

GOLAN

JOURNAL

JUL 2023

FORCE COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

CHANGING SEASONS - MY JOURNEY

10 YEARS OF NEPCON

CIVIL AFFAIRS

ON PATROL WITH THE FRC

**PEACE
BEGINS
WITH ME**



LET PEACE PREVAIL ON THE GOLAN

HEAD OF MISSION AND FORCE COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

As the mid-way point of 2023 fast approaches, we are poised to conclude the incremental return phase of the mission. Looking back to 2022 I want to congratulate you all for your profound contributions to the attainment of the mission mandate. Your achievements during the past year will stay in the history of UNDOF.

The level of interoperability has been on the high side with all units cooperating in all mission tasks. The foundation for UNDOF's future has been laid and we need to continue the joint effort to be able to complete a full return to the Bravo Side. There are many challenges still ahead as the environment continues to be potentially volatile. This affords us more opportunities to show the meaning of: "One Mission, One Team, One Goal".

A regular feature of Peacekeeping, we are also bidding farewell to our colleagues who are leaving the mission and I want to use this opportunity to thank them for their contribution and camaraderie and I do hope that they safely return to their homes and families with good memories from the time spent in UNDOF. I wish them all the best in their coming assignments. The biggest change in UNDOF was the departure of the previous Head of Mission, Force Commander and Delegated Official, Lt General Ishwar Hamal after two years of sterling stewardship to the Mission and the Golan.

We will have many challenges ahead of us, but I believe that with the excellent cooperation within UNDOF and with our UNTSO colleagues we will find solutions to all of them. With proper training, preparation and planning, we can mitigate the risks inherent in peacekeeping. We must continuously assess all the tasks, so that we can conduct our duties without risking the safety and security of ourselves and our units.

The safety and security of every individual is paramount when planning, preparing, and conducting our operational tasks. We should also bear in mind that every individual action might also impact on the safety and security of other colleagues in the Mission. Our continued professional behaviour is vital to the image of the mission. We must also continue to interact in a very courteous but alert manner with society. In modern days social media plays a big part in our every life as it is the most facile way to stay in contact with our friends and loved ones during our sojourn apart from them.



However, it is imperative that we always assess what is suitable for public social media and refrain from publications and posts which can be misunderstood or can be detrimental to the image of the mission. Nevertheless, I still want to encourage you to be open in your communications with your personal contacts. You are the face and voice of UNDOF.

To conclude I want to wish you all continued success. Every member of UNDOF, civilian and military has a role to play. I value and appreciate your efforts. I value and appreciate the sacrifices you, and indeed your loved ones make, in the cause of peace.

THANK YOU.

MAJOR GENERAL NIRMAL KUMAR THAPA
HOM / FC, UNDOF

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DEAR READERS

Welcome to the latest edition of the GOLAN – The UNDOF Journal.

It is my privilege to present the latest edition of the GOLAN. As military men and women, we are well used to change, and adapting to new circumstances and environments. The rotation of staff officers and contingents is part and parcel of what we do. During this period we have seen contingent rotations from Ireland, Uruguay, Nepal, and India. To our colleagues and friends that have left the mission, we wish you a fond and happy reunion with your families. To our new colleagues and friends we wish you a warm welcome and a safe and successful tour of duty. We also have a new Force Commander and Head of Mission, Major General Nirmal Kumar Thapa. We also bid farewell to our DFC Brig Gen Anita Asmah, and welcomed her replacement Brig Gen Amitabh Jha. I'm sure you join me in extending our best wishes to all of them.

In this edition of the GOLAN, we take an in depth look and Civil Affairs, a relatively new endeavour by UNDOF. Our Civil Affairs Officer Jurga Didziokaite brings with her a wealth of experience in this field, and has been kind enough to share her experience with us in this edition.

We also take a look at the work of the FRC on a search and clearance operation, mark ten years of NepCon with UNDOF, and of course we mark various special occasions like the visit by the USG.

Finally, to you the members of UNDOF. This is your magazine. Pick up your pen (or keyboard) and write an article about your life and experiences here in UNDOF. Do not worry in the slightest if English is not your first language, together we can edit and adjust your article to fit. That's my job. Give it a go.

COMMANDANT BRIAN LYNCH
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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MEET THE PILLARS OF UNDOF



HEAD OF MISSION & FORCE COMMANDER
MAJOR GEN NIRMAL KUMAR THAPA
NEPAL
JOINED UNDOF SEPT 2022



DEPUTY FORCE COMMANDER
BRIG GEN AMITABH JHA
INDIA
JOINED UNDOF APRIL 2023



CHIEF MISSION SUPPORT
MR. BERNARD LEE
UNITED KINGDOM
JOINED UNDOF 2011



CHIEF OF STAFF
COL PRATYUSH KUMAR
INDIA
JOINED UNDOF MAR 2022



CHIEF OPS & RESOURCE MGR
MR. AMEDEO MICELLI
ITALY
JOINED UNDOF 2016



CHIEF SUPPLY CHAIN MGR
MR. HENRY NUAMAH
GBR
JOINED UNDOF 2014

"CHANGING SEASONS - MY UNDOF JOURNEY"

Major Mokshita Singh joined UNDOF last September on a 12 month tour of duty - her first overseas deployment with the United Nations. Here, she shares her story;

I was returning from an official duty when I received a message that I have been shortlisted for undergoing an interview for United Nations Peace Keeping Missions. Since, I am a second-generation officer and my father has previously served at UNAMSIL, he was happier than me to have heard this news. India has the second largest army in the world with forty-three thousand commissioned officers (approximately) and I am one of the fortunate few who got selected to serve in United Nations Disengagement Observer Force after undergoing a merit based, rigorous selection procedure.

I confess I felt slightly emotional when the aircraft left New Delhi airport as it was the first time, I was going to be away from my homeland for a long duration, but I was thrilled as well for the journey that lay ahead. We landed in Beirut on 1 Sep 2022 and I arrived at Camp Faouar on the next day.

At, Camp Faouar, we were very warmly welcomed by Indian Officers. We were given time to unpack, followed by a quick tour of the camp, a small brief and a scrumptious dinner prepared by Indian Officers and, just like that "CF" felt like "Home Away from Home". One thing I vividly remember is that one of the officers that had completed his tour and was on his way home told me "Make Each Day Count" and I promised myself I will. Upon reaching Camp Faouar, I was dropped at "Bldg 15" where four Indian Women Officers' are accommodated, and its our "home" where we carry a legacy of traditions enveloped in warmth, care, and bonding. I think it's just a true reflection of a typical Indian family, encouraging, well-knit and always there for you.

As, my interactions began with national, international civilian and military staff of UNDOF, I began to realize the many ways in which we are all so different while the core of each human being is so alike, and that makes us connect and understand each other better. Whether you are Syrian or Indian, Irish or Ghanaian, we share similar hopes and concerns. The militaries practice different cultures and traditions, there are many aspects that intrigue them about our Defense Forces and vice versa. My appointment in UNDOF is SO Supply, and hence I perform my duties under CSS (Supply Section) and CLSO (Military Wing). I have three-unit chiefs under me along with national and international staff. Interacting in a work environment with Supply Chain experts has been an enriching experience for me.



Major Mokshita Singh (on the left in picture) celebrates Diwali with her Indian UNDOF colleagues

Over social occasions, festivities or in an official gathering, the Civilian Staff, Staff Officers and TCCs have often showcased the culture, traditions, cuisine, tourism, diversity and displayed a glimpse of their Defense Forces and its ethos.

Daily Routine in UNDOF is very diverse and being a psychology graduate, I find it to be very wholesome and healthy. Most of us begin our days with physical exercise, running, work out or Yoga, followed by a healthy breakfast and prayers. The mornings are busy with morning updates, conferences, and briefings while we catch up on routine and periodic tasks on the later half of the office hours. To stay more active there is a brief coffee break and then back to work desks. IK has excellent food and a diverse menu which attracts not just Indian but national and international staff as well while we often to Irish Kitchen for their popular burgers, lasagna, tortillas, barbecue wings. NMC has always been known for its hospitality and food, momos, dal bhaat, Aloo Sadheko, Saag, mutton and pork being our favorite.

"CHANGING SEASONS - MY UNDOF JOURNEY"

CF offers various opportunities to play games like badminton, football, basketball, tennis etc. Often, competitions are held amongst different TCCs. Exercise is followed by either a healthy protein infused smoothie or a cup of tea in case our friends join us. This is also the time when we make calls to our loved ones and check out physical activity rings on our smart watches to ascertain if we achieved our daily goals to fitness.

There comes a time in the mission, when you are well settled, you know your job and you have made friends, but it turns out to coincide with the time when some of your newly made friends are at the end of their TOD or rotation. I clearly remember the rotation of each TCC and departure of each staff Officer from my TOD, because each person has been so kind, helpful, and nice while together we hold great memories of either working together, traveling, playing football or badminton, baking, or cooking different cuisines, singing, dancing at Fuji Hut, Fuel Run duties or crossings, Logistic Runs, or national festivities. Goodbyes are always hard but then before we know, the relievers arrive and the tables turn, it's now our responsibility to make them comfortable, help them and say, "Welcome to UNDOF", to make sure they feel as wonderful and at home as we did.

My journey continues for next four more months and as I was told on the first day, I make an endeavor to make each day count.

What is my biggest takeaway from my time in UNDOF thus far? Apart from professional learning, I have gained a lot personally, - unforgettable experiences, unforgettable friendships, and a deep gratitude for even the small things in life, which I may have taken for granted before. I feel this experience has made me a better human being with greater acceptance, understanding, patience and has opened my mind to greater horizons.

Maj Mokshita Singh,
India
SO SUP
UNDOF



A FOND FAREWELL & A WARM WELCOME



On the 14th of April all in UNDOF bid a fond farewell to our DFC Brig Gen Anita Asmah as she completed two years of dedicated service with UNDOF. Her unwavering commitment to duty, her exemplary leadership, and her relentless pursuit of excellence have left an indelible mark on our hearts and minds. Her leadership has been marked by her unwavering integrity, unyielding perseverance, and tireless dedication to the mission. All in UNDOF are immensely grateful for her service and wish her the very best in all her future endeavors.



Brigadier General Amitabh Jha, has taken over the reins as Deputy Force Commander UNDOF. He joins UNDOF with a wealth of military experience behind him. Prior to his current appointment as DFC, UNDOF he was posted as Deputy Assistant Chief of Integrated Defence Staff at Tri Services HQ and has worked towards jointness and integration of Armed Forces of India. He has also served as a Military Observer in the UN mission in Democratic Republic of Congo and worked in multinational environment in UN. All in UNDOF wish him all the best for a successful tour of Duty.

MEET THE LEADERS

HOM & FC MAJOR GENERAL NIRMAL KUMAR THAPA



Major General Nirmal Kumar Thapa, was born in Lalitpur, Nepal. The General Officer joined the Nepali Army as an officer cadet on 15th February 1987. He was commissioned into Nepali Army as Second Lieutenant and joined an Infantry Battalion on 1st June 1988. During his career he has completed various professional courses, both at home and abroad, among them the National Defense College - Bangladesh, Higher Command and Management Course - Nepal, Army Command and Staff College- Nepal and Comprehensive Crisis Management Course - USA. Furthermore, he has participated in seminars and workshops abroad in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Russia, and the UK.

On the academic front, he holds a Master's Degree in Security and Development Studies from Bangladesh University of Professionals.

Major General Thapa has previously served as a Platoon Commander in UNPROFOR in former Yugoslavia, Logistic Coy Commander in UNIFIL in Lebanon, JOC Operations Officer in UNMEE-Ethiopia & Eritrea and as a Military Observer in MONUSCO-Congo.

Major General Thapa, has dedicated thirty-four years of service to Nepal and the United Nations. He is happily married to Mrs Muna Thapa and the couple is blessed with two sons.

DFC BRIG GENERAL AMITABH JHA



Brigadier General Amitabh Jha, is an alumnus of Delhi University and was commissioned into the Infantry from the Officers Training Academy, Chennai in 1993. He has vast experience in operations across a wide spectrum of conflict and terrain profiles. He has commanded a Commando Platoon in mountains, a Company in Counter Terrorist Forces and a Rifle company along Northern borders in the Himalayas. As a Colonel he has commanded an elite Special Forces Unit. Brigadier General Amitabh Jha, has commanded a Brigade in Glaciated Mountainous terrain in the Northern Borders area, and has served as a Military Observer in the UN mission in Democratic Republic of Congo.

He has attended and successfully completed the Junior & Senior Command Course at Army War College, Mhow and the prestigious Higher Defence Management Course at College of Defence Management, Secundrabad. Academically inclined, Brigadier General Amitabh Jha has a keen interest in reading on Geopolitics, Indo-Pacific, Modern & Small Wars, Sub-conventional Warfare, Human psychology, Culture and Spirituality. He is a keen sports enthusiast, who plays troop games and enjoys backpacking in the mountains & enjoys nature and music. He is married to Mrs Anupama Jha who is an educationalist and an avid reading enthusiast. The couple have two children.

MEET THE CHIEFS



CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER. Lt Col Dave McCarthy was born on 29 January 1980 in Cork, Ireland. He joined the Irish Defence Forces in 1999 and was commissioned in 2001 to the Infantry Corps. He has amassed a wide range of experience across a number of roles at home, serving in command and staff roles at battalion level in 12 Infantry Battalion and in 4 Infantry Battalion. He also commanded the Brigade Training Centre in 1 Brigade as well as holding staff officer appointments in the Irish Defence Forces' J3 (Operations). Lt Col McCarthy has prior overseas experience in the Middle East and Africa, having served in command and staff appointments in Mali (EUTM), Lebanon (UNIFIL), Kosovo (KFOR), and Liberia (UNMIL). Lt Col McCarthy is a B Eng graduate of the National University of Ireland in Galway and holds a Masters Degree in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies from the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He is also a graduate of the Command and Staff course run by the Command and Staff School in the Military College.



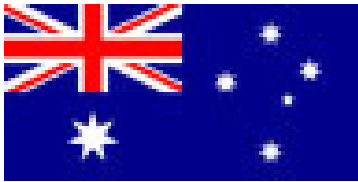
CHIEF LOGISTICS SUPPORT OFFICER. Lt Col Vignendra was born on 23rd June 1987 in Chennai, India. He started his military career by joining the National Defence Academy as a Cadet in 2006, graduated to the Indian Military Academy in 2008 and was commissioned as a Lieutenant into the 7th Battalion, The Maratha Light Infantry on 13th June 2009. As an Infantry Officer, he has been a Platoon Commander and a Company Commander in an infantry battalion in High Altitude Areas, Desert terrain and in the areas adjoining the International Borders. He has held the appointment of General Staff Officer Grade -I of an Independent Armoured Brigade for two years and Quarter Master of an Infantry Battalion in Active Field Areas for over three years. He also served as an Instructor for two years in Wangchuk Lo Dzong Military School, a training school for Officers and troops of the Royal Bhutan Army.



Lt Col Vignendra is an alumnus of the Defence Services Staff College, where he completed his Command and Staff Course. The Officer has a Masters degree in 'Defence Studies and Strategic Affairs' from Madras University. He also holds diplomas in 'Mil Studies and Defence Management' and 'Junior Level Defence Management'. He has also done SCUBA Diving Cadre and Parachute Course with 8 static line para jumps to his credit.



MEET THE CHIEFS



CHIEF TRAINING OFFICER. Wing Commander Stuart Wheel (born 30 Jun 1975) began his Air Force career in 1998 after graduating from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Education. Initially joining as a Ground Defence Officer, on completion of his training at the Royal Military College - Duntroon, Wing Commander Wheel was posted to 3 Airfield Defence Squadron, being quickly reassigned to 2 Airfield Defence Squadron to deploy to East Timor as part of INTERFET. In 2001, Wing Commander Wheel respecialised to become a Personnel Capability Officer, being posted to Central Flying School, at RAAF Base East Sale as the Unit Administrative Officer. He completed other junior officer postings to Defence Force Recruiting - Adelaide and back to East Sale at 32 Squadron. Wing Commander Wheel was posted to (then) 322 Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron located at RAAF Base Tindal in 2007. Wing Commander Wheel was posted to Officers' Training School from 2009 and 2010 as the Specialist Training Flight Commander. He then became Executive Officer 30 SQN from 2011 to 2014. During his time as Executive Officer he acted as Commanding Officer for a nine month period, receiving an ACAUST Silver Commendation for outstanding leadership in response to a Defence Aid to the Civil Community activity to combat flooding in Gippsland in June 2012. He took command of 382 Squadron in January 2020 where he led the Squadron on numerous exercises and deployments.



CHIEF MISSION PERSONNEL OFFICER. Lt.Cnel. Roberto FERNÁNDEZ was born in June 9 1978, in Montevideo, Uruguay. He graduated from the Military Academy on December 2000, and was posted as Junior Officer at the 12th and 6th Infantry Mech Battalion. After that, he held the position as a Drill Infantry Instructor to the Military Academy.

As Major, he served as 2nd Command of the 4th Infantry Mech Battalion.

As Lt.Cnel, he served as Cap Career Course School Director at the Military Institution of Arms and Specialties. In February 2021, he served as 6th Infantry Commander Battalion.

He has completed military law Courses and the Staff Officer Course and participated at the UN Contingent Officer Course and UN Experts Mission Operation at the National Peace Operations Uruguayan Academy.

Among other military professional specializations, he has a Degree in Military Sciences.



He has participated in PKO at MONUSCO in 2004 as Platoon Mech Leader and MINUSTAH as Company Commander in 2012 and as HQ Uruguayan Battalion Staff Officer in 2013.



MEET THE CHIEFS



CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER. Lieutenant Colonel Libor Madzia was born on 3rd April 1983 in city Třinec in the Czech Republic. He has been married since 2018 and he has one son, Vílém. He started his military career by joining the University of Defence in Brno, field of study - aircraft and missile technology. He Graduated in 2005. After twelve years of active duty, in 2017 - 2018, he graduated Senior Officer Course.

His military education predestined him to start his professional career at 21st Tactical Air Force Base in Čáslav as a member of ground logistics support supervisors. After eight years at the air force base he left his position as a leader of ground logistics support supervisors and in 2013 he had been appointed on a position of a staff officer of the Logistics Agency. From then, he had been carrying out central logistic support of the Air Force. At the end of 2015 he had been appointed as an UN Military Liaison Officer (MLO) in the United Nations Mission in Kosovo - UNMIK. It was his first UN service experience. He spent 12 months at MLO Team North in city Mitrovica.

In 2021 he has been appointed on a position Chief of Service for maintenance of airports at Logistics Division of Ministry of Defence.



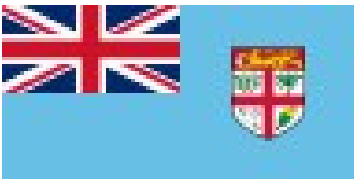
CHIEF LIAISON OFFICER. Lieutenant Colonel Jone Kuruduadua Verebasaga enlisted into the Republic of Fiji Military Forces in Feb 2001 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on 19 Dec 2001.

After five years with the infantry battalion, he was then posted to the Force Training Group as an Instructor and team leader, senior instructor and chief instructor at the Officers Training Centre.

As well as other UN tours of Duty, he previously served in UNDOF as a Staff Officer holding the appointment of Senior Staff Officer Operations SSOPS from 2017-2018.

In 2021 LTCOL Verebasaga was posted to the Joint Task Force Command and currently holds the post of Chief of Staff of the Joint Task Force Command.

He is a graduate of the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College with a Post Graduate Diploma in Strategic and Defence Studies from the National University of Malaysia.



THE CHIEF OF STAFF

As any Staff Officer will tell you, the Chief of Staff makes all the difference in whether you have a good trip (Tour of Duty) or a fairly difficult trip. He has a huge impact on your work environment – for better or worse! He is the link between the Mission Leadership and their staff. He tasks, co-ordinates, manages, and generally has his fingers dipped into every pie. If you want to know what's happening, ask the Chief of Staff!

Colonel Pratyush Kumar YSM, was born in Almora India in 1978, he joined the National Defence Academy India as a cadet officer in 1995. Commissioned as an Infantry Officer, he has served in combat and combat like situations in all parts of India, Africa and Central Asia. He went on to command his Battalion from 2015–2019 along the Northern and Western Borders in a highly active field location, where he was decorated for Distinguished Services in War (YSM). He was promoted to Major in 2006, to Lt Col in 2013 and to Colonel in 2015.

Fortunately for UNDOF (And for me ... Kind of!) Col. Kumar has held the position of Chief of Staff for the past sixteen months. I say kind of because he can be a hard task master. But he has a swagger and a spark about him – I like that. That spark can keep you on your toes, and have you scrambling to keep up, but it is matched with a wicked sense of humour. With those qualities combined, he has managed to bring out the best in his staff – ordinarily a difficult task, but even more so in a multinational environment. An ability to bring this diverse group together – and keep them together and focused, and dare I say it – happy, is a highly valued skill. Soldiers are comfortable with him – and that's important.



He listens. He encourages counter points. He challenges. In essence – he is a soldier's soldier – and that is very high praise indeed. As he departs the mission in early July, one thing is for sure – he will be missed.

MAJ. B. LYNCH
(IRL)
SSO MEDIA & PR
UNDOF

10 YEARS OF NEPCON IN UNDOF

Under the Security Council Resolution 350(1974) of 31st May 1974, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was established to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and Syria, supervise the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian Forces, and to supervise the area of separation (AOS) and area of limitation (AOL).

The first formation of UNDOF in 1974 consisted of personnel from Austria, Peru, Canada, and Poland, followed by contingents from Iran, Finland, Slovenia, Japan, Croatia, India, and the Philippines. In March 2013, Anti Government Armed Elements (AGAE's) took 21 personnel of UNDOF hostage in the Neutral Buffer Zone around Quneitra. The fighting between them attracted international attention. Observation Post 58 was damaged and evacuated after heavy fighting near Al-Jamra. Personnel were eventually released and returned to the base via Jordan and Israel on 12 March. On June 6, 2013, Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann and Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindegger announced that Austria was withdrawing its troops from the mission. The decision came after an attack by Syrian rebels and they temporarily occupied the border crossing in Quneitra. Later, the Japanese and Croats also withdrew their troops.

On 19th July 2013, NEPCON, with its proud history of more than half-century in serving for peace covering some 44 UN Missions, became the newest members of UNDOF. At the time of the troop crisis in the UNDOF Mission, the Nepali Army was the very first to respond to the request for troop deployment to the mission. As an immediate response, it deployed a company strength of troops from the nearby UNIFIL mission. It clearly demonstrated the 'can do' attitude, resilience and determination for which the Nepalese Forces are well renowned. With remarkable speed and agility they entered the Golan, which at that time was quite a volatile environment.

NEPCON I arrived to join UNDOF with 130 soldiers who were serving in Nepali Battalion at UNIFIL mission for the past four months. NEPCON comprised of two infantry companies and a forward medical team. One company was deployed at Mt Hermon as 1st company and was under OPCON with FIJIBATT, while the other company was deployed at Camp Faouar as FHQ Reserve Company.

Major Rajan Dahal, who was the Officer in Command and Acting Contingent Commander, officially took over the command of the Mount Hermon Complex from Captain Lazaro D. Quigao JR, Officer in Command of 4th Company PHILBATT on 23rd July 2013.



10 YEARS OF NEPCON IN UNDOF

Since the takeover of the Mt Hermon Complex by NEPCON, there have been various changes regarding its role, composition and mission environment, however the mandate remains constant. Currently NEPCON XI is deployed at Mount Hermon complex under the command of Lt. Col. Mahesh Kumar Suwal Bata. During the transitional phase of the internal conflict within Syria, NEPCON, as part of UNDOF, stood firm and rigid in maintaining the mandate provided by the Security Resolution. Meanwhile, they were also given additional tasks for the deployment towards the Northern Sector. Currently, troops of NEPCON are deployed in 5 UNPs namely Hermon Hotel, Hermon South, Hermon Base (As the contingent Headquarter), Position 12 and Position 12 A (As the logistic base) as well as certain troops as the liaison element at Camp Ziouani. The vulnerability created by the scenarios during the transitional period was calmly managed by the commander and troops using all the mental and physical agility acquired during the rigorous training at the High Altitude and Mountain Warfare School back in Kaisang, as well as the Pre-Deployment Training being conducted at Birendra Peace Operation Training Center in Panchkhal, both being the prime training center within the Nepali Army. Training doesn't stop once we leave Nepal and arrive in the mission area. On a weekly basis the training calendar dictates the schedule of the troops, improving their soldiering skills to obtain the desired output on the mission area.

The shivering wind and incessant snowfall during the winter period can make for an unpleasant work environment. The main supply route can be blocked by heavy snow, and the communication domes need constant attention. Through it all NEPCON have managed the smooth performance of administrative and operational tasks. And through it all, we never forget about home. NEPCON celebrates its culture and customs marking various feasts and festivals during its deployment and even sharing it with the other contingent members and other UNDOF elements. Besides the implementation of Mission mandate, VIP escorts and varieties of exercises including MEDEVAC, ROCK CRAFT and ICE CRAFT are conducted by the NEPCON. The CIMIC (Civil Military Co-operation) activities in the form of QIP (Quick Impact Projects) are also conducted in its AOR in coordination with FHQ and SSAD that enhances the importance of the UNDOF Mission among the local population. NEPCON has reached the milestone of a decade of service with UNDOF in the cause of peace.

Memories of NEPCON I troops walking down crossing the mountains through the Golan for the call of peace are still fresh in our hearts. The determination of our troops and commitment for peace are still the priorities of all the men and women working under the single umbrella of NEPCON UNDOF.

Mahesh Kumar Suwal Bata
Lt. Col.
CO NepCon XI



MEDAL PARADES & CEREMONIES

New HoM & FC

On 19 September UNDOF welcomed our new Head of Mission and Force Commander Maj Gen Nirmal Kumar Thapa. Maj Gen Thapa inspected his Guard of Honour made up of troops drawn from all contingents and led by Lt. Col Akwerh from Ghana.

Maj Gen Thapa signed the Transfer of Authority Documents, formally marking the commencement of his tour of duty as Head of Mission & Force Commander UNDOF. Addressing the Parade, the Mission leadership team and distinguished guests, Maj. Gen Thapa stated it was an honour and a privilege to lead the mission, and he looked forward to working with the mission leadership team and contingent commanders to fulfill the UNDOF mandate.



UMIC Medal Parade

On 25 August the proud members of the UNDOF Uruguayan Contingent were awarded their UNDOF Medals by Deputy Force Commander Brig. Gen Anita Asmah. Escorted by the Contingent Commander Lt. Col Elbio H Berriel, the DFC inspects the Guard of Honour on the parade ground in UNP 80.

As well as the Uruguayan contingent members receiving their well earned UNDOF Medals, Uruguayan and Czech members of the Force Headquarters also received their medals on the day. DFC Asmah thanked them all for their service in the cause of peace in the Golan, and wished them a safe and joyous return to their families on the completion of their tour of duty.



MEDAL PARADES & CEREMONIES

Irish Medal Parade.

On 22 September members of the UNDOF Force Reserve Company made up of troops from Ireland were awarded their UNDOF Medals. Led by Lt. Col Declan Crummey, the troops are formed up on the parade ground awaiting the arrival of Deputy Force Commander UNDOF Brig. Gen Anita Asmah to arrive on parade.

Joining DFC Asmah was Chief Mission Support UNDOF Mr. Bernard Lee, and Deputy Chief of Staff (Ops) Irish Defence Forces Maj. Gen McKenna. This high ranking team presented the UNDOF Medals to the worthy members of the FRC on completion of their tour of Duty. Brig. Gen Asmah thanked the Irish troops for their dedication and professionalism



Fiji Medal Parade

On 13 October Deputy Force Commander Anita Asmah presented UNDOF Medals to members of the Fiji Battalion under the leadership of Lt. Col . Monty Naulmatua. It was a splendid day for the troops of Fiji and their invited guests, who were treated to a special Fijian Haka on the completion of the formal ceremonies.

DFC Asmah and Lt. Col Naulmatua were joined by a host of dignitaries and the proud recipients of their UNDOF Medals for a group photograph.



MEDAL PARADES & CEREMONIES

Indian Medal Parade.

On 09 November members of the UNDOF Indian Contingent were on parade to receive their UNDOF Medals. Head of Mission & FC Maj Gen Nirmal Kumar Thapa was joined by the DFC, CMS and COS who had the honour of presenting the medals to the worthy recipients. IndCon provides UNDOF with a number of specialties, including Heavy Transport, MP, Logistics, Engineering and IT.

Maj Gen Nirmal Kumar Thapa thanked those on parade for their professionalism and dedication to UNDOF and the cause of peace.



CIVIL AFFAIRS & QIPs

REBUILDING SCHOOLS AND FUTURES: THE IMPACT OF UNDOF'S QUICK IMPACT PROJECTS

It is late January when I return to the Faouar school in Syria which the United Nations Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF) peacekeepers recently refurbished.

"Before UNDOF renovated the school, it was cold but now the windows are fixed so it is warmer and more comfortable here in the school, we do not get sick anymore," 12-year old Saleh who is in 6th grade tells me.

"The roof of the school was leaking in the classroom, and water was dripping on our heads. Now it is dry and warm in winter in the classrooms," her classmate Bayam chimes in.

The Faouar school is one of the 19 Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) which the mission has implemented since the mission returned to Syria in 2019. These projects are equally distributed in the area of responsibility of UNDOF, including the most deprived areas, and aim to build trust between the peacekeeping force and local population and local authorities. From refurbishing health centers to improving parts of roads, renovating water wells and sport fields, they all seek to improve communities' access to basic services. The Faouar school is one of four that have been refurbished, benefitting over 78 children and their teachers.

"Refurbished schools contribute to a positive learning and teaching environment and together with child-friendly space, they help reduce students' drop out and improve their performance. Projects like these help boost students' and teachers' creativity and provide incentives to study," Faouar school's headmaster said.

"Even one child without education is too many. The opportunity to get education is a ticket to a brighter future for the young generation of Syrians. Supporting schools with the QIPs, UNDOF increases opportunities for boys and girls", I strongly believe. "That is why UNDOF intends to continue refurbishing schools in the most deprived areas."

After years of conflict, it is estimated that only one third of all schools are fully functional in Syria with millions of children without access to education or dropping off school to support their families.



"Safety and stability of the Golan Heights region depends to a large extent on an economically self-sustained and empowered population. The impact of the war, compounded by sanctions which are exacerbated by the global recession and economic crisis in neighboring Lebanon, have increased the need for aid provided by a limited number of actors operating on the ground." To strengthen the impact and scope of these projects, UNDOF Civil Affairs has increased its budget allocation to QIPs by 50% and coordinates with the United Nations Country Teams which gathers UN agencies working in the area to prevent duplication and best respond to unanswered needs.

"UNDOF's projects supporting the local population have become increasingly important and our peacekeepers volunteer their time by painting the buildings, installing electricity and internet, and clearing project sites from debris and also playing with the children in the refurbished schools."

UNDOF is coordinating with the local authorities to assess their needs and has started planning for new QIPs including the renovation of more schools, building of a water well and provision of a solar panel to a hospital.

Jurga Didziokaite
Civil Affairs Officer

CIVIL AFFAIRS & QIPs

All over the world, children are the same. They love to learn and they love to have fun. There is nothing like seeing the smile on a child's face, or hearing their laughter to cheer you up.

Sadly, all over the world, children are amongst the most vulnerable in suffering the consequences of conflict - physically and emotionally. With the drive and vision exhibited by Jurga Didziokaite, UNDOF has achieved much, but as always there is much more to do in trying to help the communities in the UNDOF area.



Jurga Didziokaite, the UNDOF Civil Affairs Officer (pictured here with members of the Nepalese Contingent) has also overseen other projects in the UNDOF Area of Operations.

These projects are undertaken in consultation, cooperation and collaboration with local communities to meet their needs. Projects have included the renovation of Health Centers, and the upgrading of water wells to ensure sustainable access to clean water, and the upgrade of road surfaces to assist in access to communities and farmland.



Of course the ribbon cutting or opening ceremony is a special day. The dignitaries arrive, kids are happy with all the pomp and ceremony (and a break from the classroom!) But a lot of planning and work goes into bringing a project to fruition. UNDOF soldiers are happy to lend a helping hand. Soldiers (Fathers and mothers too you know) from Uruguay, Ireland, India and Nepal have all recently been involved in assisting projects in the background. So too have the local communities themselves. Our efforts together lead to the successful completion of the projects.



SEARCH & CLEARANCE WITH THE FRC



The UNDOF Force Commander's Reserve (FRC) was tasked by UNDOF HQ to Search and Clear OP58 in order to certify it as clear of all potential hazards for future reoccupation by UNTSO Observer Group Golan (OGG) observers. UN OP 58 is approximately 70km SOUTH from Camp FAOUAR (CF) on high ground. It is located SOUTH of the village AL JAMLAH which is approximately 1km away. The Bravo Line is approximately 1000m and the ALPHA line is approximately 2000m WEST of the OP. The OP is also approximately 20km SOUTH of UN Position 80.

Preparation for the operation began a number of days prior. The FRC follows a strict process of planning and preparation in advance of all deliberate operations to ensure that detailed plans are created, areas and routes are reconnoitred, and all eventualities are planned and prepared for. FRC personnel conducted an on the ground reconnaissance of routes to and from OP58, and a general reconnaissance of the area and work that was required.

FRC personnel liaised with Alpha side and Bravo side authorities in advance of the operation through UNDOF's liaison branch in order to ensure that the operation could go ahead without any misunderstandings or surprises for all parties present in the Golan Heights

The FRC's Mechanised Infantry Company provided an on the ground security perimeter while FRC Engineers conducted their Search and Clearance works. Throughout the operation the FRC remained on 15 minutes notice to move as the Force Commander's Reserve.

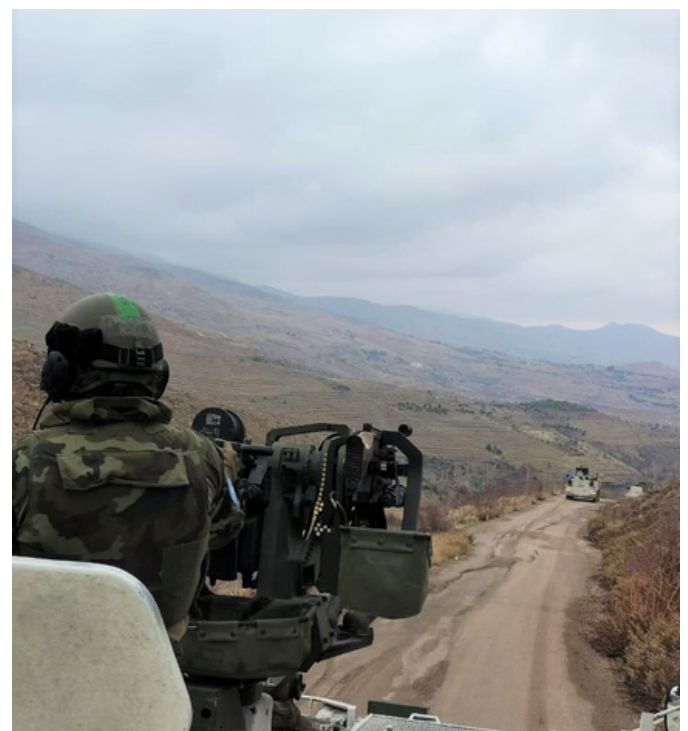
There were five phases to the operation. Phase 1 consisted of the move to the location of the FRC convoy consisting of Engineer Specialist Search and Clearance (ESSC) assets and Mechanised Infantry Company MOWAG PIRHANNA III APCs as part of the security element. Phase 2 consisted of the establishment of a cordon. During this phase troops from the FRC's Mechanised Infantry Company took the lead in the establishment of a secure cordon to ensure a safe environment for the ESSC team to work. Phase 3 consisted of the ESSC team conducting its search in detail. During the process of the Search and Clearance operation the FRC searched all buildings and areas within the OP, and the perimeter of the OP. There were no explosive devices or materials found during the search. As well as searching the OP, FRC Engineers Searched and Cleared an extraction route outside the OP for OGG observers to utilise in the event of an emergency extraction.



This allows OGG observers to evacuate the OP to a safe point of extraction in the event of an emergency in a safe manner without threat from Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) or Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). Phase 4 consisted of the synchronised and coordinated collapsing of the security cordon. During this phase the Mechanised Infantry Company troops again took the lead in safely collapsing the cordon in place and rendezvousing with FRC personnel at OP58. Phase 5 of the operation consisted of the reconstituted FRC convoy and all assets returning to Camp Faouar. Throughout the operation the FRCs Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team was on standby to render safe any UXOs or ERW that may have been found during the searches.



OP58 was certified as free of ERW and UXOs to the highest degree of certainty achievable by the FRC ESSC team. This operation allowed the FRC to display and exercise its capabilities as a Mechanised Infantry Company and in the realm of specialist searches and clearance. It serves as another example of the many essential capabilities that the FRC brings to UNDOF in the service of peace.



BRIAN CLARKE
CAPT(OF-2)
FRC - IRL

SNAPSHOTS-INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Below is a personal message delivered by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres marking International Women's Day on 08 March 2023.

Dear All,

Today On International Women's Day, we celebrate the achievements of women and girls across all walks of life, in all corners of the world.

Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge women's equality.

Equity isn't just a nice-to-have, it's a must-have.

A focus on gender equity needs to be part of every society's DNA.

And it's critical to understand the difference between equity and equality. Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

We can all play a part.

António Guterres (UN Secretary-General) on International Women's Day

Here in UNDOF the celebration was prepared and organised by Major Shalini Singh from the Indian Contingent. Shalini arrived into Undof Camp Faouar in September 2022 last year and is employed as Staff Officer Transport Maintenance. There, she tasks and supervises the fleet mechanics ensuring UNDOF vehicles are road worthy and service schedules are met.



Major Shalini Singh giving a presentation in Camp Faouar, celebrating International Women's Day 08 March 2023

SNAPSHOTS - INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



SNAPSHOTS - DIPLOMAT'S DAY

Diplomat's Day was hosted by UNDOF on both "A" & "B" sides with the attendees of Ambassadors, Diplomats & DAs from various countries. Welcomed by UNDOF HoM/FC Major General Nirmal Kumar Thapa, the event was followed by an Operational overview by the Chief Operations Officer, Mission Support update by Chief Mission Support & Civil affairs update by Civil Affairs Officer. Similarly, UNTSO presented an operational overview to the distinguished guests. The event was an opportunity to facilitate interaction between the dignitaries and the leaders of UNDOF & UNTSO.



SNAPSHOTS - NMC VI FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN UNDOF

Nepal became a member of the United Nations in 1955 and in 1958 started sending Nepali peacekeepers to conflict-hit countries around the world wearing the Blue UN Beret. Some 144,969 personnel have participated 44 UN missions. As of 16 March 2023, the Nepali Army has some 6057 soldiers including 544 female soldiers serving in 13 different missions in various capacities around the globe. As a troop-contributing country, Nepal ranks second in the world.

The Nepali Mechanised Company (NMC) has been deployed in UNDOF since 2017. Currently UNDOF NMC is deployed with 16 female soldiers - meeting the UN specific gender strategy requirements of 9% by 2022 and we will meet 10% by 2023 by the upcoming new rotation. The female soldiers are actively taking part in different operational and non - operational activities in the mission area. Along with the patrol, regular duty and training they are participating in ESSC Operation, Barrel Refurbishment, Maintenance of Vehicles, IT Section, Medical, and Signals. Female peacekeepers make unique and substantive contributions in UNDOF to improve peacekeeping operations. In fact, female peacekeepers improve unit performance and help military commanders in the decision making process and fulfilling their mandates.

WO2 LAXMI BHATTARAI
NMC



SNAPSHOTS - 260TH NEPALI ARMY DAY

Nepali contingents (NEPCON & NMC) celebrated their glorious "260th Nepali Army day" on 17 Feb 2023 at Camp Faouar. The Chief guest of the event, HoM/FC Major General Nirmal Kumar Thapa along with other military & civilian staffs watched the magnificent Nepali military culture along with various cultural programmes. Similarly, on 18 Feb, a wreath laying ceremony for the fallen peacekeepers was organized to commemorate the occasion.



SNAPSHOTS - VISIT OF UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR PEACE OPERATIONS, JEAN-PIERRE LACROIX



Under-Secretary General for Peace Operations Jeane Pierre Lacroix visited UNDOF from 22nd Jan to 25th Jan 2023. During his visit, he witnessed and praised the contributions of the UNDOF peacekeepers in maintaining the mandate and peace and stability in the region. He observed various UNPs/OPs in the Area of Operations and participated on a patrol with the NEPCON troops to Mt. Hermon-the highest UN manned position in the world. He spent a significant amount of time talking with and listening to the troops in informal settings. He was accompanied by the HoM/FC of UNDOF and other mission leadership during his entire visit.



CASEVAC TRAINING AMIDST ADVERSITY: MOUNT HERMON



United Nations Peacekeeping missions usually operate in grim and austere environments. UNDOF is no exception to the extreme operational environment seen in most missions. Added to the operational threats, the topographical challenge in UNDOF is something that cannot be overlooked. The northern sector of the Mission is in Mount Hermon which is manned by NEPCON (Nepali Contingent). It also comprises of Hermon Hotel which is the highest UN position in the world. This region is notorious for its harsh winters which lasts for four months. During this period the northern sector becomes almost cut off from the rest of the mission in terms of road access. Heli access is something that remains out of reach for UNDOF as we are in a No-fly zone. The ability to carry out medical evacuation or CASEVAC during this period is one of the biggest challenges faced by the mission. This drives the requirement to foresee measures that can be adopted by the mission to provide abilities and resources for the evacuation and treatment of casualties or medical emergencies within the "10-1-2" metric.

Competent medical evacuation requires the choreography of a range of domains and assets. Planning and preparation is a key factor. Each stakeholder knowing their course of action is also fundamental. The need for extended field care due to limited evacuation platforms, requires military personnel to practice the full scope of their training to maximize outcomes. Keeping this in mind CASEVAC exercises have been conducted in the region regularly. These exercises are not only meant to test medical response but also assess transportation capabilities. Transportation of casualty may also require insight resulting in use of whatever resources we have in the best possible manner. Modification of existing vehicles may also be necessary at times. Piston bully, skidoo with sleds and ski stretchers are used in place of an ambulance or 4 wheelers in the mountains. Troops stationed at Mt Hermon usually arrive by mid-October each year. Their early days are focused on trainings related to use of all the transport facilities available.



CASEVAC TRAINING AMIDST ADVERSITY: MOUNT HERMON



Refresher courses on First aid/ Buddy first aid are conducted diligently for all troops including the use of BFAK app. Prehospital trauma care and ACLS refreshers courses are conducted for all the medics on board. Ski trainings are a must for the medical officer and all the paramedics. Series of CASEVAC exercises are conducted during the early snow fall to ascertain their capabilities. The key to a successful MEDEVAC or CASEVAC also depends on effective communications and adherence to standard operating procedures (SOP). Training exercise with a simulated accident, though may seem theoretical, it brings out our shortfalls and helps us address them and improve our SOP with each practice session. Focusing on CASEVAC trainings, helps units significantly improve patient survivability. Most important to patient survivability is the rapid movement of the sick to higher echelons of medical care.

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions require effective casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) systems to enable peacekeepers to mitigate risk and carry out their core mandated activities with confidence. If peacekeepers themselves don't feel safe and have doubts about a mission's ability to provide them with life-saving medical treatment, it constrains their willingness and capacity to perform their duties to the best of their ability.

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DR MALLIKA RAYAMAJHI
LT COL
FMO

UNDOF: AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TEAM



UNDOF has outstanding environmental achievements over more than five (5) years of the existence of the Environmental Office in the Office of Chief Mission Support (OCMS). UNDOF Leadership recognizes exceptional contributions to environmental projects delivered by civilian and military personnel and contractors. UNDOF has established policies that include the Environmental Strategy of the Department of Operational Support (DOS). These policies manage environmental issues under the five (5) pillars of DOS, namely: Energy; Water and Wastewater; Solid Waste; Wider Impact; and Environmental Management System (EMS).

Since 2018, the Chief of Operations and Resources Management, Mr. Amedeo Micelli has supported and encouraged the engagement of military personnel in environmental activities by leading effective operations in coordination with the Chief of Staff. These operations include the provision of resources intended to provide electricity; lighting; clean water; treated wastewater; improved disposal of solid waste; positive legacy through QIPs; Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) on major projects; site inspections; military focal points; and emergency preparedness and response. UNDOF has made progress in providing:

7% proportion in renewable; demonstrating relatively low (good) GHG emissions; installing 99% of LED lighting; measuring 100% of electricity and water use; reducing water consumption to 74 L/Capita/Day; and ensuring that environmental obligations are identified throughout the supply chain. In other substantive activities UNDOF has demonstrated positive impact on by implementing Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) such as the project of the renovated water well in Harfa village and set up the solar panel.

UNDOF is demonstrating self-reliance in maintaining effective operations by providing: Treated and Safe Drinking Water to all personnel from Drinking Water Facilities at five (5) UNDOF Positions, including the headquarters at Camp Faouar) and treating wastewater from WWTP for washing vehicles.

Significant lessons on dependability in operations, resources and supply chain management include decreasing the high (14.115 KWh/Capita/Day) electricity demand; improving disposal of solid waste; encouraging tree planting projects; promoting supportive engagement to general clean-up and applying efficiency rules for use of vehicles.

UNDOF is upholding an integrated approach to environmental management with supportive engagement by neighboring communities to maintain the good conduct of peacekeepers.

Joyce Mulinde
Environment Officer
UNDOF

PROFILES

Sergeant Vetiana Gorgal is the current Sergeant of UMIC 4th Platoon UNDOF.

She was born in Rocha IN Uruguay, which is one of the districts that divides the country into 19 parts.

She joined the military in 2008 in the 12th Infantry Battalion and has been serving there ever since.

During this time, she completed several courses such as. Training and class improvement, Basic and advanced courses for non-commissioned officers, tank chief of armored and mechanized vehicles, Chief and sergeant of armored and mechanized infantry section.

Well regarded and respected among the men under her command, she managed to become a peacekeeper in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as Leader of Armored Vehicles from 2018 to 2019 and repeating the same position from 2022 to 2023 in the Golan Heights.

Sgt. Gorga demonstrates determination and professionalism in every task, and is highly regarded by her colleagues.

In conclusion, she would like to send a message to all women in the forces "persist, persevere, resist and never give up".



Name: VETIANA GORGAL

Rank: SERGEANT

Appointment: leader 4 platoon UMIC

CPL KAMINIELI TAMANIVALU was born in 1987 at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, the Capital City of Fiji. He was raised in his village at Vunisei, Toga, in the province of Rewa and attended Vunimoni High School. He was recruited into the Republic of Fiji Military Force (RFMF) in 2014 and was later enlisted into the Third Battalion Fiji Infantry Regiment (3FIR) as an Assault Pioneer. The Junior NCO holds a Trade Certificate in Plumbing, Carpentry and Building. His first UN peacekeeping mission Tour of Duty (TOD) was in Lebanon (UNIFIL) from 2017 to 2018, and in 2020 he was also part of the RFMF deployment team to Australia for Bushfire assistance. He is currently holding the appointment of a Specialist plumber in Camp Ziouani and assists the local staff on daily inspection, repairs, and maintenance of the Camp Ziouani plumbing system. The Junior NCO has performed well in the mission area for the last 11 months and has displayed commitment and dedication towards his roles and responsibility. CPL TAMANIVALU is married with five beautiful children. Apart from work, he loves fishing and spending time with his family. After this TOD, he wishes to attend more training to enhance his knowledge and skills.



NAME: KAMINIELI TAMANIVALU

RANK: CPL

APPT: PLUMBER

APPOINTMENT: SPECIALIST (PLUMBER)

PROFILES

PTE Joginder was born in Haryana in India on 20 May 1995. He graduated in the year 2013 and joined the Indian Army on 09 Mar 2016 as Soldier Refrigerator Technician in the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Corps. This is his first foreign mission at UNDOF. His father Mr Vinod is a farmer and mother Mrs Saroj Devi is a housewife. Joginder is a professional volleyball player and has represented the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Corps Center team at Command level. He is Physically fit and has an upright military bearing.

NAME : JOGINDER

RANK : CFN/ PTE

APPOINTMENT IN UNDOF : REFRIGERATOR TECHNICIAN



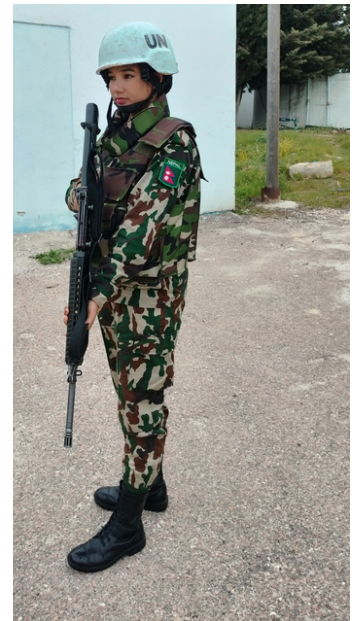
Bhatta Mausami was born in 1995 in Pyuthan, a small, town in the Khalanga, a "hill" district some 250 km (160 mi) west of Kathmandu in Lumbini Province in midwestern Nepal. She joined the Nepali Army in 2013 & she passed SLC (School Level Certificate) in 2018. She serves in the KaliBhakti Battalion (E) as a Sapper. During her service, she has completed all the mandatory military courses in Nepal including F.E. Basic, M.P. Basic, TLSR, Light driving & Maintenances and Plumbing as a Pte. This is her first overseas deployment as an UN Peacekeeper. She works as a plumber in Nep Engr Pl-VII. She sees this as an excellent opportunity to gain experience for her military career.

Together with her mother Shova, father Surendra, sister Juna, and brother Milan, she lives in Pyuthan. She enjoys dance, sports, and professional development. Her passion and hard work have served as a source of inspiration and motivation for everyone in peacekeeping environment. As she works toward enrolling in engineer training school, she spends her leisure time playing games, physical exercises and studying.

NAME: BHATTA MAUSAMI

RANK: PTE

APPOINTMENT: PLUMBER IN NEP ENGR PL-VII





'THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS'

PHOTO: MAJ MOKSHITA SINGH

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