lives whilst serving with the United Nations in Cyprus.



Former Force Commander Ingrid Gjerde of Norway visits peacekeepers in Sector 1.

SECTOR 4 THE SLOVAK CONTINGENT

Since 2001, the Armed Forces of Slovakia and Hungary have jointly contributed to Sector 4 of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, when Slovakia assumed command of the Sector from the Austrian contingent. In 2005, Sector 4 was strengthened by the addition of peacekeepers from Croatia. In 2010, it was expanded further with a contingent from Serbia, and in 2013 with a contingent from Ukraine.

Slovakia also deploys personnel assigned to the Mobile Force Reserve, the Force Military Police Unit, and a separate troop of Slovak engineers who are based in the United Nations Protected Area. Many of the peacekeepers have previously deployed on operations to the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan, or to the other missions all around the world.

The Sector 4 Headquarters and main camp is Camp General Stefanik in Famagusta. Additionally, there are many Patrol Bases and Observation Posts in its area of responsibility within the eastern section of the buffer zone. In support of the Mission and in the service of peace, 2 Slovak peacekeepers lost their lives in Cyprus.

Up until 1993, the armed Forces of Hungary had command of the Sector.



Sector 4 peacekeepers join in a blood donation distributed to both communities.

FROZEN IN TIME

Within the buffer zone, on the western edge of the capital of the island, the hangars and runways of the Nicosia International Airport remain much as they were on 16 August 1974.

Just six years after Cyprus' only international airport expanded its operations with a modern new terminal, it was witness to a series of air raids when fighting between Turkish and Greek Cypriot forces was especially fierce within its vicinity. Having initially served as a United Kingdom Royal Air Force Station (RAF), the Nicosia International Airport played a pertinent role throughout the Second World War. It was when Cyprus gained independence in 1960 that the airport and its surrounding area were transferred to the Cyprus Government, with the airport and its tower staffed and run by Greek Cypriots. At the time, the RAF continued to occupy part of the site, known as the RAF Nicosia Retained Site: this British "retained site" status gave the United Kingdom the right to exercise exclusive control over the designated area in an emergency. After UNFICYP was established in 1964, three former RAF camps close to the airport also shared facilities with the Mission.

An initial expansion of the airport in 1968 saw its runways serving both military and civilian aircrafts and by 1974, the airport was welcoming a strong tourism trade and a highly esteemed meeting point for locals. German-designed by Dorsch und Gehrman and Cypriot-built, the airport was hailed for the stylish modernity of its design. It was elegant and

uncluttered with shafts of sunlight streaming through large circular wells in the ceiling.

Even though there were plans announced to expand the terminal and platform again, it was on 15 July 1974 that Greek National Guard officers staged a military coup d'état during which the airport hosted its last commercial flights in operation as it evacuated primarily tourists from the island. Four days later, as Turkish forces responded to the Greek coup, the airport underwent a series of air raids, until UNFICYP's Force Commander at the time ordered the Mission to take over the airport and cease its operations, a decision immediately approved by the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and thus declaring it as a United Nations Protected Area (UNPA).

In agreement by the local military commanders of both sides, UNFICYP troops (from Canada, Finland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) occupied the airport and in keeping with the Mission's mandate to maintain the status quo, the airport has remained a United Nations Protected Area since 1974 and today stands a stone's throw away from the UNFICYP Headquarters located within the buffer zone.



AS IT STANDS 60 YEARS ON

Time and weather have led to some structural deterioration to the terminal building and to the Cyprus Airways Trident Sunjet passenger plane resting beside it: the plane's engines were stripped during the events of 1974 and used to repair another Cyprus Airways airplane to enable the latter to fly out. Extensive efforts were made during 1993 and 1994 to reach an agreement on a series of confidence building measures aimed at spurring a return to normal conditions on the island. A key element in the action was an attempt to reopen Nicosia International Airport for the equal benefit of both communities.

By mid-1994, however, agreement on the measures remained beyond reach, and despite further talks between both communities, the airport remains closed until today.

3D VIRTUAL TOUR OF THE ABANDONED AIRPORT

In 2021, a team of The Cyprus Institute, with the support of the Mission, completed the full digitisation of the former

Nicosia International Airport. The NIC Project (named after the airport's IATA code) focuses on an interdisciplinary 3D modelling and visualisation process developed to create interactive applications for virtual tours, since access to the airport terminal building is nowadays deemed unsafe due to years of abandonment and lack of maintenance. The project can be seen on YouTube: [The NIC Project - An overview - YouTube](#)

By mid-1994, an agreement on the measures remained beyond reach, and despite further talks between both communities, the airport remains closed until today.



60 years in the service of peace

BEACON OF HOPE

Ledra Palace's Bicommunal Rooms have become a vital part of peacebuilding on the island.

Initially a place where royalty and grandeur would come together in the heart of Cyprus' capital, the emblematic Ledra Palace Hotel has played and still plays a huge part in the history of the island.

The hotel first opened to the public on 8 October 1949. The once luxurious Ledra Palace Hotel consisted of 200 bedrooms, two restaurants, two bars, a café, an outdoor pool, and a function room, all of which were considered novelty at the time. Yet, following the events of 1974, the hotel found itself inside the UN-controlled buffer zone which today divides the Greek Cypriot community in the south and the Turkish Cypriot community in the north.

By 1993, the hotel saw the first British peacekeepers settle in the hotel and military apparatus took over of the hotel's grandeur. As time passed, peacekeepers ended up decamping due to the dire state of the building and the hotel's premises. However, the large hall that used to host balls and parties has come to be known as the United Nation's "Bicommunal Room", which has been used by the United Nations for numerous events and initiatives including high-level meetings, women and youth groups and various activities focused on conflict resolution workshops and seminars between Cypriots. These meetings aim at bringing the communities closer together. Having seen its share of conflict, the Ledra Palace Hotel's role has certainly changed, yet its legacy, location and facilities continue to write Cyprus' history, with notably, peacebuilding and furthering trust building between the communities at the core of its newly found existence.

COEXISTING IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST

In April 2003, the opening of the first crossing point allowing civilians to cross to either side of the buffer zone was facilitated by the Mission. Having been completely divided from each other for decades, it was only at the Ledra Palace Hotel's Bicommunal Rooms that the two communities were able to meet, talk to each other and help build bridges from across the divide. Since the first crossing opened along with another eight to date, the Bicommunal Rooms continue to be a common space used to bring people together.

Evgenia Chamilou, a young activist who has taken part in the Mission's Youth Champion for Environment and Peace initiative, recalls a moment that symbolises the significance of the room: "When we were arranging the room for our first conference, we were looking for a door to let participants in and we found out that it was locked. The chain was so old, no one knew where the key was; UNFICYP informed us that the door had been locked since the 1960s when the Peacekeeping Force first arrived in Cyprus. Eventually the chain was broken so that we could have the conference and for participants to be able to enter and leave the hotel. This was such a special and symbolic moment for us, given that we have given this hotel a new purpose – from a tragic venue with signs of bullets on the walls, to a space for dialogue where young people come together to discuss pressing issues," she reveals.



"It is a very safe place, we do not feel afraid of something, or of somebody. It is a place that belongs to both of us (both communities)," attests Magda Eleftheriou, who is part of the bicomunal choir. Up until today, the Ledra Palace Hotel's Bicomunal Rooms have seen the communities come together and realise that they share the same traditions, the same culture. "We cannot underestimate the importance of the trust building and confidence building work that has taken place here, in these rooms over the years; we have seen young Cypriots and old Cypriots often meet for the first time and realise that they do have a future together. The role of such venues for the communities to gather in a safe environment, where there is an atmosphere of trust between the two communities, is imperative to the peacebuilding process here in Cyprus," says Aleem Siddique, UNFICYP Spokesperson. "In this room, there were a lot of people, from a lot of backgrounds, a lot of communities that had to catch a conversation, had to debate about an idea along with discussing current world issues. This room is special because it made a lot of people from a lot of communities feel safe,"

says Ferihan Ince, who was part of the first intercommunal youth diplomats conference held at Ledra Palace in December 2022. Around 90 young Cypriots from across the island engaged in debates on global issues and worked together in multicomunal groups. Over the years, there have been numerous examples of initiatives and events which have brought the two communities together in the Ledra Palace Hotel's Bicomunal Rooms. Whether this be bicomunal choirs, youth environmentalists, peaceful gatherings, sports events or high-level meetings, the United Nations supports and promotes the usage of the space and looks to the future to see other, similar spaces multiply across the island, in support of the Mission's mandate. "This room has been a beacon of hope, reminding us that we can bring divided communities together, help overcome mistrust and build confidence. I hope that people will be inspired and that the example we see in this space will be mirrored across the island, helping to bring the divided communities of Cyprus one step closer to a peaceful reunited future," concludes Siddique.

"This room is special because it made a lot of people from a lot of communities feel safe."



PRESERVING THE ISLAND'S UNIQUE NATURE

180 kilometres of diverse and unique flora and fauna make the buffer zone's biodiversity an ideal environment for both communities to work together and allow nature to flourish. UNFICYP is committed to safeguarding the area.

As custodians of the buffer zone, the Mission strives to preserve and protect 180 kilometres of diverse flora and fauna and an unparalleled ecosystem that has been thriving with almost no human intervention for the last 60 years.

Home to 12 unique species of orchids, foxes, mouflon, rare butterflies and birds, the buffer zone's natural biodiversity could be described as an unofficial wildlife reserve, with residents such as the endangered and endemic Egyptian fruit bat, the bee orchid, and the Eurasian Thick-knee. As the Mission implements its mandate, working widely within the buffer zone, it is pertinent that environmental matters have become an integral part of its work and awareness. In practice, it has triggered an array of good practices, faced challenges and brought forward initiatives which hold the protection of the environment at heart. "I want to pledge our support to protect the environment, not just in words but also in actions," says Head of Mission, Colin Stewart, referring to the challenges the Mission faces with regard to Cyprus' environmental care, whilst also looking at the bigger picture on how to address climate change.



Cyprus Mouflon.

patrol the buffer zone by foot or bicycles as alternatives to cars. As far as tackling environmental hazards within the buffer zone and ensuring wildlife continues to thrive, the Mission works alongside both communities. "Illegal dumping is a crime on the island," states Koivu, as an example. "The police force therefore monitors and patrols such activities. Unfortunately, very often, we see illegal dumping cases where construction waste or animal carcasses are

dumped in the buffer zone, and together with our Civil Affairs component, and local communities, we organise clean-ups to deal with these issues," says Koivu.

"During my time here, we've removed over ten kilometres of old barbed wire, which was a defensive position from 1974, which now plays no part except for preventing farmland from being farmed. We have also removed plastic waste from the buffer zone, which will be beneficial for the environment and for animals and the ecosystem within the environment," adds Force Chief of Staff, Benedict Ramsay.

FACING CHALLENGES TOGETHER

Most components in the Mission will refer to the same challenges faced on the ground such as illegal dumping, illegal hunting and poaching, fire hazard, deterioration of old buildings, and a general lack of respect for the plethora of wildlife that inhabits the area. There is also UNFICYP's own impact on the environment that is under the microscope. "As custodians of the buffer zone, I feel that as peacekeepers, we are also committed towards environmental issues; we are keen to make sure that our footprint on the ground is as light as possible and make every effort to minimise our impact," says Special Police Advisor, Satu Koivu.

To this end, UNFICYP's Environmental Committee, has set up Green Parks inside the buffer zone to encourage personnel to dispose of recyclable waste responsibly. Additionally, Mission Support addresses environmental issues by replacing vehicles with hybrid cars, providing reusable water bottles to personnel and monitoring water consumption, plastic waste and renewable electricity use. Furthermore, peacekeepers



Peacekeepers protect the natural environment of the buffer zone.

SETTING AN EXAMPLE

As for the wildlife, looking out for the endangered mouflon sheep that are endemic to the island and one of the many rare plant and animal species that have flourished in the buffer zone, is one example. Koivu said: "Some years ago, we established quite a unique project: a nesting project, where together with the local authorities, we use old wooden ammunition boxes for barn owls in the buffer zone to nest. When we started, there was a very small number



Peacekeepers patrolling the buffer zone on bicycles.

of baby owls, but now, it is so successful that it is spread throughout the buffer zone and outside of the buffer zone too; barn owls are multiplying,” says Koivu. “This project really feels like we are doing something concrete for nature,” admits Koivu, “and we are proud to support nature and these initiatives. By taking on our own responsibilities as custodians of the buffer zone and by showing that UN peacekeepers are committed to voluntary work, we are also sending strong messages to the local authorities for them to continue these efforts and support environmental activities,” she adds.

Yet, beyond its hand-on contribution and as the Mission prepares the grounds for a potential peaceful settlement, UNFICYP’s leadership is very conscious that safeguarding the buffer zone’s history – land that makes up 3% of Cyprus’ total land mass, is as equally important, both for the present and the future.

“We know that a stressed environment is often a cause for conflict between communities. So, focusing on handing over the buffer zone’s rich, fertile environment back to the people of Cyprus when we leave is something that is absolutely at the forefront of senior leaders’ minds and cascades all the way down to the soldier and to the police officer who is on duty. We do not own this land, and we see it as our responsibility to look after the buffer zone, to make sure that it is in a good a state as possible right now and for the future, when hopefully the people of Cyprus will be able to enjoy the land in the buffer zone and sustain a peaceful coexistence,” says Ramsay.

YOUTH AND A COMMON DRIVE

Ultimately, the environment is also a global topic which concerns us all. “Protecting the environment is not just about the birds and the trees. It also serves an important purpose in bringing people together from across the divide to work together on common solutions,” says Stewart.

“Over the years we have been working with hundreds of young people from across the island; bringing them together, often for the first time, to discuss common environmental challenges and agree on concrete plans to improve their shared environment. This helps to build trust and confidence between divided communities, an important pre-requisite for peace, while also progressing much needed climate action across the island,” adds Stewart.

“I remember when Colin Stewart stated “that environmentalist movements are perhaps one of the most

“Protecting the environment is not just about the birds and the trees. It also serves an important purpose in bringing people together from across the divide to work together on common solutions.”



The UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace is one of several initiatives spearheaded by the Civil Affairs Section to bring communities together through common interests.

promising channels to help bridge the divide between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and build an open dialogue. This gave me a feeling of acceptance and immediately felt welcomed. Because I’m a person who believes so much in passion and creativity utilisation in creating positive and sustainable impacts in our communities,” explains Daniel Barasa, one of the UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace, an initiative led by UNFICYP’s Civil Affairs, which aims to bring young people from across the island to work together on shared environmental concerns, helping them to build trust and confidence. The initiative is also supported by the Good Offices Mission, who does a lot of groundwork through the Technical Committee on the Environment to encourage Cypriots from across the island and abroad to form meaningful networks to safeguard the island and all it has to offer.

UNMAS IN CYPRUS





In 2015, Daniel Craig, UNMAS Goodwill Ambassador, visited Cyprus.

REMOVING THREATS, BUILDING CONFIDENCE, AND FACILITATING LASTING PEACE

As an expert in providing dedicated expertise in mine action planning and coordination, demining capacity, quality assurance oversight, and data management of mine action information, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has become an integral component of UNFICYP since 2016. The objectives of UNMAS operations are to: reduce the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) to contribute to confidence building measures; facilitate a return to normal living conditions; and to ensure safer freedom of

movement for UNFICYP, UN partners, and communities. UNMAS also provides assistance to the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus to ensure safe access to areas it conducts activities in and technical guidance to UNFICYP for small arms ammunition management. Within its capacity, UNMAS facilitates UNFICYP in achieving its mandated objectives as described in UN Security Council resolution 2369 (July 2017) and supports progress towards a mine-free Cyprus.

SINCE ITS ARRIVAL IN CYPRUS, UNMAS HAS SUCCEEDED IN:

- Releasing 199,783m² of land in the north of the island to remove the threat of mines and to facilitate confidence building measures, agricultural activities, and livelihood activities.
- Recovering and destroying 7 anti-tank and removing six mortars.
- Releasing 20,000m² of land and removing unexploded ordnance (UXO) for the Mission to conduct safe operations and facilitate agricultural activities in Sector 4.
- Releasing 101,891m² of land in the buffer zone through battle area clearance and technical survey to facilitate safe UNFICYP operations and confidence building measures.
- Removing UXO, providing field support, technical advice, and training for the Committee on Missing Persons to safely conduct operations and promote reconciliation between the communities.
- Conducting awareness training for UNFICYP personnel to enhance force protection and facilitate operations in areas potentially contaminated with mines/UXO.
- Updating mine action technical standards and guidelines to conform to International Mine Action Standards.
- Providing data analysis of information on “suspect hazardous areas” to prepare for future surveys and clearance when access to the sites becomes available.

THE BUFFER ZONE



180 kilometres form the length of the United Nations buffer zone, an area which UNFICYP has been mandated to work in as the Mission strives towards a return to normal conditions.

The UN-controlled buffer zone extends approximately 180 kilometres across the island and divides the Greek Cypriot community in the south and the Turkish Cypriot community in the north since 1974.

Its northern and southern limits constitute the lines where the hostilities halted following the ceasefire of 16 August 1974, as recorded by UNFICYP. With some parts of the buffer zone only a few metres wide, while in other areas some few kilometres wider, in the eastern part of the island, it is interrupted by the British Sovereign Base Area of Dhekelia, where the UN does not operate. Another area the UN does not control is Maraş/Varosha, a former resort town near the town of Famagusta, now under the control of the Turkish military.

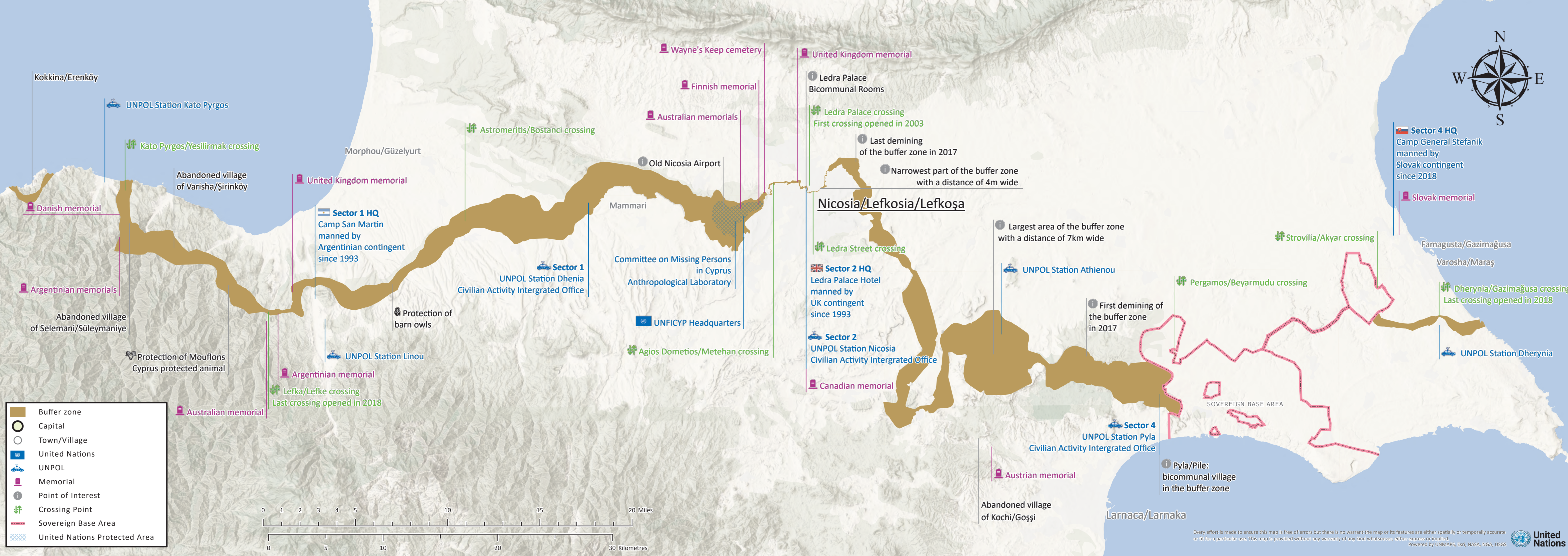
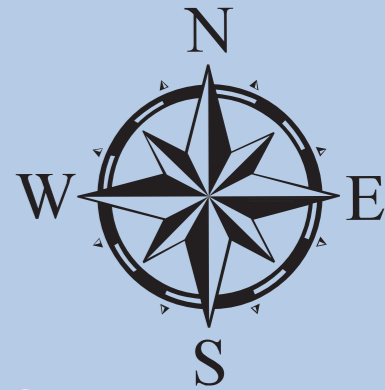
ACTIVITY WITHIN THE BUFFER ZONE

In line with UNFICYP's mandate to work towards a return to normal conditions, many parts of the buffer zone still observe numerous civilian activities such as farming, while there are also several villages where more than 10,000 people live and work and where civilians may enter freely. Elsewhere in the buffer zone, civilian movement or activity requires specific authorisation from the Mission. Within the entire buffer zone, only one village known as Pyla/Pile has remained as a bicomunal one, with Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots living side-by-side since 1974.

The remaining areas of the buffer zone have been untouched by human activity, with remnants of old villages, shops, an abundant wildlife, and other reminders of lives once lived scattered throughout the area. In April 2003, the first crossing point through the buffer zone was opened to the wider public, with another eight succeeding to date, occurrences which were facilitated by the UN in Cyprus.

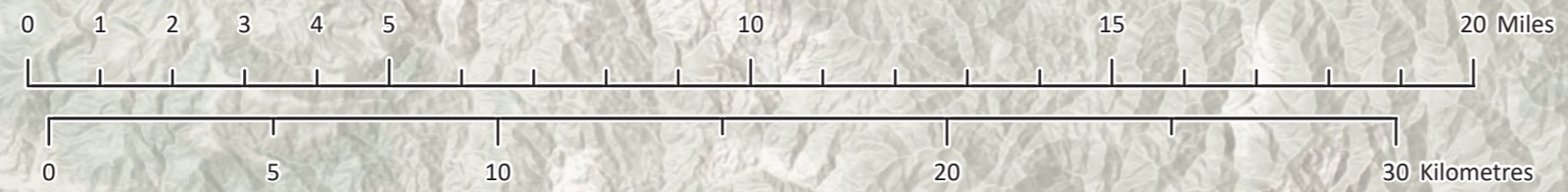


60 years in the service of peace



Legend

- Buffer zone
- Capital
- Town/Village
- United Nations
- UNPOL
- Memorial
- Point of Interest
- Crossing Point
- Sovereign Base Area
- United Nations Protected Area



BRINGING HISTORY BACK TO LIFE

UNFICYP sets an example and digitises 1,500,000 pages of substantive political, civilian, military and police archives, a project which aims at facilitating access to information and modernise the Mission's efficiency.

600 box files of UNFICYP's historical paper archive stored at the Headquarters for decades are in the final stages of being digitised, a project which took 18 months to materialise and is paramount in facilitating the support of the Mission to continue its mandated activities. The project is also a leap towards modernising the Mission's operations and providing easy access to its archives.

Throughout 2023, a team working under the Mission's Field Technology Section digitised approximately 1,500,000 pages of substantive political, civilian, military and police physical archives which have accumulated since the inception of the Mission almost 60 years ago.

"These documents are very important to our uniformed personnel and offices who refer to these documents and need them for research purposes, to go back in time to understand the history of the Mission or specific incidents that may have occurred," explains David Wilkins, Chief of UNFICYP's Field Technology Section.

Up until recently, staff had to attain access and physically scrounge around archive rooms to find what they were looking for. But today, with the support of the United Nations Archives and Records Management Section (ARMS) – whose policy is that such historical documents are retained indefinitely – over a million documents are now accessible through an online system, which was created to store data.

"Once we secured the funds, we sourced qualified people, bought numerous scanners and adopted a methodology on how to scan the documents into an electronic system," reveals Wilkins. To this end, the team followed a 6-step process for each document including identifying, scanning it, processing it digitally, placing it back in new acid free folders to ensure its long-term preservation and labelling it.



David Wilkins and Renalyn Natural have been overseeing the project since it began.



Initially all documentation at UNFICYP was done by hand or typewriters. Today, thousands of official records have been digitalised.

"We are talking about six decades of records. 1400 boxes of records, and we keep on receiving more."

"It is a sort of labour of love," says Wilkins, "you need to ensure that you follow a process, and it has taken thousands of hours of human resources," he adds.

Supervising the project, Renalyn Natural, attests to its challenges. "We're talking about six decades of records, 1400 boxes of records, and we keep on receiving more," reveals Natural. "Digitisation it is not just a matter of scanning documents. You need to pay attention to details. It was important for us to find people who dedicated their time in firstly finding the documents and then making sure that they are readable when scanned," adds Natural.

"The objective is to bring history back to life and we want to see a good result," says Stuart John Beatty, a contractor working on the digitisation project from the Mission's Headquarters in Nicosia/Lefkoşa as part of a diverse team comprised of three women and three men, ranging from the ages of 28 to 67-years-old.

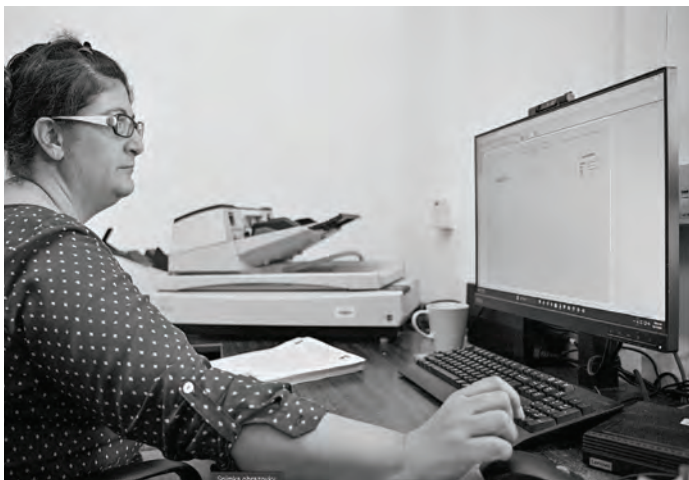


FAST FORWARD TO TODAY

Today, UNFICYP's digital archive is infinitely more usable. Mission offices have quick access to their data at anytime from anywhere. Easy accessibility of cloud-based digital data has improved the data flow within the organisation and has enhanced productivity because digital files can be accessed by multiple departments at the same time. As for the future, and in accordance with ARMS policy, the long-term keeping of the historical physical archive is also secured. "These documents obviously cannot stay in situ because of the

risk [of deterioration], so the policy is that these documents will be shipped to New York and will be part of the permanent management records system in UN Headquarters," explains Wilkins. UNFICYP's digitisation project is showing the way for other missions interested in digitising their own archives. "We have had some interest from two or three missions who have inquired about the project, and we are in the process of helping them set up. The standard procedures are now in place for them to follow," concludes Renalyn.

"These documents are very important to our uniformed personnel and offices who refer to them for research purposes, to go back in time to understand the history of the Mission."



Marianna Christodolou-Aidoo and Stuart John Beatty (Right), both contractors in UNFICYP, work on digitising records, a task that has taken the Mission over a year to materialise.

BLUE BERET MAGAZINE IN RETROSPECT

This year, the Blue Beret magazine marks its 60th year, coinciding with UNFICYP's establishment.

It was on the 20th of April 1964 that the founder of the Blue Beret magazine, a young British Officer known as Captain David Lees, brought to life the publication you hold in your hands for the very first time; a publication that is testimony to UNFICYP's story, from its early years, all the way through until today. Deemed at the time as an excellent means of internal communication in a multi-national organisation, the publication acquired its name from the one common symbol that the United Nations had: the blue beret worn by all members of various contingents.



"We were given a table and chairs, a typewriter, and a small room in Wolseley Barracks (close to the Ledra Palace Hotel) in Nicosia and that is how the Blue Beret began!" Lees declares in a previous edition of the Blue Beret magazine. "All editorial copy - the editorial itself, press releases, statements from UN Headquarters - had to be 'bashed' out on a typewriter," he recalls. "Every week we visited each contingent and attended their press conferences; We also liaised with reporters from all over the world... English was the main language of the Blue Beret magazine, but we also featured articles in French, German, Swedish, Finnish, Danish and Gaelic. On one occasion there were 9 different languages in an edition," he adds.



ADAPTING THROUGH THE TIMES

This year, the Blue Beret publication marks its 60th year, coinciding with the Mission's establishment. For many years, the magazine was printed on a weekly basis, a laborious task considering the lack of technology and infrastructure during its initial stages. Having moved on from typewriters to computers, proofreading on paper to digital editing, letter writing to e-mails and offset printing to digital printing, the Blue Beret magazine has undergone many changes; it now circulates as a quarterly edition in English and is produced by the Mission's Public Information Office, yet as always, strives to pay tribute to the Mission's activities and the work that peacekeepers do in the service of peace as well as share staff's experiences, achievements and news with external audiences, other members of the Mission and the wider United Nations community through the written word.

"We were given a table and chairs, a typewriter, and a small room in Wolseley Barracks (close to the Ledra Palace Hotel) in Nicosia and that is how the Blue Beret began!"



Blue Beret magazine in the 1960s. The first edition of the magazine was published on June 1, 1964.



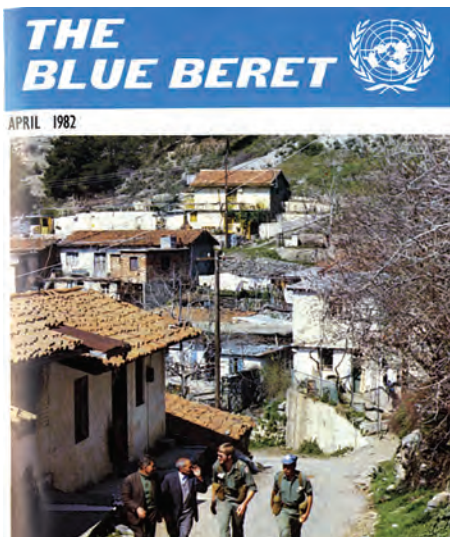
Blue Beret magazine pays tribute to two peacekeepers who lost their lives during their service of peace in 1970.



Front page of Blue Beret magazine pays tribute to the 3 Austrian Peacekeepers who lost their lives during the events of 1974.



Women's efforts in peacekeeping are depicted on the front cover of the Blue Beret magazine in 1975.



Front cover of the Blue Beret magazine shows peacekeepers interacting with civilians while on duty in a Cypriot village back in 1980's.



Blue Beret magazine in the 1990s. A photo of peacekeepers and a dog at the Nicosia International Airport.



Blue Beret magazine in the 1990s. Peacekeeper looks out from a UN post overlooking the buffer zone.



Blue Beret magazine in the 2000s. Front cover photo of the opening of the first crossing facilitated by the Mission in 2003.



Blue Beret magazine in the 2010s. Front cover pays tribute to Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon's, visit to boost peace efforts.



Blue Beret magazine in the 2020s. UNPOL peacekeepers reach out to children at one of the crossings points in Nicosia/Lefkoşa.

60 years in the service of peace

YOUNG PEOPLE TAKE CENTRE STAGE IN PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS

A great number of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot youth are engaging, communicating and sharing their concerns under the guidance of initiatives organised by the UN in Cyprus, in an effort to include young people in peacebuilding work.



“I always dreamt to see my island united one day, and I always knew that I wanted to take action. As I was trying to find a way to do this, friends suggested to reach out to UNFICYP; that’s how my journey begun.”

Turkish Cypriot Ahmed Aksunlar is one of the hundreds of young people who have been involved in initiatives that promote the inclusion and participation of young people as a key dimension of building and sustaining peace and security for all Cyprus.

“I could not believe the immense support I got from the UN offices. We managed to create the Inter-communal Youth Diplomacy Cyprus, an initiative where young people can learn about the policy-making process of the UN while creating long-lasting relationships. During our first year we managed to host 90 participants and in 2023, we hosted 200 participants,” reveals Ahmed.

Daniel Barasa from Uganda made Cyprus his home as he furthers his education. He also participated in several programmes organised by the Mission’s Civil Affairs Section and, in particular, the UN Youth Champion for Environment and Peace, an initiative that started in 2020 and so far, has gathered more than 80 young people to discuss pressing issues to them, including ways to raise awareness about climate change.

“To me, being part of peace and environmental related projects is empowering and inspiring; it is a unique platform to voice our ideas, contribute to change, and foster understanding. It has been a privilege to play a role in shaping a more peaceful, more inclusive, more environmentally sustainable world, and it is a responsibility I embrace with enthusiasm and dedication,” says Daniel.

Greek Cypriot Evgenia Chamilou has attained a wide range of experience, having participated in a variety of UN lead initiatives, both in Cyprus and abroad, all of which have broadened her horizons on a professional level.

“The UN was the reason why I became interested in pursuing a career in diplomacy and multilateral affairs. As a child, I once wrote a novel about fictional characters from Disney travelling the world to see first-hand the problem that young children across the world are facing. It seemed that from a young age I cared about children’s rights, poverty and conflict resolutions and I always sought for creative ways to face global challenges,” recalls Evgenia. “In high school, I first got involved with the Model United Nations conferences and continued at the university-level. I remember distinctly the first time I entered the UN General Assembly room in New York – I burst into tears. My love and admiration for this organisation is immense and quite frankly I find it very hard to



Daniel Barasa from Uganda interacts in one of the UN Youth Champion for Environment and Peace events.



express my feelings into words,” adds Evgenia. Yet she is also apt in pinpointing the challenges of being involved in the UN family as a youth. “It honestly feels empowering, but it can also be frustrating. Things are particularly slow when it comes to significant developments in political negotiations – and Cyprus is not unique to this issue. The frustration comes from the missed opportunities we could have had if we were united, such as conducting research across our shared ecosystems and being able to effectively protect our biodiversity, as well as everything that should have been done when it comes to youth involvement in the peace process, as stipulated by UN Security Council resolution on Youth, Peace, and Security,” reveals Evgenia. “Some might argue that the youth lack experience and historical context, which are essential in navigating the complexities of the Cyprus issue,” adds Daniel. “However, this perspective overlooks the power of fresh perspectives and the ability of young people to challenge the status quo. Youth can bring a sense of urgency to the reconciliation process, inspiring older generations to reconsider entrenched beliefs and ideologies. Youths’ ability to think outside the box can lead to innovative solutions and approaches that may not be apparent to those who have been immersed in the conflict for a long time,” he says. Advocating for youth’s participation in peace processes, Daniel attests that “young people are natural bridge-builders. They are more likely to challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and divisive narratives, promoting mutual understanding and tolerance between different communities. By actively participating in community-based projects, cultural exchanges, and educational programmes, youth can facilitate

cross-cultural interactions that break down barriers and promote social cohesion.” And so, as hundreds of youths have participated in youth, peace and security initiatives, the experiences and understandings gained are priceless, with unique moments imprinted in their memories that they will carry throughout their lives. Ahmed recalls the last Inter-communal youth diplomacy conference he attended in 2022. “After so much work, at the closing ceremony we saw people tearing up with joy and happiness that they had this experience, so many participants found new friends, learned so many things and seeing them that happy was a memory I will never forget.” What then would youth that have gained experience in such initiatives and actions tell their peers? “Embarking on a journey with the United Nations is a powerful commitment to making a positive impact on Cyprus and our globe. The UN addresses a wide array of challenges, from climate change and poverty, to human rights and peacekeeping. Identifying the causes that resonate with you will fuel your commitment and drive... Our generation has the potential to shape a brighter future, and the UN is a platform where your contributions can make a lasting difference,” concludes Evgenia. For UNFICYP, engaging with young Cypriots plays a vital role to foster meaningful interactions and increase understanding and trust between the communities. To strengthen the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in Cyprus, the UN family on the island partners with young people, helping them participate in decisions affecting them, and strengthening their ability to advance issues such as climate action, education and employment.



Evgenia Chamilou from Cyprus, one of the first UN Youth Champions For Environment and Peace.





KEEPING HOPE ALIVE

For the last two decades, the Buyuk Han Coffee Club, an informal club that strives to bring Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots together in a social gathering every Saturday morning, holds trust to build lasting peace on the island.

For decades, a growing number of civil society actors and non-governmental organisations in Cyprus have been working alongside one of the aims of the Mission's Civil Affairs Section; that is to promote a sense of harmony and community through interactions such as dialogues and conversations, enabling communities to see other's perspective and create empathy for each other.

One such initiative is the Buyuk Han Coffee Club, an informal club which for the past two decades has been striving to bring people from both sides of the divide together to enhance social contact. As such, a group of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots meet every Saturday morning in the northern part of the capital, where they leave behind their sad stories from the past and together build foundations of a new Cyprus through friendship, tolerance, respect, forgiveness, and cooperation.

A NEW BEGINNING

"It all started in 2003 when the first crossing point finally opened and we could visit the part of our country that we could not visit for about thirty years," revealed the Greek Cypriot founder of the Club Andreas Paralikis. "I came looking for my old classmates from before the war and although I did not find them right away, I found other people and we started having coffee together in Buyuk Han," he adds.



Andreas Paralikis and Süleyman Ergüçlü (Right).



It was through these meetings that Andreas met his counterpart, Turkish Cypriot Süleyman Ergüçlü, who equally believed that it was time for the two communities to come together and enjoy the beauties of the island, their mutual customs, understandings, and character.

"I am proud to say that for the past twenty years we have been meeting every single Saturday, at the

same place, at the same time, at the same table. We are good friends and we made good friends. And we are still making new friends," says Süleyman.

Andreas agrees: "The fact that we are Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots has not stopped us at all in becoming real friends. It is not just about the people who come here on Saturdays, it is also about our families, our children have become friends; we do many, many things together."

Beyond their weekly social gathering, the Club organises outings on both sides of the divide and introduces each other to each other's realms and visit historical sites, villages and places imprinted in their memories as a Cyprus once united. The Club also attends and supports intercommunal events and various happenings that bring meaning to their cause, while from time to time, prominent figures such as ambassadors, politicians, community leaders and notably, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in Cyprus join the coffee mornings.



Former SRSF Elizabeth Spehar in one of the weekend meetings.

LEADING THE WAY

“We are still trying to contribute, to move towards lasting peace on this island so that our children and grandchildren do not see the bad and difficult days we did and had to go through; we remain determined to continue with the Buyuk Han Coffee Club,” discloses Süleyman, to which Andreas added: “I feel that if the crossing points ever closed it would be like cutting off one of my hands. I cannot live without my friends in the north and my country in the north.”

Pertinently, discussions about politics and the current Cyprus issue cannot be ignored. Yet, the duo has found a means to deter their gatherings from being politically driven. “We make fun of each other, we laugh, we enjoy ourselves and we speak a little bit about politics, but not very much,” said Andreas. “When Cypriots come together, they start with: ‘What are we going to do with the Cyprus issue?’ That is the initial subject. So we let them talk about the problems or politics for a few minutes. But after a reasonable time, we interfere and I start singing: ‘Hey, mambo, mambo Italiano’... And everybody understands,” added Süleyman.

Yet Andreas does not shy away from admitting that in essence, they are politically active. “Politically in the general sense,” he clarified. “At one time, our group participated in a lovely event in Larnaka, where Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot young tennis players had a tournament; we had about 17 people

visiting, congratulating the kids and in a way sponsoring the event. So, we do things to promote our coexistence in Cyprus.”

COMING TOGETHER

And so, the Buyuk Han Coffee Club’s underlying messages are clear: “People should stop thinking in terms of different communities and start thinking in terms of Cypriots. It is a nice nationality, and we should not try to hide it. It is a nationality of a small island that has its own culture, even its own dialect, so stop thinking of motherlands.

“I believe that peace is built on trust. If you do not have trust, you cannot have peace. We have found out that we can trust each other. A lot of people have not found that out yet. We want them to see that it is possible for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to trust each other. If we manage to affect some people in building trust, we will be very happy and that will make a small contribution to peace,” concludes Andreas. To which Süleyman adds: “There is always hope for a solution, and we should keep that hope there. Whether there are negative things happening around us, it does not matter. We should insist on keeping that hope in place.”

“It all started in 2003 when the first crossing point finally opened and we could visit the part of our country that we could not visit for about thirty years.”

*** Süleyman Ergüçlü sadly passed away on 14 August 2023. A photo in memory of him stands on the walls of the Buyuk Han, just behind the table where the group continues to meet every Saturday.

A DIVIDED HOMELAND

In 2003, the first crossing point across the buffer zone opened, a milestone for the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities that was facilitated by UNFICYP.

Gaston and Tuncer's friendship sparked before the first crossing was officially opened in 2003. In early 2001, Tuncer Bağışkan, a Turkish Cypriot archaeologist, attended a conference that took place in the Bicomunal Room at the Ledra Palace Hotel. At the time, the Ledra Palace Hotel was the only place where both communities could meet under the auspices of the UN in Cyprus. Gaston Neocleous, a Greek Cypriot economist, attended the same conference. This was the impetus for the two Cypriots to meet for the first time. Yet it was once the first crossing through the buffer zone opened in 2003 that the two Cypriots deepened their friendship and re-introduced each other to their sides of the island.

"After meeting Gaston during the conference, we started contacting each other via Facebook, learning about what he was doing and what I was doing," says Tuncer as a testament to their initial contact which, at the time, could only be pursued via the Internet. "As we wrote to each other... I felt that we were close in our quests and way of thinking... I wrote to him that if people opened their heart... they could break the barrier of separation between Muslim/Orthodox, Turkish Cypriot/Greek Cypriot; that we would have a better world," adds Gaston.

"When the first crossing opened, an enthusiasm was created to go and see the other half of our homeland, which we were deprived of for almost 30 years," reveals Gaston. "I first tried to cross on foot, I waited for 4 hours in the crowd, we moved towards the crossing step-by-step, but in the end, we did not manage to cross until the following day," recalls Gaston. "I had planned with Tuncer; he greeted me at the crossing and took me and my family to Kyrenia/Girne. We sat there and had lunch. We were excited, we felt an unprecedented joy that finally people would come closer to each other, and that Cyprus would be reunited again," adds Gaston.

"When I crossed for the first time, I met with Gaston who picked me up from the Ledra Palace crossing. The first place that I wanted to visit was my house and neighbourhood, where I lived during my childhood up until the age of 7... all the memories of that neighbourhood started to come back to me like a movie," reveals Tuncer.

"The occasion was the first move to get together, go together and see our land, take him (Tuncer) to his land in the south, take him to villages where he had identified mosques that



Tuncer Bağışkan (Left) and Gaston Neocleous.

he wanted to photograph, and see their condition in order to include them in the book he wrote about the Ottoman monuments of Cyprus," explains Gaston. "Crossing gave me the opportunity to spread across the island, I had so many memories from my childhood... it was natural for my first thought to be to visit the places where I experienced my most beautiful childhood memories. We would walk barefoot for about a kilometre to go from our house to the beach, we would have beautiful and unforgettable moments

with friends from Nicosia, we played games and spent time in nature, on a beautiful piece of land with carob, olive and fig trees and vines that my grandmother had planted," recalls Gaston.

"When the first crossing opened, an enthusiasm was created to go and see the other half of our homeland, which we were deprived of for almost 30 years."

From then on, Gaston and Tuncer's friendship flourished. In 1994, the Enorasis Socio-Cultural Club was founded, an initiative that offers quality entertainment, through a range of activities that expands circles of acquaintances and builds genuine friendship and cooperation. Both Gaston and Tuncer are members of the board. "Gaston introduced me to Enorasis. Over the years, I had different duties as a member of the Enorasis board committee," reveals Tuncer.

The opening of the crossing was thus determinative in bringing people together and start building friendships. "Through Enorasis, when the crossings opened and along with the friendship that I had created with Tuncer, we immediately shared contacts, we went on outings, pilgrimages, we went to see our houses, we got to know our land, we took Turkish Cypriots with us, we went to excursions in the southern parts, and northern parts of our island, we brought them back to places they already had memories in as children, and we built



a humane and beautiful communication between people who from then onwards started to do things together... I remember when we went to Apostolos Andreas on our first excursion, many Turkish Cypriots came, they lit a candle because they felt that it was a pilgrimage of love, humanity, communication, beauty of people together," says Gaston. To this end, Tuncer and Gaston express the commonalities between both communities. "Our island is one, the people for me are all the same, I feel that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, Latins, Armenians, they're all the same, they are simple people from this land that can coexist and be happy, creative, and make a beautiful homeland, a beautiful Cyprus," adds Gaston.

"Even language wise, in the Turkish Cypriot villages, people spoke Greek, they did not know Turkish like in Istence village, my grandmother's village. Even until recent years, in Kalebornou village, people did not know Turkish, and they would speak Greek and they know Greek as a mother tongue," reveals Tuncer.

As Gaston envisions a Cyprus with no divide, he envisions a land where "people can get involved, create, work together, it will be the most beautiful thing, and that would fulfil me, I would move around the entire island, more freely, more optimistic, and in this way I think that all the people will see how well you can live when you set aside obstacles... when people are free to express themselves, to talk, to act, then Cyprus will be a heavenly paradise".

While acknowledging that many Turkish Cypriots have not met a Greek Cypriot and vice versa, and considering the friendship Tuncer and Gaston have created, Gaston also estimates that a Turkish Cypriot who has not met a Greek Cypriot may have a misconception, that they are a foreigner, that there is no way that they can live together in a united island. "If they have not met each other, they may be scared; but if one meets a Turkish Cypriot or a Greek Cypriot, they will understand that there is nothing to be scared about, that they can build the future together," he adds.

"We are now 60 years later, and these fights must end, Cyprus should be united, and all Cypriots should live in peace. I will always think the same: yesterday, today, and always," attests Tuncer. "My hope for Cyprus is to see it as a prototype and role model for the world and our neighbours in the Middle East; that the two communities, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots can coexist beautifully without any problems,

create a beautiful society, a beautiful world of creativity and progress, welfare, and set aside divisions," adds Gaston. "The UN have acted determinatively on the island by bringing people together and opening up our spirit to join forces. Their events at the Ledra Palace Hotel brought people together at a time when there was no way of coming into contact, for people to begin saying that we are the same, that Cypriots can live together and create together; the United Nations built this perspective, they contributed determinatively to open our hearts, making sure to maintain peace of course, but they gave the opportunity for people to unite, come together. I hope that at some point they won't be needed, even if we feel grateful that they are here and have struggled for so many years for us, I hope that the time will come when we will be able to say thank you very much, you can go somewhere else where there is a problem and that we have overcome our problem," concludes Gaston.



***Tuncer Bağışkan sadly passed away on 8 December 2023. In a Facebook post, his long-time friend, Gaston wrote: "It leaves us with a void that cannot be filled. We all cry for the man we lost, our Tuncer who loved us and we loved him more than anyone else. He opened roads of beauty and joy at Enorasis, but also roads of struggle to restore the unity of the island and people. With sweetness and humanity, he moved every moment, winning our hearts and souls."

*** UNFICYP's Civil Affairs Section supports Enorasis and a broad range of civil society groups to carry out initiatives that promote trust building between the communities.

FATHERS AND SONS: GENERATIONS IN THE SERVICE OF PEACE

Conveying experiences derived from working in the service of peace from one generation to the next enhances pride in both parent-child relationships and common career paths.

Uniformed personnel following the footsteps of their parents is not uncommon in peacekeeping operations, and UNFICYP is no different. Since the Mission's inception, several peacekeepers have seen their parents, grandparents or even both precede them; a call which some describe as an honour, a unique affiliation with their relatives and a distinctive sense of pride in their service towards peace.

"My father was deployed in UNFICYP in 1964 during what he termed was the emergency, it was the initial deployment of UNFICYP, and he was deployed in the Paphos area where he was protecting communities from being attacked," describes current Force Chief of Staff, Benedict Ramsay. "I think my father is the biggest influence in my life, as fathers and parents generally are. He served in challenging countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, and Cyprus. And I followed in his footsteps as a soldier," Ramsay adds as he reveals that his father passed away just before he was deployed to the Mission.

Military police peacekeeper Arnold Gavaj saw three generations of his family work for the military, including his father who served in UNFICYP over a decade ago. "It is a compelling feeling to be working in the same Mission as my father because I can finally put myself in his shoes and experience it firsthand," says Arnold upon his father's return to the island to visit him. "Growing up, he told me about some of his experiences here, even though his position was different from mine, he gave me some basic information about life on the island. He told me about some places he liked to visit. He talked about how it was 14 years ago," adds Arnold.

Conveying experiences in the service of peace from one generation to the next is one aspect of the parent-child relationship that is forged through common career paths. "Coming to Cyprus was very important to me because it completed my career by linking it with my father's," says Ramsay. "We were never able to share the fact that I was going to come to Cyprus, but he used to love walking in the mountains, and it has been a real pilgrimage to be as close to him as I possibly can," he adds.

Arnold was 15-years-old at the time his father, Gustav, served in UNFICYP. "I was in the ninth grade and when I came to visit my father in Cyprus, I mainly saw it as a vacation, but I remember my dad taking me to his workplace, showing me how things worked in the camp, that was interesting. In hindsight, he inspired me, even though I was not aware of it. Perhaps I was already thinking about what it would be like to



Benedict Ramsay (Left) and Allan Ramsay.



be a peacekeeper in Cyprus," reflects Arnold.

From a father's point of view, returning to the Mission and seeing his son follow his footsteps is twofold: pride and reminiscence. As the head of UNFICYP's catering unit from March 2008 to March 2009, Gustav Gavaj was responsible for cooking for remote work stations

and patrol bases from Sector 4, a very different capacity than his son's current policing service, Gustav explains that he adjusted quickly to the Mission and holds pride in the work accomplished. "The difference between my line of duty and my son's lies in the nature of our tasks," says Gustav.

"Many things have certainly changed in the last 14 years. The kitchen is renovated and looks different from the time I worked there. Back when I served here, they did not have the equipment they have now; the equipment is at a higher standard than it was during my time," he adds.

The influence, values and ethics transmitted down the family tree by having varying generations contribute



Gustav Gavaj and Arnold Gavaj (Right).

to the same mission is thus another aspect. As Ramsay attests, his father had a profound influence on him. "He was very principled, and it has been an honour trying to follow and live up to the standards that he set. He taught me to respect other people, as you would expect to be treated yourself, to maintain an integrity in all that you do, and stand up for the people who cannot stand up for themselves. Those are the things that he drove into me and coached me with when I was younger," he says. "He impressed on me the beauty of Cyprus that he was aware of when he came here as a young man, and the impacts that politics and war play on essentially a beautiful island that has been blighted by war. For me, I wanted to play my part in a country that played such a large part in his world," he adds.

FACING UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES

As COVID-19 spread across the island, the Mission successfully protected health and contained the outbreak internally, while it played a considerable role as the interlocutor of the buffer zone.

“COVID does not know any borders,” asserts Aderemi Adekoya as he reflects on the Mission’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic back in 2020. As the Mission’s Senior Advisor, who supports the Head of UNFICYP in the day-to-day management of the Mission’s operations inside the buffer zone,



Aderemi Adekoya and Obiageli Ifeyinwa Thelma Nwuba (Right).

Adekoya witnessed a period in time when UNFICYP faced unprecedented challenges. At the time, the island saw the closing all of its crossing points since the opening of the first crossing in 2003. To address this, Adekoya liaised closely with both communities to ensure operations were not completely interrupted.

“Closing the crossing points disrupted people’s livelihood,” says Adekoya, “many people working from the north in the south could not cross, shops benefiting from both communities crossing were affected; the communities were once again shut off from each other, so for us, reopening the crossings was something that we felt was required. We had to find a way to harmonise the protocols that the two sides used to be able to facilitate the return to normal conditions. The SRSG at that time played a significant role in engaging with both leaders, making them understand that we could not just close the crossing points,” adds Adekoya.

During the pandemic, “Mission Support also played a vital role in making sure measures and actions were taken to protect the health of staff, personnel and peacekeepers, while ensuring the Mission continued to implement its mandate,” attests Joel Cohen, Chief of Mission Support, whose office was in the forefront of the UN COVID-19 Committee for Cyprus.

From the onset of the pandemic, the Mission’s approach was rooted in science, all the while working closely with the local authorities and ensuring preventive measures were strictly adhered to by all peacekeepers. As the communities set different measures in place on each side of the divide, UNFICYP remained the main interlocutor of the buffer zone.

Obiageli Ifeyinwa Thelma Nwuba, is a Political Affairs Officer at the Good Offices Mission who, among many tasks, also facilitates the meetings and discussions between members of the Technical Committee on Health, one of the 12 technical committees established to work on confidence building measures aimed at improving the everyday life of Cypriots, as well as encouraging and facilitating greater interaction between the two communities.

In that capacity, Nwuba arrived at the Mission just as the pandemic was developing, and explains that “in the beginning, we were hoping that the pandemic would have been an opportunity to bring the two sides together to work



on a joint action plan on how to deal with the pandemic, but initially, that did not happen. With different measures in place, it was difficult and confusing for the population to follow each sides’ requirements.”

As the crossings closed on 29 February 2020, the Technical Committee on Health was already striving to share

information on how each community was reacting. Within this framework, “they were learning from each other and sharing their own experiences”, recalls Nwuba.

“It was the Technical Committee on Health that helped pave the way for the sides to reopen the crossings,” clarifies Adekoya, “eventually, the leaders met and were briefed about the efforts being made and how the crossings should reopen”, he adds.

By 2 June 2021, the crossings reopened after an agreement to harmonise the COVID-19 preventive measures on both sides. Yet the work the Mission carried out throughout those 16 months was essential. “There was an issue of approved EU vaccines at the time,” recalls Nwuba as an example of the work the UN in Cyprus facilitated. “It was through the Technical Committee on Health that EU approved vaccines were made available to Turkish Cypriots because they did not have access at the beginning of the vaccination campaigns,” says Nwuba.

“The delivery of vaccines was done through the facilitation of UNFICYP,” adds Adekoya. “The relationship between the two communities with respect to the Technical Committee created a good avenue for many things to happen. They were able to advise or agree on certain protocols that both sides could use to ensure the opening of the crossing points. During the pandemic, many students had to be repatriated to their countries and had to use the crossings, and UNFICYP facilitated this, by engaging with local authorities. Another example was an eastern European lady that underwent IVF in the north who we assisted in crossing so that she could return to her home country. We were also able to transfer dead bodies from south to north and facilitate funerals as well; we transferred vaccinations to the Maronite community in Kormakitis and the Karpas region who did not have access to vaccines, although there was a limit in terms of humanitarian delivery and our facilitation of religious services, these were stopped,” explains Adekoya.

“But COVID-19 was a testament to the fact that technical committees are active, and this mechanism of working together is effective,” he adds. “What we are working on right now, is to also bring the two communities together through an additional technical committee on crisis management, which could deal with this sort of crisis management issues in the future,” he concludes.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The work that Mission Support and other key units at UNFICYP carries out is not often seen or necessarily heard of, yet their expertise form the backbone of the Mission's operation.

MISSION SUPPORT

“The Security Council does not pass resolutions to put radio towers on hilltops; resolutions are there to bring peace to a land and create the environment for talks to proceed or protect civilians. We are here to support that and to ensure that the Mission can do its job,” reveals the Chief of Mission Support, Joel Cohen, as he begins to describe what Mission Support is all about.

“We are basically the people that keep the troops fed, the trucks rolling, the electricity on, the computers and network up; we are the people that support the operation so that the Mission can function on a 24-hour basis,” he adds. To this end, the work that Mission Support does is not often seen or necessarily heard of, but as Cohen mentions, “if we are not there, nothing works, and people would find out very quickly”. As an integral part and key component of UNFICYP, Mission Support backs the function and operation of the Force, and not only with regard to the military and



Chief of Mission Support, Joel Cohen.

police component, but also with civilian operations as well as the Good Offices Mission and the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus. “We deal with everything from recruitment and administration of overseeing staff, budget, finance payments to vendors, payments of allowances to troops and police, we take care of supply - making sure that we have the right goods and services that a mission needs to operate, service delivery in terms of transport to ensure that

the Mission has vehicles to undertake their functions and duties,” says Cohen.

Considering that the Mission patrols 250 kilometres of patrol tracks across the buffer zone which cannot adequately be surveyed and patrolled by foot, mobility is a key part of any mission and an integral part of Mission Support’s undertakings to ensure that troops, UNPOL officers and civilian staff can undertake their work and effectively discharge their duties.



KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

“Information Technology is another key area in the work we do. As the UN and missions have evolved, our reliance on information technology, new technologies and communication becomes even more paramount,” suggests Cohen. This was evident during COVID-19, when people were working from home and other locations and making sure the Mission had the tools, network and systems in place to manage. “The mobile communications that the Mission has in place is supported by Mission Support and enabled our people to do just that: continue to operate, we didn’t shut down, we didn’t go slow, we continued operations around the clock as we have done for many years. COVID-19 was just another challenge,” explains Cohen while pinpointing that Mission Support made sure that COVID-19 protocols, testing regimens, quarantines and isolation areas were also in place in order to make sure that people could work safely.

Cohen recalls how Mission Support spearheaded the UN COVID-19 Committee for Cyprus, and under this capacity also played a vital role in keeping staff and personnel up to date with the rapid changes in protocols and measures. “Not only did we send regular updates to all staff, it was also a tremendous effort to fast track access to vaccines as soon as they were available,” he explains.

INCORPORATING BROADER NOTIONS

Mission Support also looks to the future and broader aspects of the Mission’s environmental footprint: “One of the challenges we face is that there is a greater level of responsibility to address other risks such as climate change. Environmental management is also a big part of what we do. We want to leave the buffer zone in a better state than how we found it. As custodians of the area, we have a responsibility to make sure that we take care of it and that we are mindful of the use of scarce resources. We are focusing on getting energy from renewable sources. At this stage, we are the leading Mission in the field in that regard. We get 26% of our electricity drawn from renewable sources, a contribution towards meeting the Secretariat’s climate action plan to reach 40% from renewables by 2025 and 80% by 2030,” reveals Cohen. “We are committed to meet this goal and spend a lot of time and energy across Mission Support in achieving that. It has made us change the ways we do things - bringing in photovoltaic cells or solar farms, switching to hybrid vehicles, using clean energy generators, lower emission and energy heating and air conditioning systems, and improving our water consumption and the way that we utilise water and waste. This is a significant change in Mission Support over the last five to 10 years.”



“We are basically the people that keep the troops fed, the trucks rolling, the electricity on, the computers and network up; we’re the people that support the operation so that the Mission can function on a 24-hour basis.”



CONTRIBUTING TO THE UN'S VISION

Longstanding staff at UNFICYP play a key role in supporting the Mission achieve its mandate. Some of them have spent over 35 years of their lives working for the Mission, with pride as they serve for peace and contribute towards the reconciliation of the island.

Making sure the Mission can accomplish its tasks, UN staff are distinguished by the work they do and the roles they play. Usually, they are the ones who work behind the scenes. They are recruited internationally or locally, and notably spend more time contributing to the Mission – working in various fields, including providing technical expertise, conducting research, analysing data, managing projects, and coordinating with other organisations – than rotating personnel.



Demetris Tsiakkis.

Greek Cypriot Demetris Tsiakkis started off his career at UNFICYP as a lifeguard at the UN swimming pool, after having completed his military national service. His ambition at the time was to offer his services to the United Nations as he always admired the

organisation's contribution to humanity.

Fast forward 37 years, Tsiakkis has held varying positions since his first role. From waiter to driver, to dispatcher and unit assistant, Tsiakkis today holds the title of Air Operations Assistant.

"I feel very proud about working for the United Nations because I have always admired the UN's contribution to the security and prosperity of humanity," says Tsiakkis from UNFICYP's Headquarters in Nicosia/Lefkoşa. "The UN encourages the coexistence of different nationalities and helps them live in peace and prosperity," he adds.

On a similar note, Turkish Cypriot Ersin Öztoycan joined the Mission in December 2003, just a year before the first crossing between the two communities opened. "I joined on a temporary contract when the Mission opened a liaison office in Limassol and they needed someone there," reveals Öztoycan. Her duties were to help the Turkish Cypriot community that lived in Limassol and Paphos and assist them with housing and education issues. "A lot of Turkish Cypriot children that were born in the Greek Cypriot side did not have any documentation, they had problems acquiring their IDs, which resulted in them being unable to go to school, unable to get health care and so on; we were helping them to get all the paperwork together and liaising with government offices, making sure that they were issued documentation and helped resolve these problems," says Öztoycan. "As far as housing was concerned, we would meet with people that were looking for housing or others who had issues with the properties that they were living in," she recalls.

To this end, Öztoycan pays testament to the work the UN did all those years ago. "We made the life of the Turkish Cypriots living there easier; I remember there was a pregnant woman who was unable to get her ID, which meant she could not receive assistance



Ersin Öztoycan.

from the hospital. We intervened and we liaised with government offices. She was able to give birth in the hospital and we actually visited her after she delivered her baby," says Öztoycan.

It was a year later, and once the office closed in Limassol that Öztoycan applied for the position of Information Assistant in Nicosia/Lefkoşa, a position she still holds today. Very much like Tsiakkis, the alternating roles both he and Öztoycan have undertaken in the Mission have contributed to developing their skillsets and given them the opportunity to evolve professionally.

Tsiakkis estimates that there is no singular moment that stands out during his duties within the Mission. On the contrary, there are many moments: his joy of initially joining UNFICYP in 1987, the opportunity of representing the Mission abroad in seminars, the maintenance of vehicle engines, his selection as a dispatcher in the Transport Unit, his appointment as the personal driver for Special Advisors to the Secretary-General, namely Alvaro de Soto and Alexander Downer, and his continuous contact and duty with the UN Flight since 2014 while proudly facilitating high-level visitors to safely reach the helicopters.

Looking back, Öztoycan is witness to how her roles have changed, initially from working with the Civil Affairs Section on a more humanitarian level, to working in the Public Information Office, where she is involved in desktop publishing. "Over the years I developed my skills. At the time when I started working in the Public Information Office, I was involved in laying out the Mission's flagship magazine and all communication products. We were using different programmes and I had to learn how to use them on my own. I taught myself because, as a dyslexic person, I found it very easy to learn how to use technology and all the applications that I had to become familiar with on my own terms; it's well known that dyslexic people are much more visual in their learning and thrive when given the opportunity to be creative," reveals Öztoycan.



Demetris Tsiakkis assists in UN Flight operations at the Headquarters of the Mission.

As the years went by and technology evolved, Öztoycan saw herself more involved in the outputs of the Mission. “The Mission needed posters, so I started making them, then social media came into being, so I started working on that; as new technology became available, we began publishing online. From desktop publishing, we started working on the website, we then moved on to doing podcasts which we needed to edit so I started teaching myself how to do video editing and publishing all of this on our website and social media accounts,” says Öztoycan. “The UN has given me the opportunity to evolve and time to work on my skills,” she adds.

For Tsiakkis, his most challenging time during his tenure was when he took on the role of a dispatcher in the Transport Unit. “Due to my new duties, I had the opportunity to learn many things that helped me both in my professional and personal life, making many new friends who supported me,” says Tsiakkis. Testament to how UNFICYP has changed over the years he has been here, Tsiakkis estimates that the Mission has evolved dramatically over the years: “Technology became part of our lives and helped us to make our lives and duties easier in order to achieve the UN goals in a more efficient way,” says Tsiakkis.

“I am thankful to UNFICYP for noticing and encouraging my talents and work ethics.”

“I feel that I am contributing to resolving the Cyprus issue and Cypriots need to be involved with that.”

With over 20 years of experience in the Mission, Öztoycan feels that working for the UN is a privilege.

“I feel that I am contributing to resolving the Cyprus issue and Cypriots need to be involved with that; there are Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots working at UNFICYP and helping to create conditions where we can have a solution to the issue. I think working here has showed that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots can work together, we can live together, we are the same,” concludes Öztoycan.

Personally, Tsiakkis also highlights the Mission’s support towards developing his own skills and expertise. “I’m thankful to UNFICYP for noticing and encouraging my talents and work ethics; the UN’s purpose is to work hard in the service of peace. I am part of the UN and I am very proud to know that I offer my skills in the service of peace,” he concludes.



Ersin Öztoycan recording a podcast with civil society representatives and presenting a book to former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during his visit in 2010.



A PEACEKEEPING OPERATION AHEAD OF THE INNOVATION CURVE

As a shift in peacekeeping culture is being observed around the world due to deep and rapid technological change, the use of new technologies has enabled the Mission to take a leap forward and stay relevant.

Technology has played a substantial role in UNFICYP's transition from a 20th century mission established in the early 60s, to a contemporary and modern operation that embraces new opportunities that aspire to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, and the safety and security of its peacekeepers. "The beauty of our job in the Field Technology Section is that we need to move with the times; we do not just develop



or install technology for the sake of it. We put things in place based on the needs of the Mission, while being as effective and efficient as possible and leverage technology wherever possible," reveals Chief of the Field Technology Section (FTS), David Wilkins.

Reflecting on the past, Wilkins recalls the Mission's predominantly manned operations with basic communication means such as radio and telephones. "When uniformed personnel wanted to call home, they had to go to the switchboard operator. In Headquarters, we used to have big satellite dishes with relatively slow communications. It was only in the late 90s that we moved to more localised infrastructure and installed servers," says Wilkins. "These are just examples, but certainly for us, and especially in the last decade or so, it's just been about trying to stay ahead of the innovation curve," he adds.

In December 2023, UNFICYP became the first United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to receive enhanced situational awareness capabilities with the launch of its Unite Aware technical platform and redesign of its Joint Operations Centre. Designed to improve the near real-time data capabilities of missions, Unite Aware consolidates existing systems into a single point of access for Mission personnel. It incorporates patrol planning, incident reporting, real-time asset tracking and multilayer mapping tools in a user-friendly interface. "This system allows us to gain much more situational awareness in a timely and accurate manner. Having information being provided through the Joint Operations Centre up to leadership means that we are able to liaise their decision-making process and also inform both the opposing forces of activity that is happening in the buffer zone," attests Force Chief of Staff Benedict Ramsay.

"Having reconfigured the Joint Operations Centre, we went from a manual system with paper maps, etc., to a

completely digitised video wall, a real-time incident management solution where we can monitor patrols, helicopters and incidences all on one platform which is interconnected with all the television and CCTV systems across the Mission," explains Wilkins.

Senior Duty Officer at the Joint Operations Centre, Renat Ekshikeev, came to the Mission before the redesigning of the Centre and

has seen the shift in the way the team manages the operation.

"The Unite Aware platform allows us to make sense of the situation by understanding the opposing forces positions, locations, etc," says Ekshikeev. "Now, there's much less space for misunderstandings. We use the same data, same tools, same system over all the components and units. We moved from manual, slow, and complicated methods to interactive maps, with all the data visible and easy to operate," he adds. "We can also accurately estimate the accessibility of every exact location for UNFICYP personnel. The vehicle track system allows us to find every patrol car – in case something happens to it, or we need the assistance of personnel nearby."

As a shift in peacekeeping culture is being observed around the world due to deep and rapid technological change, the use of new technologies has enabled the Mission to take a leap forward and stay relevant. For example, the Unite Aware platform's technological advancement not only assists leadership, but trickles down to the troops on the ground. "The platform allows uniformed personnel to operate in the field with iPads equipped with a remote situational awareness tool enabling the sharing of maps, cadastral plots and real data in the field," adds Wilkins.

Working in Sector 2 as a Signal Officer, Captain Hare attests that the complexity and range of tasks that UNFICYP conducts as part of its peacekeeping mandate provides a fantastic opportunity to the United Nations to test and implement new technologies and applications. "The Mission employs advanced surveillance technologies, satellite imaging, radio communications, all of which offer real-time situational awareness, allowing peacekeepers to monitor and respond to incidents promptly," says Hare. "In comparison to the humble beginnings of the Mission, the way in which we, as peacekeepers, communicate has evolved, UNFICYP's drive to test and implement new technologies truly enables seamless



coordination amongst partner nations deployed on what is a truly international peacekeeping effort,” he adds. Indeed, the integration of modern communication and information systems in peacekeeping not only improves the safety and security of peacekeepers patrolling the buffer zone, but also contributes to the overall success of the peacekeeping Mission. “UNFICYP empowers the most junior soldier on the ground to pass time sensitive updates and information all the way to New York. The success and future of the Mission lies in our ability to continue to enable our commanders to conduct highly informed decision-making, and, more importantly, to continue to provide research and development for peace operations and move with the ever-changing technological developments the Mission offers to worldwide peacekeeping efforts,” concludes Hare.

“In December 2023, UNFICYP became the first United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to receive enhanced situational awareness capabilities with the launch of its Unite Aware technical platform and redesign of its Joint Operations Centre.”



CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITIES

The United Nations works through the Secretary-General's Good Offices to assist the sides in the search for a comprehensive and mutually acceptable settlement to the Cyprus issue. Two former Special Advisers reflect on their time on the island.



Alexander Downer, former Special Adviser.

When asked what message he would give to Cypriots as he reflects on his time on the island as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Cyprus ten years ago, Alexander Downer assuredly states: "Thank you for showing respect to each other. And I am confident that you will continue to show that same respect because together, you are united in the bond of being Cypriots."

Alexander Downer was appointed in 2008 by Ban Ki-moon and spent six years on and off the island as he worked with the Good Offices Mission* towards reaching a comprehensive settlement with the two community leaders at the time. Although the Australian former politician and diplomat's aspirations were not met as he left the island in the absence of a settlement, his contribution to the Mission, in his eyes, lies in assisting to build and sustain relations between the two communities.

Downer's successor, Espen Barth Eide, a Norwegian politician and political scientist was appointed as a Special Adviser to the island in 2014 until 2017. For him, "I would like to remind Cypriots that first and foremost, this is their issue, but the rest of us are here to help; it's also our problem because Europe, the eastern Mediterranean and the world would be better off with a solution, a non-solution is never good, the world is actually ready to help them," says Eide as he reflects on his time on the island.

"The negotiations did not succeed, but I would say that we were hugely successful in inching the two communities closer together and succeeded in enabling confidence building

measures between them which I am in favour of, and supported at the time," says Downer.

As Eide recalls, the occasion of his appointment was a rare moment: "There was an EU expansion on the table, there was an international general climate that supported the process and there was a joint declaration, which had already been written which was Alexander Downer's last contribution and was a good framework to start from."

Downer arrived on the island having done plenty of preliminary homework and having spoken to his predecessor, Alvaro de Soto, who was appointed as a Special Adviser on Cyprus between 2000 to 2004. Downer held the mandate he was handed, notably to help the leaders through their negotiations, and sought to find out whether his task was feasible.

"The issue was identifying public opinion. The first question I had was what the polling said. I knew what the leaders were saying. I could read them; I was meeting with them, but what was the polling showing? What did the public think? Leaders wouldn't be the leaders if they did not have a strong sense of the public, but if the UN does not understand the public, then it is unable to give them useful advice."

Up until that time the UN in Cyprus did not have access to its own opinion polling and went ahead to carry out its own opinion polls. "I sat down and looked at this polling in a lot of detail. I think that the great lesson I learnt from Cyprus is that, yes, we have an objective to achieve agreement, but first of all, we need to build confidence between the two communities and build a peaceful environment," reflects Downer.

To this end he saw the opening of the Limnitis/Yeşilirmak crossing, the last crossing to open at the time. "There were seven crossings open at the time. The negotiation to open the Limnitis/Yeşilirmak crossing was a long and tortuous diversion from the negotiations, but we opened the crossing, that was a good moment," says Downer.

THE ROLE OF THE TWO MISSIONS

"60 years is nothing of an age for a man, but it's a quite an age for a peacekeeping mission," attests Eide. "UNFICYP is one of the longest peace operations in the UN, and if you look at the UN in Cyprus at large, including the Good Offices, they have been conducting two different but parallel tracks," says Eide. "On the one hand UNFICYP keeps conflict away in the absence of a solution with its original mandate to return to normal conditions. In 1974 it became about preventing the two communities from a recurrence of fighting until a solution could be found. At the same time, the Mission has also been maintaining the status quo, because the UN has the Good Offices Mission, which is all about

changing the status quo but without violence,” explains Eide. “Therefore, the logical relationship between the two missions is that one is there to prevent violence and conflict and the other one is precisely trying to change the same status quo, but through negotiations,” he adds.

“What I felt when I was head of the Good Offices as a Special Adviser was that the Head of UNFICYP at the time, Elizabeth Spehar, had in many ways defined the modern relationship between those two Missions, which meant that I could concentrate only on content, because security, back office and all the things you need in order to have a UN presence were already taken care of. So, I had a very effective organisation that could focus on its core purpose, and I felt that was very comfortable because it meant that I could spend most of my time in Cyprus working on what I was there to do,” recalls Eide.

Eide’s appointment was not as fruitful as the UN had hoped. Leaving the island without a settlement, Eide’s take away is that “it is paramount that parties are prepared for succeeding; in Cyprus people have been so used to failing that the default expectation is failure. Looking back, I think we did a lot of things right.”

To this end, Eide estimates that UNFICYP has been successful in maintaining the status quo, and that the emphasis on building bridges between the two communities is the right thing to do. “When you do not have strategic rapprochement on the political level, UNFICYP is absolutely correct in using its energy, resources and whatever is there in order to deal with issues that reduces difference and makes the communities more prepared. As we talk about marking 60 years of the UN on the island, a worrying lingering challenge is that the number of people who have experienced togetherness is diminishing. The younger generation has no practical experience of living together, they grew up in a divided country and that is a problem,” says Eide.

From a current stance, Eide urges the two communities to “use opportunities and not rest in the comfort that this non-solution will always be as comfortable as today. They must own the desire for a settlement and recognise that a settlement is never absolutely one’s perfect settlement; it must be an accommodation with others and an understanding why others view things differently. Every time I saw Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots working together, I did not see hatred or animosity, I saw cooperation, respect, and friendliness,” says Eide. “Success is when preparedness meets opportunity. Both sides and the UN, with UNFICYP conducting its peacekeeping role, along with the Good Offices and its knowledge of the process, have detailed records of everything that has been discussed and agreed before, so they are prepared.



Espen Barth Eide, former Special Adviser.

“What is not there right now is the opportunity, so when opportunity tails by, somebody needs to see it and catch it. I seriously think that if you have parallel will on both sides, you could solve the Cyprus issue,” concludes Eide.

“UNFICYP is absolutely correct in using its energy, resources and whatever there is in order to deal with issues that reduces difference and makes the communities more prepared.”

*The Office of the Special Adviser on Cyprus is mandated to support the Secretary-General in using his Good Offices to assist the sides to promote a peaceful solution, and bring the Cyprus conflict to a comprehensive and durable settlement. The Good Offices compound is located in the UN Protected Area and among its responsibilities are: Facilitating negotiations, overseeing and facilitating the work of 12 Technical Committees, coordinating external technical support to the peace process and confidence building measures, and reporting to and coordinating with the United Nations Headquarters, the international community, and stakeholders on the island.



Finnish peacekeepers patrolling on bicycles.

2024 SECRETARY-GENERAL APPOINTMENTS

At the beginning of 2024, the Secretary-General made two new appointments, notably a Personal Envoy and a Force Commander.

FORCE COMMANDER

In early January 2024, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri of Mongolia as Force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Major General Batsuuri succeeds Major General Ingrid Gjerde of Norway, to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for her exemplary service and dedication.

Major General Batsuuri has had a distinguished career in the Mongolian Armed Forces, serving most recently as the Chief of Staff at the Mongolian Air Force Command (2020-2023). He was previously Senior Officer in the General Staff of the Mongolian Armed Forces (2017-2018) as well as Chief of the Peace Support Operation Division within the General Staff of the Mongolian Armed Forces (2014-2017).

He has been deployed in eight United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization peacekeeping and peace support operations including in Iraq, Sierra Leone, Sudan and South Sudan. Notably, he served as a Contingent Commander in United Nations Mission in Liberia (2010-2011), and as a Battalion Commander in UN Mission in South Sudan (2013-2014). He also held the positions of Chief of Staff in UNMISS Sector South (2018-2019) and Juba Sector Commander (2021-2022).

Major General Batsuuri holds a Master's degree from the National University of Defence in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, specializing as an Infantry officer. He is a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College and the Army War College in the United States. He is fluent in English and Mongolian.



"I will do my best to help. I want to listen to people and civil society. In my previous experience I learned how important it is to listen. I recognise all the efforts done in the past. Now let us look to the future."

- María Angela Holguín Cuéllar on her arrival in Cyprus



PERSONAL ENVOY

In early January 2024, Secretary-General also appointed Ms. María Angela Holguín Cuéllar of Colombia as his Personal Envoy on Cyprus. The Secretary-General has asked Ms. Holguín to assume a Good Offices role on his behalf to search for common ground on the way forward and to advise him on the Cyprus issue.

Ms. Holguín brings extensive diplomatic experience at the highest levels, including as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia (2010-2018). She also served as delegate of the President of Colombia in the Peace Process Negotiation in Havana, Cuba (2015-2016) and was a member of the Cabinet for Post-Conflict (2017-2018). Previous posts in her diplomatic career include the position of Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, Ambassador to Venezuela and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ms. Holguín holds a degree in Political Science from the Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá. She also studied at the Centre d'Études Diplomatiques et Stratégiques and at the Université Paris-Sorbonne in Paris. In addition to Spanish, she speaks English and French.



SECRETARY-GENERAL APPOINTMENTS TO CYPRUS

María Angela Holguín Cuéllar	Personal Envoy - Colombia	2024 - Present
Colin Stewart	Special Representative and Head of Mission - Canada	2021 - Present
Elizabeth Spehar	Special Representative and Head of Mission - Canada	2016 - 2021
Lisa Buttenheim	Special Representative and Head of Mission - United States of America	2010 - 2016
Espen Barth Eide	Special Adviser (non-resident) - Norway	2014 - 2017
Alexander Downer	Special Adviser (non-resident) - Australia	2008 - 2014
Taye-Brook Zerihoun	Special Representative and Head of Mission - Ethiopia	2008 - 2010
Elizabeth Spehar	Acting Special Representative and Head of Mission - Canada	2008 - 2008
Michael Moller	Special Representative and Head of Mission - Denmark	2006 - 2008
Zbiniew Wlosowicz	Acting Special Representative and Head of Mission - Poland	2005 - 2006
Alvaro de Soto	Special Adviser (non-resident) - Peru	2000 - 2004
James Holger	Acting Special Representative - Chile	1999 - 2000
Dame Ann Hercus	Deputy and later Special Representative and Head of Mission - New Zealand	1998 - 1999
Diego Cordovez	Special Adviser (non-resident) - Ecuador	1997 - 1999
Han Sung-Joo	Special Adviser (non-resident) - Republic of Korea	1996 - 1997
Joe Clark	Special Adviser (non-resident) - Canada	1993 - 1996
Oscar Camilion	Special Representative - Argentina	1988 - 1993
James Holger	Acting Special Representative - Chile	1984 - 1988
Hugo J. Gobbi	Special Representative - Argentina	1980 - 1984
Reynaldo Galindo Pohl	Special Representative - El Salvador	1978 - 1980
Remy Gorge	Acting Special Representative - Switzerland	1977 - 1978
Javier Perez de Cuellar	Special Representative - Peru	1975 - 1977
Luis Weckmann-Muñoz	Special Representative - Mexico	1974 - 1975
Bibiano F. Osorio-Tafall	Special Representative - Spain	1967 - 1974
P.P. Spinelli	Acting Special Representative - Italy	1967 - 1967
Carlos A. Bernardes	Special Representative - Brazil	1964 - 1967
Galo Plaza Lasso	Special Representative and later Mediator – Ecuador	1964 - 1964
Sakari Tuomioja	Mediator - Finland	1964

**From 1994, the Special Representative or Deputy Special Representative also filled the role of Chief of Mission, a title previously held by the Force Commander. The change reflected a unified arrangement for the United Nations operation in Cyprus, including UNFICYP.*

FORCE COMMANDERS

Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri	Mongolia	2024 - Present
Major General Ingrid Gjerde	Norway	2021 - 2023
Major General Cheryl Pearce	Australia	2019 - 2021
Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir	Bangladesh	2016 - 2018
Major General Kristin Lund	Norway	2014 - 2016
Major General Chao Liu	China	2011 - 2014
Rear Admiral Mario Sánchez Debernardi	Peru	2008 - 2010
Major General Rafael Jose Barni	Argentina	2006 - 2008
Major General Hebert Figoli	Uruguay	2004 - 2006
Lieutenant-General Jin Ha Hwang	Republic of Korea	2002 - 2003
Major General Victory Rana	Nepal	1999 - 2001
Major General Evergisto Arturo de Vergara	Argentina	1997 - 1999
Brigadier-General Ahti Toimi Vartiainen	Finland	1994 - 1997
Major General Michael F. Minehane	Ireland	1992 - 1994
Major General Clive Milner	Canada	1988 - 1992
Major General Gunther G. Greindl	Austria	1981 - 1988
Major General J. J. Quinn	Ireland	1976 - 1981
Lieutenant-General Dewan Prem Chand	India	1969 - 1976
Lieutenant General I A E Martola	Finland	1966 - 1969
Brigadier A. J. Wilson (Acting)	United Kingdom	1965 - 1966
General K.S. Thimayya	India	1964 - 1965
General Gyani	India	1964 - 1965

SENIOR POLICE ADVISERS

Assistant Commissioner Satu Koivu	Finland	2021 - Present
Chief Superintendent Fang Li	China	2020 - 2021
Chief Superintendent Dongxu Su (Acting)	China	2019 - 2020
Assistant Chief of Police Ann-Kristin Kvilekval	Norway	2017 - 2019
Colonel Andrii Sachavo	Ukraine	2014 - 2017
Commander Colin Speedie	Australia	2011 - 2014
Chief Superintendent John Farrelly	Ireland	2009 - 2009
Police Commissioner Carla van Maris	Netherlands	2004 - 2009

** Initially known as UNCIVPOL, the Mission's Police Force was the first Mission where UN 'civilian police' supported the military component to facilitate the peaceful coexistence of the two communities. In 2004, UNCIVPOL changed its name to UNPOL and began to assign Senior Police Advisors as opposed to Commanders.*



60 years in the service of peace

UNFICYP TROOP AND POLICE CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES



Argentina



Australia



Austria



Bangladesh



Bolivia



Bosnia and Herzegovina



Brazil



Bulgaria



Canada



Chile



China



Croatia



Czech Republic



Denmark



El Salvador



Finland



Ghana



Hungary



India



Indonesia



Ireland

1964-2024



Italy



Jordan



Lithuania



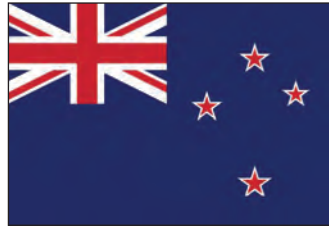
Mongolia



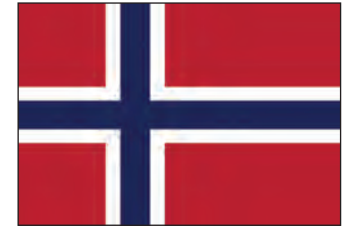
Montenegro



Nepal



New Zealand



Norway



Pakistan



Paraguay



Peru



Romania



Russia



Serbia



Slovakia



Slovenia



South Korea



Sweden



The Netherlands



Ukraine



United Kingdom



Uruguay

60 years in the service of peace

IN MEMORIAM

Sgt.	H Bassam	United Kingdom	18 April	1964	Sgt.	J D Ward	Australia	12 November	1974
Pte.	J Matikainen	Finland	20 May	1964	Pte.	J J Huttunen	Finland	25 December	1974
Dvr.	L Platt	United Kingdom	7 June	1964	Maj.	D R Wingefalk	Sweden	25 December	1974
Maj.	Macey	United Kingdom	7 June	1964	Pte.	K O Mogensen	Denmark	10 February	1975
Tpr.	J Campbell	Canada	31 July	1964	Pte.	P Thygesen	Denmark	21 February	1975
Sgt.	Nielsen	Denmark	13 August	1964	Pte.	H D Ollinen	Sweden	17 March	1975
Lt.	P Gordon-Smith	United Kingdom	28 October	1964	Pte.	D C Hurley	United Kingdom	17 March	1975
Pte.	C E Gjedsted	Denmark	26 November	1964	Capt.	J E Patten	Canada	1 April	1975
Lt.	K E Edmonds	Canada	25 December	1964	Pte.	S J Kohlman	Canada	11 April	1975
Sgt.	N Larsen	Denmark	11 January	1965	Sgt.	R G McGeown	United Kingdom	4 May	1975
Pte.	F Smith	United Kingdom	10 February	1965	Sgt.	U S Sondergaard	Denmark	12 December	1975
Sgt.	W Macauley	Ireland	22 February	1965	Capt.	K C Crawford	Canada	20 December	1975
Sgt.	J Hammill	Ireland	7 April	1965	Pte.	K J Uuttu	Finland	26 June	1976
Sgt.	R J Kiviniemi	Finland	3 May	1965	Pte.	D R Kreiger	Canada	17 August	1976
Cpl.	T Hollingsworth	United Kingdom	7 June	1965	WO	T Moen	Sweden	14 December	1976
Cpl.	W Hetherington	Ireland	19 July	1965	Pte.	T E Tornberg	Finland	16 January	1977
Rfn.	P J Hoare	Canada	14 August	1965	Dvr.	C J Ellerby	United Kingdom	14 April	1977
Pte.	P Soinen	Finland	5 October	1965	Pte.	F Lorentzen	Denmark	20 April	1977
WO	Attemalm	Sweden	5 October	1965	Sgt.	A J R Dupont	Canada	24 April	1977
Capt.	P K Jarvinen	Finland	12 December	1965	Pte.	O Britz	Austria	8 November	1977
Gen.	K S Thimayya	India	18 December	1965	Cpl.	D Hansen	Denmark	18 February	1979
Gdsm.	J J P Chartier	Canada	14 March	1966	SSgt.	F A Christensen	Denmark	18 February	1979
Pte.	K T Jorgensen	Denmark	18 March	1966	Capt.	S A R Martinsson	Sweden	4 August	1979
Pte.	J Knudsen	Denmark	18 March	1966	Cpl. of H.	B R Meade	United Kingdom	31 August	1979
Mr.	Z Maydenov	Secretariat	18 March	1966	Pte.	J Lackner	Austria	5 November	1979
Pte.	J Antera Huha	Finland	8 June	1966	MCpl.	J D G McInnes	Canada	30 March	1980
Maj.	Pavey Ewart George	United Kingdom	4 July	1966	Sig.	P C Child	United Kingdom	7 December	1980
Pte.	J E Jonsson	Sweden	6 July	1966	ALCpl.	R D Perry	United Kingdom	17 January	1981
Pte.	J P E Bernard	Canada	9 July	1966	Sgt.	C H Hardcastle	United Kingdom	22 March	1981
Tpr.	J J Synnott	United Kingdom	9 July	1966	Cpl.	J McAfee	United Kingdom	22 May	1981
Pte.	M J Tillus	Finland	7 August	1966	Pte.	L Brown	United Kingdom	22 August	1981
Tpr.	L W Nass	Canada	27 September	1966	Pte.	R J Muntun	United Kingdom	4 September	1981
WO2	N Westberg	Sweden	6 October	1966	Pte.	F S A Thomas	Denmark	26 November	1981
Sgt.	O Foukles	United Kingdom	6 October	1966	Pte.	J Oberbambault	Canada	30 November	1981
Lt.Col.	C Chettle MC	United Kingdom	16 February	1967	LCpl.	J Oberberger	Austria	16 January	1982
Cpl.	O Redmond	Canada	10 March	1967	Tpr.	K W E Randall	United Kingdom	23 January	1982
Cfn.	S Houghton	United Kingdom	13 July	1967	Pte.	A J Prins	Canada	25 September	1982
2Lt.	A C N Mitchell	United Kingdom	13 August	1967	Pte.	D M Wilson	Canada	22 January	1983
Pte.	K K Kangasmuaki	Finland	7 September	1967	Pte.	P M Thomassen	Denmark	5 July	1983
Cpl.	A K Salmon	Canada	24 September	1967	Pte.	R Blek	Austria	23 February	1984
Capt.	C McNamara	Ireland	16 January	1968	Pte.	P Salander	Sweden	3 March	1984
Pte.	O Soerensen	Denmark	14 April	1968	ALCpl.	W Dickinson	United Kingdom	27 May	1984
Sgt.	L G Andersson	Sweden	26 May	1968	Pte.	A Glaser	Austria	4 July	1984
Pte.	R L G Gissel	Denmark	29 May	1968	Cpl.	M A Wagstaff	United Kingdom	29 September	1984
Cpl.	J Fagan	Ireland	10 June	1968	Lt.	K Klementin	Austria	8 November	1984
Pte.	B K Kannan	United Kingdom	11 August	1968	Pte.	M Kern	Sweden	1 December	1984
Lt.	R Byrne	Ireland	20 September	1968	LCpl.	D P Key	United Kingdom	25 December	1984
WO	T Samuelsson	Sweden	28 February	1969	Pte.	W Ter	Sweden	26 January	1985
Pte.	J T Chelmick	United Kingdom	24 May	1969	Cpl.	W Hagel	Sweden	7 September	1985
WO	T R Jokinen	Finland	3 June	1969	Pte.	S R Nylander	Sweden	15 September	1985
Tpr.	M Kennedy	Ireland	1 July	1969	Pte.	J Hingeberg	Denmark	26 March	1986
Sgt.	L J Thomas	Australia	26 July	1969	Pte.	P J Trotter	Canada	25 April	1986
Pte.	J A Lerue	Canada	9 February	1970	MCpl.	M MacRae	Canada	5 December	1986
Pte.	D Newstead	United Kingdom	11 February	1970	Dvr.	S Garland	United Kingdom	5 May	1987
Pte.	T J Hall	Canada	31 July	1970	LCpl.	N Tulloch	United Kingdom	22 October	1987
Maj.	F R Hansen	Denmark	2 September	1970	Maj.	P M Christensen	Denmark	14 April	1988
Cpl.	P C Isenor	Canada	26 October	1970	Gdsm.	L D Sinclair	United Kingdom	20 April	1989
SAC	E E Mellish	United Kingdom	24 December	1970	Pte.	J J Costello	United Kingdom	12 December	1989
Rfn.	R P Hill	United Kingdom	2 January	1971	Sgt.	F Maier	Austria	27 January	1990
Rfn.	K Chavenor	United Kingdom	4 January	1971	LCpl.	T G Burkat	United Kingdom	20 May	1990
LCpl.	K R Trusswell	United Kingdom	4 March	1971	LCpl.	A H Rimmer	United Kingdom	15 July	1990
Pte.	S Cummins	Ireland	11 June	1971	LBdr.	M A Moorcroft	United Kingdom	8 August	1990
Cpl.	J B Neilsen	Denmark	12 July	1971	Cpl.	K H Garrad-Cole	United Kingdom	7 September	1990
Insp.	P M Hackett	Australia	29 August	1971	Cpl.	G J Easter	United Kingdom	7 September	1990
Pte.	H Faickney	United Kingdom	18 September	1971	LCpl.	M D Owen	United Kingdom	7 September	1990
Ranger	F T McLernon	United Kingdom	9 March	1972	LCpl.	S G Shrubsole	United Kingdom	7 September	1990
Cpl.	H B Oboril	Austria	3 August	1972	Sgt.	G Poms	Austria	20 February	1991
Dvr.	B J Lover	United Kingdom	13 August	1972	Lt.Col.	E Anderson	United Kingdom	14 May	1991
Pte.	E Mearns	United Kingdom	13 August	1972	Tpr.	S McGhee	United Kingdom	21 May	1991
Sgt.	L C Fjellstrom	Sweden	20 August	1972	Sgt.	M Schmuck	Austria	4 December	1992
MCpl.	J R Lessard	Canada	1 December	1972	Sgt.	D L Kloss	Canada	8 April	1993
Capt.	M T Toumi	Finland	20 January	1973	MCpl.	W Leeb	Austria	2 May	1993
Miss	A Valentine	Secretariat	29 January	1973	Cpl.	J Schopfer	Austria	23 July	1996
Sgt.	C H Edenborg	Sweden	29 January	1973	Mr.	B.Garrett	United Kingdom	8 July	1997
Sgt.	L Enberg	Sweden	29 January	1973	Mr.	G.Sigas	Cyprus	16 January	1998
Pte.	J B Masters	United Kingdom	8 February	1973	WO3	L A D'agata	Argentina	1 March	1999
CSgt.	J L Meacock	United Kingdom	28 March	1973	Pte.	L J H Harrison	United Kingdom	15 March	2000
Pte.	W R A Mallone	United Kingdom	21 June	1973	Sgt.	N D Davies	United Kingdom	8 July	2000
2Lt.	G A Paterson	United Kingdom	13 October	1973	Pte.	J M Escalante	Argentina	12 December	2003
2Lt.	K B Petersen	Denmark	9 December	1973	Sgt.	A O Chocobar	Argentina	12 December	2003
Insp.	W Payer	Austria	10 January	1974	Mr.	A Demetriou	Cyprus	22 April	2004
LCpl.	J E Laird	United Kingdom	2 February	1974	Ms.	S. Kyriakides	United Kingdom	22 May	2004
Cpl.	A Roach	Canada	17 February	1974	Sgt.	M Hruska	Slovakia	8 June	2004
Supt.	V J G Fogt	Denmark	15 March	1974	Mr.	S. Kariuki	Kenya	22 January	2005
Pte.	N O Pedersen	Denmark	1 June	1974	Mr.	P. Loizou	Cyprus	1 January	2006
Sgt.	C A Wamback	Canada	30 June	1974	WO2	S Goldsmith	United Kingdom	23 November	2007
Gdsm.	G Lawson	United Kingdom	21 July	1974	Pfc.	A Simkovic	Slovakia	5 October	2008
Pte.	J L G Perron	Canada	8 August	1974	Mr.	P. Fennelly	Ireland	14 March	2008
LCpl.	A Isak	Austria	14 August	1974	Mr.	A.Alleyne	Barbados	14 July	2008
Lt.	J Izay	Austria	14 August	1974	Sgt.	A D Ojeda	Argentina	27 November	2009
MSgt.	F Decombe	Austria	14 August	1974	WO2	Bean	United Kingdom	2 May	2011
Pte.	C S Andersen	Denmark	16 August	1974	Mr.	M Bonnardeaux	Canada	26 November	2014
Sgt.	D S Christensen	Denmark	16 August	1974	Pte.	JL Sawyer	United Kingdom	12 March	2015
Pte.	J J C Berger	Canada	19 September	1974					

PEACE

By Captain Dougie Gillespie

*In Cypriot lands we have been given our mission,
this time without guns or live ammunition.
United Nations, guardians of peace,
From east to the west, conflicts to cease.*

*British, Argentinian, and Slovak grace,
Together they stand, a diverse embrace.
In this mosaic of cultures, a chorus begins,
A hymn of peace where every heart wins.*

*Ειρήνη, in Greek, whispers through the air,
A wish for calmness, a tranquil affair.
Turkish huzur, a melody sweet,
Harmony sought where conflicts retreat.*

*In the West, amidst the echoes of Argentinian grace,
La paz, a yearning for a peaceful embrace.
Slovak mier, a word softly spoken,
Many years of peace that should never be broken.
Their duty station in the East,
Where guns fell silent, all conflict ceased.
United, they stand, a global choir,
Deescalating tensions, quenching the fire.*

*Then in the centre, the British resolve a historical tie,
an unwavering commitment beneath blue Cypriot skies.
In Nicosia's streets, where tales divide,
Hope whispers, where unity abides.
Greek and Turkish dreams entwine,
A tapestry woven, a peace sign.*

*In the buffer zone,
Amidst the ruins of a divided past,
Hearts yearn for peace, a love that will last.
Beyond the scars, a future's gleam,
In every heart, a shared dream.*

*In the hearts of all on this beautiful island,
Peace blossoms, a promise sweetly planned.
From olive groves to shores so wide,
A tranquil spirit, a shared stride.*

Captain Gillespie is a Digital Communications Technician with 71 Engineer Regiment. He volunteered to deploy on Op TOSCA and is currently employed in the Tactical Operations Centre in Sector 2. He has been a reservist for 17 years, deploying to the USA, Falkland Islands and during the 2012 Olympic Games. At home in Scotland, he is a principal teacher at a high school and keen sportsman; enjoying both football and sailing, he has represented the Army in competitions and expeditions across Europe. Captain Gillespie has a real passion and flair for poetry, which he usually writes and delivers in the Scots dialect.

60 years in the service of peace



60 Years
In the service of peace
1964 -2024