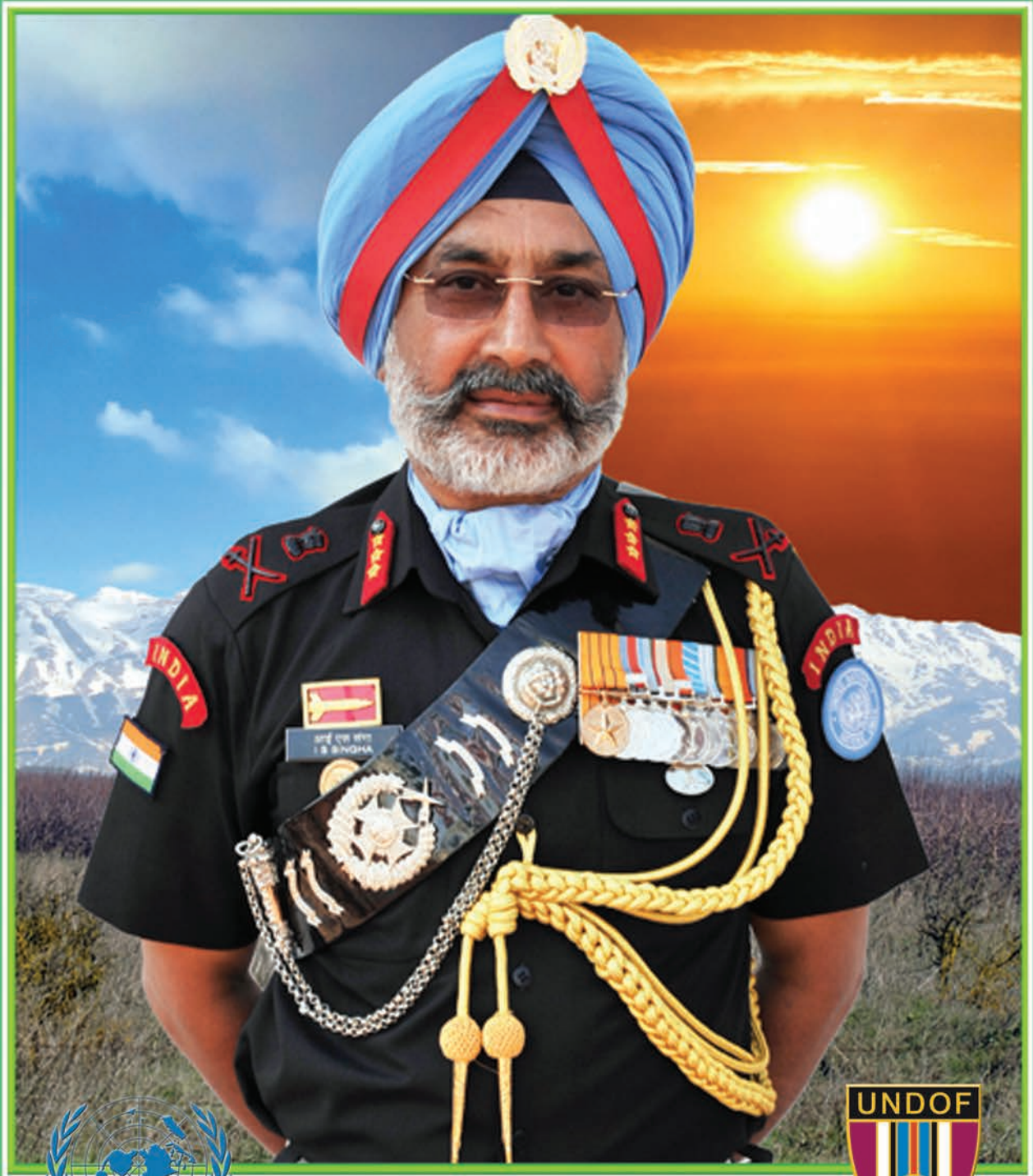


GOLAN

The UNDOF Journal



October - December 2014
No. 141



DEAR READERS !

EDITORIAL

HAPPY NEW YEAR,

"Namaste", "Bula", "Kamusta" and "Dia Duit. I would like to take this opportunity to wish all the readers of the Golan magazine, as well as all military and civilian members of UNDOF and UNTSO a happy and prosperous new year. May 2015 see us continue our important mission in a professional, efficient and impartial manner.

Completing his tour of duty, Lt. Gen. I. S. Singha, F.C & HoM displayed his professionalism, enthusiasm and commitment to both the mission and the Indian Army. It is fitting that we dedicate this edition of the Golan Journal to him as we pay tribute to his time in charge from August 2012 to December 2014. During his time in charge, Lt. Gen Singha saw the mission change in all possible ways, from the operational to the geographic. TCCs have come and gone but the one constant throughout has been the steadfast determination and professionalism of all involved, even in the most difficult circumstances, to ensure the mission mandate would abide. This in no small way can be attributed to the strong leadership and no-nonsense approach of the senior military and civilian staff of UNDOF.

We say goodbye to Lt. Gen Singha and look forward to the arrival of the new FC& HoM Maj. Gen Purna Chandra Thapa, who brings with him 35 years of experience to



the mission. We take this opportunity to welcome Maj. Gen. Thapa, and to assure him of the full co-operation, hard work ethic and can do attitude of all UNDOF members. Finally, "Goodbye" to all the members who have left and are leaving the mission after completing their tour.

SINCERLY

COMDT. MICK PARSONS
SSO M/PR
UNDOF

SSO M/PR	Editorial	2
FC UNDOF	Force Commander's Farewell Message	3
DFC	DFC	4
COS/CMS	COS	5
People of UNDOF	New People in UNDOF.....	6-7
UNDOF	JOC Training.....	8
UNDOF	NEPCON..... Everest to Hermon....	9
UNDOF	Force Military Police.....	10
UNDOF	Force Commander Special	11-14
OGG	UNTSO Interstation Training.....	15
UNDOF	FIJIBATT.Fiji day, going home after 30 years of service	16 - 17
UNDOF	U. N . Day.....	18 - 19
UNDOF	FRC : Cosantoir 10k, Breaking New Ground.....	20 - 21
UNDOF	LOGBATT	Diwali22 - 23

Front (Page 1): Lt. Gen. I. S. Singha FC & HoM 2012- 20141

Back (Page 24): Winter in CZ

Photo by Sgt Tomas Delana

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FORCE COMMANDERS FAREWELL MESSAGE



Good Morning ladies and gentlemen and more importantly fellow peacekeepers.

Firstly, I shall like to express my gratitude to all UNDOF members for this opportunity to address my farewell message. Before going any further, I pray that the coming year will bring peace and prosperity in Golan.

From the time I took this position as Head of Mission and Force Commander in 09 Aug 2012, the environment of UNDOF was always challenging. Despite the challenging environment, I am happy to say that we in UNDOF have given our best to meet the standards and uphold the mission mandate.

Today, I would like to pay tribute to your dedication, your commitment, your innovative approach and your professionalism shown on the challenging and volatile environment of Golan to uphold the mandate of UNDOF. I count myself most fortunate. Here I have come today, not only as Force Commander and head of Mission, but as a comrade and friend too!

I remember thinking that it would be hard to say goodbye ... and I was right - it is hard.

Yet I consider myself fortunate to have met such special peacekeepers ... that I care so much about ... that it not easy to say goodbye!

As I say goodbye, let me remind you that farewells are not forever, nor are they the end. They are simply words to say that I will miss you all dearly and that I will remember you all fondly.

I wish you happy adventures, fantastic new friendships, amazing experiences and the journey of a lifetime. And I assured myself that you would provide all the support and loyalty to the coming FC from Nepal in days ahead.

Finally, Thank you for this grand farewell parade put forward by all the contingent members of UNDOF and I look forward to hearing of your future successes.

Before I say goodbye, I would not miss this opportunity to wish you all Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2015.

Bye bye, Albida, Mothe Maada.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'I. Singha'.

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

ACTING FORCE COMMANDER ADDRESS



My dear colleagues we have passed another historic milestone in the long and proud history of the UNDOF Mission. On the 24th of December last we gathered on parade to pay tribute and to say farewell to our distinguished Force Commander and Head of Mission, Lieutenant General Iqbal Singh Singha, VSM. It was a poignant day for all members of the Mission, but, also a day of great pride; pride in the many wonderful achievements of our General.

General Singha brought his very considerable military experience as a strategist, a diplomat and a warfighter to UNDOF in August of 2012. It was his personal courage, his leadership, his ability to bring disparate Parties together and his unrelenting drive and commitment to face up to risk and uncertainty that kept the UNDOF Mission and its personnel safe throughout the most dangerous and turbulent period in its 40 year history.

The journey you and the Force Commander took together over the past two and a half years was an unprecedented one, one filled with great highs and difficult and dangerous times. The journey is not at an end, it continues, and although we have only recently said farewell to General Singha we have already begun the next part of the UNDOF story. A story we hope will be filled with wonderful opportunity and unprecedented success. I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that the legacy of General Iqbal Singh Singha will carry us forward on a great tidal wave of belief in our ability to deliver mission success through determination, courage and pride in our Mission.

Very soon we will welcome our new Force Commander and Head of Mission, Major General Purna Chandra Thapa of Nepal. We look forward to his arrival secure in the knowledge that he will build on the legacy of General Singha.

And so let me conclude by again extending our deepest thanks to the General, and to his family for sharing him with us this past two and half years. May God bless General Singha and also bless his great country, and most importantly, the men and women of India who wear that uniform so proudly, and their families.

General, your valor and leadership has inspired us all to be better men and women. Please join me as we wish both the General and his charming wife Baljeet a wonderful return to life with family and friends in India as he takes up command once again, this time as a Corps Commander in the Indian Army.

Thank you.

“In tranquillo esse quisque gubernator potest.”

(Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm)

- Publilius Syrus, 46 BC - 29 BC, Latin writer, native of Assyria, modern day Syria

Brigadier General Anthony Hanlon
Acting Force Commander, UNDOF

ACTING HOM / CMS ADDRESS



Dear colleagues,

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy, prosperous and most of all a peaceful New Year. I'd also like to welcome the 17th rotation of INDCON and thank their predecessors, 16th rotation for all their hard work. I'd also like give my best wishes to the Fijibat Company that we are detaching over to join our neighbours in UNIFIL.

During the year we are going to continue to face many challenges, initially welcoming and supporting our distinguished new Force Commander Major General Thapa and simultaneously expanding our presence on the B side both in Damascus and in the AOL. I hope that as we expand and redevelop our facilities, living and working conditions will also improve. Realistically however, the process of developing new facilities on the B side and redeveloping Camp Zouani will be long one and I'd like to thank you all for your patience so far and beg your further indulgence and acceptance of the disruption. In addition to the ongoing restructuring of the Military we will also restructure the civilian component, in order to ensure that together we all in the best shape to meet the future challenges.

Along with all the other historic developments that are happening to us, the New Year saw yet another ground breaking departure, UNDOF which is normally a military dictatorship, experienced six weeks of civilian rule. I hope that during my short tenure I brought to your lives the normal confusion, bluster, spin, obscurity and downright incompetence, that normally accompanies civilian government and I am delighted to announce that by the time you read this we will have returned to military rule!!

Happy New Year once again.

Mr. Bernard Lee
CMS & A/HoM
UNDOF

The new Nep Con Commander



Lt. Col Ishwar Thapa is an alumnus of Nepalese Military Academy, Kharipati; he enrolled himself in Nepalese Army in 1990 and was commissioned as an infantry officer. Following his commission, he attained most of his military training like Jungle Warfare, Mountain Warfare, Paratrooper, Intelligence and Security, Company commander and Staff Course in Nepal. He is a graduate of the Nepal Army Staff College. Besides, he presented himself on various seminars and workshops at home and abroad.

Lt Col Thapa has served in a broad range of command and staff appointments at home and overseas. At home he has served in command appointments of platoon, company, independent infantry company, Commandant of Military Intelligence School and Battalion Commander. Prior to this deployment He held the appointment of infantry Battalion commander back home.

In addition, Lt Col Thapa possesses a significant experience in the service of peace in UN. He served twice in UNIFIL as platoon commander and Operation Officer, as Staff officer in UNMIS. He has also attended UN instructor course in China.

Lt Col Thapa is a keen sportsman, happily married to Mrs. Binita Thapa and blessed with a son.

The new Force Reserve Company Commander



Lt Col Denis Harrington (DSM) joined the Irish Defence Forces in 1981. Commissioned into the Infantry Corps he has held command appointments at Platoon, Company and Battalion level, and staff appointments at Battalion, Brigade and Defence Forces Headquarters level. His last appointment prior to deployment with UNDOF was Battalion Commander. He is a graduate of the Irish Defence Forces Senior Command and Staff College.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) degree from National University of Ireland (Galway) and a Masters Degree in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies from National University of Ireland (Maynooth).

He has served overseas in appointments in UNIFIL, both at Contingent and Sector Headquarters, and in KFOR at Contingent Headquarters Staff level.

He is married and has three children.

The new Force Medical Officer



Lt Col Dr Sagar Rajkarnikar was born in 12/08/1971 in Lalitpur, Nepal. He completed medical graduation from Russia. He was appointed as Nepal Army Medical Officer in 2000. He commanded Field Ambulance Company. He holds a MS (Ophthalmology) from National Academy of Medical Science, Nepal. Dr Rajkarnikar has done several course includes Jr command and Staff college in Nepal, Hospital preparedness for Emergencies and Faculty Development Training in Nepal.

Lt Col Dr Sagar Rajkarnikar has also served in MONUC Mission, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as a Senior Medical Commander in 2003 and got the Medical Certificate of Excellence from Force Medical Officer Col Dr Mahaman Tchiary and has participated in 70th All India Ophthalmological conference 2012 in India.

Lt Col Dr Sagar Rajkarnikar is happily married to Muna and they are blessed with a son Samud.

His hobby is reading books, collecting currencies of different countries, playing table tennis.

The new Force Provost Marshall (FIJICON)



Major Anirudh Singh was born in 20th February 1960 in Bua, The Republic of Fiji Islands. He was enlisted into the Republic of Fiji Military Force (RFMF) in 1991 after serving as a Police Officer with Fiji Police Force for 13 years. He was commissioned as an Officer in 1996 and got promoted to Major in 2014.

Major Singh is a Graduate in Masters in International Relations and Diplomacy, LLB Law Degree, Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma in International Relations, Accredited Associate Mediator of Singapore Mediation Center. He is Commissioner for Oaths and Justice of Peace and an evaluator with Fiji Service Excellence Awards and Fiji Business Excellence Awards.

At national level, he has served and held appointments in the RFMF as Officer in Charge of Military Police Unit, Force Provost Marshal, Camp Commandant, Staff Officer Logistics, Staff Officer Training and Staff Officer Investigations for ten years.

At international, level he served with Multinational Observer Force (MFO) in Sinai, United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL), United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNMISET) and Peace Monitoring Group Bougainville (PMG) for seven years. Some of the appointments he held during his tenure with UN were UN Military Observer, Liaison Officer, Chief of Investigation, and Officer in Charge of Military Police, Military Transport Officer, Platoon Commander and Company 2 IC.

He is married to Fiva Isapeti and has two sons and a daughter and thirteen grandchildren. His hobbies are networking, travelling, reading and watching rugby.

MISSION TRAINING



The Joint Operation Command Centre (JOCC) is the nerve centre of UNDOF operations where all activities are coordinated and monitored. On a 24/7 basis one will find at the JOCC an OGG duty officer codenamed DOG (Duty Officer Golan), an UNDOF duty officer and an UNDOF signaler. They receive and send communication to line Battalions, personnel driving on the road, UNDOF HQ staff and UNHQ NY.

Since UNDOF had temporarily redeployed to Alpha side, according to Deputy Force Commander Brigadier General Hanlons remarks during the training officers conference in October 2014; quote “UNDOF is going through an interesting time, we should take advantage of our situation and carry out training and be better prepared for the future” unquote. The Mission Training Cell (MTC) is co-located in JOCC is one of the contributing factors in smoothing operations through refresher workshops on radio procedures especially the switch from analogue to digital, winter driving skills, understanding UNDOF SOP’s and regulations, SAGEM equipment training and setting out guidelines. Although the facilities for training is challenging, considerations for future improvement had been captured.



“EVEREST TO HERMON”



Following in the footsteps of their predecessors, 67 Nepalese Peacekeepers, from the country of Mt. Everest (8,848m) for the very first time, arrived in UNDOF mission on the 19 July 2013 to man MT. Hermon complex, the highest UN manned position in the world. Since that day NEPCON members have been manning Mount Hermon, an area of strategic interest, providing a birds eye view of the areas bordering Syria, Lebanon and Israel. It would be imperative and worthy to mention that Nepalese troops currently deployed in the HERMON, complex are well trained in High altitude and Mountain warfare having trained in the Nepalese Army school situated at a height of 3500 meters, thus making the job of acclimatization easier.

NEPCON

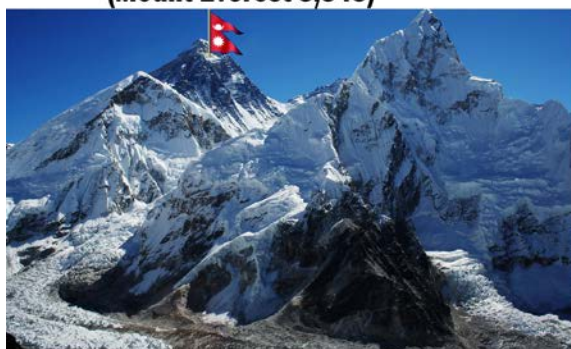
Additional troops in the form of Guard Company, including CPU (Close protection Unit) for the Force commander and the Head of Mission, arrived in the mission area on 19 August 2014 totaling the current strength of 154 including 5 staff officers. Presently NEPCON 3rd is serving in the mission under the competent leadership and command of Lt Col Ishwar Thapa. Following the relocation of Force HQ from Camp Faouar to Camp Ziouani, NEPCON troops took Position 22 and OP 73 in addition to the most daunting task of the mission i.e. holding Mount Hermon.

The aforementioned CPU (close protection Unit) upgrades and magnifies UNDOF security capabilities by providing close protection to the Force commander / HOM. CPU carries out vehicle escort and inner cordon security during the movement and various programs and events of the Force commander. Working in the team concept, CPU team member have undergone intensive VIP security training prior to their deployment in the mission, while most of the troops are the members of elite special force of the Nepalese Army.

Upholding the legacy and image of its brave predecessors, Nepalese peacekeeper will always endlessly strive for the Noble cause of world peace and humanity. Nepal is not only regarded as one of the major UN troops contributing country, its troops are also stationed in the most challenging and difficult part of the globe. Mount Hermon is a perfect example that fits the bill. The current batch of NEPCON members are therefore committed to carry out their duty and responsibilities with pride and honor in their hearts, a sense of commitment in their mind and smiles on their faces.

INTERESTING ABOUT NEPCON

**Highest Position in the world
(Mount Everest 8,848)**



**Highest UN Position in the world
(Mount Hermon 2,814)**



Concept and Collection by T/Sgt. Kuldip Thapa

“THE FORCE MILITARY POLICE”

UNDOF Military Police has been in existence since the inception of UNDOF. Over the years, the composition and strength has changed as Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) withdrew for obvious reasons. However, these changes have not deterred UNDOF MP in effectively and efficiently policing UNDOF. The concept of policing needs to change in order to be relevant in adequately addressing pressing sophisticated crime trends globally due to modernization. Therefore, the ideal concept adopted in this 21st Century is “Proactive Role Policing” i.e. in partnership with all stakeholders.

Role

In this regard, UNDOF MP is augmented to provide security and police services to the Force and UN interest within UNDOF’s Area of Responsibility (AOR) this being its primary role. Basically, it provides and facilitates first line security and Military Police Services to all Military components, International Staff as well as National Staff as far as UNDOF is concerned.

This is achieved by enforcing UN Regulations within the AOR in conjunction with UNDOF and UNTSO SOP, Military Police Instructions and other Administrative Instructions and Circulars from time to time issued by UNDOF HQ. Specifically, security, discipline, traffic control, investigations, escorts and TCC rotations are facilitated by UNDOF Force Military Unit.



It can be said that, an integrated mission like UNDOF, Force Military Police is the only entity comprised of different nationalities of the military component. Diversity in this composition has in fact become a source of strength of the Unit, as each member has set aside their differences and displayed great sense of camaraderie and team work in accomplishing their common task.

Organization

The Force Military Police comprises of MPs who are specialists from their country Military Police establishments who hail from India, Ireland, Fiji and Nepal. Headed by Maj Anirudh Singh as new incumbent Force Provost Marshal (FPM), Military Police is geared to meet the challenges ahead as its HQ is co-located in Camp Ziouani with its competent HR capability and resources at its disposal.

Some of the strategies to make Force MP more relevant and effective are: proactive policing rather than reactive, policing in collaboration with internal & external stakeholders, sensitizing key stakeholders, need for a collective approach, capacity building, awareness, training, more visibility, timeliness in reporting, adoption of systems and processes to ensure speedy resolution, adoption of data, analysis to identify gaps and implement changes for continuous improvement.

FORCE COMMANDER SPECIAL









DFC Brig. Gen. Hanlon presenting FC Lt. Gen. Singha with a memento to mark his time as Force Commander from August 2012 - December 2014. We wish Lt. Gen. Singha every success for the future



UNTSO Interstation Training

Given that members of the two UNTSO observer groups, Observer Group Lebanon (OGL) and Observer Group Golan (OGG) have a limited understanding of what the life of an UNMO is like on “the other side”, an opportunity was provided for a few UNMOs to experience a different operational environment and enhance their understanding of the wider UNTSO Area of Responsibility (AOR) by undergoing Inter-Station training from 14-17 Nov 2014.

The OGG participation in this training consisted of two Canadian UNMOs, Captain Dave Horton and Major Erik Andresen. Upon arrival at OGL HQ, we were met by UNMO, Major Sepp Rodgers (CAN), who provided a tour of the OGL HQ facilities and brief introductions to OGL HQ staff. This provided a good opportunity to shape our overall understanding of the functionality of OGL. We were then met by the OGL TRGO, Captain Tim Colliar (NZL), who explained the schedule for the upcoming training. Upon leaving OGL HQ, we were given a tour of the remaining UNFIL facilities in Naqoura, were introduced to some of the civilian support staff and were then taken to Canada House, in Tyre, where we would be housed during the training period. The afternoon was spent familiarizing ourselves with key locations in vicinity of the accommodations and getting a sense of what life was like in Tyre for the OGL UNMOs. The evening was spent with the TRGO and the new OGL UNMOs, who were currently undergoing induction training, including two of the transferees from OGG – Major Nirmal Khand (NPL) and Captain Daniel Zuercher (CHE), who seemed to be adjusting well to their new place of duty.



OGL HQ, Naqoura

The next morning (15 Nov) we were provided with a very detailed walking tour of all significant areas throughout Tyre, giving us a great overview of the history, culture, and everyday life in Tyre. It also highlighted UNMO security issues and outlined the current religious sections of the city and the key gathering spots for the major factions. Major Rodgers proved to be an extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide. Time was later spent discussing life on the Patrol Bases, the conduct of patrols and the nature of meeting with local leaders. There is no doubt that the daily routine of the UNMO within OGL is both different yet equally interesting as it is within OGG.

16 Nov comprised of the Blue Line tour, including visits to Patrol Base (PB) East and PB West. Following a very professional set of patrol orders from the TRGO in Tyre, the convoy (including the UNMO trainees) drove to PB East. Here we were given a brief on the PB and surrounding area, received a tour of the PB and received operational briefings from the two OGL teams operating out of this area. The convoy then departed the PB for key points along the Blue Line in each team’s AOR. It was very interesting to view locations from the Lebanon side that we only see from Israeli occupied Golan side here in OGG. Following lunch we continued to PB West where we received similar operational briefings from each team and a tour of the PB before continuing along the Blue Line and receiving further briefings at various key locations. We certainly got a good glimpse into the AOR and an understanding of the duties of the OGL Line UNMOs.

The next day, we bid our farewell to OGL and began our journey back to OGG. On the drive back, we spoke of the importance of conducting such inter-station training and recommendations to further enhance future events. This training proved extremely valuable and went a long way to removing misconceptions about what working in OGL is like. In closing, we would like to thank the whole OGL team for their warm welcome and hospitality.

FIJI DAY IN THE GOLAN

The Fiji contingent celebrated its national independence day in the occupied Golan Heights, on 10th October 2014. Since Fiji's first deployment to the Middle East in 1978, this celebration was a first ever to be held in this land, a place held in high regard for Christian believers due to its religious significance. As such, the Fiji Independence day celebration in UNDOF was orchestrated in a way that would live to be remembered by Fijians all over in years to come – for one, the first ever Fiji day celebrations to be held on the alpha side by a whole Contingent of 400 plus soldiers and secondly, in the Golan heights – a strategic mountainous range having geological, bio geographical and geo political significance over Israel and the neighbouring states. A presentation on Fiji was conducted to UNDOF senior staff on the morning of celebration day, and a few items from the different ethnic groups represented in the Fiji Contingent was put to the floor before the chief guest UNDOF DFC, Brig. Gen. Tony Hanlon. The Fiji Contingent Commander and UNDOF CMPO, in delivering his Fiji day address reminded his troops the importance of executing duties and responsibilities both as a soldier and diplomat whilst serving in multinational environments such as UNDOF and it was imperative that each soldier understood this concept wholesomely. He proceeded to plant an olive tree together with the Fiji Batt Chaplain and the youngest serving Fiji batt member after the parade, to commemorate this significant occasion. The celebration continued with the youngest serving member hosting the chief guest for lunch at the IK, sports after lunch and entertainment later that evening. Each company provided an item each for the evening formalities which brought about much joy, laughter and merry making in Camp Ziouani. The Fiji batt dance band jazzed up the basketball court as Fiji batt members took turns in 'strutting their stuff' under the very brightly decorated venue. Alas! The first Fiji day celebration in the Golan Heights came and went...with much satisfaction and weariness!

Capt S.T. Qetaki
FB Welfare Offr



FIJIBATT REMEMBERS THE FALLEN

“John 15:13: There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.”

Fijibatt commemorated Remembrance Day on the 11th of November with a dawn service parade. The Contingent Commander, LT COL Vatimio Leva laid the wreath on behalf of the contingent in the short yet moving ceremony. The Last Post and Reveille resounded as troops saluted in a silent vigil for fallen comrades, past and present. The Binyon lines were recited and everyone on parade in the very chilly conditions at Camp Ziouani echoed the sentiments “We will remember them”. In all UN missions Fiji has participated in, UNIFIL has registered the most number of fatalities at 35 casualties, between 1978 through to 2003. Fiji continues to contribute almost 600 troops to UNDOF and UNAMI and 300 more on the non UN mission in Sinai, Egypt.

Capt S.T. Qetaki
FB Welfare Offr

GOING HOME AFTER 30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Enlisting into the Fiji Navy as a Seaman Gunner on 01 Feb 1988, 24527 Warrant Officer Class 1 Malakai Waqa has enjoyed the naval ranks and attended various courses in the process. The 12 June 1961 born sailor, among other naval courses, highlighted his achievements on the Maritime Law Enforcement Course and Seamanship Instructors Course as the pinnacle of his naval instructions phase that saw him turning out a better sailor and vigilant watch keeper as a seaman gunner on board the Fiji Navy patrol boats. His proficiency in weapons saw him being transferred to the RFMF Logistic Support Unit as the Fiji Naval Division Chief Armourer and through this transition, his regimental capabilities were also acknowledged and so he was appointed the Regimental Sergeant Major of the LSU. WO1 Waqa has served in two other peacekeeping missions as RSM and Platoon commander with the 1st Battalion, UNAMI and 2nd Battalion, MFO, Sinai respectively. As the Fiji Batt RSM here with UNDOF, WO1 Waqa is expediting all opportunities made available to him to ensure he enjoys his last TOD after 30 years of faithful service with the RFMF. WO1 Waqa has had many memorable moments during his years of service and further mentions that there hasn't been a better place to prepare him for retirement, than being in the service. WO1 Waqa looks forward to life after service at the end of his current tour to spend more time with his wife and his 3 children.

LT M. Kolinisau

FB Trg Offr



FIRST IN LAST OUTIN THE COLD

Camp Ziouani was awoken to resounding voices in unison at 0400 on 28 Nov as the Fiji Batt Engineers began their Sappers Day celebrations with an early morning devotion. The recently recruited youngsters in the battalion gazed in awe from under their duvets on that early and chilly morning as the Sappers and ex sappers dressed in synchronised white t shirts signifying the incoming winter seasons of Mount Hermon, entered accommodation blocks after the morning devotion, breaking the sleeping silence with a "Happy Sappers Day" greeting and offering each person a mug of rum and coffee, including their Engineer counterparts of IRECON. Different vehicles were allocated different areas of responsibility in CZ to serve the traditional sappers drink while the front end loader from the heavy equipment platoon roared its engines between the accommodation lines, bringing about much curiosity from within Camp Zouani in the early hours of the morning. Because of the incoming official visit on the following week, the day program for Sappers day was forfeited in lieu of cleaning up preparations, but later resumed with the evening formalities that included the cutting of the Sappers day cake, the awarding of the best Sapper award to 30939 Spr Asaeli Vunituraga, and the continuation of the celebrations at the Bula Bar, with free drinks provided by the Sappers to the Battalion. At around 0230, a handful of young men were still seen in the confines on the Bula Bar, now in synchronised black t shirts, cleaning up and refurbishing the venue of the successful 2014 Sappers Day celebration in the Golan Heights. They were up before 0400 and were still up by at least 0300 the next morning despite the chilly conditions...indeed, they were first in and last out...Happy Sappers Day
Sgt S Naiduki, FB Engrs Section

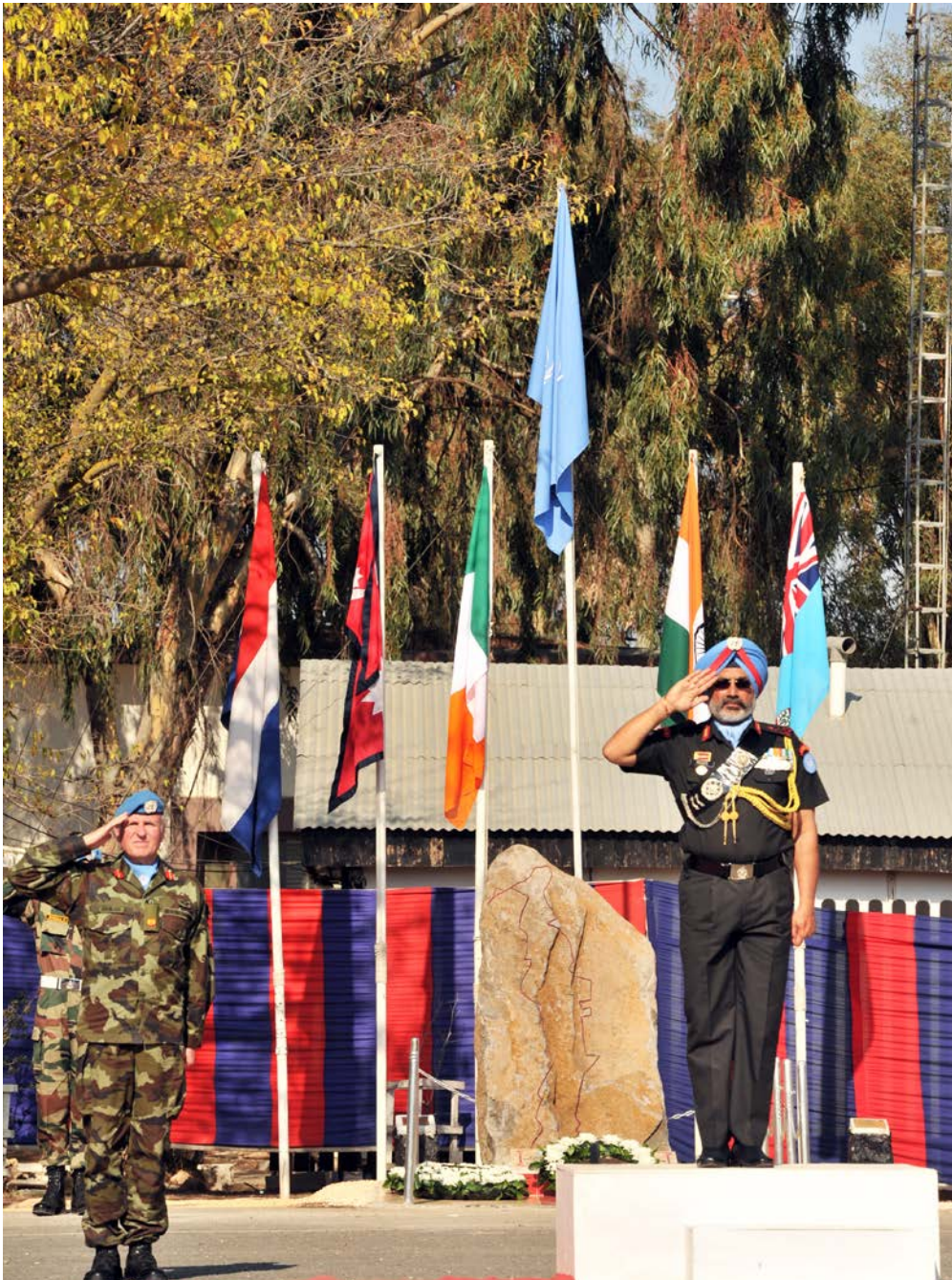


UNITED NATIONS DAY 2014

U. N. day 2014 was celebrated in Camp Ziouani on 24 Oct 2014. It was a mixture of both the formal and informal, with a solemn wreath laying ceremony to commemorate fallen comrades, as well as cultural exhibitions from each TCC and several sporting events throughout the day. The day was a great success and included contributions from all nationalities.

The Force Commander Lt. Gen. I.S. Singha, paid tribute to the sacrifice that is made by all peacekeepers to ensure stability in some of the worlds more troubled spots. He and DFC UNDOF, Brig. Gen. T. Hanlon then laid the final wreath at the newly commissioned monument before one minute of silence, followed by a lone bugler sounding 'last post' and 'reveille'

The sporting events then took centre stage with FIJBATT, LOGBATT, IRECON and NEPCON participating in some very competitive Tug-of-war, Soccer, Cricket and Volleyball matches. The FC presented the winners medals later at a special dinner to end a very enjoyable U.N. day.





IRECON Force Reserve Company 10km Road Race

IRECON Force Reserve Company 10km Road Race

On the 16th October 2014, nine days after deploying in theatre, the 46th Infantry Group hosted the UNDOF edition of the An Cosantóir 10k race in Camp Ziouani. The An Cosantóir 10k is a race held every year in Dublin by the Irish Defence Forces where participants come from throughout the organisation to participate in teams and individually.

A total of 93 runners competed, drawn from FIJIBATT, INDCON, UNDOF Force HQ, UN Civilian Staff and the Force Reserve Company. In a very tight race which was only decided on the finishing straight, 1st place went to Pte John Dillon (38min 12s), second place Cpl Steven McKeigue (38min 17s), followed home by Pte Niall Kelly (38min 27s).



The prize for first placed female competitor went to Lt Ciara Ní Ruairc (50min 48s) with Lt Marie Carrigy a close second.

In the over forties category LtCol Colm O'Lúasa led the field home in 49min20s.

With over 35 international contingent personnel running, the fastest International competitor was Cpl Mukesh Kumar of INDCON in a time of 47min 21s.

The event was a huge success for the 46th Infantry Group, in establishing positive relationships with the other UNDOF troops and also raising €513 for Crumlin Children's Hospital & the Westmeath Hospice



Irish Force Reserve Company – Breaking New Ground

Since arriving in the UNDOF mission area on a sunny evening in early October, with the Irish Force Reserve Company, Pte John Nevin, a rifleman with the mechanised company, has observed a period of rapid change and development. In this article he gives an account of his experience to date as an UNDOF peacekeeper.

Prior to our arrival in Camp Ziouani, our new home for six months, a mountain of engineering works had to be completed to accommodate all of our personnel and equipment. This entailed the building of purpose built accommodation and the retrofitting of suitable buildings for offices, dining areas and cooking facilities. Following a huge concerted effort from personnel in the FRC and Combat Support Elements within a matter of days we were up and running.

Article by Pte John Nevin. IRECON



Once established in Camp Ziouani, we began settling into a comprehensive training and work schedule. A normal training day in the FRC could involve Medical training in the morning, Communications training in the afternoon and QRF scenario drills. Considering our recent deployment to UN Position 80, across the A-line in the Area of Separation, this training programme has been effective at keeping our skills current in the event they are called into use. On 25th October we, along with the other troop contributing nations, took part in the United Nations Day commemorations. UN Day marks the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter. This was a wonderful day of celebration which began with a ceremonial parade taken by the Force Commander LGen I. S. Singha. Following the parade there was cultural display from all the nations, at which Ireland gave a display of our national sport, Hurling. In the afternoon there was an inter-contingent sports day where each country fielded their most accomplished sports people in Cricket, Soccer, Volleyball and Tug of War. Although the games were very competitive in nature, there was a great sense of 'Esprit de Corps' between all nations.



DIWALI IN UNDOF

Diwali also known as Deepavali and the “festival of lights”, is an ancient Hindu festival celebrated in autumn every year. The festival spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, good over evil, and hope over despair. The festival preparations and rituals typically extend over a five day period, but the main festival night of Diwali coincides with the darkest, new moon night of the Hindu Lunisolar month Kartika. In the Gregorian calendar, Diwali night falls between mid-October and mid-November.



THE STORY

The ancient story of how Diwali evolved into such a widely celebrated festival is different in various regions and states of India. Diwali is the day when King Rama’s coronation was celebrated in Ayodhya after his epic war with Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. By order of the royal families of Ayodhya and Mithila, the kingdom of which Sita was princess, the cities and far-flung boundaries of these kingdoms were lit up with rows of lamps, glittering on dark nights to welcome home the divine king Rama and his queen Sita after 14 years of exile, ending with an across-the-seas war in which the whole of the kingdom of Lankawas destroyed.

On the day of Diwali festival, doorways are hung with torans of mango leaves and marigolds. Rangolis are drawn with different colored powders to welcome guests. The traditional motifs are often linked with auspicious symbols of good luck. Oil diyas are arranged in and around the house. Because of these flickering lamps, the festival has acquired its name: Dipawali or Diwali meaning ‘rows of lamps’. On this day, people buy something for the house or some jewelry for the women of the house. It is auspicious to be buy something metallic, such as silver.



Every year on the dark nights of Diwali the sound of firecrackers announces the celebration of the favorite festival of Indians. Homes are decorated, sweets are distributed by everyone and thousands of lamps are lit to create a world of fantasy. Of all the festivals celebrated in India, Diwali is by far the most glamorous and important. Enthusiastically enjoyed by people of every religion, its magical and radiant touch creates an atmosphere of joy and festivity.

CELEBRATIONS ACROSS THE WORLD

Diwali is celebrated around the world, particularly in countries with significant populations of Hindu, Jain and Sikh origin. These include Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Mauritius, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, the Netherlands, Canada, the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, and the United States. With more understanding of Indian culture and global migration of people of Indian origin, the number of countries where Diwali/ Deepavali is celebrated has been gradually increasing. While in some countries it is celebrated mainly by Indian expatriates, in others it is becoming part of the general local culture. In most of these countries Diwali is celebrated on the same lines with some minor variations.



