

OPERATION TOSCA

MOBILE FORCE RESERVE OCT 2013 – APR 2014

By Major Jim Phipps (Commanding the Mobile Force Reserve)

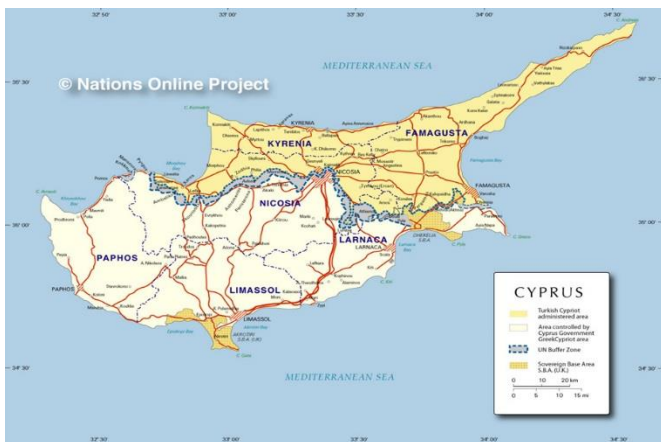
Four Nations — One Company

Deploying as the Mobile Force Reserve has presented us all with a unique challenge. The Company is made up of Regular and Reserve soldiers of 4 nationalities who all bring with them different cultures, training and most importantly language. It has been enormously rewarding over the first month of the deployment to see the way that the Company has bonded together with all nations working side by side.

The mission is one that is quite unlike any that many of us have deployed on before. The UNFICYP military mission is to prevent a recurrence of fighting and maintain a stable environment so that a lasting political solution can be found. Within this the role of the MFR is to respond to incidents at short notice anywhere across the Buffer Zone, as we have done a number of times to date. For a mission that has existed since 1964 the pace of events in Cyprus since we arrived has been very high. In the last few weeks we have facilitated talks between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot representatives and we hope that we may be deployed at a time of great change when the two sides start to work once again towards a settlement. It looks set to be an interesting and very different tour!



Major Jim Phipps



What is Operation TOSCA?

The UK's contribution to UNFICYP is known as Operation TOSCA. UNFICYP (the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus) is one of the longest -running UN Peacekeeping missions. It was set up in 1964 to prevent further fighting between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island and bring about a return to normal conditions. The Mission's responsibilities expanded in 1974, following a coup d'état by elements favouring union with Greece and a subsequent military intervention by Turkey, whose troops established control over the northern part of the island.

the TIGER e-News



Since a de facto ceasefire in August 1974, UNFICYP has supervised the ceasefire lines, provided humanitarian assistance, and maintained a buffer zone between the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces in the north and the Greek Cypriot forces in the south. UNFICYP's Chief of Mission also serves as the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Cyprus and in that capacity leads efforts to assist the parties in reaching a comprehensive settlement.

The ceasefire lines extend over 180 kilometers across the island. In the absence of a formal ceasefire agreement, UNFICYP's 850-plus troops and 60-plus police officers deal with hundreds of incidents each year.

Attempts to solve the Cyprus conflict and reunify the island have so far been without result, although relations between north and south have improved over the years. Among other things, this led to the opening of several crossing points across the buffer zone, most notably across Ledra Street in old Nicosia on 3 April 2008.

This is extracted from www.unficy.org.



Nicosia International Airport Terminal, part of the United Nations Protected Area.



The TACTIC APC, on deployment in the Buffer Zone



Petrol bomb inoculation

Pre- Deployment Training

The British element of the Mobile Reserve Force (MFR) began pre-deployment training on August 5th. The training took place in a variety of locations from Shorncliffe and Lydd in Kent to Nottingham and Shropshire. As part of the Pre-Deployment package, supervised and provided by the Operational Training Advisory Group (OPTAG), the 56 Brits conducted a Public Order training package.

The training was delivered by the Army's expert trainers who deliver specialist training all around the world. The intensive training package evolved from dismounted (foot) drills to a full company level Battle exercise with Snatch Land Rovers, petrol bombs and a very hostile simulated civilian population provided by the 2nd Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and the University of London Officers' Training Corps.

Public Order training and operations require very high levels of discipline, restraint, controlled aggression and trust. The use of vehicles gives troops extra protection but requires trust and considerable training.

For many one of the highlights of the training was the petrol bomb inoculation where soldiers have petrol bombs thrown at them to ensure that they are able to react correctly and safely if and when it happens for real. Everyone worked very hard in training and now in Cyprus we have cascaded this to the entire Company and the multinational platoons have formed to make effective public order platoons.



"Though multinational the Coy is already operating as one and for British soldiers it's a fantastic experience."

The Multinational Force

The MFR is made up of 108 soldiers; of these 56 are British, 33 Argentinean, 10 Slovakian and 9 Hungarian. This includes an Argentinean Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) Platoon Commander, a Slovakian Rifle Platoon Commander, and an Argentinean Company Second in Command! In this respect, as you can imagine, the Company is unique, which creates its own special challenges but also brings benefits too.

The Company is made up of two 40 man Rifle Platoons, a 15 man Armoured Personnel Carrier Platoon with 9 TACTICA vehicles, a 5 man Signals Detachment and an 11 man Company Headquarters. Most of the other nationalities speak very decent English and some just enough. However this has not been an issue for us and after one week in theatre we held an "Asado", what us Brits call a BBQ, The Company immediately began to bond and this has had a positive effect amongst the lads and particularly training. The Slovaks are 'beasting' everyone with gym lifting weights and the Argentineans are teaching how to BBQ. When asked on his thoughts Pte Murray believed the integration was

Seamless saying: "Though multinational the Coy is already operating as one and for British soldiers it's a fantastic experience". The Company has already been deployed on a number of operational tasks and the coming months look set to be busy for the MFR.

A Soldier's Story: UN Flight

UNFICYP has its own Flight of helicopters to support operations across the island. The UN Flight is exclusively Argentinian and the pilots have a reputation for brilliant piloting skills. Since arriving in Cyprus almost all the lads have been on a familiarization flight allowing them to see a large part of the 180 Km buffer zone.



**UN Flight – The Bell
212**

The helicopters used by UN Flight are the Bell 'Huey', or the small and very maneuverable 'Hughes' where the observer sits in the co-pilot's seat. Cpl Bennett recalls: "When on my flight in the Hughes I was allowed to take control from take off! At most times we flew only 15 feet off the ground!" The MFR has also used UN Flight on operations to move troops across island in rapid time. It is an exhilarating ride to fly at high speed, close to the ground in an aircraft with the doors off.



**2PI, led by 2Lt George Bignold, in Public
Order equipment, on deployment in the
Buffer Zone**



NEW DANISH AMBASSADOR BRIEFED BY THE COLONEL OF THE REGIMENT

Mr Claus Gruber, the newly arrived Danish Ambassador, has recently visited Regimental Headquarters where he was briefed by the Colonel of the Regiment, Brigadier Richard Dennis.

Mr Gruber, who assumed his appointment as the Danish Ambassador to the Court of St James on 01 Oct 13, was accompanied by his Defence Attache, Captain Martin LaCour Andersen, and was briefed by Brigadier Dennis and other senior Regimental officers on the Regiment's history, current deployments and future plans.

MR GRUBER'S CAREER HISTORY

2009 - Permanent Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

2003 - Ambassador, Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Denmark to the EU, Brussels.

2000 - Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Denmark to the EU, Brussels.

1997 - Under-Secretary of the North Group, Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (EU-internal policies, EU-enlargement, Central and Eastern Europe, Nordic co-operation and bilateral relations with European countries).

1994 - Head of Department, North Group 3rd Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1993 - Deputy Head of Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1988 - Counsellor (Economic Affairs), Paris.

1984 - Personal assistant to the State Secretary for Foreign Economic Affairs.

1983 - Head of Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1979 - Secretary of Embassy, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the EC, Brussels.

1977 - Entered the Danish Foreign Service.

1976 - Deputy judge, Ministry of Justice.



Mr Claus Gruber

SUBMISSIONS

Should you have a story, article, piece of news or other information that you think might be of interest to the wider readership then please submit it either by email or disk to:

Major (Retired) GB Clapp
Regimental Headquarters
The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment
HM Tower of London
London
EC3N 4AB

giles.clapp473@mod.uk