

BLUE BERET



UN Flight Medal Parade

A small UN Flight hangar at the abandoned Nicosia International Airport once more offered its shade for a UN Flight Medal Parade on 11 May 2016. Smartly turned out UN Flight peacekeepers, a display of Hughes and Bell helicopters and the fluttering Argentinian flag gave the humble hangar a ceremonial flavor.

UNFICYP Head of mission, Ms. Lisa Buttenheim, and Force Commander Major General Kristin Lund, accompanied by UN Flight Commander Lt Colonel Gustavo Villegas, inspected the troops before the UN Flight Commander's speech. Argentina's armed forces have a strong legacy in support of peace in many countries, first arriving in Cyprus in September 1994. Their work is important, but also risky, UN Flight Commander Villegas said in his remarks:

"I want you to recognize that what we do is not a simple task; it is a complex, risky task that needs a lot of capacity and attention of the all team from loading fuel, load operators, para rescue, logistics, technicians and finally the pilot in command. Every time we started a flight we are all in one."

The Force Commander also reiterated the importance of UN Flight to UNFICYP, not only for its crucial operability in carrying out operations in the most remote locations, but also as she highlighted:

"There is one issue that is really important to me. To have assurance that I will be able to perform a level of MEDEVAC if needed is a mandatory to me and to the mission. Our troops on ground relies on that"

As Ms. Buttenheim's time at the helm of UNFICYP draws to a close, she highlighted that it means a great deal to her to be able to personally express her appreciation for UN Flight's hard work. She expressed her admiration for the unit's 24,700 flight hours without accident, a hugely impressive feat, and congratulated them and encouraged to continue in their excellent vein for the duration of their time with the mission.

"I would like to pay tribute to the contribution of Argentina to UNFICYP and more broadly to Cyprus. For 22 years, Argentina has shown unwavering commitment to supporting the cause of peace in Cyprus through troop contributions, which over the years have included the majority of our Sector One personnel, UN Flight personnel, two Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and a Force Commander," she added.

The beautiful Cypriot sunset provided an excellent backdrop for the reception that followed the Medal Parade, with guests enjoying delicious Argentine delicacies and a UN Flight cake.



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