



COPING WITH COVID-19 How UNDOF is dealing with Covid-19 and the measures that have become the norm



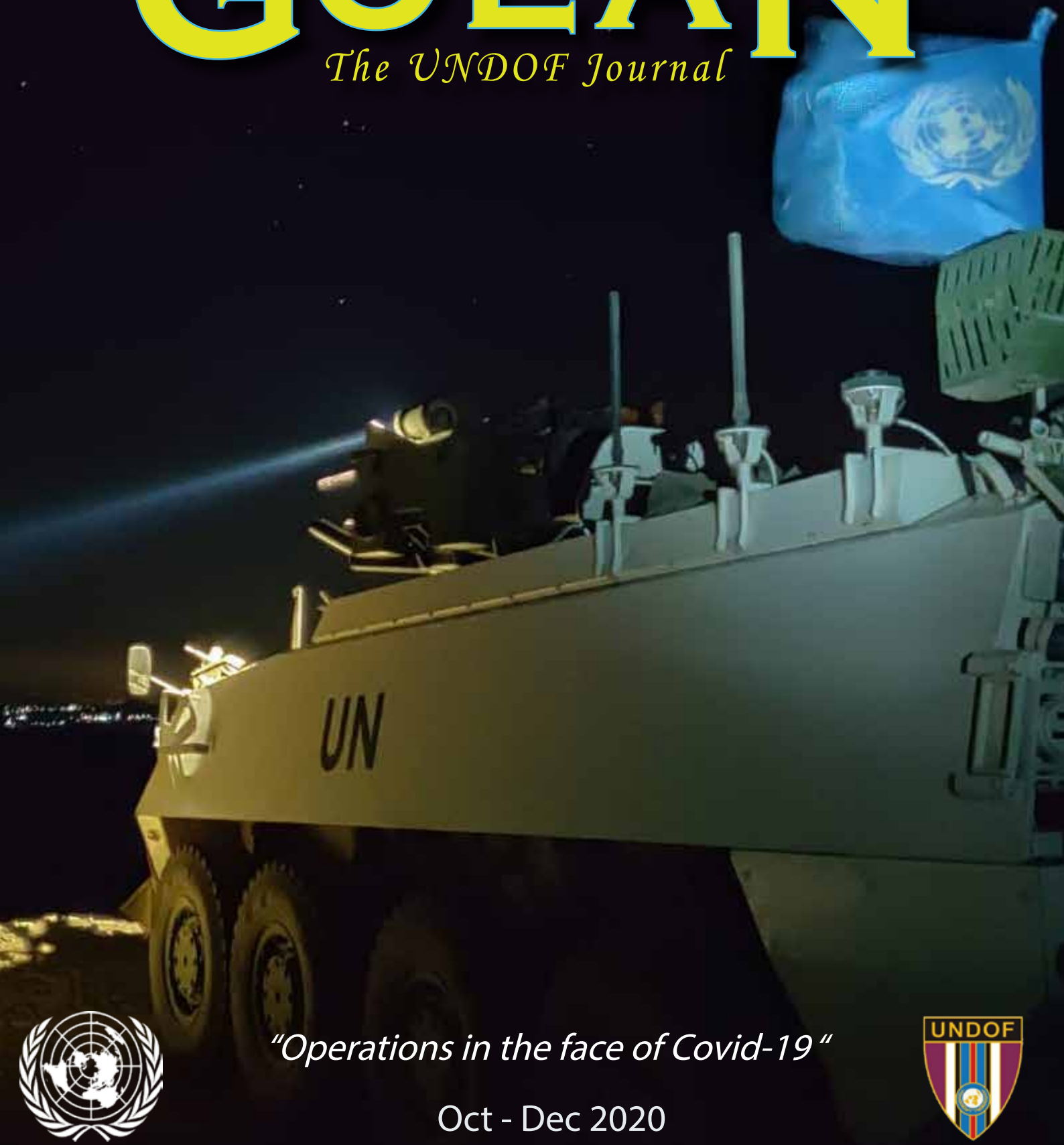
INCREMENTAL RETURN TO B SIDE UNDOF's plan to return to full capacity, and how it will get there



INTERVIEW WITH AN MP OFFICER Capt Rajsimran Cheema talks about her experiences on her first UN mission

# GOLAN

*The UNDOF Journal*



*"Operations in the face of Covid-19"*

Oct - Dec 2020



# Head of Mission and Force Commander's Message

It gives me immense pleasure to write this message for the quarterly professional publication and a mouthpiece of UNDOF, "Golan – the UNDOF Journal." I am extremely excited in launching the 155<sup>th</sup> edition of this journal, which is being published after a long interval of more than two and half years. Since its establishment, UNDOF has always endeavored to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic and continue to preserve stability on the Golan during these 46 years. UNDOF has been successfully implementing its mandate by supervising the Disengagement Agreement and protocol with regard to the areas of separation and limitation as well as by actively liaising with the parties while ensuring utmost impartiality.

The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation continues to be a priority for the Mission. Similarly, implementation of effective measures and procedures to ensure safety and security of every individual peacekeepers against emerging threats is an issue of significant concern. Despite numerous challenges that prevail in the Mission, I satisfyingly marked the steadfast dedication, exemplary professionalism, and flawless performance of every members of UNDOF, which have pushed this Mission to a successful point, as it stands today.

The past few months have been extremely challenging for all of us due to the menace of COVID-19. In the initial days of the pandemic, not only our physical health was threatened but also our mental health got terribly disrupted. I could feel the hardship that you all have faced due to the restriction imposed in your social life being away from home and your beloved ones. I honestly acknowledge that it was because of the UNDOF's workable plan and the system within that functioned as planned, we only had a case and were able to contain the virus with no onward transmission. With a gradual lifting of policies and procedures emplaced against COVID-19 we are now heading towards the adaptation of "New Normal." I urge you all to continue with every possible precaution against COVID-19 while carrying out your duty. I take this opportunity to appreciate the mission leadership and all concerned for your tremendous effort to minimizing the spread of disease within UNDOF. Even in the mishap of the pandemic, it was through our coherent commitment that our endeavour towards the implementation of the Mission's mandate hardly got affected. I admit that there were a few restrictions, delays



and challenges within the operational and logistical aspects associated with the impact of the pandemic, but we successfully overcame through our collective contribution as guided by the Mission's motto "One Mission, One Team, One Goal."

Therefore, I wish to commend the relentless efforts of the leadership and all military and civilian personnel of UNDOF, and Observer Group Golan, who have performed the important tasks assigned to them with efficiency and devotion under challenging circumstances. I also extend my sincere appreciation to both the parties to agreement for their strong commitment in upholding the agreement on disengagement. Finally, I would like to compliment the members of the editorial board and all concerned staff for publishing this journal. I am hopeful that this publication provides a platform for UNDOF peacekeepers to share their views on various pertinent issues and also apprise all readers the different facets of the Mission. I am equally confident that the further editions of the journal would be published timely. May peace and stability prevail in Golan!

Thank you.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL ISHWAR HAMAL  
HOM / FC, UNDOF

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

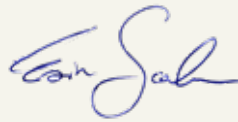
**W**ELCOME to the 155<sup>th</sup> edition of GOLAN, the UNDOF Journal.

Since the last issue in March 2018, a lot has changed in the world. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced all UN Peacekeeping missions to adapt, innovate and overcome. Those who served with UNDOF prior to 2020 would undoubtedly see significant differences in how the mission operates today, but would be satisfied that our operations and presence in the AO has remained thoroughly capable of achieving its mandate. We hope, in this issue, to highlight just how this is achieved. An editorial theme of 'UNDOF Operations in the face of Covid-19' will, we hope, provide the reader with an appreciation of the challenges and successes of UNDOF in 2020.

As this issue bridges a gap between March 2018 and December 2020, we also took the decision to include some material that was written in that period. Deciding on what content to include was not an easy decision, so we selected those which best displayed the breadth of UNDOF activities over that time. And of course, the issue would not be complete without a tribute to Major General Francis Vib-Sanziri, RIP.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of UNDOF's troops and commanders who, despite their operational commitments, found the time to engage with the Media & PR cell and provide us with articles, photographs and support. This publication is a welcome return to the acknowledgment of the important and reliable contribution each of you make to fulfilling UNDOF's mandate.

COMMANDANT EOIN SCANLON,  
EDITOR IN CHIEF




EDITORIAL STAFF

**Editor in Chief**  
SSO Media & PR  
Comdt Eoin Scanlon (Ireland)  
[undof-ss-media-pr@un.org](mailto:undof-ss-media-pr@un.org)

**Deputy Editor**  
SO PR  
Major Binod Bikash Pathak (Nepal)  
[undof-sopr@un.org](mailto:undof-sopr@un.org)



**ON THE COVER:** One of the FRC Mowag Piranha IIIH APCs observes the AO into the night

# CONTENTS

**MEDIA**

4 **#PICS:** Selected pics from the AO in 2020.

**UPDATES**

6 **LEADERS:** Meet the Mission Leadership Team  
9 **RIP:** Maj Gen Francis Vib-Sanziri 1957-2019

**NEWS**

10 **EVENTS:** A quick round-up of events in the mission  
12 **NEW FACES:** The bios of those in command  
15 **OGG:** Going green

**INTERVIEW**

14 **MP:** MP Detachment Comdr Capt Cheema tells all.

**COVER STORY**

20 **Coping with Covid:** How UNDOF is handling Covid-19

**INFORMATION**

28 **For your diary:** Browse some factoids and useful information

The UNDOF Journal is the magazine of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and it is intended to provide information about the Force and events within it which are of interest to its members. The UNDOF Media & Public Relations Office publishes the Golan Journal quarterly. While articles and photographs are welcomed from all members of the Force, the views and opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily coincide with those of the United Nations or the Force Commander. The copyright of all material in this journal is vested in United Nations Publications except where an acknowledgment is made to another holder. No articles or illustrations may be reproduced without the permission of the editorial staff.





Fiji Batt troop conducting temperature screening on entry to Camp Ziouani as part of Covid-19 mitigation.



Nepali Mechanised Company MPs keep watch over Camp Faouar.



NEPCON mountaineer rappels from a rockface on Mount Hermon.



INDCON LOGCOY troops in protective clothing prepare for a contingent rotation.



Major Andy Banks lowers the Australian Flag for the last time - Aug 2020.



FRC troops conduct a search operation, looking for explosive remnants of war (ERW).





NMC conducting APC dismounting drills. Regular training is a crucial aspect of life in UNDOF.



NEPCON Transfer of Authority Nov 2020, officiated by DFC Brig Gen Maureen O'Brien.



FRC invite the DFC to lay a wreath to honour all the Irish troops who have died in the service of peace - 25 Nov 2020.



Private Karen Santana of UMIC stands watch from her post in UNP 80



NEPCON troops are highly trained for the harsh weather on Mount Hermon.



Comdt John O'Brien of OGG on his final lap of DANCON 2020.

# Force Commander



Lieutenant General Ishwar Hamal joined UNDOF as the Head of Mission and Force Commander on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Lieutenant General Hamal has a distinguished military career at both national and international levels. He has many experiences serving as a peacekeeper in various United Nations missions, having served with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in 1990 and 2000, and with United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in former Yugoslavia in 1994. He has also served in United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in 2006-07 as a Military Observer.

In his 36 years of service in the Nepali Army, Lieutenant General Hamal held a wide array of appointments and assignments. These included the command of an Independent Company, an Infantry Battalion, an Infantry Brigade and the Mid-Eastern Division. He also served as the Commandant of Birendra Peace Operation Training Centre and the Army Command and Staff College. His staff appointments included Military Assistant to the Chief of Army Staff, Military Secretary, Director of Military Operations, Division Chief of Staff and Quarter Master General.

During his career, he completed various courses with distinction from home and abroad. His home courses primarily include the Infantry Young Officers' course, Counter Insurgency and Jungle warfare courses, Company Commander and Staff course, Para Jump training and the Junior Staff course. His overseas training includes the Artillery Young Officers' and Long Gunnery Staff course in India, the Peace and Stability Course in the USA and the Senior

Strategic Leadership Programme in UK.

Lt Gen Hamal is a distinguished graduate of the Nepali Army Command and Staff College, Shivapuri, the US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, and the US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He holds Master's Degrees in Public Administration from Tribhuvan University, Strategic Studies from US Army War College, and Counter Terrorism Fellowship from National Defense University, Washington D.C.

Lt Gen Hamal is an avid reader, keen sportsman, and a passionate traveler. He is happily married to Mrs Roshani Hamal.





# Deputy Force Commander



Before being awarded a Military Cadetship in the Irish Defence Forces, Brigadier General (Brig Gen) Maureen O'Brien graduated from University College Galway (UCG) with a B.Sc. and H. Dip. Ed. In 1983 she was commissioned into the Infantry Corps, returning to the Cadet School, Military College some years later as an Instructor. Since then Brig Gen O'Brien has held many different appointments in operations, training and strategic planning.

In 2011 she became the first female in the Irish Defence Forces to be promoted to the rank of Lt Col and in 2012 became the first female Infantry Battalion Commander when she was appointed Officer Commanding 27 Infantry Battalion in Dundalk. As Colonel, she held the appointment of Director of Communications and Information Services. In this role she was responsible for the provision of efficient and effective communications and information systems for the command, control and administration of the Defence Forces at home and overseas.

Brig Gen O'Brien has extensive overseas service. Her first two deployments were to Lebanon (UNIFIL). She has also served in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and East Timore (UNTAET). In 2005 she was seconded to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Sarajevo (BiH) for eighteen months. In 2009 she became the first Irish female officer to serve as a Deputy Commanding Officer of an Infantry Battalion in CHAD (MINURCAT). In 2012 she deployed to UNIFIL once more as Chief of Operations Planning in a multi-national Sector HQ in Lebanon.

On promotion to Brig Gen O'Brien in Sep '19, she deployed as Deputy Force Commander of the UN Disengagement Observer Forces (UNDOF) Mission in the Golan Heights, Syria. Since 16 Oct '19 she has taken over as Acting Force Commander of UNDOF. Brig Gen O'Brien has also completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Information Technology and holds a first-class Master's Degree in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies.



# Chief of Staff



Colonel Martin Alvarez has an extensive military career, both at home and overseas. Colonel Alvarez hails from the City of Rivera in Uruguay. He started his military career by joining the Military High School in 1989 and later joining the Uruguayan Military Academy in 1992. He graduated into the Cavalry Corps as a Sub Lt in 1996. During the first decade of his career he fulfilled several operational positions within the Cavalry Corps, ranging from Platoon Leader, Company Executive Officer and Company Commander in various Cavalry Units with the Uruguayan Army.

Colonel Alvarez also served with distinction as an Instructor in the Uruguayan Army Armor Training Center. He served as a Cavalry Regimental Deputy Commander Officer, Commander of the Junior Staff Officers School and Commander of the Uruguayan Logistics Base. In the rank of Colonel he served as the Deputy Director of the Uruguayan National Peace Operations School. Colonel Alvarez's overseas experience includes serving as a JMAC analyst in the Congo (MONUC) in 2007 and as the Strategic Planning Branch Chief in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in 2016.

He is a graduate of the Uruguayan Staff Officers College, and holds a degree in History and another Strategic Planning. He also holds a postgraduate Degree in Human Resource Management, and has also been conferred with a Masters Degree in Business Administration. Col Alvarez will complete his TOD in UNDOF in February 2021 after a 12 month deployment.



*Top:* Col Alvarez

*Middle:* Col Alvarez presents UN service medals to FRC troops

*Bottom:* COS HOTO parade, Jan 2020, with A/FC Brig Gen Maureen O'Brien







# Major General Francis Vib-Sanziri 1957 - 2019 RIP



Major General Francis Vib-Sanziri of Ghana was appointed as the UNDOF Head of Mission and Force Commander on 22 October 2017. He worked tirelessly to accomplish the mission mandate played a key role in the incremental return to Bravo Side and the historical reopening of the Bravo, Charlie and Alpha Gates. His leadership, dedication and enthusiasm were invaluable in commanding UNDOF under difficult and complex circumstances. He passed away on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at the age of 61 while serving the United Nations, his country and world peace. His untimely death left UNDOF disheartened and shocked, but today his strength of character and legacy have left a permanent impression amongst those that serve the United Nations in his absence.

Commemoration ceremonies for Major General Francis Vib-Sanziri RIP were held in Camp Ziouani on 24<sup>th</sup> April and Camp Faouar on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019. Attendees in Camp Ziouani included Ghana's Ambassador to Israel, Mrs Hannah Ama Nyarko, Mrs Anjan Shakya (Nepal), Mr Enoch Pear Duchi (Nigeria), Mr Joseph Rutabana (Rwanda), Mr Martin Mwananbale (Zambia), Maj Gen Cheryl Pearce (FC UNFICYP), Brig Gen Ian Graviety (COS UNIFIL), Ms Judy Hylton (Senior Advisor, UNTSO), Brig Gen Erez David Maisel and Lt Col Tal Sheffer (IDF) and Lt Col Fiifi Deegbe (CO GHANBATT UNIFIL). UNDOF was represented by Mr Bernard Lee (CMS) Brig General Kuldip Pathak (DFC) Col Luis E Coitino (COS) and the UNDOF's Contingent Commanders,

along with the Military and Civilian UN personnel based in Camp Ziouani. Attendees in Camp Faouar were Lt Gen Carlos H. Loitey (Military Advisor, Department of Peace Operations, UNHQ), Brig Gen Mazen Ibrahim Younes, Senior Syrian Arab Delegate (SSAD), Mr Bernard Lee, Colonel Luis E Coitino, along with the Military and civilian UN personnel based in Camp Faouar.

Major General Vib-Sanziri joined the Ghanaian Armed Forces (Army) in 1985, and had a distinguished military career. He served as Director-General of the International Peace Support Operations at the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces prior to his appointment to UNDOF. Earlier in his career, he served as Assistant Director, Ghana Army Operations (1996-1998), Deputy Head of the Ghana Military Academy (2002-2004), Commanding Officer of an Infantry Battalion (2004-2009), Director for International Peacekeeping Support Operations in 2009 and Army Secretary at the Army Headquarters (2010-2011). In 2014, he was appointed Director-General for Joint Operations, General Headquarters. He served as Director-General of the National Disaster Management Organization from 2015 to 2017.

Major General Vib-Sanziri also possessed extensive peacekeeping experience, including deployments to the United Nations Interim Force in

Lebanon (1988 and 1991), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (1993-1994), and the United Nations Mission in Liberia in 2007. He also served with the Economic Community of West Africa States Monitoring Group in Liberia (1990), in Sierra Leone (1999-2000) and, subsequently, with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. From 2011 to 2014, he served as a strategic military planner in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the United Nations.

Major General Vib-Sanziri was a keen scholar, holding a Master's degree in Military Art and Science from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (USA), a Post Graduate Certificate in Public Administration from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration and a Bachelor of Arts degree (BA Hons) in Geography and Rural Resource Development from the University of Ghana. He was a graduate of the Nigerian Armed Forces Command and General Staff College, Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College and the United States Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

UNDOF salutes the memory of a highly professional and honourable officer and leader, who died in the service of the United Nations and the noble cause of peace. May his Soul Rest in Peace.

## 10 EVENTS

### OGG'S OP72

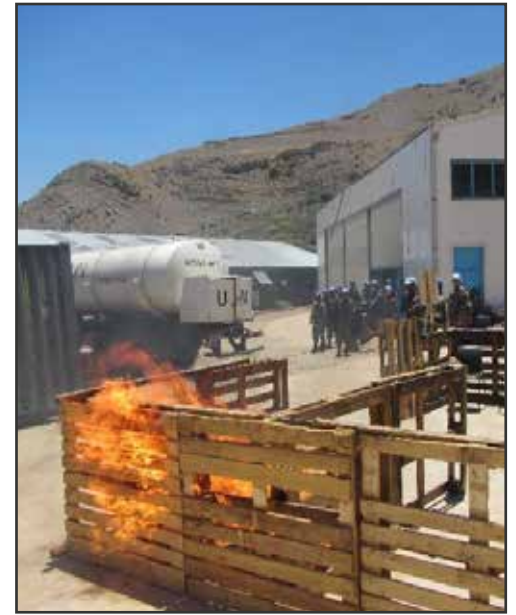
Summer 2019 was an eventful time for OGG. After careful planning and preparation, limitless hard work by dedicated civilian contractors and UNTSO military and civilian staff on OP72, and some exercising on the parade ground, the official opening ceremony for OP72 (and OP56) took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, with the presence of HoM / Chief of Staff UNTSO Major General Kristin Lund, Chief Mission Support UNTSO Mr Alan Doyle and Deputy Force Commander UNDOF Brigadier General Maureen O'Brien.

This was OGG's first static OP on the B-side after 5 years. These new OPs dramatically increased the operational footprint of OGG on the Golan. The picture below shows the opening ceremony.



TOP: FijiBatt inspections bringing training back to the basics

RIGHT: A FijiBatt soldier strips her weapon for inspection



NEPCON VIII troops receive their refresher fire fighting training and conduct scenario-based training on Mount Hermon Complex

## TRAINING

### FIGHTING FIRE ON MT. HERMON

The NEPCON VIII troops of MT. Hermon Complex should always be prepared to counter any dangerous situations resulting from the outbreak of fire. It is therefore essential to build and maintain the confidence of troops and develop self-reliance regarding the control of fire in all positions. This, as always, is done through rigorous training and exercising. Troops must have confidence in their firefighting techniques and their knowledge of each

of the firefighting apparatus positioned throughout their positions.

To meet these high standards, NEPCON VIII conducted a firefighting exercise in POS 12A on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020. The exercise was intense and exercised troops from command level to extinguisher.

Morale was high on completion of a successful, and important, exercise and everyone involved gained confidence in dealing with fire.

## INSPECTIONS

### FIJIBATT KEEP THE STANDARDS HIGH



The imposition of Covid-19 mitigation measures did not slow FijiBatt down in 2020. The contingent, based in Camp Ziouani, grasped the opportunity to renew its focus on preparation and training with both hands.

Fijian troops were put through their paces regularly in 2020 as they refocused on critical basic skills, such as weapons handling and drills. Inspections, briefings and the occasional competitive event featured in the training plan, with a renewed commitment to ensuring the highest standards.



## EXERCISES

### EX RAQQADIYAH

In June 2020, the FRC under the command of Lt Col Robert Kiely, conducted Exercise RAQQADIYAH.

The Operation involved a full SECURE, SEARCH and CLEARANCE of UNP 60 in order to allow its reconstruction for use as a future transit hub for UNDOF.

The FRC Engineer Specialist Search team performed a clearance of the post, with the QRF providing security throughout. Once completed (ahead of schedule), the post was then handed over to the Nepalese Mechanised Company.



A member of the FRC QRF, equipped with night-vision, provides overwatch for search & clearance during Exercise RAQQADIYAH.

## SPORT

### VOLLEYBALL

Sport is not only healthy for the body and mind of the individual, but for the team and spirit too. In the military environment, sport is a great way to develop teamwork as well as to let off some steam, from time to time.

A popular sport in UNDOF has always been the fast-paced game of volleyball. It is a unique game of physical stamina and wit, forcing its players to think fast and not overreact.

While the pandemic of 2020 has removed the possibility of team sports, UNDOF eagerly awaits the day when the competitive tournaments of volleyball can recommence.

Taken prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, this picture demonstrates the wit required to hold ones own in a competitive game of volleyball in UNDOF.



## ENGINEERS

### PROTECTING THE FORCE

The Nepalese Engineer Platoon-IV's first task on arrival to the mission area - a series of force protection works undertaken over a number of weeks. These works are often labour intensive but absolutely essential to help maintain the required standards of kinetic protection in UNDOF.

The platoon completed the last phase of works by laying concertina and barbed wires along the perimeter in UNP 27. Concurrently an engineer task force continued to assist the force protection works in UNP 60 since 4<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020. The Nepalese Engineer Platoon laid Hesco Bastions along the perimeters, in coordination with Engineering section and the Force Protection officer.

The platoon also constructed a flag post at the Level 1+ hospital in Camp Faouar, and assisted in laying the drainage pipe of the isolation ward.



## EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL

An important capability in the Golan Heights for UNDOF in Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD). The FRC's EOD team is regularly called upon to investigate and dispose of unexploded ordnance, so the area can be made safe.

In July 20, the FRC EOD Team were tasked with the CLEARANCE of an UXO OBSERVED by NEPCON VIII in the vicinity of UNP HERMON SOUTH. A section from Mech Coy provided the Security Cordon throughout and NEPCON VIII provided the medical support for the operation. The EOD Offr conducted an Explosive Ordnance Recce (EOR) and confirmed that the UXO was an 81mm Illumination round and was required to be disposed of in-location, which was conducted once the approval was given.



TOP: A member of the FRC EOD team investigates a potential UXO.

LEFT: A Nepali Engineer inspects newly installed concertina wire

# UNDOF's New Faces



Since the last edition of the Golan Journal, there have been many commanders serving in UNDOF, each contributing significantly towards strengthening UNDOF's mandate in the Golan Heights thanks to the hard work and perseverance of their troops. Let's meet some of those who command in UNDOF at the time of publication.



CO FijiBatt

Lt Col Penioni Naliva deployed to UNDOF on 16 Oct 2019 as the 7<sup>th</sup> Commanding Officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fiji Infantry Regiment. He is a graduate of the Royal Military College, Australia and was commissioned on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec 1997 into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Fiji Infantry Regiment (3FIR). He Commanded at Platoon and Company levels in 3FIR before being posted to HQ

RFMF in 2004 as Staff Officer, Training, in charge of Defence Cooperation Programs and later Personal Staff Officer to the Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Force (CRFMF) from 2006 to 2007 and again from 2008 to 2014. He was Commanding Officer 3FIR prior to deployment to UNDOF from Jan 2016 to June 2019.

LTCOL Naliva's overseas deployments include service as Platoon Commander with 1FIR, UNIFIL in 1998 and INTERFET, East Timor in 2000, Operations Officer with Peace Monitoring Group, Bougainville in 2001 and Liaison Officer with NZ 1st Infantry Regiment in UNTAET in 2002. Additionally, he completed a tour of duty with HQ UNMISSET in East Timor as staff Officer Military Information Cell in 2003 and as a Military Observer with UNIMIS, Sudan from 2007 to 2008.

Lt Col Naliva's Military education includes successful qualifications on the ROBC in Australia, the Infantry Captains Course, Grade III Staff and Tactics Course in Fiji, ADFLEPS Rater Course in Melbourne, Grade II Staff & Tactics Course and the Command & Staff Course in Malaysia. He is married with 5 children.



Chief Operations Officer

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Kelly, of the Irish Defence Forces, was commissioned in 1993 as an Infantry officer. During his service he has served in a wide variety of Infantry Corps Command and Staff appointments, both at home and overseas. Lt Col Kelly served in 5<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalions and was notably the

Commanding Officer of the 28 Infantry Battalion from 2018 to 2019. In addition, Lt Col Kelly has served as the Chief Instructor of the Military College NCO Training Wing and as a Staff Officer in J3/5 Branch of Defence Forces Headquarters.

Lt Col Kelly's current appointment in Ireland is Officer Commanding the Communications and Information Services (CIS) Group in the Defence Forces Training Center. His previous overseas experience includes two tours of duty with UNIFIL, where he was most recently Officer Commanding of 114 IRISHBATT in 2019, UNTAET (East Timor), UNDOF (Golan Heights), UNTSO (Middle East) and KFOR (Kosovo). Lt Col Kelly's military education includes the Junior and Senior Command and Staff Courses. He also holds a Masters degree in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies awarded by National University of Ireland. He also holds a Higher Diploma in Defence Studies awarded by the National Council of Education Awards Ireland. Lt Col Kelly is married to Andrea and has two children, Eva aged 20 and Caolan aged 17. They are natives of and continue to reside in Letterkenny, Co Donegal.



CO FRC

Lt Col Carey is an Infantry Officer by trade and training. He has served in a wide variety of appointments at home and in an overseas environment.

These have included appointments at Battalion level at home. He has also served in Staff appointments at Brigade level and in Training Branch (J7) at Defence Forces HQ

level. Lt Col Carey spent a period as Aide de Camp to the Irish Prime Minister between 2015 and 2017. The unit he has been most closely associated with throughout his career is the 27 Infantry Battalion. He previously served there as a junior officer from 1997-2001 and returned to the unit in 2018 to take up the coveted appointment of Officer Commanding.

Lt Col Carey is a graduate of the University of Limerick. He attained a BA in Physical Education and English from the University of Limerick in 1994. He also holds a Masters Degree in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies from the National University of Ireland. Lt Col Carey has also successfully completed his Junior Command and Staff Course and is a graduate of the Irish Defence Forces Command and Staff Course conducted in the Command and Staff School, Military College.

Lt Col Carey has extensive overseas experience in the Middle East and in Africa. He has served with the United Nations in Command and Staff Appointments in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Liberia (UNMIL) and Chad (MINURCAT). He has also served with the EU training Mission in Mali, serving as Chief J4 in the FHQ in Bamako in 2017/18.





CO UMIC

Lt Col Luis Benavides will hold the position of Company Commander in UNDOF since set/20. He was born on March 27, 1977 in Montevideo, Uruguay.

He started his military career in 1996, finishing his bachelor's degree in International Affairs in 1999 as a Cavalry Officer.

He has completed several courses during his career, such as the Military Institute Superior Studies (Warfare Staff College), Jr. Command College and Master Riding Course. Also has participated in Cabinet exercise for the application of the CEA (GUATEMALA), UNMEMcourse Milob (CANADA) and Strategy and operational design.

Since he graduated, he has served as Platoon Leader and Mechanized Company Commander in different Cavalry Battalions, but also as Logistic Cmdr. Military adviser, Army Logistic Support (Finance Officer) and, his latest post as Planning Officer in the Uruguayan Peacekeeping Operations Center.

Lt. Col. Benavides has a vast experience serving for United Nations. He was Infantry Company Commander for MONUSCO in 2010, Deputy G3 Officer for MONUSCO in 2012 and Military Observer for MONSUCO in 2016.



CO INDCON LOGCOY

Maj S Sakhikomahan joined UNDOF on 21 Sep 2020 as part of 3<sup>rd</sup> Rotation INDCON LOGCOY. He took over as Contingent Commander, INDCON LOGCOY on 21<sup>st</sup> Sep 2020.

He was born on 10 August 1983, in Trichirapalli district, Tamilnadu state in India. He is an alumnus of Officers Training Academy, Chennai.

He was commissioned into an Artillery Regiment on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep 2007. He has performed various duties as GPO, Troop Leader, Adjutant and as Battery Commander throughout his career.

He was also an instructor in Officers Training Academy, Gaya, India. He has attended various courses in his army career such as the Young Officers course, Advance Gunnery and Long Gunnery Staff Course. He also attended prestigious Defence Services Technical Staff Course, Pune.

He had tenanted the appointment of AQMG before being appointed as Contingent Commander of INDCON LOGCOY. He has served adequately in field environments including Siachen Glacier. He was also awarded with Army Commanders commendation card in 2011. He has a happy family, comprised of his parents, his wife Mrs B Vidhya and his two children - a daughter and a son.



CO NMC

Lt Col Rajesh Khakurel joined UNDOF on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020, as the Commanding officer of Nepalese Mechanized company (NMC-IV) at Camp Faouar. Born in Kavrepalanchok, Nepal on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec 1981, Lt Col Khakurel began his military career by joining the then Royal Nepalese Army in 2001 and was commissioned as an infantry officer from the

prestigious Military Academy of Nepal. He has a wide range of knowledge and experience on staff work in various formations and units of the Nepali Army. During his 20 years of military service he held multiple leadership positions from platoon leader to Infantry Company commander and the Infantry Battalion commander.

Lt Col Khakurel has extensive international operational experience, including in Lebanon and Central African Republic (CAR). He served with United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in 2007 as a Company second in command. In a later deployment (2011-2012) he served as the company commander of the Infantry Bn.

Lt col Khakurel is an alumnus of the Army Command and Staff College Shivapuri, Nepal and Marine Command and Staff course in the USA. He holds a master's degree in strategic studies from T.U. University, Nepal and master's degree in military science from Marine Corps University, Virginia, USA.



CO NEPCON

Lt Col Pankaj Raj Pokharel joined Nepali Army as an Officer Cadet in 1998 and commissioned as 2/Lt in 2000. He started his military career as an infantry officer and has completed many courses, including Mountain Warfare Training (Basic and Advance), Company Commander & Staff Course, Army Command and Staff College, Media Handling

and attended a Human Rights & International Humanitarian Law Seminar in Nepal. In addition to this, he had also participated in various UN trainings; UNPSOIC (GPOI) & UNMO from home country, Nepal and UNPKOIC from Malaysia. He holds a Master's Degree in Strategic Studies from Tribhuvan University.

He has served in various appointments as Battalion Adjutant, Brigade Operation Officer and Company Commander. In an illustrious career of 23 years, he has gathered a wide range of experience serving in high mountains. He has successfully commanded a Battalion for two years in Mustang (Northern Nepal) at the altitude of almost 3000m. During his command, he established a permanent Company Location at an altitude of 4000m. He has gained notable experiences working with the UN. He served in Burundi as Deputy Operation Officer/ PIO on 2005/06, Congo as Deputy Operation Officer in 2010/11, Military Observer UNTSO in 2014/15 and at present serving as Commanding Officer of Force HQ Support Unit, NEPCON IX, UNDOF since 6<sup>th</sup> NOV 2020.

# INTERVIEW WITH AN MP OFFICER

Capt Rajsimran Cheema is the MP Detachment Commander in Camp Faouar. At home, she serves in the Corps of Army Air Defence of the Indian Army, with 3.5 years of service under her belt. She is 25 years old, and belongs to Chandigarh, Punjab.



**SSO MEDIA:** Can you tell us a little bit about your background and where you come from?

**CAPT CHEEMA:** Prior to my arrival at UNDOF as an MP officer, I served in my Regiment in the Corps of Army Air Defence. I underwent an MP course (a few weeks long) before coming here as a part of the Force Military Police Platoon. I have an army background as both my grandfathers served in the Indian Army and they were the reason that I was motivated to join the forces too and carry on the legacy of the family. Before joining the forces, I graduated with a degree in Science from North Maharashtra University and got commissioned into the Indian Army at the age of 21.

**SSO MEDIA:** When did you arrive to the Mission Area, and how has your experience been so far?

**CAPT CHEEMA:** I arrived at the Mission Area in the last week of September 2020, and after the 2-week of mandatory quarantine period, I was able to take over my new duties here in UNDOF. It has been quite an enriching exposure – I have learnt a lot in particular about serving in a rich, multinational environment such as this. I only have 3.5 years of service, and this is my first overseas deployment and my first time working with soldiers outside of the Indian Army, so it is all very new to me. I find it fascinating and rewarding to learn about other cultures and traditions, appreciating the different backgrounds that everybody has come from. That has really broadened my horizons.

**SSO MEDIA:** How did you decide to become a Military Police officer? What did your training involve?

**CAPT CHEEMA:** To be able to serve as a Military Police officer here at the mission, we underwent training in India. It consisted of both theory and practical elements and we were made aware of the responsibilities and duties awaiting us on deployment. Representatives from the Corps of Military Police conducted course for us wherein we were made to understand the job specifications that we were supposed to fulfil after coming to the mission area.

**SSO MEDIA:** What are some of the challenges that you've experienced in your career?

**CAPT CHEEMA:** At home, I am the only female in a Battalion of around 600 personnel, and as an officer there is an added expectation on me to over-achieve as a result. I have to prove my knowledge and physical capabilities and prove that I can lead them. I think it takes time for society and the Army to change and accept that female officers and troops are every bit as capable as them. We do the same duties and missions as our male counterparts in India, there are no exemptions. I have learned a lot from my troops and they have helped make me the officer I am.

So far in my UNDOF deployment, I think it's important to take the time to understand people's motivations for actions or decisions. The multinational aspect requires some effort, but it is very rewarding. As an MP Officer though, discipline must be enforced, and discipline doesn't distinguish between rank or nationality. So finding a balance between understanding and discipline is definitely a challenge.

**SSO MEDIA:** What is a typical day in the life of an UNDOF MP Officer?

**CAPT CHEEMA:** For an MP in UNDOF, we always start with our morning patrols. We keep a close eye on the reports, checking if there is any action to be taken, as identified by the NCOs here in the detachment. It is followed by a morning conference with the Force Provost Marshall (FPM) each day and to discuss the issues that come down from the HQ, coordinating the action required. There are frequent MP escorts in the Mission Area, and they require planning and coordination. We are often involved with recces of UN Positions too. There are added responsibilities once rotation of troops from TCCs takes place, which involves luggage screening, escorting them from the UNPs to the Camp and then further to the Airport. Apart from that, one of the major duties is ensuring smooth crossings at the C gate which is frequented quite often by the civilian staff and military police personnel for crossing over to and fro. Road Traffic Accidents and other incidents of that nature could always happen, and we have a critical role to play



there, so we need to be always ready to respond. The job itself is not really time-bound, we could be called upon at any time of the day or night. It is the endeavour of the Military Police platoon to perform the duties in an utmost professional manner.

**SSO MEDIA:** What do you hope to take away from your time in UNDOF?

**CAPT CHEEMA:** I look forward to learning as much as I can from each of the nationalities and people here. There is such a diverse mix of people here. I look forward to a tenure which is enriching and empowering, in terms of knowledge, exposure and experience.

# SUSTAINABILITY

UNTSO's Observer Group Golan champion the latest technologies in a bid to contribute towards a more sustainable, green peacekeeping environment.



UNTSO OGG's OP56 fitted with a new array of solar panels.



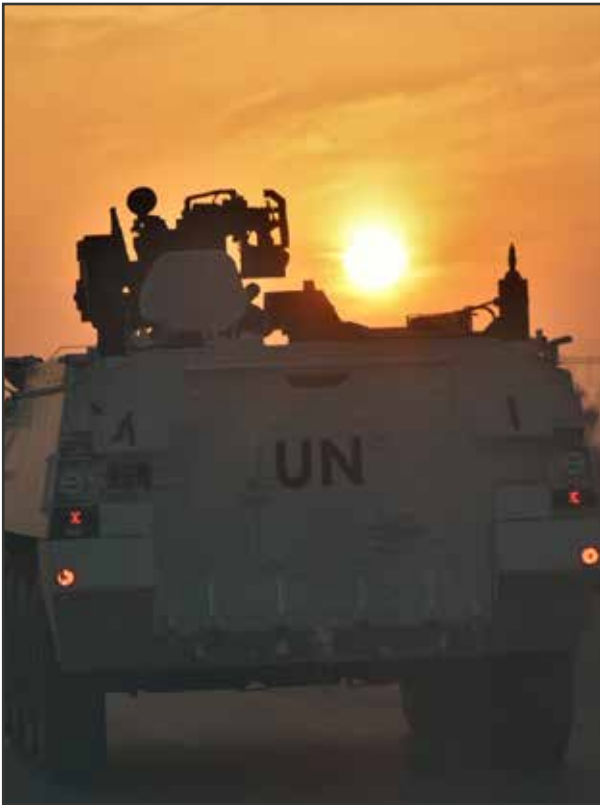
When the United Nations Development Program published the UN Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2015-2030 a key goal was the provision of Affordable and Clean Energy in order to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

As part of efforts by the UN to achieve this goal, many green energy projects have taken place in several UN Peacekeeping Missions, including the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO). The most recent example of this is the new solar panels that were recently installed on the roofs of Observer Group Golan (OGG), UNTSO Observation Posts OP56 and OP72. Solar power takes the photovoltaic energy of the sun, and turns this into electricity that can be used to power buildings. Solar power produces no emissions during generation itself, and life-cycle assessments show that it has a smaller carbon footprint during the entire life of the solar panels when compared to fossil fuels.

The solar panels will allow the OPs to generate enough electricity to run the OPs for several hours each day without using their existing diesel generators. Excess electricity stored during the day can be stored in batteries in the OPs, so that this electricity can then be used at night. An electricity management system to regulate between solar generated electricity and diesel generated electricity has also been installed. The panels also compliment the existing water heaters on the OPs, which use sunlight to provide hot water for showers and sanitation.

OGG Engineering Technician Bernard Kasolo, who supervised the EFMS Team that installed the panels, said "OP56 and OP72 consumer up to 36,500 liters of diesel each year. These solar panels will significantly reduce the diesel consumed by up to 60%, which is a huge improvement both in money saved, and in the reduction of CO2 into the atmosphere". This initiative will also dramatically reduce noise on the OPs, particularly obvious at night.

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.



# The Covid-19 Pandemic and its impact on UNDOF Operations

Written by

Lt Col KC Jayendra,  
SSO Current Ops

**THE SUDDEN OUTBREAK** of the COVID-19 pandemic and its inevitable consequences have caused wider impacts to UNDOF. It has left the mission with a significant challenge in maintaining an "infection free" profile while also implementing the mission mandates. UNDOF has made an enormous effort in mitigation measures to promote the safety, security and health of all peacekeepers while maintaining the required operational tempo to fulfill its mandates.

In view of the potential for substantial COVID-19 outbreak within UNDOF positions and bases, stringent restrictive measures have been adopted since the beginning of the pandemic. Social distancing norms have prompted changes to the operational procedures. The movement of troops between the UN positions and bases have been strictly restricted which has reduced the physical contacts between the military

leadership and troops on ground significantly. The leave and welfare trips of troops and staff officers has been seriously affected by flight bans and lockdowns. This has all exerted a serious bearing on troop's morale and fatigue.

The periodic inspection of IDF positions by OGG on the Alpha side has remained suspended since 02 March 2020 citing COVID-19 related precautions. Likewise, the resumption of periodic inspection of SAAF positions by OGG on the Bravo Side has not started citing the same reason. The cancellation of inspections on both the sides have had an adverse impact on UNDOF's endeavor to implement its mandated tasks. UNDOF has continued to engage with both the parties in resuming inspection that determine whether the parties to the agreement are abiding by the terms of the Separation of Forces Agreement relative to the areas of limitation of forces and armament.

The stringent conditions for safety and security, a 14-days quarantine period in the home country, adherence to the host country's 14-days quarantine regulations upon deployment in theater and social distancing have all created extra hardship for the troops to continue to operate in the same pace. This has also necessitated a frequent redeployment of troops within the





TOP LEFT  
An FRC MOWAG Piranha on patrol in the AO.

CENTER  
A UMIC soldier observes the AO from his post.

BOTTOM RIGHT  
The Nepalese Level 1+ Hospital conducts a Covid-19 patient transportation demonstration.

mission AOO adding additional logistics and operational burden to maintain the status quo.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the Phase-3 of the Incremental Return Strategy of UNDOF. The reconstruction of UNP 60 and the construction of UNP 10A which form part of the Phase -3-the consolidation phase-has been delayed by few months due to the COVID-19 related restrictions. To avoid further delay, the Mission Support Cell continued its efforts to complete construction works at the earliest possible time frame.

The crossings at the A-C-B Gate have been severely restricted allowing only for exceptional cases with applications

required to both the sides on a case by case basis is another major impediment. This has significantly hindered the movements between the Alpha and Bravo Side for operational purposes. Notwithstanding the severe effects of pandemic in the host countries, UNDOF has continued to liaise with both the sides to resume normal crossings with all safety precautions.

UNDOF has also faced a significant challenge in maintaining operational strength and executing mandated tasks during the rotation of contingents. The problem was further compounded by the delay in scheduled rotation of one of the contingents which subsequently caused a congestion in

the rotations of other contingents. However, with all contingencies in place UNDOF managed to minimize the operational impacts that were expected during the rotations to a great extent.

Despite all these adversities, UNDOF has demonstrated a remarkable resilience in implementing its mandates. The mission has put in place various contingencies to minimize the effects of COVID-19 restrictive measures adopted by the host countries.

The Mission's proactive posture, characterized by mobility, flexibility and agility, and the best practices that have been developed during this course of pandemic have helped UNDOF to effectively manage risks while successfully delivering on its mandates.



# UNDOF'S LEVEL 1+ HOSPITAL

UNDOF's Level 1+ Hospital in Camp Faouar, also known as Camp Faouar Medical Center (CFMC), was first inducted into the mission on 1974 by an Austrian medical team. FijiBatt most recently ran the CFMC until it was handed over to the first Nepali medical contingent (NEPMED I) on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2019. Nepali Medical contingent II (NEPMED II) took over the responsibility of the UNDOF level one plus hospital on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2020. This UN medical center works as a referral center for all other medical units of UNDOF, with its organic surgical and emergency care capabilities.

CFMC operates in close collaboration, coordination and guidance of the Force Medical Officer (FMO) and his team (Force Hygiene Officer, Laboratory Chief, and Medical Logistics). The Indian Contingent Logistic Company (INDCON LOGCOY) supports the daily activities and movements of the staff and the hospital. NEPMED is actually an independent unit to the other Nepali contingents in UNDOF, whose administrative management is the responsibility of the senior national officer.

Our mission is to provide high quality emergency medical and surgical care through good governance and quality care. NEPMED complies with the following four United Nations support pillars: (1) international convention for the sick and the wounded; (2) entitlement to medical care; (3) standards of medical care; and (4) timely and responsive medical support. The concept of operation of CFMC is developed based on the current threats and situation in the UNDOF-AOR in accordance with the Statement

of Unit Requirements (SUR), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and operational order and standard operating procedures of UNDOF-HQ.

UNDOF's Level 1+ hospital, currently run by NEPMED II, is headed by Senior Medical Officer (SMO) with a total strength of 23 health care professionals (2x General surgeons, 1x anesthesiologist, 2x General Physician, 1x Physiotherapist, 1x Pharmacist, 12x Nursing staff, 1x Lab technician, 1x Radiology technician, 1x antiesthetic assistant and 1x biomedical technician). The breadth and depth of expertise amongst the staff, combined with the facilities in place, provide a responsive and reassuring level of care to those serving with UNDOF.

Specifically, the primary responsibilities of the hospital are:

1. Outpatient and inpatient care to all UNDOF military and civil personnel.
2. Medevac and Casevac when required (done by two forward medical team and one forward surgical team that is 24/7 standby.)
3. Provide emergency and damage control surgery.
4. Provide basic laboratory, pharmacy and preventive medical services.
5. Conduct medical training to UNDOF personnel.



COVID-19 Response and Preparedness Demonstration Briefing by Capt. Dr. Ayush Rayamajhi



6. Coordinate and facilitate referral to higher level UN hospital (level 2/Level 3).
7. Humanitarian assistance to local nationals
8. Maintain medical supplies and consumables.
9. Disposal of medical waste with when called for.
10. Assist with human resources to chief Laboratory officer and FMO.
11. COVID-19 care: the hospital is committed to providing COVID-screening, facilitating quarantine, isolation and critical care within its capacity under WHO and UN guidelines.

During the year 2019/2020 we performed various operational and training activities, and a logistical upgrade of the Level 1+ hospital. The well-equipped ambulances, emergency suite, Operation Theater, patient ward and critical care unit are the armamentarium of this center to carry out the daily medical activities under mandate. We have robust medevac, casevac and mass casualty incident response plans in place. The COVID-19 pandemic has added an unprecedented threat to the personnel and the mission as a whole. Hence, the Level 1+ hospital has been upgraded with a separate COVID-19 complex that is equipped with screening area, isolation room (2 beds) and critical care (1 bed) facilities. This can be extended up to 10-15 isolation and two critical care facilities maintaining business continuity of our surgical module.

The basic COVID-19 preparedness and response training has been a priority. The COVID-19 outbreak contingency plan is updated regularly depending on existing threats and the resources (staff, space, and supply) available. With the increased risk of seasonal flu and its importance during the COVID-pandemic, this hospital has started inoculating Influenza vaccine to UNDOF personnel starting from November 2020.



NEPMED staff demonstrate casualty care to the COS during a bunker drill

The Force Commander's 'appreciation letters' received in August and December of 2020 stated that the mission leadership is truly impressed with the hospital's highest professional standards, dedication, and commitment toward assisting UNDOF achieving its mandate.

The Level 1+ hospital has treated a total of 2032 patients in the year 2019/20 which includes 57 minor surgeries and 1788 out patients. Radiology department has performed 245 X-ray's and 70 diagnostic ultrasounds. NEPMED has also conducted several capacity building exercises, such as refresher course on BCLS/ACLS, First aid training, Donning and Doffing for covid response, primary trauma care, and many more.

The Level 1+ hospital is committed to securing the health and well-being of members of United Nations peacekeeping operations through well planning, co-ordination, execution, monitoring and the professional supervision of excellent medical care in the field, as required by United Nations filed mission policy. The Level 1+ hospital of UNDOF is working with diligence and dedication to reach a common goal of "One Mission One Team One Goal". The specialized team of NEPMED II in this hospital continues to provide quality health care services, despite the constraints and challenges.



LEFT: Minor surgery being performed in Level 1+

Written by  
Maj. Bikash Bikram Thapa  
(SMO)



FHO demonstrates the proper use of Covid-19 face protection



A Casevac exercise being conducted in the AO, complete with face masks as a standard



INDCON LOGCOY troops disinfect a vehicle between movements, a new norm for UNDOF in 2020

## FORCE HYGIENE

# COPING WITH COVID-19

In March of 2020, the entire world radically changed when the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) started spreading across borders at an alarming rate and was soon declared a pandemic by the WHO. As this was an unprecedented outbreak, the challenges were many, as very little information was available with regards to causes, symptoms, diagnosis and cure (if any). We underwent a rapid change in our social norms wherein masks were a mandatory accessory along with hand sanitizer, and handshakes ceased being the norm for person-to-person greetings, replaced by the Namaste or elbow bump. Opening doors with elbows, frequent temperature checks and a heightened awareness of personal hygiene became necessarily common. Suddenly a mild fever or common cold were not looked down upon as common ailments.

UNDOF, like any other UN Field

Mission was vulnerable to the spread of Covid-19 as personnel hailing from various nationalities constituted the workforce and frequent rotations made the task of curbing the spread a daunting one.

The Mission Leadership Team (MLT) was quick to take adequate precautions based on the various inputs received from the WHO. The handling of Covid-19 in UNDOF was brought under the remit of the Crisis Management Team (CMT) in early March 2020, which has convened at least once a week since then to enforce and advise on the necessary protocols to be put in place. The main objective of the CMT was to prevent an outbreak of COVID-19 within the mission while also ensuring the force was prepared identify, isolate and control an infection if it did occur. Swift and effective measures were swiftly adopted, such as:



Early and decisive action, with everyone sharing a common understanding, was key to an effective UNDOF Covid-19 strategy





A PCR test being conducted on a suspected case of Covid-19 in the Level 1+ hospital. (The result was negative).



UNDOF HQ's conference room is sprayed with disinfectant and cleaned between briefings. Such measures became routine and common this year.



- The segregation of working space of military, International and civilian personnel to ensure minimum direct contact.
- Conferences were downscaled and restricted to online and digital platforms. ICTS worked tirelessly to ensure that adequate infrastructure was in place as to support the seamless functioning of the mission throughout its positions in this respect.
- Strict social distancing guidelines to limit the numbers of people in common places were adopted, in an effort to ensure all recreational facilities remain open - albeit in a reduced capacity.
- Information pamphlets on Covid-19 symptoms, causes, and precautions were printed in local languages of the TCCs so as to ensure wide dissemination and understanding.
- Non-operational movement outside camps and positions was reduced and very closely monitored. Adequate screening facilities and trained troops were stationed at gates to detect any possible anomalies in body temperature.
- Adequate hygiene chemicals, hand sanitizers, temperature screening modules and face masks were procured and distributed.
- All vehicles returning post-duty were sanitized and drivers were kept segregated from the rest of the internal population for as long as advised.
- Troops were trained to sanitize vehicles, living



“Now is the time for unity, for the international community to work together in solidarity to stop this virus and its shattering consequences” - *UN Secretary General António Guterres*

cohorts is an alien concept in UN missions but by reducing the numbers of ‘close contacts’ we have, we can limit how quickly this virus can spread from person to person. At the start of the year, quarantine was something obscure and unusual, now it something that every UN peacekeeper has had to do, whether that be on entry to the mission area or in the event of being close to a suspected COVID-19 case. But science has shown that it can take up to 14 days for the COVID-19 symptoms to develop and so maintaining this mandatory quarantine period has been proven to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

accommodation and kitchens. This happened regularly.

- Medical staff were trained in how to handle suspected Covid-19 patients, yet still provide the same level of care despite difficult restrictions.
- Classes were organized for all personnel to spread awareness regarding common precautions to be undertaken to prevent the spread of the disease.
- TCCs, particularly during rotations, were informed about the measures to be observed prior to arrival in the mission area.

These measures have been difficult for all our personnel. It is natural for soldiers and peacekeepers to mingle, play sports together and forge new friendships with our international counterparts and the local population. Maintaining our distances and staying within our contingent

For outbreak control, a COVID-QRF was established and adequately trained and kitted as to provide emergency response to a suspected COVID-19 outbreak situation. The simulation of various unprecedented scenarios with relation to COVID-19 were roleplayed as to provide measured response to any eventuality and drills were further refined.

The medical staff regularly attended conferences organized by multifarious agencies experienced with battling COVID in other missions and countries as to compile a compendium of measures which would prove effective in combating the threat of COVID-19. These lessons were immediately brought to the attention of MLT and broadcasted to all concerned via email. Regular inspections of living areas, cook houses, dining halls, wash-rooms, recreation halls in camp as well as all positions were carried out to ensure that all guidelines were being implemented.

The Level 1+ Hospital have worked tirelessly to establish a robust system for handling of





FAR LEFT: A medic enters the room of a suspected Covid-19 patient, donned in protective attire.

CENTRE LEFT: A scheduled bunker drill conducted with face masks.

LEFT: The FC visits Mount Hermon, all complete with face masks and other precautions - the new norm.

COVID-19 patients including establishing isolation wards and ensuring our Intensive Care Unit was ready if it was needed. Numerous exercises and drills have been conducted to ensure our medics are well prepared to deal with the worst. The MLT also recognized the importance of quick diagnosis and promptly procured a RT-PCR machine and installed it in the hospital lab thus effectively reducing the time in diagnosis of a patient. Through the UN Medevac Coordination Unit a system has been established to ensure that all UN personnel can be evacuated from the mission area if they require specialist hospital care and it has been the mission's priority from the start to ensure our personnel are evacuated to the best medical care possible as soon as possible. Luckily, we have not needed to call on this service yet.

Prevention of spread of Covid-19 in a location with limited medical facilities and no prior experience was a trial by fire for all concerned. The measures, guidelines and protocols established ensured that no untoward incident occurs and that we are prepared to handle any situation effectively. The fact that UNDOF has 02 reported cases of COVID-19 is a testimonial to the fact that all measures have been effective.

### Vaccine Development

As of December 2020, a number of positive developments worldwide

had taken place with regard to the development, deployment and administration of Covid-19 vaccinations. After an unprecedented period of focussed research and collaboration globally, several vaccines entered advanced clinical trials, and several began to be rolled out at national levels, to those most vulnerable initially.

It remains to be seen to what extent these vaccinations affect United Nations field missions, but while the world awaits with optimism, it is fair to say that we have all grown somewhat accustomed to the new social and work norms that feature so heavily in daily life.

For UNDOF, it is business as usual-achieving its mandate. Despite the additional constraints now present in almost all activities, with strong leadership and excellent compliance with these mitigation measures, UNDOF has protected its capabilities, troops and mission. With rigorous systems and practices now in place, UNDOF is committed to its incremental return to the B-side and fulfilling its mandate.

Written by

Maj Anurag Chandra Hati Boruah, FHO

Comdt Ronan Kavanagh, FPO and COVID-19 Coordinator



TOP: The refuse collection vehicle is disinfected on entry to CF.

BELOW: Medics rehearse donning procedures under the guidance of the FHO.

# UNDOF'S INCREMENTAL RETURN STRATEGY

*Written by*

*Capt Colm Kirby  
JOC DO  
CF*

SINCE UNDOF was relocated predominately to the A-side in September 2014, an incremental return to the B-side has always been a key objective. The plan formally received UN HQ approval in November 2016, and consisted of four phases:

1. Limited return to Camp Faouar.
2. Limited return to B-side operations.
3. Return to B-side operations and consolidation.
4. Enhancement.

On the 14 November 2016, personnel drawn from FijiBatt, Nepalese Mechanised Company (NMC), Nep Engineer Platoon and Indian Logcon commenced phase one when they occupied Camp Faouar and put in place a guard. During this phase there was no operational activity from the camp. The main effort was to prepare Camp Faouar to once again become UNDOF HQ.

In July 2017, phase two was initiated with the stated objectives to deploy a Mechanised Infantry Company, achieve limited operational activity from Camp Faouar by patrolling and restructure the HQ.

On the 25 September 2017, NMC deployed to Camp Faouar. In February 2018 four (04) patrol routes were approved and limited patrolling commenced.

Following this the UNDOF JOC, Force Commanders office and OGG relocated to Camp Faouar.

By August 2018 phase two was building momentum. Over 30 patrols had been conducted by the NMC along the four designed routes in the North and Centre sector with a positive response from the local population. UNDOF also conducted reconnaissance patrols to the A/B/C Gate in the area of separation to facilitate a technical assessment of the Bravo and Charlie gates and the viability of main supply route 7 from Camp Faouar to Bravo gate for the future use by UNDOF vehicles, in particular heavy cargo vehicles. During this time the FRC also commenced redeployment to the Camp Faouar. This allowed transition to Phase 3.

In September 2018, Phase 3 commenced with a clearance operation conducted by the FRC on the Qunaytirah crossing clearing all potential hazards, such as mines and unexploded ordnance, from the B gate and C gate. This set the conditions for this crossing to be reopened. This crossing was reopened on the 15 October 2018 in close cooperation with both authorities. Limited crossings recommenced twice daily from 08:00 to 09:00 and from 15:00 to 16:00 hours, five times a week. UNP32 was also cleared by the FRC and occupied by the NMC in a security capacity as engineering works on refurbishment of facilities and the security infrastructure proceeded. All posts re-established on the B-side would now be of Platoon sized Posts.







UNDOF is operating in a complex, dynamic environment. It is imperative that

UNDOF continues to progress its incremental return to the Bravo side in order to maintain its impartiality, credibility and legitimacy with the signatories to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement.



A reduction in military activity in the area of separation in late 2018 facilitated the extension of a limited protected patrolling programme. This resulted that in addition to the patrolling on B-Side on the four designated routes the NMC and FRC conducted more than 20 area patrols, route reconnaissance and joint patrols with Observer Group Golan to OPs 71,72 and 56 and UNPs 10, 16, 32 and 80. By the end of 2018 UNP32 was fully operational.

In early 2019 UNP37, UNP85 and UNP27 was cleared and occupied in a similar manner to UNP32. The FRC completed these clearance operations. By Mid-2019 all of these UNPs were fully operational. In September 2019 the refurbishment of the OGG OP72 and OP56 commenced. The FRC also completed Engineer Specialist Search and Clearance operations on TOPs 102A, 108, 127 and 206 located in Mount HERMON complex.

Finally, Uruguay was invited to contribute a mechanized company to the Mission. This signaled the transition to phase 4 as the consolidation phase of the incremental return strategy was nearing an end and B-side operations were occurring throughout the AOS. This was achieved with the successful deployment of the Uruguayan Mechanized Infantry Coy (UMIC) to the Southern Sector. UMIC commenced full-time operations on 18 September 2019 taking over United Nations UNP80 and UNP85 from FIJIBATT.

This also resulted in a realignment of the sectors. The Central Sector now consisted of UNP32, UNP37 and UNP27 as NMCs Area of Responsibility. The South Sector comprising UNP85, UNP80 and UNP68 became UMICs Area of Responsibility. FIJIBATT was now located predominately on the A-Side/West Sector occupying UNP22 and C Gate as well as Camp Ziouani. NEPCON's Area of Responsibility remained Hermon Complex. Finally, OGG successfully reoccupied OP56 and OP72.

In Early 2020 when UNP68 was declared full operationally capable the transition to phase 4 of the Incremental Return Strategy commenced. UNP60 was established as an Interim Logistics facility. However as with many things in 2020 momentum was slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting challenges. Despite this progress is being achieved. UNP60, UNP10A and OP71 are well under construction and UNP86, OP57 and OP58 will commence in the near future.

The Military operational end-state is the full return of UNDOF to the Area of Separation (AOS) to fulfil the mission's mandate. A lot is done there is more to do but the end state is in sight.



UMIC troops celebrating Uruguyan Independence Day on the square of UNP 80, 25 August 2020.

UMIC's APCs were engaged in the patrolling phase of the exercise.



*Written by*

*Capt Carlos Magallenes  
UMIC Operations Officer  
UNP 80*



UMIC is deployed in UNDOF's southern sector, holding three United Nations Positions, UNP 68 in the North with a platoon, UNP 85 in the South with another platoon, and our command post and offices, along with the third maneuver element are located at the center of the sector in UNP80.

We conduct regular training, in which we are constantly trying to keep our readiness and awareness sharp at all times. We strongly believe that being ready is the only way we will help UNDOF achieve its goals. Of course, as everyone knows, not all of the training can be simulated-ultimately you need to ut it into practice. So the past few months have seen joint training operations with OGG and other stakeholders such as the JOC, and other contingents.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, we conducted a 3 day shooting range practice in the shooting range located in the vicinity of Mazra'at Bayt Jinn. This provided an opportunity for all UMIC's personnel to test their weapons and APCs. After doing so, we stepped up the practice by working our combat shooting, we rearranged the outdoor areas to host the following activities in the most secure way by trying to minimise the always existing risks.

The mission clearly did not start there, we conducted approaching manoeuvres in which we patrolled across all B-side sectors, and that is always a great experience. We had the opportunity to understand some of the areas where our Nepali and Irish colleagues conduct their patrols, therefore understanding their daily challenges, like moving through crowded cities such as Khan Arnabah while driving APCs or climbing mountains with our vehicles, the terrain here in the south is normally very flat.

On the secure range, we commenced the shooting practice, and received the visit of the Acting Force Commander, Brig Gen Maureen O'Brien, her Military Assistant, Comdt Colin Campbell, and members of her personal security team from the Ghanaian army. After carefully reviewing the exercise, they decided to stop watching and participate with us-going through the combat shooting course. The weapon that they used is the one that we share with the Irish Defense Forces, the Steyr AUG Rifle.

Once we reviewed the whole training session, is it fair to say that, we not only improved our combat capabilities, but also had the chance to enhance our bonds with other armies by hosting them on our activities. I think that this last part, is the real essence of all of us as army men and women, sharing with each other, because at the end of the day, camaraderie is the core value that binds every army, and in this particular case all armies that take part in he UNDOF mission.

**ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION, ONE GOAL.**  
Together we are stronger.





# UMIC's Coat of Arms



**THE URUGUAYAN MECHANISED INFANTRY COMPANY'S** coat of arms is a slice shield, with the first section in blue crowned by the Flag of Artigas. The second one section is silver with the bell of Gules. On the right a steel armored wolf with its head looking over its left shoulder, complete with a steel sword and gold blade on its shoulder, holding a shield that displaying the crest of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force Mission. All of this is overlooked by the Sun from the State Coat of Arms and a Blue ribbon carrying the motto "Adsumus custodes pacis" in silver.

**SUN OF THE STATE COAT OF ARMS:** Extracted from the State Coat of Arms, representing that the Forces are deployed under Uruguayan sovereignty.

**FLAG OF ARTIGAS:** Represents membership to the National Army. The colors of the Artigas Flag refer to the ideals of the Hero that serve as guide for the citizens of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

**THE STEEL ARMORED WOLF:** Represents the native fauna (Gray Wolf) of the area

of operations, it also highlights its characteristic of using wisdom and ingenuity to defend itself. The steel refers to the armored protection of the vehicles of the Mechanized subunit deployed. The sword symbolizes the unyielding force, at rest but ready to be used if necessary. The wolf's gaze is directed to the Cockade because its guide is the Artigas principles and the justice of the Blue enamel crowned. The shield held by the wolf sports the Blazon of the United Nations Mission (UNDOF) to which UMIC is deployed - headed by the Sable enamel and the UNDOF legend in Gold represents the importance of the mission.

**BLUE ENAMEL:** This represents the virtue of justice and being crowned by the Flag of Artigas proves that it is the guide for the Steel wolf who observes it. It also marks the blue color of the waters; the multiple water courses that develop transversely in the Golan Heights.

**SILVER ENAMEL:** symbolizes the integrity of the elements that carry out the mission conferred by the United Nations in the Area of Operations and hope for a peaceful solution to the conflict. It also represents the icy peaks of Mount Hermon towering over the Golan Heights.

**GULES ENAMEL:** This symbolizes courage, war and charity at the same time, since under the enamel the planet Mars is also represented and on it rest the virtue of war and the protection of the soldiers on the battlefield. A mention of the red line is highlighted (represented in the Medal awarded by the United Nations) to indicate that which separates nations in conflict.

**THE MOTTO ON AZUR RIBBON:** "Adsumus custodes pacis" expresses the commitment assumed by the force deployed with the important mission assigned. "I assume the custody of peace", it reads, assigning UMIC its mission from the moment it steps foot in the Mission Area.



UNDOF  
HOLIDAYS 2021

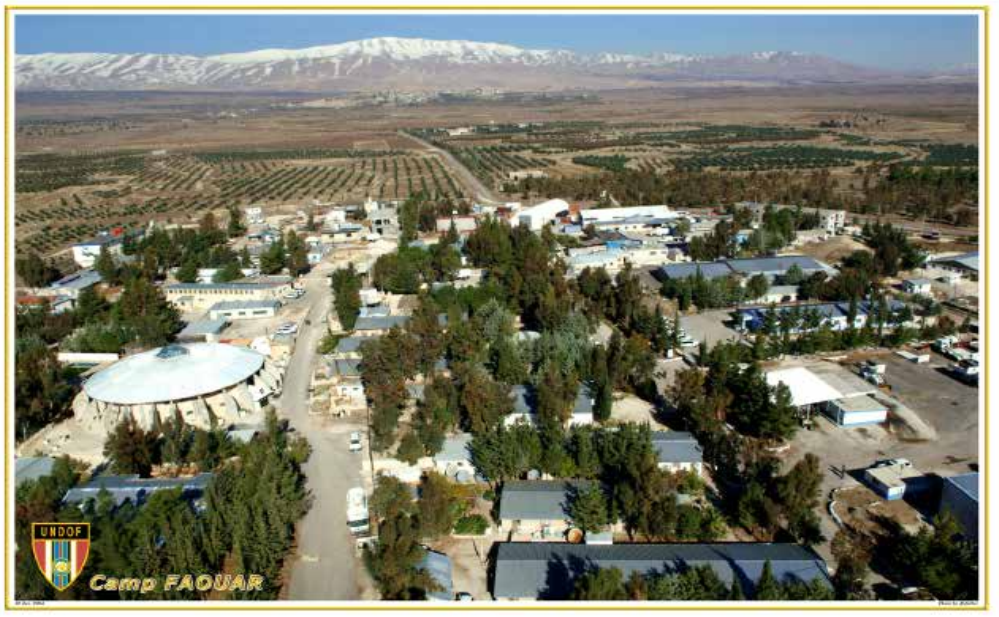
Alpha

- 01 Jan
- 14 Jan
- 15 April
- 14 May\*
- 17 May
- 23 July
- 07 Sept
- 16 Sept
- 21 Sept
- 24 Dec

Bravo

- 01 Jan
- 05 April
- 17 April
- 03 May
- 13 May\*
- 14 May\*
- 19 July
- 20 July
- 25 Dec
- 26 Dec

\* Dates are subject to change



Aerial view of Camp Faouar

TIME

CLOCK CHANGE/DAYLIGHT SAVING

On 26 Mar 2021 - Daylight Saving Time starts .

When local standard time is about to reach Friday, 26 March 2021, 00:00:00 clocks are turned forward 1 hour to Friday, 26 March 2021, 01:00:00 local daylight time instead.

Sunrise and sunset will be about 1 hour later on 26 Mar 2021 than the day before. There will be more light in the evening.

Similarly, on 29 Oct 2021 - Daylight Saving Time Ends.

When local daylight time is about to reach Friday, 29 October 2021, 00:00:00 clocks are turned backward 1 hour to Thursday, 28 October 2021, 23:00:00 local standard time instead.

Sunrise and sunset will be about 1 hour earlier on 29 Oct 2021 than the day before. There will be more light in the morning.



HEALTH

STRENGTH TRAINING



Strength training is a great compliment to cardiovascular training, as it helps build muscle, protect joints and improve overall fitness. But lifting heavy weights must be done carefully, and should be done in conjunction with a reliable training program.

For those new to weightlifting, or for those looking to add plates to the bar, 'Stronglifts 5x5' is a trusted, methodical and effective way of gaining strength. The app is available in most app stores.

Anyone new to weight training should consult a Physical Training Instructor before lifting.



TECHNOLOGY

CYBERSECURITY A TRENDING TECHNOLOGY

Cyber security might not seem like an emerging technology, given that it has been around for a while, but it is evolving just as other technologies are. As long as we have hackers, cybersecurity will remain a trending tech because it will constantly evolve to defend against those hackers. As proof of the strong need for cybersecurity the number of cybersecurity jobs is growing three times faster than other tech jobs. Also, the need for proper cyber security is so high that by 2021, \$6 trillion will be spent globally cybersecurity.



Security analysts suggest that hackers are likely always aiming for something big, and so succeed in infiltrating even the most secure networks if proper precautions are not in place.

UN CELEBRATIONS

ARABIC LANGUAGE DAY

World Arabic Language Day (WALD), also known as the UN Arabic Language Day is observed annually on December 18. First established by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2010, the day celebrates the Arabic language and promotes cultural diversity. WALD is celebrated all around the world as a means to promote cultural understanding and encourage dialogue among people who speak different languages.

Arabic is a language with a rich history and is spoken by almost 1.5 billion people around the world and in UNESCO's 22 member states. The date for WALD signifies the day in 1973 when Arabic became the sixth official language of the UN. The other official languages of the UN are French, English, Russian, Spanish and Chinese.



DATES

ISLAMIC NEW YEAR IN 2021

Awal Muharram or Hijri New Year is celebrated by Muslims as the day symbolises two important events in the Islamic year.

Awal means beginning in English and Muharram is the name of the first month in the Muslim calendar. The first day of Muharram is therefore the Islamic New Year's Day and on this date the Hijra, the historic journey from Mecca to Medina began. Islam has a calendar based on the revolutions of the Moon rather than the sun. Thus, it is only 354 days long. Islamic New Year is celebrated on the first day of Muharram, the first Islamic month.

Compared to Western calendars, the Islamic year goes backwards by about 11 days every year. The date in some countries may vary by up to two days, as some countries use a lunar sighting basis to determine the date. Because of this, the official dates may not be announced until close to the actual day. IN 2021, Syria is celebrating islamic new year on 10 August. Islamic New Year represents the starting point of the Muslim era as it coincides with the Hijrah, the Prophet's journey from Mecca to Medina on the first of Muharram in 622 CE.

SPORTS IN THE UN

Sport has historically played an important role in all societies, be it in the form of competitive sport, physical activity or play. To raise awareness of this potential, 6<sup>th</sup> April was declared the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSDP) by the UN General Assembly in its Resolution(A/RES/67/296). The adoption of this day signifies the increasing recognition by the UN of the positive influence that sport can have on the advancement of human rights, and social and economic development.

The UN General Assembly also recognizes the role that the International Paralympic Committee plays in showcasing the achievements of athletes with an impairment to a global audience and in acting as a primary vehicle to change societal perceptions of disability sport.



FRC troops don festive outfits for the annual "Monty's Santa Fun Run", 13 Dec 2020



# Personal Precautions

COVID 19 Directive 07/20



DO NOT Handshake, Hug, Or Kiss



Avoid Touching Your Face



Wash/Sterilise Your Hands



Cough/Sneeze Into A Tissue or Elbow



1 Metre Distance Between Colleagues



Keep Meetings Under 15 Minutes



**COUGHING, SNEEZING, OR DIFFICULTY BREATHING**

**- REPORT TO A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY**



# HOW TO WEAR A NON-MEDICAL FABRIC MASK SAFELY

[who.int/epi-win](http://who.int/epi-win)

## Do's →



Clean your hands before touching the mask



Inspect the mask for damage or if dirty



Adjust the mask to your face without leaving gaps on the sides



Cover your mouth, nose, and chin



Avoid touching the mask



Clean your hands before removing the mask



Remove the mask by the straps behind the ears or head



Pull the mask away from your face



Store the mask in a clean plastic, resealable bag if it is not dirty or wet and you plan to re-use it



Remove the mask by the straps when taking it out of the bag



Wash the mask in soap or detergent, preferably with hot water, at least once a day



Clean your hands after removing the mask

## Don'ts →



Do not use a mask that looks damaged



Do not wear a loose mask



Do not wear the mask under the nose



Do not remove the mask where there are people within 1 metre



Do not use a mask that is difficult to breathe through



Do not wear a dirty or wet mask



Do not share your mask with others

A fabric mask can protect others around you. To protect yourself and prevent the spread of COVID-19, remember to keep at least 1 metre distance from others, clean your hands frequently and thoroughly, and avoid touching your face and mask.



World Health Organization





*One Mission, One Team, One Goal*