The first tranche of 30 new Sovereign Base Area Police recruits were sworn-in on January 7th with the officers now ready to begin two years of intense education in the field of law enforcement. The ceremony in Dhekelia, saw 15 recruits take the official oath in the presence of Chief Constable Chris Eyre and other SBA Police officials.

Before the 12 Greek Cypriots and three Turkish Cypriots took the oath, the chief constable paid tribute to their efforts, which saw them undergo eight different assessments over a 10-month period. He said: “Firstly, I would like to offer my congratulations to every one of you and I would like to welcome you into the SBA Police family.

“When we started this process back in March last year, we had more than 500 people apply for the positions and we took only the very best applicants. ”The job of a police officer is extremely demanding but also very rewarding. Daily, police officers get to experience what most people only ever see through their TV screens.

“Police officers head towards danger when others head away from it in order to protect the most vulnerable.

“The swearing-in of new recruits, all from different communities and backgrounds, will enhance this already great police force.”

SBA Police Chief of Staff, Chief Inspector Maria Atalioti, who headed-up the recruitment process, said: ”It was an extremely difficult and challenging process but it allowed us to identify only the very best and most suitable candidates.

“Throughout, it was done with fairness, integrity and transparency and we are delighted to welcome them into our SBA Police force.”

Greek Cypriot, 22-year-old Elizabeth Nicolaou, speaking after swearing the oath, revealed she was fulfilling a life-long dream in becoming a police officer, she said: “I finished school in 2015 and I went to Cardiff to study police sciences.

“It was my dream to work as a police officer and it has been an amazing process. I don’t want to sit in an office, I want to experience new things every day and the police offers me that. I am just so excited to get started now.”

Bertug Tekakpinar, a 27-year-old Turkish Cypriot from Nicosia, who worked in primary education before applying to the police, explained why he felt many of his skills would be transferrable: “I wanted to challenge myself further. As a teacher you deal with problems and high expectations and I think they are applicable skills that will help me now.

“I have learnt a lot over the past 10-months, so that was very rewarding. I have met lots of new people and we will learn from each other and the training that we are now going to receive.”

A further 15 recruits will be sworn-in later this year in May, bringing the total number of SBA Police officers serving to 241.
A note from CBF

LET ME first off wish you a very Happy New Year and I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and a good break. The new decade did not take long to find fifth gear. I am particularly grateful to everyone in the Headquarters who had to cut short their holidays and come in to work. The UK position on the crisis in the Middle East is very clear – we are at the front of the line calling for de-escalation in the region. Here in Cyprus, we were busy supporting UK Defence as it increased force protection levels for our troops deployed across the region, and conducted wider contingency planning, all based on protecting our people. 2 MERCIAN became the Regional Standby Battalion in double quick time and are now poised. We also rapidly reviewed the threats to the SBA and found nothing to suggest anything had changed on island. Nevertheless, as a precaution, we increased the volume and visibility of patrols across the SBAs for 10 days. That is now being relaxed back to normal levels. As we keep our vigilance up, please don’t hesitate to report anything suspicious.

I also went to see the new Sam Mendes film, 1917, in Akrotiri cinema this weekend and loved it – the characterisation of the two young Lance-Corporals was spot on and the two actors looked as if they could have walked out of one of the Resident Infantry Battalions today. I loved that the cinemas on each camp are a community effort and it was good to see the place well used. If you get a free evening, it’s a film not to miss; the cinematography is exceptional (says this non-expert). Have a great 2020 and here’s hoping the rain stops soon.

Report by Kristian Gray

British High Commissioner Stephen Lillie visited the Episkopi Officers’ Mess on Monday to speak to military and civilian personnel about the all-important bi-lateral relationship between Britain and the Republic of Cyprus.

During his speech, the High Commissioner highlighted how important the next 12-months were in strengthening the close ties between the two nations.

He said: “This year, 2020, is an important year for UK Cypriot relations for two reasons. Firstly, it is the year we leave the European Union. The decision has been taken and we are going to be moving forward confidently to promote Britain’s place in the world. “Secondly, it is the 60th year of Cypriot independence and as the UK, we will approach it as the 60th anniversary of the UK’s relationship with Cyprus as equal partners. “We should treasure the things we have in common (Britain and Cyprus), including the large British community here and the many Cypriots who live, work and study in the UK. “We have done a lot to build on the existing strengths between the UK and Cyprus, and there are also opportunities for further co-operation, including for example, further developing UK educational opportunities in Cyprus.”

Photo: Cpl Lee Goddard

AN IMPORTANT YEAR: British High Commissioner Stephen Lillie spoke to BFC and SBAA personnel about how the next 12 months will be key in strengthening the ties between our two nations
Cyprus News in brief

Cyprus Defence Minister Savvas Angelides travelled to Italy this week to meet with his counterpart, Italian Defence Minister, Lorenzo Buerine, to discuss recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean region and the Cyprus’ Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Prior to flying to Italy, an announcement from the Government said “the two ministers will also discuss ways of further strengthening and enhancing the two countries’ relations, placing an emphasis on security and Defence issues as well as on the development of PESCO (Permanent Structured Coordination) programmes.”

Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades said last week that he hoped more sensible ideas would prevail regarding the situation in the Middle East, while sources expect “no unpleasant surprises” ahead of a mandate review for UN peacekeeping on the island.

“I remain hopeful that wiser or more sensible ideas will prevail so as to avoid new bloodshed that would affect not only the region but also Europe in its entirety, as well as the global economy and stability in the wider region,” Anastasiades according to the Cyprus News Agency.

BFC /SBAA Social Media Roundup

An example of #ArmyConfidence:
Taking young soldiers who have never skied before and after a couple weeks getting them to race!
Your local soldiers doing extraordinary things globally.

Thank you to Nurses Victoria and Claire, and SBA Community Officer Loukia for an informative talk to Year 11 on the dangers of substance abuse. #PSHE #Community #JustSayNo

New Years honours for BFC personnel

It has been confirmed that personnel from across British Forces Cyprus received awards from Her Majesty the Queen in the New Year’s Honours List which was announced at the end of December.

IN TOTAL, eight members of the BFC and Sovereign Base Areas community received awards for the outstanding work taking place.

From the military side, Major David Robinson from the 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment, was awarded an MBE, Warrant Officer Kevin Skinner from the Joint Movements Squadron received a Meritorious Service Medal and Colour Sergeant Leighton Shirton, Petty Officer Amy Rawcliffe and Major Kieron Campbell all received Commander Strategic Command Commendations.

Civilians also recognised on the list were Police Sergeant, Menelaos Louca, who received the prestigious Queen’s Overseas Territory Police Medal and both Kelly Martinou from the Joint Service Health Unit and Christina Pitrakkou from HQ BFC received the Commanders Strategic Command Commendations.

Speaking shortly after the announcement, Maj Robinson, who received his MBE for establishing a new exchange post with the US Army as a senior instructor on the Maneuver Captains’ Career Course (MCCC) at Fort Benning, Georgia, said: “This award gives me great pride, particularly for the hard work and dedication shown by my colleagues and family, who are equally as deserving of recognition as I.

“My family and I were holidaying in Paphos just prior to Christmas, eating lunch in a cafe when I received a phone call from Lt Col Mark Nooney, Commanding Officer, 1 PWRR, informing me of the award. It was a great Christmas surprise for all the family. My youngest daughter began choosing her outfit to ‘meet the Queen’ almost immediately.”

Colour Sergeant Shirton, was equally proud of the recognition, he explained: “I didn’t find out until the list was revealed before Christmas and it was great to be recognised for the work I was doing in the welfare department of 2 MERCIAN.

“Working in welfare is very rewarding because you get to make an impact on people’s lives and that is very satisfying.”

To read more about these stories just click on the images to go through to the relevant social media pages.

RECOGNITION: CSgt Shirton has been awarded the Commander Strategic Command Commendation for his work in the welfare department for 2Mercian
1PWRR makes its mark in Morocco

Report by Kristian Gray

A TRAINING team from the Dhekelia-based The 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment has returned to Cyprus after deploying to Morocco to train members of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment (RG) and the Moroccan Army. The four-man training team, planned, developed and ran static and Live Fire Tactical Training (LFTT) ranges over the course of a month to deliver a realistic and challenging package and to “analyse and develop the participants”. The British and Moroccan armies have a long heritage of Defence Engagement and Exercise Jebel Sahara, which has been running for over 20 years, is fundamental to maintaining good relations between the nations.

Second Lieutenant Jack Cornish, who was part of the four-man team in Morocco, felt the training package was hugely beneficial to all those involved.

He said: “The 1PWRR and Royal Gibraltar training team, supported by the Small Arms School Corps - a unit within the British Army that specialises in instructing and supervising how we conduct all types of training that uses infantry weapons in live firing scenarios - delivered a progressive package. “It went from grouping and zeroing, which are forms of static training practice where a small number of shots (grouping) are taken at a target to ensure that the weapon is shooting as accurately as possible (zeroing), up to and including Close Quarter Marksmanship and our Annual Combat Marksmanship Test, these give soldiers the chance to demonstrate they can shoot their weapons to the Army’s minimum standard. “The training team were presented with a great opportunity to interact, train and coach a foreign army, tapping into their plethora of experience and teaching techniques to develop the soldiers. “The culmination of the training was a section level competition, which tested the Moroccan soldiers on the skills and drills they had learnt. The competition consisted of a two-kilometre best effort run, a 600-metre casualty evacuation and finally, a falling plates shoot, with the winning section dropping all 14 targets at 150 metres with the SA80 rifle.”

During the exercise, the training team also focused on more complex LFTT to test the full-range of abilities of the soldiers from the RG. Second Lieutenant Cornish continued: “The training team produced a physically and mentally challenging package which tested every member, from platoon commander to private soldier. “The highlight of the week was the platoon house in defence serial, which incorporated two PWRR snipers, a General Purpose Machine Gun and a significant amount of explosive battle simulations. “Soldiers were tasked with establishing and defending the position for 16 hours, testing all aspects of the platoon’s capabilities. “Overall, the training team provided a fantastic range package which facilitated the training of everyone involved and we had a brilliant month working with other units, exploring the local culture and gaining valuable experience.”
Everyone reacted so quickly to the threat
Chief Inspector Panayi continued:
the plant.
to divert the flow of the river away from
Department and the Bases Fire Service,
the Limassol District Office, the Water
called the SBA Administration Area Office,
Prior to arriving at the scene, the police
to get them to safety.
“Everyone reacted so quickly to offer us the assistance
we needed.”

The police were called last Wednesday
by the general manager of the plant who
reported the water from the overflowing
Kouris Dam had caused the river to rise to
three metres in some places and was on a
direct collision course with the plant.
At the time, the plant contained 17
members of staff and many tonnes of
the chemical, chloride, which was now
under threat.
Had the river made impact, according to
the general manager, there was a potential
threat to the lives of the employees and
a high possibility that the chloride would
be washed into the sea, causing a huge
environmental issue.
Chief Inspector Panicos Panayi, who
took the original call, explained how the
events of the day unfolded, he said: “The
general manager called the police station
and he was very concerned that the lives
of his employees were under threat from
drowning, because they were virtually
blocked in by the approaching river.
“Myself and the duty officer immediately
went to the plant to find a way out for the
employees and fortunately we were able
to find a previously unused back way out
to get them to safety.”

Prior to arriving at the scene, the police
called the SBA Administration Area Office,
the Limassol District Office, the Water
Department and the Bases Fire Service,
to divert the flow of the river away from
the plant.
Chief Inspector Panayi continued:
“Everyone reacted so quickly to the threat
and within 20 minutes there were two large
excavators at the scene ready to enter the
river to divert its flow.
The excavators dug into the river bank
to make sure the water didn’t have a direct
impact on the plant itself and the result
was incredible.
“Not only did they manage to successfully
divert the flow of the river and avoid the
chloride finding its way into the sea, they
also saved millions of Euros in damage to
the plant itself, which could have set the
infrastructure back a very long time.”
Fortunately, given the huge risk the river
posed – there were approximately 60
other people in the area at the time –
disaster was averted with limited damage
to property.
The chief inspector also revealed plans
are now being made to ensure this type of
threat doesn’t happen again.
“Obviously, we can’t control the amount
of rainfall we have had recently,” he said.
“However, what we and all of our partners
can do, is to look at how and why this
happened and try to find a way to ensure it
doesn’t happen again.
“This week, meetings have taken place
to discuss our next steps but for now it is
worth saying that this was an extremely
successful joint operation.
“When we first took the call it seemed very
unlikely that we would be able to come out
of the other side with so little impact on the
plant and the surrounding area and that
is thanks largely to the quick reactions of
every unit involved.
“Our working relationship and the trust
we have in our partners in the Republic
of Cyprus and indeed throughout the
SBAs, was once again key to the
success and I am very thankful that they
reacted so quickly to offer us the assistance
we needed.”
What’s On in BFC

Episkopi & Troodos

EPISKOPI DATE NIGHT
Wednesday, January 22nd, 19:30 onwards
Epi Centre, Dodge City.
Deadline for application is Friday, January 17th. Three course meal with drinks for €10 per person. For more information and to book, search ‘Date Night Episkopi’ on Facebook or on messenger.

SPACE THEATRE PRESENTS ROBIN HOOD
THE PANTOMIME
Showings for UK passport holders and SBA pass holders are on: Friday, January 31st at 19:00, Saturday, February 1st at 19:00, and Saturday, February 8th at 17:00.
Showings for SBA pass holders only are on Saturday, February 1st at 15:00, Sunday, February 2nd at 15:00, and Friday 7th February at 17:00. Tickets are available from Epi HIVE on Dodge, or reserve online: www.spacetheatecyprus.com

JSHAO HOUSING OPTIONS
Tuesday, February 11th, 08:30-11:30
The presentation will take place in Classroom 3 at 55AEC with information on purchasing/renting property, affordable home ownership schemes, the Lifetime ISA and much more.
To register your attendance please email RC-Pers-JSHAO-OMailbox@mod.gov.uk

GYM 2 GYM 2020
Saturday, February 15th. Walkers 08:00 start and Runners 09:00 start.

AKROTIRI TINY TOTS
Every Friday, 09:00-11:00
For all children aged 0-3, with siblings welcome. Stay and play sessions including two themed sessions per month. €1 donation per child, which includes a small snack and tea/coffee for the parents/guardians.

JSHAO HOUSING OPTIONS
Wednesday, February 12th, 08:30-11:30
The presentation will take place at the Learning Centre and will include purchasing/renting property, affordable home ownership, an update on Forces Help to Buy, the MoD referral scheme, and more.
To register your attendance please email RC-Pers-JSHAO-OMailbox@mod.gov.uk

BLOOD DONATION
Tuesday, February 3rd, 10:30-13:00
Akrotiri Police Station
Blood donation will be taking place at M1 station, first floor conference room by members of Limassol General Hospital.
This is an ongoing humanitarian commitment to service and local communities which takes place every six months.
For more information call the Community and Liaison Officer, Loucas Panayiotou on 9966 4151.

TROODOS CHALETS AVAILABLE FOR RENT
Year round availability
Are you aware that Episkopi and Troodos Station have 11 chalets to rent to entitled personnel and their families?
There are one and three bedroom chalets ranging from €25 - €60 per night.
If you are interested in booking a chalet please contact Michael on 2596 7065/7027 or email michael.pieris100@mod.gov.uk

AKROTIRI TINY TOTS
Every Friday, 09:00-11:00
For all children aged 0-3, with siblings welcome. Stay and play sessions including two themed sessions per month. €1 donation per child, which includes a small snack and tea/coffee for the parents/guardians.

ONLINE LEARNING FOR ECDL COURSES
During January 2020 personnel who sign up and complete their ECDL course before the end of March will be entitled to claim 20% cashback. The ECDL programme is open to all entitled BFC personnel including UKBCs, LECs and dependants. Participants must be in possession of a valid in date gate pass for Epi and Aki in order to take part. Registration is open now at www.gym2gym.webs.com and the cost is €25. More information is available by visiting the website.

Akrotiri

K1 TRIATHLON CLUB - AQUATHLON CLUB
KIDS AND ADULTS RACE
Saturday, January 25th, 13:00 onwards, races start at 13:30
Swimming pool, RAF Akrotiri.
If you have ever considered giving a triathlon a go, or maybe have done one or two in the past, these are a great way to get back in to it. Cost is €5. Registration closes on Friday, January 24th at 12noon. To register go to www.webscorer.com and search for K1 in the events section.

AKROTIRI KART CLUB LADIES GRAND PRIX
Every Friday, 09:00-11:00
For all children aged 0-3, with siblings welcome. Stay and play sessions including two themed sessions per month. €1 donation per child, which includes a small snack and tea/coffee for the parents/guardians.

AKROTIRI TINY TOTS
Every Friday, 09:00-11:00
For all children aged 0-3, with siblings welcome. Stay and play sessions including two themed sessions per month. €1 donation per child, which includes a small snack and tea/coffee for the parents/guardians.

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JSATW RUN CYCLE SWIM TRAINING BRIEF
Friday, January 17th, 14:30
Do you cycle, swim or run regularly? Do you have an aim or a goal? A presentation on aims, goals and season planning will be held in the JSATW Cyprus HQ Briefing Room, Dhekelia and is open to anyone on station. Please email lloyd.keenan968@mod.gov.uk for more information and to book your place.

JSHAO HOUSING OPTIONS
Thursday, February 13th, 08:30-11:30
The presentation will take place in Classroom 18, 55AEC Dhekelia and will include information on purchasing and renting property, affordable home ownership schemes, the Lifetime ISA, and update on Forces Help to Buy, the MoD referral scheme, social housing and an Independent Financial Advisor Briefing.
To register your attendance please email RC-Pers-JSHAO-0Mailbox@mod.gov.uk

1st DHUKELIA RAINBOWS
THURSDAYS 16:00-17:00
1st Dhekelia Rainbows have spaces for girls aged 5-7. They meet upstairs in the Youth Centre. The cost is €40 per term.
To register for a place please visit the girlguiding website http://go.girlguiding.org.uk/join-us/join-as-member or email dhekelia.rainbow@gmail.com

AY NIK CAMEO COME AND MEET EVERYONE
Every Thursday, 09:30 - 11:00
A great way to meet new people, the Cameo come and meet everyone. Refreshments are available and all funds raised go back into the community. For more information please contact the HIVE.

AY NIK MUSIC TOTS - FRIDAY 09:30-11:00
Bring along your children up to pre-school age. Cost is €1 including a snack. For more info contact the HIVE.

DHEKELIA GRACE YOGA - BEGINNERS, INTERMEDIATE AND PRENATAL YOGA.
Want to try something new in 2020 or further your current yoga practice? Grace Yoga offers classes in a welcoming, fun and friendly environment within Dhekelia Station open to military and entitled civilian personnel. Courses begin on Tuesday, January 28th for six weeks.
Beginners and Intermediate classes will take place on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, 08:45 - 10:15 in the Union Room at the Amenities Centre and Tuesday and Thursday evenings 17:15-18:45 at the same location. The pre-natal classes will take place on Thursday mornings 10:30-12:00 in the Union Room @ The Amenities Centre. To sign up contact Maria Petsas, Course Coordinator for 55 AEC on 2427 4998 or email Maria.Petsas163@mod.gov.uk

DHEKELIA PIRATES RUGBY CLUB
Sunday, February 2nd, 10:00-12:00
Dhekelia Rugby Club Children's rugby training for age Groups are 3-16 years, €80 registration cost, which includes a full kit. For more information and to register please go to the Dhekelia Pirates RC Facebook page.

DHEKELIA HOME START STAY AND PLAY
Every Thursday, 9-11 from Thursday January 23rd onwards. Little Monkey's Dhekelia, €1 per session which includes refreshments. To find out more contact the HIVE.

To advertise your community related event in this section, please contact the Cyprus Lion editorial team on 2596 2052 or email your submissions to sovereign.areas@outlook.com
Community Noticeboard

What are you up to? Do you have an event or a success to tell us about? Submissions to the Cyprus Lion are welcomed. Email your stories, images and announcements to sovereign.areas@outlook.com or call the Editorial Team on 2596 2052.

Pregnant, got a baby or child under 5 years?

Have you got the electronic child health and development record yet?

SSAFA is encouraging all expectant and current parents/carers with children under 5 years of age to sign up to the eRedbook and to use this as their primary health and development record. You can record developmental milestones, weight, immunisations and any other important health and development information along with photos and never worry about misplacing it or packing it away in storage again!

To find out more, or to start using the eRedbook you can speak to your local SSAFA Midwife or Health Visitor or visit www.eredbook.org.uk

N.b. you will need to use the standard format (BF1) postcode.

The BFC Community Learning Programme

Offers a range of recreational, vocational and academic courses across a variety of locations and is open to all entitled BFC personnel including: Service personnel, UKBCs, All Locally Employed Civilians and dependants

How do I apply?

Simply identify the course that you would like to attend and complete an application form. The application form and money is then given to the point of contact for that particular location.

Registration will take place 9 – 23 Jan 20

Please be aware that courses may not run if they are under subscribed. For more information look up 55AEC on Facebook.

Going Skiing at Troodos?

For more information on conditions and which slopes are open, visit:

http://www.cypruski.com

http://www.cypruski.com/piste-road-conditions

https://www.skicyprus.com

https://www.skicyprus.com/webcam

Do you have a VPN?

In accordance with the BFC Personal Electronic Device (PED) Policy, all users of locally provided internet are directed to use a Virtual Private Network (VPN). You are entitled to buy a subscription from Freedome to provide coverage for devices used by you and your dependants (up to a max of 7 devices per household) and claim the cost back through JPA or HRMS. All BFC/SBA Personnel that are entitled to a Ration Card are entitled to this offer. For further information you can go to the Be Safe on Island Facebook page.

Fiscal Office Contact Numbers

Episkopi 2596 3342
Akrotiri 2527 6762
Dhekelia 2474 4078
Ay Nik 2474 4226
What's On at the cinema

Showing at the Astra Akrotiri in January:
STAR WARS: The Rise of Skywalker (12A)
No one's ever really gone... Rey's journey continues and the Skywalker saga concludes in 'Star Wars: The Rise Of Skywalker'.

OTHER SHOWINGS THIS MONTH: Jo Jo Rabbit (12A) CATS (U) / 1917 (15) / JUMANJII: The Next Level (12A) / 1917 (15) / Bad Boys For Life (15) / Bombshell (15) / The Personal History of David Copperfield (PG) / Spies in Disguise (PG)

Showing at the Key Dhekelia in January:
CATS (U)
Featuring Lloyd Webber's iconic music and a world-class cast of dancers under the guidance of Tony-winning choreographer Andy Blankenbuehler, the film reimagines the musical.

OTHER SHOWINGS THIS MONTH: Jumanji: The Next Level (12A) / Jo Jo Rabbit (12A) / STAR WARS: The Rise of Skywalker (12A) / Bad Boys for Life (15) / Bombshell (15) / Spies in Disguise (PG) / The Personal History of David Copperfield (PG)

Showing at the Mercury Ay Nik in January:
1917 (15)
At the height of the First World War, two young British soldiers, Schofield and Blake are given a seemingly impossible mission. In a race against time, they must cross enemy territory and deliver a message that will stop a deadly attack on hundreds of soldiers—Blake's own brother among them.

OTHER SHOWINGS THIS MONTH: STAR WARS: The Rise of Skywalker (12A) / Cats (U) / Jo Jo Rabbit (12A) / 1917 (15) / Playing with Fire (PG) / Bombshell (15) / Jumanji: The Next Level (15) / The Personal History of David Copperfield (PG)

Showing at Episkopi Cinema Club in January:
Jumanji: The Next Level (12A)
In Jumanji: The Next Level, the gang is back but the game has changed. As they return to Jumanji to rescue one of their own, they discover that nothing is as they expect.

ALSO SHOWING THIS MONTH: Le Mans 66 (12A) / Doctor Sleep (15) / Frozen II (U) / Knives Out (12A)

For full cinema listings see the Episkopi Community Support Facebook Page

1917 review: World War I epic is the first must-see movie of the year

IF YOU'RE a fan of breathing, then 1917 might not be the movie for you, but you'd be missing out on an astonishing experience.

Directed by Sam Mendes, a lot has been made of the technical choice to shoot the movie as though it’s one continuous two-hour shot. But all that actually matters is that 1917 is really, really good.

Tense, powerful and breathtaking, 1917 is a visceral movie you won't forget in a hurry – and it's the first must-see movie of the year.

Set in France on April 6, 1917, the movie sees two British soldiers – Schofield (George MacKay) and Blake (Game of Thrones star Dean-Charles Chapman) – sent on an impossible mission.

Shot in several long takes that have been edited together to give the real-time impression, 1917 is a flawless achievement and, one slight cheat moment aside, you won't be able to spot the editing stitches. The one-take nature is in service of the story and not a distraction, working to heighten the intense against-the-clock nature of it all.

If all the impeccable craft on offer isn't enough for you, 1917 also delivers a series of cameos from a Who's Who of British acting royalty (Colin Firth, Benedict Cumberbatch, Andrew Scott.) For the Fleabag fans, Andrew Scott's character even gives the soldiers a blessing to bring back those Hot Priest vibes.

It all adds up to make 1917 a true big-screen experience, rivalling Dunkirk as the best war movie of recent years. Just make sure to have a lie-down afterwards to catch your breath back.

1917 is out now in all SSVC cinemas. Click here to find out where and when you can see it. Review by Digital Spy.

Would you like to review a movie for the Cyprus Lion?

We are looking for reviews from people in the BFC/SBAA community to publish in the Cyprus Lion.
Call 2596 2052 or email sovereign.areas@outlook.com for more information.
New ponies for RDA Episkopi

RIDING FOR the Disabled Episkopi (RDA) have started the new year in positive fashion after taking delivery of three new ponies, thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Tartan Army Children’s Charity (TACC), Sodexo and support from the Episkopi Garrison.

In the build-up to last year’s European Championship qualifier between Scotland and Cyprus, TACC - the official charity of the Scottish national football team which “aims to support disadvantaged children in Scotland and overseas” - visited the RDA in Episkopi’s Happy Valley and handed over a cheque for £5,000 to be used towards purchasing a pony.

Also towards the end of last year, Sodexo donated €1,500 to the worthwhile cause and now with the mission complete, the three ponies are ready to work closely with the team of volunteers to provide riding instruction for people with disabilities.

According to experts, the RDA has been proven to help adults and children with Attention Deficit Disorder, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Hearing Impairment, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy and Visual Impairment.

Wendi Quinn, the chairperson for the RDA, explained why donations are so important to her team, she said:

“The money donated to us by TACC, Sodexo, Episkopi Garrison and our own fundraising efforts, have allowed us to purchase the new ponies, which has been our mission for the past few years.

“It costs us approximately €12,000 annually just to keep us on the road so to speak and that can go even higher with vet’s bills, which can be huge, as they were last year.

“We are so grateful for all of the support we have received and I am now delighted to have the three ponies – Lindy Lou, Peaches and Dinky – almost ready to go.”

Speaking at the time of the donation, Dorothy Wilson from TACC, explained why the charity wanted to help the RDA.

She said: “TACC have previously donated to Riding for the Disabled in Scotland and Davy Provan, who is a Scot living in Cyprus, suggested the RDA Episkopi as we are aware of the benefits this can bring to children. I contacted Wendi Quinn from the RDA to ask if they had any projects that might meet our criteria for a donation.”

The money was raised through the sale of t-shirts, fundraising from “The Kiltwalk”, charity events, the TACC lottery and donations from Scotland supporters.”

The RDA runs every Thursday morning for riders from the Republic of Cyprus and on Tuesday afternoons, it offers rides for those with special needs from Episkopi and Akrotiri.

CLUB IN FOCUS - Akrotiri Judo Club

RAF AKROTIRI Judo Club held its first ever internal judo competition on Saturday, December 14th for its junior and intermediate judoka.

The event took place at the Akrotiri Martial Arts Centre and involved 27 judoka between the ages of five and 12. Each athlete took part in a number of contests, lasting between 2-3 minutes, where they were able to showcase the standing techniques and groundwork skills they have learnt. For many of them it was their first-ever competition and was a good introduction ahead of potential participation in competitions in the Republic of Cyprus.

Two of the most senior judoka were Gabe and Zachary, who put on a good show for the crowd, displaying tenacity and confidence during their contests. Gabe, who has been at the club for approximately 18 months, picked up the ‘Most Competitive Fighter’ Award, given his strong skills displayed during competitions in the Republic of Cyprus.

One of the youngest participants was Henry, aged five, who achieved a gold medal despite only having participated in judo for less than two weeks. He said: “It was so awesome, we got to show our mummies and daddies and we all got medals.”

Station Commander, Group Captain Chris Snaith, watched the action and presented the medals to the judoka. He said: “The courage and respect shown by the young children today has been fantastic and has impressed me enormously. I am very grateful for what our hard-working team of volunteers have achieved in order to provide this opportunity to our younger dependants.

“The Club has gone from strength to strength and I look forward to hearing about its future successes as we develop our engagement with the clubs in the Republic of Cyprus.”

Anyone who is interested in Judo can visit Akrotiri Judo Club on Facebook or contact Sqn Ldr Steve Helmsley on 2527 6675.
The SOVEREIGN Base Area Police’s Community Action Team (CAT) have been awarded two of the most coveted environmental awards across Defence for their work in almost eradicating bird trapping within the SBAs. The anti-bird trapping team flew back for a ceremony in the UK in December to receive the prestigious Sanctuary Magazine award in the Best Environmental Project category. But whilst there, they were also presented with the Silver Otter award, which is given to the outstanding individual or group across all five judging categories, which also included sustainability, heritage, utilities projects and individual contribution.

Speaking after seeing his officers return from the UK with the extra hand-luggage, SBA Police Chief Constable, Chris Eyre, was overjoyed with the work of his team. He said: “Since 2017 the Administration has changed its approach to illegal bird trapping and invested heavily in technology and equipment to improve the SBA Police’s ability to identify, target and incapacitate bird trappers. Legislation and enforcement policies have been changed to increase the penalties, increase the consequences for those caught trapping and maximise the Force’s ability to bring offenders to justice. The removal of 90 kilometres of illegal irrigation from Pyla ranges also made it harder for the trappers to operate but all of these changes were dependent on the SBAP CAT Team identifying the criminals involved and using their enhanced technology, equipment and powers to disrupt or detect the offender. I am immensely proud of the officers and all they have achieved and I am also immensely proud of the other parts of BFC and the Administration who have worked to support them and engineered the changes that made their success possible.”

In recent weeks, environmental groups such as Bird Life Cyprus and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) have been vocal in their support of the work undertaken by the CAT team and according to Inspector Nicos Alambritis, who heads up the unit, it has been a hugely challenging task but also a collaborative effort to tackle the criminal activity. He explained: “It was very challenging for the team to get bird trapping under control and we were faced with some serious criticism at high levels originally. “When I took over the team, we sat down and identified new methods and ideas and together with the subject matter experts we agreed a plan which was implemented from A to Z and brought the desirable results. ‘The use of technology such as the drones, covert surveillance cameras and the new legislation which provided heavier punishments and fixed penalties, played a vital role in the success during the last three years. “Of course, the collective teamwork and effort from all of our internal organisations and external partners like Bird Life Cyprus, the RSPB, the Game Fund and the Committee Against Bird Slaughter, have all played a crucial role in the success too.”

And in paying tribute to the team that implements the enforcement programme on the ground, he said: “I am very proud to see our achievements recognised through these awards, and of my team members who are all working unsocial hours in a difficult environment, facing threats and violence from trappers and poachers.”

AFF focuses on relationships

Throughout January, AFF will focus on relationships and where you turn if you are having difficulties. Look out for updates on social media, the website, or speak to your local co-ordinator on cyprus@aff.org.uk

If you are having difficulties, you can contact your welfare team or seek support from organisations such as SSAFA, Relate, Citizens Advice or the Royal British Legion. The service person’s Local Service Commander may allow a cooling off period of up to three months where the service person can move into Single Living Accommodation or private accommodation, but still pay SFA charges. If your relationship breaks down and you decide to separate after the cooling off period, the service person should change their personal status category (PStatCat). Changing your PStatCat can affect your entitlements and allowances, including SFA and CEA. The JSHAO provides civilian housing information to service personnel and their families, and information on this is available on our website (see below). AFF also offers specific advice for F&C families. See the F&C section on our website at www.aff.org.uk and go to the Divorce/Separation page. More information is available on our website at www.aff.org.uk; go to Advice, then Family Life, and click the Separation & Divorce page.
BRITISH FORCES Cyprus personnel island-wide have taken up what is known as the Medicine Ball Challenge to raise awareness about mental health issues.

The three kilogramme medicine ball, which is due to spend the next two years in BFC, is a metaphor for the weight and burden service personnel, veterans and people all over the world carry with them daily.

The initiative, which raises money for Combat Stress, the soldier’s charity, highlights an issue close to the hearts of many serving and former personnel.

In the past, some members of the Forces community have felt unable to discuss the issue because of the stigma surrounding mental health problems, including stress, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression.

And these highly-important issues have been linked to numerous mental health related deaths of veterans and soldiers according to Sergeant Mark Jackson from the 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment, who completed the grueling Cyprus 4-Day Challenge last October with the medicine ball strapped to his arm, it is an issue that can’t be ignored.

He said: “Not all wounds are visible, but many of the issues could be avoided if only we could encourage people to talk about what they are feeling and going through. There must be more awareness.

“I have always been very keen to take part in charity events and try to make a difference with issues that concern our Forces community and this one is so important.

“The Medicine Ball Challenge will raise awareness and money about these issues all at the same time.”

Those taking part across BFC will strap the medicine ball to their wrist and only take it off whilst “sleeping, driving and dressing” according to Sgt Jackson.

He continued: “The reason we do this is to make every simple task feel like a challenge. It also gets people asking questions about why you are doing it and then you can raise more awareness about these issues.

“The aim of the Medicine Ball Challenge is also to encourage dialogue in order to break down the stigma surrounding mental health, so that those suffering know it is ok not to be ok and seek help before it is too late.”

As the medicine ball begins making its way around BFC, Sgt Jackson and some of his other colleagues across the Bases are already planning their next challenge.

He continued: “In March I will be taking part in the Paphos Marathon with the medicine ball and hopefully I will be able to raise a lot more money between now and then.

“This is an issue that cannot be ignored. If you are struggling, please, speak to someone, be it a work colleague, a friend, even a stranger, just speak out and ask for help.

“As the medicine ball passes through BFC over the next two years, don’t be afraid to ask questions, we want as many people as possible to understand this very serious issue.”

What are you up to? Do you have an event or a success to tell us about? Submissions to the Cyprus Lion are welcomed. Email your stories, images and announcements to sovereign.areas@outlook.com or call the Editorial Team on 2596 2052.