

ISSUE NO. 163

GOLAN

JOURNAL

DECEMBER 2025



FOREWORD FROM THE HEAD OF MISSION AND FORCE COMMANDER



**Major General Anita Asmah
HOM & FC, UNDOF**

Over the past months, UNDOF has gone through one of its most defining periods in recent memory. These changes have touched every part of our mission and have required us to reflect not only on how we operate, but on what truly sustains us as a peacekeeping mission.

The UN-wide liquidity crisis has demanded real adjustments. For UNDOF, this has meant the early repatriation of some military personnel and the loss of fifteen civilian posts that had long supported our operations. These reductions are not abstract figures, but represent people whose dedication shaped the mission's daily rhythm and institutional continuity. Their contributions, whether in planning, logistics, administration, communications, or civil affairs, helped hold the mission together during demanding times. We owe them our gratitude.

Yet despite these constraints, our purpose has not shifted. We remain firmly committed to supervising the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and to helping preserve stability on the Golan. What has changed is how we approach this responsibility. We are now a leaner mission, not a lesser one. The strength of UNDOF has never been measured only by numbers, but by the collective resolve and professionalism of its peacekeepers, and that has not diminished.

Across the mission, sections and branches have had to reorganise, contingents have adjusted their operational coverage, and staff have quietly taken on additional responsibilities to ensure continuity. These efforts form the backbone that sustains our operational credibility. Whether you are conducting patrols, supporting logistics, maintaining equipment, preparing reports, or enabling movement, your work continues to keep this mission effective and trusted.

As our military layout has shifted, so too has our way of working. Units have taken on new areas or wider responsibilities. Civilian staff have refined processes to keep essential services running smoothly. UNTSO observers have strengthened their partnership with us through consistent monitoring and reporting. None of these adaptations has been simple, but they reflect something essential about UNDOF: that we endure through cooperation, flexibility, and a shared purpose.

I have spent some time visiting positions, speaking with staff, and listening to your experiences. What I see across all components is the same steady professionalism, whether it is a patrol team adjusting to a new area of responsibility, a mechanic keeping critical equipment operational, or a civilian colleague finding solutions when usual processes no longer suffice. These actions, taken together, ensure that UNDOF continues to deliver.

As we move forward, our challenges will evolve, but so will our capacity to meet them. We will continue to innovate, to prioritise wisely, and to support one another. And we will continue to show that even with fewer resources, UNDOF remains a reliable, impartial, and steadfast presence.

To each member of this mission, thank you for your resilience, adaptability, and your unwavering commitment to the values of the United Nations. It is an honour to lead this mission alongside you.

One Mission. One Team. One Goal.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DEAR READERS

Welcome to the latest edition of the Golan Journal. As we step into a new year, this issue reflects our continued commitment to fostering understanding, collaboration, and transparency within the mission and beyond. The Golan remains a region of strategic importance, and through these pages, we aim to share stories that highlight the dedication, resilience, and professionalism of UNDOF personnel in fulfilling our mandate.

In this edition, you will find updates on operational achievements, community engagement initiatives, and insights into the evolving dynamics of peacekeeping in the region. We also feature perspectives from our contingents and personnel on their first UN deployment, showcasing the diversity and unity that define our mission.

The challenges we face are complex, but they are met with unwavering resolve and a spirit of cooperation. It is through these collective efforts that we continue to uphold the principles of peace and security.

Thank you for your continued interest and support. We invite you to explore, reflect, and share your thoughts as we move forward together.

COMMANDANT DONNACHA REILLY
EDITOR IN CHIEF



CAPTAIN SUDEEP GIRI
DEPUTY EDITOR



CONTENTS

• Foreword from the HoM and FC Major General Anita Asmah	PAGE 02
• Editors Note	PAGE 03
• Deputy Force Commander addresses our readers	PAGE 04
• Chief of Staff Message	PAGE 05
• NMC: A Pillar of Mobility, Stability, and Peace in the Golan	PAGE 06
• Visits to UNDOF,	
◦ MPAC	PAGE 08
◦ USG SEA and OPSP Inspection	PAGE 09
◦ USG DPKO and AMILAD Visit	PAGE 10
• Kazakhstan Contingent Expands	PAGE 11
• First Deployments- Personal Experiences	PAGE 12
• Himalayas to Hermon: A Mountain's Tribute to a Peacekeeper	PAGE 16
• Backache in Soldiers Serving Under the United Nations:	PAGE 18
• UNDOF: Quick Impact Projects-UMIC Innovates	PAGE 20
• Nepal's Engineers Reinvent Mobility in the Golan Heights	PAGE 22
• UNDOF Training Cell and Excellence Awards	PAGE 27
• Photos from recent UNDOF Medal Parades	PAGE 28
• Photos of recent UNDOF events	PAGE 29

DEPUTY FORCE COMMANDER - GOLAN THE UNDOF JOURNAL

Continuity and change might be the catch phrases of the last six months on the Golan. The dedication of our team to the continuation of supervision of the 1974 agreement on disengagement across the areas of separation and limitation remains. The resources, operating concepts and the environment continue to evolve.

Since mid-year, the UN Liquidity crisis saw us enact contingency plans to reduce our budget. The reductions to the mission are regrettable but necessary to sustain peacekeeping globally. Our focus remains twofold: to maintain mandate delivery while sustaining peacekeeper safety and security. Adversity reveals character and the response of UNDOF to this challenge highlights the quality of our team. The mission has acted together to find innovative ways to achieve our mandate.



Sadly, the drawdown of the mission sees us farewell the Nepalese Mechanised Contingent (NMC), and some military members from the Indian Logistics Contingent, the Level 1(+) hospital and military staff officers on the Headquarters. To all soldiers and officers departing the mission I reiterate my message, "measure your contribution not by your time on the Golan but by what you achieved while here". I thank all who are departing early for their service and wish them every success in their next assignments.

On 14 November, NMC ceased operations ending eight consecutive rotations through Sector Centre. The repatriation of an entire contingent and their equipment represent an enormous endeavour for UNDOF. I thank everyone, across every part of the mission, who supported NMC during this time. NMC's achievements are covered in detail later in this edition.



We also welcome Fijian soldiers back to the Bravo side of the line. Returning to their former UN Positions 60 and 27, FIJIBATT will continue the work of NMC in a reduced Sector Centre while also maintaining responsibility for Sector West.

The Force Reserve Company (FRC) from Kazakhstan has expanded their mission and now also holds responsibility for Sector North and UN Positions 32 and 37. Already their soldiers are maintaining our mandate in different ways from previous FRC rotations. Additionally, I note the expanded role of the Nepalese soldiers of NEPCON in the new and larger Sector Hermon. As always, the contributions of our attached Observer Group Golan officers from UNTSO complement the remainder of the team.

The 2025 UN Leadership Dialogue focused on our values and behaviours. I have the privilege of seeing every component of the mission at work as I circulate the areas of separation and limitation. The actions of every member of our team that I observe reinforce to me that we live our values through our behaviours, regardless of uniform, background, or role. This is critical to our legitimacy and underpins our success. Keep up your efforts!

Finally, our efforts are making a difference. Every patrol, every observation and every report serve to maintain peace on the Golan. I could not be prouder of the UNDOF Team. Keep up the great work. It is a privilege to serve alongside you.

CHIEF OF STAFF'S MESSAGE

Serving on the Golan Heights under the UNDOF mandate involves more than just monitoring a ceasefire. It means committing to peace, fairness, and resilience in one of the world's most sensitive areas. Recent months have tested that commitment as we faced resource shortages and organizational changes. Yet, through professionalism and unity, our mission continues to stand firm.

As Chief of Staff, I have seen the enduring spirit behind our operations. All UNDOF staff have been refining the processes to keep essential services running. Contingents are adjusting coverage without compromising safety and colleagues are taking on extra responsibilities with determination. These actions reflect UNDOF's adaptability and dedication, despite the varied circumstances.



To each member of UNDOF, both military and civilian, I extend my deepest gratitude. Your discipline, integrity, and professionalism help us remain a credible and impartial presence. Also, I take this opportunity to sincerely extend my appreciation to the recently repatriated NMC-VIII for the commendable efforts towards peace and stability in the AOR.



Our operational environment remains complex and dynamic. Every patrol, observation tasks, and immediate reporting are essential. These efforts are not routine; they build the trust and stability that the region has relied on for more than fifty years. While resources may be limited, our determination is unwavering.

Looking ahead, we face a clear challenge: to maintain our mandate while embracing innovation and efficiency. This demands collaboration across all areas and a shared understanding that every role contributes to mission success.



Together, we show that peacekeeping is defined not by numbers, but by commitment, character and dedication. May we stay steadfast in our duty, resilient in spirit, and united in purpose as we strive for a more secure and peaceful future. It is an honour to serve on this mission alongside all of you.

NEPAL MECHANIZED COMPANY (NMC): A PILLAR OF MOBILITY, STABILITY AND PEACE IN THE GOLAN

For more than sixty years, Nepal has stood as one of the United Nations' most reliable troop-contributing nations, earning global respect for its courage, discipline, and professionalism. Since joining the UN in 1955 and deploying its first peacekeepers in 1958, Nepal has participated in nearly every major mission worldwide. Among its many contributions, the Nepalese Mechanized Infantry Company (NMC) has become a cornerstone of operational capability within the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights.

Nepali troops first joined UNDOF in 2013 as mountaineering contingents, bringing unique expertise to the rugged terrain. In 2017, Nepal deployed its first mechanized unit—NMC-I—marking a significant transformation toward mobility and rapid response. Initially comprising 153 personnel across three UN positions, the company's strength and responsibilities expanded steadily. By 2023, NMC operated five positions, including the strategically vital UNP 17A along a primary smuggling route, with a peak strength of 224 personnel.



Operating from Camp Faouar and later UNP 60, NMC covered one of UNDOF's most sensitive areas—Sector Centre—monitoring dozens of A-Line and B-Line barrels. Its responsibilities included observing and reporting on the 1974 Disengagement Agreement between Israel and Syria, maintaining the ceasefire, and supervising disengagement operations.

The company's area of responsibility bordered NEPCON to the north, UMIC to the south, and FIJIBAT to the west, underscoring its central role in sustaining peace. On 13 April 2025, Shree Durgabhanjan Company (NMC-VIII) assumed command, continuing the proud legacy of adaptability and professionalism.



However, financial constraints within the UN led to an 80% downsizing, reducing the contingent to 46 troops merged into NEPCON. Despite this challenge, NMC maintained its operational presence and commitment to UNDOF's mandate.



INMC's duties extended beyond observation. The unit conducted continuous day and night patrols, manned observation posts, and provided security for the Observer Group Golan. It executed convoy protection, reinforcement drills, and CASEVAC exercises, ensuring readiness for emergencies. Expanded patrol operations resumed under OPOORD 05/25, extending up to 25 km into the Area of Limitation, enhancing situational awareness and community rapport.

The Explosive Ordnance Disposal section played a critical role in mitigating risks. It conducted UXO reconnaissance, supported disposal operations, and facilitated mine clearance along evacuation routes. Joint IEED training with other contingents strengthened interoperability, while refurbishment of A-Line barrels maintained essential infrastructure. These efforts ensured safer routes for peacekeepers and local communities.

NEPAL MECHANIZED COMPANY (NMC): A PILLAR OF MOBILITY, STABILITY AND PEACE IN THE GOLAN

Recognizing the importance of local trust, NMC implemented robust civil-military programs. Profiling 19 villages across the AOS and AOL, the unit gathered vital socio-economic and security data. Initiatives such as the futsal event in Hadar on 29 August 2025 fostered goodwill, with participation from local leaders, youth, and UNDOF officials. These engagements reinforced UNDOF's stabilizing role and strengthened community relations.



From April to November 2025, NMC-VIII upheld the highest standards of professionalism, completing all tasks and executing a smooth handover despite compressed timelines. Its operational capability, adaptability, and community engagement reaffirm Nepal's reputation as a reliable contributor to global peacekeeping. In the Golan Heights, the Nepal Mechanized Company remains a pillar of mobility, stability, and peace—embodying Nepal's enduring commitment to international security.

NMC demonstrated exceptional composure during crises. During the Suwayda incident in July 2025, the unit engaged Druze leaders to ease tensions over siege conditions, restoring calm in Hadar. Similarly, during the Israel-Iran escalation in June 2025, NMC conducted 27 Ground Hog operations, documenting aerial violations and missile interceptions, providing UNDOF HQ with critical real-time updates.

Sector Centre accounted for over half of UNDOF's violation reports, reflecting NMC's vigilance. Following the December 2024 incident, six IDF positions were identified in the sector, underscoring its volatility. NMC's accurate and timely reporting ensured informed decision-making at mission headquarters.

**Article by Lt Col Pukar Basnet
CO, NMC -VIII**

MILITARY AND POLICE ADVISERS COMMUNITY (MPAC)

FIELD VISIT TO UNDOF FROM 24-25TH OCT 2025

The Military and Police Advisers Community (MPAC) visited UNDOF including engagements with UNTSO Observer Group Golan from 24 to 25 October 2025. The event was part of the Community's annual field visits to selected United Nations missions to familiarize themselves with the operational activities and challenges in missions and provide informed and meaningful contributions to DPO and DOS.



Picture above: During the operational briefing being provided by Chief Operation Officer of UNDOF to the visiting delegates.



Picture above: NEPMED Level 1+ hospital doctors carrying out walk through/talk through to the visiting delegates explaining their capabilities and infrastructure available in the hospital.



Picture above: The delegation also toured key operational sites such as OP 56, and UNP 10A, where they received detailed briefings and observed field operations.



Picture above: INDCON CO briefing the delegates about the ongoing INDCON activities and their capabilities.



OFFICE FOR THE PEACEKEEPING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP(OPSP) VISIT TO UNDOF FROM 20-24TH NOV 2025

United Nations Office for the Peacekeeping Strategic Partnership (OPSP) delegation visited UNDOF over 20-24th Nov 2025, to familiarize themselves with the operational activities and challenges of the mission. This was an important opportunity for UNDOF to showcase its proficiency and operational readiness.



Picture above: During Office Call with HoM/FC where the delegates talked and exchanged ideas with HoM/FC Maj Gen Anita Asmah regarding the mission.



Picture above: Familiarizing the visiting delegation with the operational briefing regarding the activities and challenges of the mission showcasing the important roles and functions UNDOF has performed to support the mission mandate.



Picture above: The delegation also toured key operational sites on Mount Hermon, where they received detailed briefings and observed field operations.



Picture above: UMIC CO carrying out field visit and briefing to USG Christian Saunder about operational activities and challenges.



UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL, DPO, JEAN-PIERRE LACROIX AND AMILAD LT GEN CHERYL PEARCE VISITS TO UNDOF

Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Peace Operations Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix accompanied by AMILAD Lt Gen Cheryl Pearce conducted visit to UNDOF in January 2026, demonstrating UN headquarters' commitment to the mission in Syria. Visit focused on honoring UNDOF's service and addressing operational challenges following Syria's political transition. The visit began with a security brief when they arrived in UNDOF,



followed by a guard of honor in the presence of Syrian Permanent Representative (PR) to the UN Mr. Ibrahim Olabi.



During a town hall meeting with UNDOF personnel, the Under-Secretary-General emphasized the mission's critical role in monitoring ground conditions and maintaining stability along the



disengagement line. Mr. Lacroix also met with Quneitra Governorate Police Chief along with community members in Quneitra to discuss how the mission can continue supporting them during these challenging times.



Mr. Lacroix, AMILAD Lt Gen Pearce, Syrian PR along with other members of delegation were provided with operational briefings stating the opportunities and challenges UNDOF faces for the implementation of mandate.



Mr. Lacroix along with other delegates were provided tour to the UNP and OP where UNTSO colleagues provided briefing to the delegates.



During his stop in Damascus, Mr. Lacroix met with the Syrian authorities and reaffirmed UNDOF's commitment to continue carrying out its important mandate and he thanked Syrian president Ahmed al-Sharaa for his full support to UNDOF's work.

KAZAKHSTAN'S CONTINGENT EXPANDS ITS PRESENCE: UN OBSERVATION POSTS 32 AND 37 OFFICIALLY TAKEN OVER FROM NEPALESE PEACEKEEPERS

A significant realignment of forces has taken place within the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), reflecting ongoing adjustments in the mission's structure on the Golan Heights. Following the planned reduction of the Nepalese contingent, the Kazakhstan Contingent has assumed responsibility for two strategically important sites — UN Posts 32 and 37.

Context of the Transition

The decision to reduce the Nepalese presence was part of a scheduled recalibration of UNDOF's force configuration. The mission continually assesses operational needs along the area of separation to optimize the distribution of tasks among deployed units.

Within this review, Kazakhstan's peacekeepers — known for their discipline, readiness, and strong professional reputation — were identified as the most suitable contingent to take over UN Posts 32 and 37.



Why This Matters

Taking on new UN Posts strengthens Kazakhstan's operational presence in UNDOF and expands its contribution to fulfilling the UN mandate.

This development means:

- a broader area of responsibility and increased situational oversight;
- enhanced observation coverage in important sectors;
- a greater role for Kazakhstan in sustaining peace and stability in the region;
- valuable operational experience for the personnel serving in real mission conditions.

UN Posts 32 and 37 are integral parts of UNDOF's observation and patrol network, providing stability and transparency in one of the region's most sensitive areas.



How the Handover Took Place

Taking over an OMR (Observation, Monitoring, Report) post is a complex, multi-stage procedure involving technical, administrative, and operational coordination.

- Joint inspections. Teams from both contingents conducted detailed assessments of the infrastructure, engineering systems, equipment, communications, and observation capabilities of the posts.
- Documentation transfer. The Nepalese side handed over operational documents, duty logs, safety instructions, and other essential records.
- Familiarization with the area. Peacekeepers from both units jointly traversed patrol routes, observation points, and key terrain features surrounding the posts.
- Official ceremony. The process concluded with a formal handover ceremony marking the transfer of responsibility for UN Posts 32 and 37 to the Kazakhstan Contingent.

A Step Forward for Kazakhstan's Peacekeeping Mission

The transfer of the posts highlights the mission leadership's confidence in the professionalism of the Kazakhstan Contingent. It also reflects the country's readiness to take on a broader set of responsibilities within UN peacekeeping operations.

Thus, the takeover of UN Posts 32 and 37 represents more than a routine reassignment. It is a meaningful step in strengthening Kazakhstan's presence within UNDOF and reinforcing its contribution to global peace and security.

Article by Major Bula Kuzhakov, S1, KAZCON

MY FIRST TOUR OF DUTY

Being part of FIJIBATT 12 serving with UNDOF marks my first overseas deployment. When I received the news, I was excited as I had just begun my career in the Army. Preparations started four months before our departure to the mission area, covering all administrative and documentation phase, operational training, cultural awareness sessions, and mandatory UN courses.



We arrived in the mission area on 18th July 25. It was my first overseas trip, and I felt a mix of excitement and nervousness about flying for the first time. Upon arrival, I was amazed by the beautiful scenery. Operationally, I was prepared and fully motivated for the mission, knowing I was the youngest in our battalion at just 22 years old. My goal is to learn as much as possible, challenge myself, and gain valuable insights from the experienced soldiers within our unit and other contingencies. I am part of the Defence Platoon stationed at Camp Ziouani, responsible for OMR patrols, gate opening at OGG positions, and ensuring the security of the camp.

One of my main challenges so far has been adapting to the weather, which is very different from back home, especially during the winter season. I also miss my family, my parents and my partner but I'm grateful for the Wi-Fi facilities here, which allow me to stay connected with them every day. As we enter our fifth month of operations, I'm enjoying the mission overall. The camaraderie, teamwork, and welfare support provided have made this experience rewarding and memorable.

Article by Pvt Josua VIDOVI, FIJIBATT

FIRST TIME UN MISSION

I still remember the day I learned that I had been selected as one of the contingent members from Nepal to serve as a peacekeeping officer in Golan/Camp Faouar UNDOF, Syria. I was thrilled upon receiving the news. Soon after, I began coordinating with the team members already serving in Golan, discussing the new working environment, inter-contingent interactions, weather challenges, and the unstable and volatile political situation in Syria. The 14-week pre-deployment training session was overwhelming at times, yet it offered significant learning opportunities. These sessions ensure that peacekeepers are not only technically competent but have a deep understanding of the impartial role they must maintain. Due to technical issues, my team and I were required to wait an additional six months beyond the original deployment date.



As medical personnel, we encountered numerous challenges. Providing continuous treatment to military personnel and civilian staff, responding promptly to emergencies, and coordinating MEDEVAC transfers to the Level 2 Hospital in Al-Razi strengthened our confidence and enhanced our ability to work collaboratively with inter-contingent members despite language barriers.

As a first-time peacekeeper, life here in Golan provides unique blends of responsibilities including operational and medical, personal growth and culture exchange, with each day adding new layer to the experience to learn, adapt and grow. I hold high expectations that I will be able to apply the new knowledge, skills, and perspectives I have gained throughout this journey to my future professional endeavors.



Finally, on April 17th, 2025, I departed from Kathmandu, Nepal, to begin the mission. As a nursing officer, the initial weeks were quite intimidating receiving the handover from the previous troops, adjusting to a new workplace and accommodation, and being miles away from my home country and loved ones. I was assigned as the bunker marshal of Level 1+ Hospital, Shelter No. 3. This new appointment was a unique and challenging experience in my nursing career, but with proper guidance from my seniors and the unwavering emotional and physical support of my teammates, I was able to manage and regulate the shelter effectively with available resources and remain prepared for any future threats.

One of the aspects I truly appreciate about the United Nations—and UNDOF in particular—is its commitment to continuous professional development. The mission regularly provides sessions on leadership in emotional challenges, learning and experimentation, future-proofing professional skills, and language development. Continuous medical and non-medical training sessions further refined my capabilities and prepared me to respond more effectively in the future and broaden my perspective.

T/Lt Smriti Sapkota
Level 1+ Hospital
NEPMED VI



AN INDIAN ARMY OFFICER'S FIRST UNDOF DEPLOYMENT DUTY, ADAPTATION, AND GROWTH ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS

An Indian Army officer's first overseas deployment to the Golan Heights under the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) is a unique blend of pride, responsibility, and high-tempo routine. Serving in this sensitive conflict zone between Israel and Syria requires thorough preparation, adaptability, and a commitment to international peacekeeping.



Preparations Before Departure

Months before leaving India, the officer is nominated by his formation and begins a rigorous process: medical examinations, vaccinations, documentation, and obtaining UN clearances. Pre-deployment training covers UN peacekeeping standards, rules of engagement, cultural awareness, and basic Arabic phrases.

Professionally, the officer studies the 1974 disengagement agreement, the UNDOF mandate, and the layout of the Area of Separation (AOS) and Area of Limitation (AOL). He receives mission-specific training on UN logistics, communication procedures, incident reporting, and learns to interact with other national contingents, such as Fiji and Nepalese troops.

The Indian contingent, part of the logistics company since 2006, is drawn from various arms and services. Officers may serve as communication platoon commanders, transport officers, maintenance officers, engineer officers or medical officers, ensuring the mission's communication, vehicles, supplies, and personnel move safely and efficiently.

Arrival and First Impressions

Upon arrival in the Middle East, the officer undergoes a UN induction process, receiving briefings on threat assessments and ceasefire violations. The stark contrast between India and the rocky, windswept Golan plateau is immediately apparent, with defensive positions, minefield markers, and UN observation posts dotting the landscape.

At the main camp—Camp Faouar in Syria—the officer is assigned accommodation, equipment, and initial duties. The camp operates like a self-contained town, reflecting the mission's multinational character.



Daily Life and Responsibilities

Life in camp follows a disciplined routine: physical training, morning briefings, duty hours, patrols or convoys, and evening debriefs. The officer balances UN duties with Indian Army routines, adapting to a multicultural environment and interacting with personnel from around the world. Daily tasks include planning and escorting supply convoys, coordinating repairs, ensuring seamless and safe communication, managing fuel and rations, and ensuring medical coverage. Off-duty time features sports, cultural evenings, and informal exchanges, allowing the officer to serve as an informal ambassador for India. The contingents often participate in various inter contingent sports tournaments, amalgamating national and sports spirit with international camaraderie and unity.

Understanding UNDOF and the Indian Contingent

UNDOF, established in 1974, is tasked with monitoring the ceasefire, supervising disengagement, and maintaining the Area of Separation. Its responsibilities include observing and reporting violations, ensuring no unauthorized military presence, and supporting limited civil and humanitarian activities.

AN INDIAN ARMY OFFICER'S FIRST UNDOF DEPLOYMENT DUTY, ADAPTATION, AND GROWTH ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS

Risks and Professional Growth

Despite the structured routine, the environment is not without risk. Minefields, unexploded ordnance, and occasional firing incidents require constant vigilance and strict adherence to security protocols. Quick decision-making within UN rules is essential, especially during sudden changes in the local security situation.

Medical emergencies, vehicle accidents, or spillover hostilities test the contingent's preparedness. These challenges reinforce the seriousness of peacekeeping and the need for strong leadership and situational awareness.

Conclusion

A deployment to the Golan Heights with UNDOF offers an Indian Army officer exposure to multinational operations, professional growth, and a deeper understanding of peacekeeping. Returning home, the officer brings back not just a UN medal, but an invaluable experience and a broadened perspective on soldiering beyond national borders.



ARTICLE BY: -

**MAJ KARTIKEY CHAMOLI, SM
(INDIA)
SIGNAL OFFICER**

HIMALAYAS TO HERMON: A MOUNTAIN'S TRIBUTE TO A PEACEKEEPER

I am Mount Hermon, the great white peak where the borders of Syria, Lebanon, and Israel meet. For centuries, I have watched soldiers, shepherds, storms and silence move across my slopes. I have seen the rise and fall of seasons, the quiet of snow and the sharp tension of human conflict.

But in April 2025, someone new climbed to my heights, a peacekeeper from the distant Himalayas.

From the moment you arrived, I felt your calm strength and your respect for the mountains. You walked on my ridges with steady steps, and you looked at me not as an enemy, but as a companion.



You live and work on my highest UN position, a place where the wind speaks loudly and the clouds pass close enough to touch.

Many find this place too harsh, too cold, too lonely. But you did not fear it.

Every morning, when the sun rises over my snowy shoulders, I see you standing at your post, watching the valleys and borders below.

Your eyes follow every movement, every shadow, every change. You carry out your duty with quiet discipline, and I admire that

From my peak, I protect you with my height and you protect peace with your presence.

Winter is when I am at my strongest.

My winds roar above 120 km/h.

My snow falls heavily and fast.

My whiteouts erase the world.

Even the bravest struggle in my storms.

But you, mountain-born, mountain-trained, stand firm.

I have seen you push through deep snow, move carefully during blizzards, and keep watch even when the cold tries to bite through every layer you wear.

Many would turn back.

Many would give up.

But you do not.

Your resilience impresses me.

Most people try to fight me, You do not.

You listen to the wind before stepping outside.

HIMALAYAS TO HERMON: A MOUNTAIN'S TRIBUTE TO A PEACEKEEPER

You read the sky the way others read maps.

You move with respect, not force.

Because of this, I guide you.

I warn you with shifting clouds, I whisper with smaller gusts before a storm, and I offer clear skies when I can.

You understand me, and I understand you.

Every evening, when your patrol ends and the world turns quiet again, I watch you return to your shelter.

The snow glows softly under your steps, and even in the darkness, your duty continues.

You came from the Himalayas, but you have become part of Hermon now.

You have earned my respect, just as you earned the trust of your team.



Article by Capt Saroj Hmal, Posn Comd, UNP HH, NEPCON



BACKACHE IN SOLDIERS SERVING UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS: CAUSES, IMPACT, AND PREVENTION

Soldiers serving under United Nations (UN) peacekeeping and humanitarian missions often face unique physical and environmental challenges. Among the most common yet overlooked health concerns is backache, a condition that affects operational effectiveness, morale, and long-term health outcomes. Understanding the causes and implementing preventive measures is essential to ensure mission readiness and the well-being of troops in the field.

Common Causes of Backache Among UN Soldiers

Prolonged Load Carrying

Many soldiers carry gear weighing 30-50 kg for extended periods during patrols, training, and operations. Repetitive strain on the spine, especially without proper load distribution, leads to chronic musculoskeletal stress.

Improper Posture

Long hours in armored vehicles, field offices, or while standing on uneven terrain can promote poor posture. Slouching, twisting, or sitting without lumbar support aggravates lower back pain.

Sleep and Living Conditions

Inadequate bedding, sleeping on uneven ground, and lack of ergonomic furniture in camps contribute to poor spinal alignment and increased muscle stiffness.

Physical Deconditioning

In high-tempo deployments, soldiers may lack time for proper physical training, particularly core and flexibility exercises. A weak core leads to spinal instability and susceptibility to injury.

Injuries and Trauma

Combat or accident-related injuries, such as falls or blunt force trauma, can directly lead to acute or chronic back pain. These injuries, if left untreated, can worsen over time.

Impact on Operational Effectiveness

Back pain is not just a personal discomfort—it poses a **significant operational risk**:

Reduced mobility and endurance during patrols or combat.

Increased absenteeism from physical duties or training.

Decreased morale due to chronic pain and limited treatment access.

Potential for long-term disability, affecting post-deployment quality of life.

Prevention and Management Strategies:

Load Management Training

Soldiers should be trained in optimal packing techniques and the use of supportive equipment like back braces or load-bearing vests.

Physical Conditioning

Regular core strengthening, stretching routines, and functional fitness help build spinal resilience.

Posture Awareness

Educating troops on proper posture during transport, desk work, and rest can greatly reduce strain.

Ergonomic Improvements

Whenever possible, provide better bedding, chairs with lumbar support, and proper lifting tools in camp environments.

Access to Medical Care

Early diagnosis and physiotherapy should be readily available to prevent minor issues from becoming debilitating conditions.

Mental Health Support

Chronic pain can also impact mental well-being. Integrated care involving both physical and psychological support improves outcomes.

Conclusion

Backache among UN soldiers is a silent challenge that can undermine mission success if not addressed proactively. By implementing preventive measures, improving living and working conditions, and ensuring early intervention, UN forces can maintain higher levels of readiness, effectiveness, and long-term soldier health.

Reference:

WHO Musculoskeletal Health Initiative

NATO Medical Standards

Field Reports from UN Peacekeeping Missions

**Article by Lt Col Dr Rajesh Pratap Shah
SMO, NEPMED
LEVEL 1 Plus Hospital**

Backache in UN Soldiers

Why It Happens, Why It Matters, and How to Prevent It

Why Do Soldiers Get Backaches?



Heavy Loads

Carrying 30–50 kg of gear for hours puts strain on the spine



Poor Posture

Long hours in armored vehicles or standing on uneven ground lead to slouching



Sleeping Conditions

Hard or uneven surfaces and inadequate bedding cause pain



Lack of Physical Conditioning

Busy schedules mean less time for core-strengthening exercises

Why It Matters



Soldiers move slower and tire faster

- Soldiers move slower and tire faster
- Training and duties get interrupted
- Morale drops when pain becomes constant
- Long-term disability can affect life after deployment

How Can We Prevent It?



Smart Load Management

Teach efficient packing and use of supportive equipment



Better Living Conditions

Provide ergonomic chairs, proper bedding, and lifting tools



Stay Fit

Regular core workouts and stretching routines



Mental Health Support

Combine physical and psychological care

QUICK IMPACT PROJECTS (QIPS): DOING MORE WITH LESS UMIC'S INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Football for Friendship: Nawa

On 22 August 2025, UMIC organized a friendly football match in the city of Nawa, Daraa Governorate. The Company's team faced the local Nawa Sports Club, creating an opportunity to strengthen community ties and promote peaceful coexistence.

The primary objective of this event was to enhance trust and cooperation with the local population, thereby contributing to greater acceptance of UNDOF in the area. The match provided a platform for community integration, facilitated the exchange of relevant information, and fostered a positive, collaborative atmosphere along UMIC patrol routes.

The event was carried out in an environment of mutual respect, camaraderie, and enthusiasm, with an estimated 1,000 local residents in attendance. People of all ages participated, highlighting strong local support and the high level of acceptance of UMIC initiatives.

Furthermore, between 19 and 24 November, UMIC organized an additional football tournament in the city of Nawa. On this occasion, participation expanded beyond the local population and UMIC personnel, with the inclusion of Kazakhstan contingents and OGG teams.

These activities go beyond sport: they strengthen civil-military relations, enhance operational safety, and lay the foundation for future cooperative endeavors.



QUICK IMPACT PROJECTS (QIPS): DOING MORE WITH LESS UMIC'S INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Rehabilitation of Public Area and Children's Playground: Al Rafeed

On 13 November 2025, UMIC personnel conducted a cleaning and restoration activity in a public area in the village of Al Rafeed (UTM 715-501), approximately 1.5 kilometers southeast of Position UNP 80. The focus of this QIP was the rehabilitation of the children's playground, aiming to provide a cleaner, safer, and more welcoming environment for the local community.

During the activity, UMIC personnel, along with several voluntary local residents, engaged in waste collection and controlled burning of debris, as part of a systematic effort to restore the park's functionality and aesthetic appeal. The initiative strengthened civil-military cooperation, demonstrating how collaborative projects can produce meaningful, lasting improvements in the community.

This playground restoration serves as a model for future small-scale infrastructure projects, reflecting UMIC's commitment to doing more with less, maximizing impact while conserving resources.

QIPs like these show that small gestures can create big change. From sports events that unite communities to infrastructure projects that improve daily life, UMIC's initiatives strengthen trust, foster cooperation, and contribute to a safer, more stable environment in the AOR.

**Articles by Capt Enzo Echechua
Operations Officer, UMIC**



“BREAKING BARRIERS AT 2,000 METERS: NEPAL’S ENGINEERS REINVENT MOBILITY IN THE GOLAN HEIGHTS”

In 2025, the Ninth Nepal Engineer Platoon (NEP ENGR PL-IX) accomplished one of the most challenging engineering feats in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) mission: upgrading 19 kilometers of rugged road in the Mount Hermon Complex, Golan Heights. This strategic project, completed ahead of winter, significantly improved operational mobility, force protection, and logistical access for UN peacekeepers in Sector North.



Nepal's legacy in UN peacekeeping dates back to 1958, with its combat engineers renowned for expertise in mobility, construction, and disaster response. Since joining UNDOF in 2016, NEP ENGR PL has been integral to mission infrastructure. The ninth team, comprising 30 skilled professionals, brought extensive experience—many on their third deployment—ensuring technical precision in a high-risk environment.

The Mount Hermon terrain posed formidable challenges: steep gradients, loose surfaces, narrow slopes, and unpredictable weather. These conditions often led to erosion, snow accumulation, and road degradation, hampering troop movement and emergency response. Under UNDOF's Winterization: Road Upgradation Project-2025, NEP ENGR PL-IX surveyed the area in June, identifying erosion-prone zones and drainage issues.



Work commenced on July 9, with a target of 350-400 meters per day, and was completed in 49 working days—well within the 50-day schedule. The project unfolded in three phases:

Phase I: Hermon South to Hermon Base—surface leveling, compaction, and slope stabilization.
Phase II: Hermon Hotel to Hermon Base—gradient correction, widening, and embankment creation.
Phase III: Hermon Base to UNP12A—final grading, snow-route preparation, and side clearance.

Despite mechanical failures in bulldozers, rollers, and an unusable excavator, compounded by spare-part shortages and servicing delays, the team adapted swiftly. Security risks—armed patrols, sporadic firing, and civilian protests—added complexity, alongside environmental hazards like fog and zero visibility. Through disciplined coordination with UNDOF Headquarters and adherence to “safety first” protocols, the mission progressed without incident.

By mid-September, NEP ENGR PL-IX delivered a fully upgraded network, completing over 500 machine-hours of earthmoving, grading, and drainage improvements. The new roads enable safer, faster convoy movement, emergency deployment, and logistical flow to remote posts such as UNP12A and Hermon Hotel. These enhancements also reduce exposure during transit, bolstering force protection.

This achievement underscores Nepal's unwavering commitment to global peacekeeping and its engineers' resilience under extreme conditions. Lessons learned—such as pre-deployment equipment servicing, stocking critical spares, and using robust materials for high-altitude roads—will inform future missions. NEP ENGR PL-IX's success not only strengthens UNDOF's operational readiness but also sets a benchmark for engineering excellence in peacekeeping.

**Article by Maj Ashok Dhakal
NEP ENGR PL-IX**

UNDOF MILITARY TRAINING CELL

Throughout 2025 the UNDOF Military Training Cell has sought to enhance the individual and collective readiness of the mission to respond to changes within a dynamic and uncertain operating environment. This has been achieved through the design and delivery of training that consolidates proficiency in fundamental individual skills, whilst concurrently exposing trainees to scenario-based collective training intended to build resilience and adaptiveness. It has been pleasing to witness contingents embrace a culture of continuous improvement, each striving to enhance their performance from day to day.

In recognition of the significant efforts that members of the mission were putting in to enhancing training within their contingents, the Military Training Cell established the monthly 'Excellence in Military Training' award which recognized individuals and small teams leading exemplary training that demonstrates commitment, creativity, initiative and impact. Citations of the impressive cohort of recipients are outlined below and I commend them for their dedication to high standards of training.

Contingents have continued to perform to a high standard under evaluation and I express my sincere thanks to Major Karel Eder (Czechia) for his outstanding professionalism and thoroughness in undertaking this important work. I'm also grateful to Major Jafaru Abdulai (Ghana) and Captain Ezekiel Annan (Ghana) for their work in the Staff Officer Training role, and particularly their efforts to induct newly arrived Staff Officers to the mission. The relationship between the Training and Operations branches has been strengthened throughout the year, resulting in training design that is more closely aligned to operational objectives. This would not have been possible without the support of the Operations branch, particularly Lieutenant Colonel Michael Finch (Australia) and subsequently Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Daniell (Australia). The dedicated efforts of the entire mission have enabled the Military Training Cell to deliver training that is tough, realistic and rewarding, greatly enhancing our reputation for excellence.



UNDOF: EXCELLENCE IN MILITARY TRAINING

March

Major Bijay Prakash Srivastav - Nepal
2IC and General Surgeon, Nepalese Level 1 (+) Hospital

Major Bijay Prakash Srivastav has demonstrated excellence in military training through his commitment to delivering challenging and realistic medical training for UNDOF personnel. He has enhanced the medical capabilities of UNDOF through the delivery of triage training, incorporating theoretical and practical components, resulting in improved casualty management procedures. Through the use of role players and simulation he has enhanced the quality of CASEVAC/ MEDEVAC training to ensure that those serving within the mission are ready to respond with confidence in a medical emergency. He has proven himself to be a highly effective instructor, leveraging his extensive experience in previous UN missions to guide trainees and drive continuous improvement. His dedication has brought great credit to the mission and to Nepal.



April

Major Shirshendu Chatterjee - India
Force Fire Marshal and Chief Fire Safety Officer

Major Shirshendu Chatterjee has demonstrated excellence in military training through his efforts to enhance fire safety and response within UNDOF. On arrival in the mission, he conducted a comprehensive assessment of major fire risks and threat areas, tailoring training modules accordingly. He has demonstrated initiative and innovation by generating self-study materials, handouts, posters and safety infographics to transform trainee experience. Of note, he has exceeded expectations by tailoring training modules to audience needs, including the introduction of bilingual content. His dedication has been evident through his personal involvement in live demonstrations and digital simulations. His efforts have significantly enhanced the confidence of UNDOF personnel in fire safety and response, bringing great credit to the mission and to India.



May - Multiple Awards

CAPT Pooja Raghav - India
Force Military Police Platoon - Detachment Commander

Captain Pooja Raghav has demonstrated excellence in military training through her dedication to delivering foundational and advanced training across UNDOF. She has been proactive in her approach to training delivery, visiting numerous positions across the UNDOF Area of Responsibility to provide instruction in Military Police protocols and procedures, border crossing requirements, vehicle and road traffic violations, humanitarian law and rules of engagement. She has also been called upon to provide instruction on cultural awareness and the effective use of translators. Of particular note, she was integral to the conduct of World Environment Day 2025, leading training on environmental protection, reducing plastic use and responsible water consumption. Her methods of instruction have been observed to be dynamic and engaging, with high levels of trainee participation. Her dedication has enhanced the operational effectiveness and professionalism of the Force Military Police Platoon, bringing great credit to the mission and to India.



UNDOF EXCELLENCE IN MILITARY TRAINING

May - Multiple Awards

WO2 Lote Mulo Leva and SGT Timoci Nauagunu - Fiji
Fiji Battalion - Training Cadre

Warrant Officer Class Two Lote Mulo Leva and Sergeant Timoci Nauagunu have demonstrated excellence in military training through the planning and execution of training for FIJIBATT over the course of their deployment. As members of the Training Cadre, they have been responsible for the delivery of all United Nations mandatory training for the contingent, as well as mission specific training, including SAGEM familiarization, Counter Improvised Explosive Device awareness, Nuclear, Biologic and Chemical procedures, Basic First Aid training and weapons handling instruction. Of particular note, they were instrumental to the conduct of the FIJIBATT Military Skills Competitions in November 2024 and March 2025. These activities not only reinforced previous instruction but also provided an opportunity for individuals to demonstrate their proficiency in a competitive setting which enhanced esprit de corps amongst the contingent. Their efforts have greatly enhanced the performance of FIJIBATT, bringing great credit to the mission and to Fiji.

June

SSGT Erami Kuruwale Biu and CPL Senirusi Rauqe - Fiji
Fiji Battalion - Medical Team

The Fiji Battalion Medical Team has excelled in the delivery of medical training whilst serving in the Golan Heights. During their deployment they have developed novel approaches to medical training, resulting in significant improvements in Fiji Battalion response times and standards of care during CASEVAC exercises. The team demonstrated creativity and initiative, incorporating competitive games to better engage the training audience when conducting Basic First Aid, Combat Life Support and CASEVAC procedure training. Training conducted by Fiji Battalion sought to challenge trainees and expose them to the pressure of treating casualties under stress, ensuring high standards of preparedness for a range of contingencies. The efforts of this high performing team have greatly enhanced the performance of the Fiji Battalion, bringing great credit to the mission and to Fiji.

July

Captain Yagya Raj Tamang - Nepal

Commander of United Nations Positions 10A, Nepalese Mechanized Company

Captain Yagya Raj Tamang has demonstrated excellence in military training whilst Commander of United Nations Position 10A in the Golan Heights. During this time, Captain Yagya was responsible for the design and execution of training activities that were realistic, creative, and challenging. He demonstrated initiative in reviving joint training with adjacent positions, significantly enhancing the coordination of reinforcement and casualty evacuation drills. He demonstrated meticulous planning that ensured adherence to safety protocols, alignment with operational objectives and achievement of individual and collective learning outcomes. Captain Yagya led by example, constantly seeking to ensure that every soldier demonstrated high standards of professionalism, reinforcing strong discipline and establishing high standards of readiness. His efforts have significantly improved the performance of his unit, as evidenced by improved response times, effective communication and elevated levels of confidence. His efforts have greatly enhanced the performance of NMC VIII, bringing great credit to the mission and to Nepal.

August



UNDOF EXCELLENCE IN MILITARY TRAINING

August

Uruguayan Mechanized Infantry Company - Medical Team

Doctors: 2 Lt. Andrés Machiavello and 2 Lt. Jazmín Espino.

Psychologist: 2 Lt. Artigas Scaraffuni.

Nurses: 1st Sgt. Richard Castillo, Sgt. Yoni De Olivera, 1st Cpl. Jeniffer Menezes, 1st Cpl. Carolina Bandeira, Pvt. Ángel Alfaro, Pvt. Victoria Falcón and Pvt. Karen Santana.

Drivers: Pvt. Esteban Medina and Pvt. Alfredo Veiga.

The Uruguayan Mechanised Infantry Company Medical Team has excelled in the delivery of medical training whilst serving in the Golan Heights. Throughout the deployment, the team has consistently delivered medical training of the highest standard, ensuring that the Uruguayan contingent was well prepared to respond to an array of medical incidents, both routine and critical. The team planned, executed and evaluated regular training activities, including Basic First Aid, Combat Life Support, CASEVAC procedure, trauma care, treatment of blast injuries, environmental hazards, suicide prevention and the management of stress and anxiety whilst deployed. Training conducted by the Uruguayan contingent demonstrated creativity and high standards of realism to ensure that participants were challenged and engaged, ensuring high standards of preparedness for a range of contingencies. The efforts of this high performing team have greatly enhanced the performance of the Uruguayan Mechanized Infantry Company, bringing great credit to the mission and to Uruguay.



September

Captain Maheshwor Karki - Nepal

Commander of United Nations Position 10A, Nepalese Mechanized Company Captain Maheshwor Karki demonstrated excellence in military training whilst Commander of United Nations Position 10A in the Golan Heights. He has exhibited exceptional leadership in successfully planning and executing multiple high-quality training activities throughout the deployment of Nepali Mechanized Company VIII. The effectiveness of this training was evident during exercises conducted under "no-warning" conditions, in which his unit performed to the highest standards under pressure. During his tenure, Captain Maheshwor also succeeded in strengthening cooperation with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization through regular joint training activities, earning their trust and confidence. He has significantly enhanced the overall preparedness of his unit, resulting in improved decision-making, adaptiveness, confidence and mission focus. His efforts have greatly enhanced the performance of NMC VIII, bringing great credit to the mission and to Nepal.



October

Captain Manisha Thapa - Nepal

Captain Manisha Thapa has excelled in the performance of her duties as Training Officer of Nepali Mechanized Company VII, playing a key role in planning, executing, and evaluating training activities in the Golan Heights. She has maintained high standards of adherence to mandatory training requirements and ensured all training activities were aligned with operational requirements and mission objectives. She has worked closely with the Mission Training Cell to enhance readiness for complex tasks and contingency plans. Captain Thapa has sought to inculcate a culture of continuous improvement, evaluating performance to identify strengths and weaknesses, and developing actionable training plans to drive progress. Her dedication has significantly contributed to the maintenance of high standards of preparedness and operational effectiveness within the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. Her efforts have greatly enhanced the performance of NMC VIII, bringing great credit to the mission and to Nepal.



UNDOF EXCELLENCE IN MILITARY TRAINING

November- No award

December

Captain Madhu Sudan Basnet
Training Officer - Nepalese Contingent

Captain Madhu Sudan Basnet demonstrated excellence in military training whilst Training Officer of the Nepalese Contingent in the Golan Heights. At the commencement of his tour, Captain Madhu developed a training framework intended to build a disciplined, resilient and adaptive unit. Throughout the year he designed and delivered training that embraced the unique challenges of the Mount Hermon complex, anticipating a range of scenarios that might arise and ensuring his contingent was prepared for these contingencies. Through reporting and reviews, he succinctly articulated observations and sought to define improvements that were specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound. Of note, he has also conducted challenging physical training, including rock craft and pack marches, and invited other contingents to participate, making a significant contribution to mission readiness and also to morale. He has significantly enhanced the overall preparedness of his unit, resulting in improved decision-making, adaptiveness, confidence and mission focus. His efforts have greatly enhanced the performance of NEPCON, bringing great credit to the mission and to Nepal.



**Articles by Lt Col Trent HARRON
CMTC, UNDOF HQ**

PHOTOS FROM RECENT UNDOF MEDAL PARADES



PHOTOS FROM RECENT UNDOF EVENTS



PHOTOS FROM RECENT UNDOF EVENTS



