

Cyprus

In its forty-second year of operation, the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) continued to monitor the cease-fire between Greek Cypriots (in the south) and Turkish Cypriots (in the north), to encourage the resumption of normal civilian routines in the buffer zone between them, and to engage in humanitarian activities. The island experienced another year of stability, partly attributable to the presence of UNFICYP. Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot officials agreed to resume contacts after a two-year hiatus, and the leaders of both sides called on UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to resume his mission of good offices to the island, suspended after Greek Cypriot voters rejected proposals to reunify the island in a 2004 referendum. But Annan stated in May 2006 that the political circumstances were “not yet ripe” for this move, and in the second half of the year the UN’s mediation in Cyprus was increasingly shaped by talks between the European Union (EU) and Turkey over the latter’s refusal to recognize the Greek Cypriot government.

Established in March 1964, UNFICYP was initially mandated to prevent violence between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities and to restore law and order. Following the resurgence of hostilities and intervention by Turkish military forces, a de facto cease-fire was established in 1974 and UNFICYP’s duties were broadened to include cease-fire monitoring, buffer zone administration, and humanitarian activities. Despite efforts by the Secretary-General—based on the request of the Security Council—no formula for reunification of the island was acceptable to both the Greek and Turkish parties. In March 2003 the Secretary-General’s envoy, Alvaro de Soto, submitted a comprehensive peace plan to the parties, which led to a resumption of talks in April 2004. The Turkish Cypriots accepted the



SRSG Michael Møller (right) and Danish Prime Minister Anders Fog Rasmussen leave UNFICYP headquarters to tour the UN-administered buffer zone, Nicosia, Cyprus, 5 September 2006.

plan in a referendum, but the Greek Cypriot electorate rejected it. In the absence of a political settlement of the underlying conflict, the Security Council continued to extend UNFICYP’s mandate at six-month intervals, most recently in June 2006.

UNFICYP fulfills its mandated tasks by investigating reported cease-fire violations and buffer zone infringements, ranging from minor enhancements to military positions, to stone-throwing, to the more serious incidents of weapon-pointing. Between November 2005 and May 2006, UNFICYP reported 486 violations in the buffer zone, up from 397 during the

same period in the previous year. This increase in reporting is attributable to the adoption of UNFICYP's mobile concept of operations in February 2005, which put the mission in more direct contact with the National Guard and the Turkish Forces/Turkish Cypriot Security Forces, with an emphasis on liaison. This new operational concept increased UNFICYP's civilian police component from 45 to 69, and reduced its overall troop strength from 1,224 to 860. The result has been improved coordination among civilian, military, and police elements, with the overall security situation remaining stable.

UNFICYP's presence has helped to preserve the status quo along the cease-fire lines and to promote the resumption of normal civilian activity in the buffer zone. Presently, some 8,000 Cypriots live and work in the UN-administered zone, and there is now a steady flow of both people and trade. UNFICYP's humanitarian work facilitates farming, ensures the supply of electricity and water, provides emergency medical services, and encourages bicomunal contacts in the buffer zone. UNFICYP also helps Greek Cypriots, the small Maronite community in the north, and Turkish Cypriots in the south, to maintain contact with their relatives.

In July 2006, the mission's priorities were affected by events in Lebanon. During the confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel, UNFICYP chartered a cruise ship to evacuate 150 nonessential UNIFIL staff and 750 other third-country nationals. UNFICYP sent military personnel to coordinate the civilians' embarkation at Tyre, and UNFICYP also assisted resupply vessels for UNIFIL during the crisis. While the Greek Cypriot government agreed to host UNIFIL's command center and provide bases for its maritime component, these decisions did not involve UNFICYP directly.

July 2006 also saw face-to-face negotiations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot authorities on technical matters such as water, and both sides agreed to the resumption of talks under UN auspices on more substantive political issues. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Michael Møller predicted

UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)

• Authorization and start date	4 March 1964 (UNSC Res. 186)
• SRSG	Michael Møller (Denmark)
• Force commander	Major-General Rafael José Barni (Argentina)
• Senior police adviser	Carla Van Maris (Netherlands)
• Budget	\$46.3 million (1 July 2006–30 June 2007)
• Strength as of 30 September 2006	Troops: 851 Police: 65 International civilian staff: 38 Local civilian staff: 108

For detailed mission information see p. 266.

that such confidence-building measures would bring the parties back to the table for full-scale settlement negotiations in 2007.

But this progress was overshadowed by increasingly acrimonious negotiations between the EU and Turkey over Ankara's refusal to recognize the Greek Cypriot government or permit Greek Cypriot planes and ships to land or dock in Turkey. Since joining the EU in 2004, Cyprus has consistently threatened to block negotiations on Turkish entry into the Union over these issues. The EU has maintained a trade embargo on Turkish Cyprus.

In November, UN and EU officials advocated a plan by which Turkey would open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot traffic. In return, the EU would trade freely with Turkish Cyprus through the eastern port of Famagusta. Additionally, UNFICYP would take over administration of Varosha, a deserted southern district of Famagusta technically within the buffer zone but occupied by Turkish troops since 1974. But the Greek Cypriot government remained opposed to opening direct trade links, and the EU rejected a Turkish offer to open limited trade links. In mid December, the European Council suspended parts of Turkey's accession talks. While UNFICYP saw positive developments within Cyprus, therefore, it continues to face challenges arising from the broader political context of its mission.