Soldiering in the sand

Report by Kristian Gray

ROOPS from the 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment have been in Jordan over the past few weeks exercising alongside members of the Cyprus National Guard and the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF).

Exercise Olive Grove, which saw 101 personnel, made up from 2MERCIAN’s A-Company, the National Guard and various other members of the British military, train alongside JAF soldiers “to develop interoperability and defence relationships”.

Major Mike Brigham, Officer Commanding of A-Company, who was in Jordan overseeing the entire exercise, explained a little more about Olive Grove. He said: “We managed to achieve our main goal by constructing a training programme to instruct both the Jordanian and British troops in trench and urban operations and the exercise culminated in a joint live fire distinguished visitor’s day.

“The training was hugely successful and it has received praise not only from the military chain of command but from the other government departments based out in Jordan too.”

Training alongside other nations is not uncommon for British military personnel but it is still challenging according to Maj Brigham. He continued: “Language, culture and understanding you could say are the three main challenges when exercising alongside other nations. We call them the ‘three pillars’ but they are easily overcome by preparation, acceptance and willing.”

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Goodbye from CoS

IT IS WITH mixed emotions that I depart the Island after two and a half years in post as Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff British Forces Cyprus. I leave with immense pride at all we have achieved together but with great sadness that I will soon be leaving this beautiful, and historically important island.

The changing regional political dynamic over this period has only reinforced the importance of the SBAs as a vital strategic Permanent Sovereign Platform for the UK. Amongst our many successes, we have demonstrated the continued utility of Akrotiri as a Forward Mounting Base through the successful proof of concept for the F-35 Lightening fast jets, we have forged ever-closer relationships with our colleagues from the National Guard in Cyprus and the Regional Standby Battalion have also been deployed on multiple tasks and have continued to exercise and execute our ability to support contingent operations.

Looking to the future, there is much change on the horizon with an Estate Development Plan and investment in our infrastructure across the board; I am assured that we will all be enjoying the delights of a new Air Terminal within the next four years!

I would like to finish by thanking you all for the hard work and professionalism that you have shown during my time in post whether you be military or civilian, full time or volunteer.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege, and I know my replacement is looking forward to taking the baton as I depart in early February.

Huge fines for illegal gambling in ESBA

The owner of a betting shop in Achna Forest was fined €15,000 and given a 12-month prison sentence suspended for three-years last week after he was found guilty on two charges of unlawful possession of gaming machines.

A further two men, who were customers at the shop when it was raided on June 26 last year, were both fined €1,500 each for participating in illegal gambling at the betting facility in the village.

The conclusion to the legal proceedings, according to SBA Police officials in Dhekelia, sends out a strong message to betting shop owners in the area that this type of crime will not be tolerated.

Divisional Commander, Andreas Pitsillides, praised the efforts of his investigative team and said he felt the heavy fines and threat of imprisonment would serve as a deterrent to others carrying out the crime.

He said: “This was a highly-successful intelligence-led operation and this allowed us to build a very strong case against the defendants.

“We as a police force, operate a zero-tolerance approach to this type of crime and it is clear that if you are caught, you will face severe punishment.”

In recent years, the SBA Police in the west of the island have been praised for their efforts in closing all of the illegal casinos operating in the area but according to the divisional commander, this is a very different type of crime and customer.

He continued: “We do not have illegal casinos, we have legitimate betting shops running illegal software on their machines, so it can be very difficult to detect.

“We are however doing a very good job at cracking down on this crime and in this latest case, we were able to make multiple seizures that led to the prosecution and heavy fines.”

He was also quick to point out that the prosecutions would not have been possible without the assistance of Cyprus Police colleagues.

“We utilised the expertise of the Cyber Crime unit from CyPol and they played a key role in the case.

“We have an excellent relationship with them and we are always very grateful for their assistance on these cases.”

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.
A cut above the rest at KRS

King Richard’s School Year 8 student, Charlie Brown, took a set of clippers to his locks this week in an attempt to raise €500 for Macmillan Cancer Research. The caring 13-year-old, who decided he wanted to “help those that are suffering” after members of his own family had been diagnosed with the illness, was supported by his school friends, teachers and his “excited” mother in the courtyard of KRS.

Speaking shortly before hairdressers from Legends Barbers in Dhekelia shaved him bald, Charlie explained his thought process and his aspirations for what has become known as ‘Brave the Shave’. He said: “The idea came to me because I wanted to be able to do something for people and I chose Macmillan Cancer because my aunt and her daughter have cancer. “My mum targeted €100 and my target was €500 and already we are on €300, so we have to see how it goes.”

Prior to losing his hair, which Charlie admitted was symbolic of what many cancer sufferers go through during treatment, he said: “I am not really bothered about my hair to be honest, my hair just keeps my head warm and I have been looking forward to having this done.”

But in the aftermath and as he looked at the mountains of brown hair strewn across the courtyard floor, he admitted: “I feel pretty ‘weirded’ out now to be honest due to the fact that I have no hair. I am glad I have done it though.”

Charlie’s mum, Zoe, is understandably very proud of his achievements: “I am very, very proud, it was his idea because we have a few family members who are suffering with cancer and it was also inspired by a little boy in our town that had cancer.

“He has always wanted to help people but he has never known how to do it I think. It is nice that everyone has made a big fuss of him, it has made it very special.”

To donate to Charlie’s page please visit: https://bravetheshave.macmillan.org.uk/shavers/charlie-brown

BFC / SBAA Social Media Roundup

Successful UK in Cyprus - Jordan bilateral military exercise Olive Grove in Jordan this week, involving 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment @Army2MERCIAN training alongside @EmirFrount and @ArmedForces_JO @AngelosSavvas @electorati

Members of Recce Platoon after the first half of their cadre in the UK. They are busy training new reconnaissance operators to serve in the platoon. #pwr #fiercepride #unconqueredisserve #recce #recon #SPTA #britisharmy @bfcyprus

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

Cyprus News in brief

Limassol will be turned into a friendly, green and smart city for citizens and businesses, mayor Nicos Nicolaides said on Tuesday presenting a report for 2017-2019 highlighting completed and ongoing projects and various actions regarding social policy, culture and sports by the municipality.

Cyprus Mail

Flamingo deaths at Larnaca Salt Lake have so far reached 57, while two more deaths have been recorded at Akrotiri Salt Lake in Limassol, with results from tests on dead flamingos confirming lead poisoning as the primary cause of death. Birdlife Cyprus said “the preliminary evaluation by the authorities regarding the cause of the flamingo deaths has unfortunately been confirmed”.

Kathimerini

President Nicos Anastasiades has met Diko leader Nicolas Papadopoulos, discussing various issues from the Cyprus problem to corruption in football. Papadopoulos said: “I had the chance with the president to discuss the latest developments on the Cyprus problem and also other issues.”

Cyprus Mail
Dhekelia welcomes new commander

Report by Kristian Gray

THE 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment, has welcomed a new Commanding Officer to Alexander Barracks this month and according to Lieutenant Colonel Andy Wild, he cannot wait to get started.

The new CO, who takes over from Lt Col Mark Nooney, has arrived in Cyprus on his first posting to the island and he admits to have already seen some of the “outstanding work” taking place in the Eastern Sovereign Base Areas.

As part of his role, Lt Col Wild will also take up the reins as the Dhekelia Garrison Commander, a new challenge for the infantry officer.

Speaking from his battalion’s headquarters, he said: “To become the new CO of 1PWRR is a huge privilege for me and I have already been humbled by the dedication to deliver Cyprus operations inside the battalion and have seen how hard they are working to achieve that.

“From the Station side of things, there is also a realisation of how big a task that aspect of the job really is. There are a lot of demands as the commander here and I am very much looking forward to getting started properly.”

For an infantry officer, the day to day command of a battalion comes naturally but it is the extra dynamic of overseeing the smooth running of the ESBA that could prove to be the biggest challenge for Lt Col Wild.

But not surprisingly, this is one aspect of the job that he is relishing, he explained: “Of course this is a new challenge for me and although I have done some community engagement in a previous role, this is a new, sizable task and one that I am ‘excitedly nervous’ about taking on.”

Outgoing CO, Lt Col Nooney, did leave him with some words of advice however and they have clearly made Lt Col Wild relish the job even more.

He continued: “Mark told me about all of the festivities that we get to be involved with and how you get a real feel for authentic Cyprus and that is something I am really looking forward to experiencing.

“In the short time I have been here already, I have met lots of different people and they have all been so friendly and supportive and I want to get out and meet as many of those people living and working here as possible.”

Looking ahead to his tour, Lt Col Wild said he was keen to bring the community even closer together and with the next three changeovers for the Resident Infantry Battalion (RIB) already planned, he revealed that was also in his thoughts.

“We already know the next three battalions that will be deployed to Cyprus as the RIB and I think it is important they are aware of what is happening here, even before they arrive. I plan to look at ways of doing that.

“I am also very keen to encourage even more sport in the community and to see how we can bring both the military and civilian community together.

“There is so much good work going on here in Dhekelia and I want to encourage that to continue and to see how we can make it even better.”

Safety warning for cyclists on SBA roads

THE SOVEREIGN Base Area Police are warning all cyclists about the dangers of riding side-by-side and taking up entire lanes of traffic.

In recent weeks, police officials have confirmed reports that cyclists are riding two, and sometimes up to four abreast on the roads and are “failing to give way to faster moving traffic”. Areas such as the Kolossi to Akrotiri road, the M1 road and the Limassol to Paphos old road, are said to be ‘hot-spot’ areas for the problem.

A statement issued by the SBA Police this week, said: “Such riding behaviour constitutes an offence and is punishable with a Fixed Penalty Notice.”

And in further clarifying the legal position, the statement continued: “Cyclists who are riding in a group of four persons or above, may ride side-by-side, behind each other and not in a gathered group. If there are only two cyclists, they must be riding in single file.

“Please bear in mind that there are also other obligations for cyclists applying to other offences, such as riding without brakes and riding or pushing a bicycle on a pavement.”

The statement concluded with a final safety message: “Please remember to always wear a helmet, no matter how old you are, or where you are cycling, even if you are only travelling a short distance.”

For any further information, please contact the SBA Police Station on 2596 7227.
**SBA blood drive a great success**

The SBA Police Akrotiri Division in liaison with Limassol General Hospital organised a blood donation at its station this week. The blood drive forms part of the police’s ongoing humanitarian commitment which takes place every six months. It is led by the Community Unit in an effort to help those in need. Donors from the local and Service community visited the station, where they met with medics from Limassol General Hospital, who undertook the blood donation procedure. Representatives from the Ministry of Health, community leaders and other stakeholders visited the station and expressed their gratitude to the police for all its efforts.

Deputy Divisional Commander, Dinos Petrou, said: “I am very proud that today, the SBA Police in Akrotiri has organised this humanitarian event to aid those in need. The police, despite their daily duties, are dedicated to offer their support to the problems arising within society and this is what we have organised here today. I would like to express my thanks to our partners from local and service communities and the police officers from our division who donated blood for this good cause.”

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**Akrotiri a buzzword for mosquito specialists**

Organisers of last month’s seminar on harmonising Aedes Invasive Mosquito (AIM) surveillance across Europe at the Akrotiri Environmental and Education Centre, have praised the level of commitment of those in attendance. The event, which saw experts from all over Europe discuss and learn more about mosquito control, has been given the thumbs up by Joint Service Health Unit entomologist, Dr Kelly Martinou. Speaking after the seminar had concluded, she said: “This was a really important forum because it allowed experts from all over Europe to come together, ask questions and share ideas about mosquitos. "During the seminar, there was no specific subject matter to discuss, we wanted to encourage open conversation about any issues concerning mosquitos. Of course, there are subject areas that concerned all of us but it was important to answer as many questions as possible.”

In fact, many of the questions may have seemed obscure to some, but not to Dr Martinou, she continued: “Those at the seminar had a genuine interest in mosquitos and we had questions like ‘how viable are genetically modified mosquitos (GMO) as a form of control?’ “This is an interesting subject to look at because it can be used. The idea is that you put GMO, male mosquitos into an environment to mate with the females and when the eggs arrive, they are born dead and this is a form of control. This was just one of the issues we discussed.”

Dr Martinou also said JSHU and the Bases environmental team were keen to build on the success of the seminar and plan to hold more in the future. “We are part of the European Cooperation of Science and Technology,” she said. “This allows us to meet each other, solve problems and work together and share any data we produce to get a better grasp of mosquito control and surveillance.

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**Order of St John award for Bases fire fighter**

Yiannis Pourgouris from the Defence Fire Service in Episkopi has been honoured for his outstanding work for the St John’s Ambulance in Cyprus. The Green Watch Crew Manager, a 32-year veteran of the force and a 25-year member of the St John’s Ambulance, is due to receive the prestigious Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in the coming months. Speaking shortly after learning of his achievement, he said: “In my 32 years as a fire fighter, this is the greatest thing to have happened to me. I had absolutely no idea I was going to receive the award, so it came as a huge surprise and I couldn’t be happier. I have always loved what I do and I am a big believer in what the St John’s Ambulance do.”

Pourgouris’ award has also been given the seal of approval by Episkopi Station Manager, Roberto Lycurgou, who feels it has gone to a very worthy recipient. He said: “When I found out he was to be given this award I was very, very proud. I have known him for 25 years as a fire fighter and he is a huge part of the fire station family.”
Episkopi & Troodos

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

FORCES PENSION SOCIETY BRIEF
Wednesday, March 4th, 14:30
Major General (Retd) Marshall will be conducting a Forces Pension Society brief in the Epi Centre. All personnel are encouraged to attend. For more information please contact Scott Anderson on 2596 3326.

BRITISH FORCES CLAY PIGEON TARGET CHAMPIONSHIP 2020
Wednesday, March 18th, 0900-1600.
Open to all UK Service Personnel including UNFICYP, UK Bases Civilians and Dependants, SBA Police, DFRMO and Service Veterans and members of the ESBA and WSBA gun clubs, all abilities and experience are welcome. Cost is €120 per team of three or €35 per individual. Closing date is Wednesday, March 11th. Please contact Will Wilson on 2527 6663 or Richard Hoole 9977 1098.

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

GYM 2 GYM 2020
Saturday, February 15th. Walkers 08:00 start and Runners 09:00 start.
The Gym 2 Gym event is open to all on island 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 PRIMARY PTA VALENTINE’S CINEMA EXPERIENCE.
Wednesday, February 12th.
Timings FS1: During school hours, FS2 - Yr2: 1400-1600, Yr3-Yr6: 16:30-18:30
Tickets cost €3 and include film, popcorn, a drink and a small gift.
For more information please contact the school on 2527 6390.

AKROTIRI PRIMARY PTA VALENTINE’S CINEMA EXPERIENCE.
Wednesday, February 12th.
Timings FS1: During school hours, FS2 - Yr2: 1400-1600, Yr3-Yr6: 16:30-18:30
Tickets cost €3 and include film, popcorn, a drink and a small gift.
For more information please contact the school on 2527 6390.

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; military, UKBCs, adult dependants (over 18 years) and LECs. It is simple to sign up and pay for your course at your local Learning Centre and then recieve 20% cashback on completion of the qualification. (before March 21st, 2020). For military personnel using their Standard Learning Credits, this qualification will be totally free.

NEW ARRIVALS BRIEF
Thursday, February 13th, 1000-1130
Akrotiri HIVE - Find us next to to the coffee pot. All welcome - open to both new and current members of the Akrotiri community. Meet representatives from all the services and representatives on station, and get all the information you need to settle in to life at Akrotiri. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available. For more information, pop in to the HIVE or call on 2527 6390.

ST JOHN’S SCHOOL - MEET THE HEAD AT AKROTIRI HIVE
Monday, February 10th, 1000.
Mrs Emma Bryson would like to welcome all Akrotiri parents with children currently attending St John’s School for a ‘Meet and Greet’ morning at Akrotiri HIVE. For more information please contact the HIVE on 2527 6390.

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Thursday, February 13th, 1000-1130
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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

AY NIK KART CLUB ARRIVE & DRIVE
Saturday, February 15th 0900-1100
Entertainment and adrenaline for the whole family. Adult, child and twin carts are available. Children must be able to safely push the pedals. Laps are charged at €1 per lap and cool drinks are available from the track staff at a cost. Please like our Facebook page for regular updates and new videos.

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 information contact the HIVE.

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 HOME START STAY AND PLAY
Every Thursday, 0900-1100
Little Monkey’s Dhekelia. €1 per session which includes refreshments. To find out more, contact the HIVE.

AY NIK HOMESTART STAY AND PLAY
Every Monday 0930-1100
€1 per session which includes refreshments. Run by Homestart volunteers, come and join our welcoming, friendly and relaxed atmosphere in which children are given the chance to learn new skills and make new friends. To find out more, contact the HIVE.

DHEKELIA SAILING CLUB L2 POWERBOAT COURSE
Saturday March 7th and Sunday March 8th. For more information or to reserve a place please contact Sue Cherry, training coordinator on training@dhekeliasailing.com

THE MERCURY THEATRE (AY NIK) PRESENTS LADIES’ DAY
Friday, March 20th and Saturday March 21st
Doors open at 1830 and show starts at 1930. Tickets are €5 for children, €10 per adult and €25 per family. Refreshments will be available. Tickets are available at the HIVE.

THE RACING FUTURE (AY NIK) PRESENTS MUSIC TOTS
Friday, March 20th and Saturday March 21st
Bring along your children up to pre-school age. Cost is €1 including a snack. For more information contact the HIVE.

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION BINGO NIGHT
First Friday of every month. 1830-2300
Why not come down to the RBL and try your luck at our monthly bingo? We have refreshments for sale at the Poppy Bar from 1830 onwards and bingo starts at 1930. The RBL Larnaca branch is located between Alexander Barracks and CESSAC in the old Customs building. Everyone is welcome. For more information please contact Julie on 9972 5818 or email rbl.larnaca@gmail.com

THE PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION
Open to all AFC personnel and dependents
Please see the British Forces Cyprus Photographic Competition 2020 on Facebook for more information.
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.

EU exit advice for our community
The following advice is designed to reassure military personnel, UKBCs and dependants in British Forces Cyprus over what happens now that the UK has left the European Union.

Contractors and British Expats in Cyprus should follow the British High Commission’s Living in Cyprus guide on gov.uk.

What is the current situation with EU Exit?
The British Government has agreed a withdrawal deal with the EU, which means the UK along with the Bases has now entered an transition period for the duration of 2020.

What does that mean for us here in British Forces Cyprus?
That means you are still able to shop online, enter and leave Cyprus, access indulgence flights, bring your pets to Cyprus and take them with you when you leave, drive here and across the EU with your British driving licenses, access healthcare in Cyprus and send and receive post to the UK just as you did before 31 January. You are also still able to buy tax free goods in Cyprus over the value of €100.

How do we stand with importing Tax Free goods, such as cars?
BFC personnel can also still buy vehicles and import them into Cyprus. We advise anyone planning to either purchase a vehicle from the UK or return a vehicle to the UK to check with the Fiscal office for any changes to the rules around VAT and Import Duty that may occur as a result of EU exit. We will also issue further guidance on this in due course.

So, what happens next?
The Government is aiming to agree a free trade deal with the EU which will come into effect once the transition period finishes at the end of 2020, and we will of course ensure our whole community is kept updated as that progresses.

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 Freddome 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.

Going Skiing at Troodos?
For more information on conditions and which slopes are open, visit:
http://www.cyprusski.com
http://www.cyprusski.com/piste-road-conditions
https://www.skicyprus.com
https://www.skicyprus.com/webcam

Looking for employment on camp?
UK Dependant and Locally Employed Civilian roles can be found on the SBA Administration website: https://sbaadministration.org/index.php/m-vacancies

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 February:**

BAD BOYS FOR LIFE (15)
Marcus Burnett is now a police inspector and Mike Lowery is in a midlife crisis. They unite again when an Albanian mercenary, whose brother they killed, promises them an important bonus.

OTHER SHOWINGS THIS MONTH: The Gentlemen (18), Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker (12A), 1917 (15), Just Mercy (12A), Birds of Prey (TBC), The Lion King (PG), Spies in Disguise (PG), Frozen 2 (U), Toy Story 4 (U), The Secret Life of pets 2 (U), Underwater (15), Sonic the Hedgehog, (PG)

For full cinema listings, prices and reviews go to https://www.forcescinemas.com/akrotiri

**Showing at the Key Dhekelia in February:**

THE GENTLEMEN (18)
A British drug lord tries to sell off his highly profitable empire to a dynasty of Oklahoma billionaires.

OTHER SHOWINGS THIS MONTH: Just Mercy (12A), 1917 (15), Chaapack (12A), Bad boys for life (15), Spies in Disguise (PG), Dolittle (PG), Birds of Prey; Underwater (15).

For full cinema listings, prices and reviews, go to https://www.forcescinemas.com/dhekelia

**Showing at the Mercury Ay Nik in February:**

JUST MERCY (12A)
A powerful and thought-provoking true story, ‘Just Mercy’ follows young lawyer Bryan Stevenson (Jordan) and his history-making battle for justice.

OTHER SHOWINGS THIS MONTH: Star Wars, The Rise of Skywalker (12A), Just Mercy (12A), 1917 (15), Spies in Disguise (PG), Dolittle (PG), Birds of Prey (TBC). Underwater (15).

For full cinema listings, prices and reviews, go to https://www.forcescinemas.com/ayios-nikolaos

**Showing at Episkopi Cinema Club in February:**

KNIVES OUT (12A)
When renowned crime novelist Harlan Thrombey (Christopher Plummer) is found dead at his estate just after his 85th birthday, the inquisitive and debonair Detective Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig) is mysteriously enlisted to investigate.

ALSO SHOWING THIS MONTH: Spies in Disguise (PG), Jumanji: The Next Level (12A), Star Wars, The Rise of Skywalker (12A), Jojo Rabbit (12A), Cats (U), Le Mans 66 (12A), Bad Boys For Life (15).

For full cinema listings see the Episkopi Community Support Facebook Page

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**The Bad Boys are back in town**

BAD BOYS for Life catches up with its heroes Mike Lowrey (Will Smith) and Marcus Burnett (Martin Lawrence) at what should be the end of their careers. Burnett’s now a grandpa, and wants to retire. Lowrey, however, still wants to be a Bad Boy. Unfortunately for them, they’ve got company. The charmingly named AMMO squad is Miami PD’s elite team that specializes in high-tech tactics for bringing down high-profile criminals.

Bad Boys For Life is like a less self-aware Hot Fuzz, a movie about how much of a pain in the ass it is to be cops who work with wannabe action heroes. Unfortunately, the new faces are underutilized. Its villains, the mother-son team of Isabel Aretas (Kate del Castillo) and Armando Armas (Jacob Scipio) are terrific but surprisingly absent; they barely appear in the movie’s second act.

The AMMO squad is fun, but seems to waste Hudgens and Melton, two actors who are likely capable of leading a spinoff film. None of this ruins the movie, it just might’ve been the difference between good and great.

Bad Boys for Life is admirable in its lack of ambition. It’s here to serve action and comedy in roughly proportionate amounts, with big set pieces that are just thrilling enough to hook you and jokes that are just funny enough for you to hope no one dies.

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.
The Exiles Hockey Club is a fun, friendly, mixed club, open to all entitled personnel and their families, based out of Happy Valley.

Training once a week during our summer and winter seasons, we play semi-regular matches against other teams on island, visiting teams, as well as matches against the Cyprus National teams – usually all followed by a barbecue on the beach.

Our players are truly a mixture of abilities; we welcome anyone with any level of experience, and our sessions are designed to build everyone’s skill levels. Even if someone has never held a stick before, we work together as a club to build their confidence and skills using peer coaching and group work to create a supportive environment. There is no pressure; we are all there to play hockey, do some exercise, and have a laugh while we’re at it.

Off the pitch, we keep the fun going with socials throughout the year.

Once a month we follow up training with a pizza night, paid for by the club; in the summer these take place at Lemming’s Beach, only a couple hundred metres away from the pitch.

Our social secretary also organises events such as karaoke night, and towards the end of the year we celebrated our achievements with an end of season and awards dinner.

We welcome new players at any point in the year. Our team is for anyone aged 13+, so if you have a child who would like to join us, please reach out for more details.

We train on Wednesday evenings from 18:00 to 19:30; search Exiles Hockey Club on Facebook to get the most up to date information on training sessions and socials.
MORE THAN 100 professionals from British Forces Cyprus’ UK Dependant community have signed up to become members of the Cyprus Military Coworking Hub which aims to connect small business owners in RAF Akrotiri and Episkopi.

The brainchild of Delyth Moylan, a Private GP Practice Manager, Leanne Lancaster, Suzy Olivier, Katie Baines and Emma Ford, the Facebook virtual hub, also aims to help those working remotely combat the challenges of not having an office environment to go to daily.

One of the founding members, Leanne Lancaster said: “When you’re at work or college, nothing sounds more appealing than a cozy day at home wearing your favourite comfy clothes but when you’re at home, you long for a chat with your co-workers or fellow students about last night’s episode of Love Island.

“The grass always appears to be greener and this is exactly how many military dependents that work or study from home feel on a daily basis.

“The purpose of the Facebook ‘virtual hub’ will allow individuals and businesses to boost their skills, be inspired by other members and find support and friendship within the group.

“Yes, remote working provides flexibility but it can also be extremely isolating. Living at RAF Akrotiri or Episkopi Garrison certainly has its perks but for the many small business owners, remote workers and students on base, staring at four magnolia walls can impact both productivity and wellbeing.”

The online Cyprus Military Coworking Hub now has 125 members on Facebook only three months after it was established and Delyth Moylan feels it is proving popular for many reasons. She explained: “The hub is a gateway into a completely inclusive community. We want to stamp out the feeling of isolation and for our members to feel they can always come to the hub for support. We couldn’t be more delighted with the response from our members.”

The online community recently got together for the first ever face-to-face ‘Hub Huddle’ and according to the organisers, it gave the members the chance to “share experiences, ideas and concerns”.

Mrs Lancaster continued: “The ultimate aim is to open a physical hub at RAF Akrotiri so that community members have a place that they can turn up to and work, whatever that may be.

“Empowering military spouses to maintain their identities and careers whilst supporting their serving partners is an important goal of the hub and one that is hoped to be achieved very soon.”

The next Hub Huddle is scheduled to take place on Friday, February 28 at the Akrotiri HIVE, between 9am and 10:30am. To find out more about the online community and for updates on the physical hub, check out the Facebook page: Cyprus Military Coworking Hub.

EARLIER this month, representatives from various organisations across British Forces Cyprus visited St John’s School in Episkopi to deliver a Drugs Substance Misuse presentation to Year 11 students.

SBA Police Community Officer, Police Constable Lucy Charalambous, was joined by BFC school Nurse, Victoria Critchley and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Nurse, Claire Lenehan, who all played an active role.

The presentation focused largely on illegal drugs and the impact they have on society and in particular, on school-age children.

The misuse of drugs and the hugely damaging impact they can have on the body in both the short and long-term, was also highlighted to the students, by showing them the ageing effect these substances have.

Reflecting on the hard-hitting seminar, PC Charalambous explained why it was so important to get the message through to the students.

She said: “As a Community Police officer, I strive to educate young people, especially teenagers about the dangers involved with drugs misuse, in order to make them think twice about taking drugs, or never trying them in the first place.”

Registered Nurse, Victoria Critchley, who works closely with the students daily, was equally passionate about the importance of the presentation.

She said: “As the school nurse one of my roles is to inform young people about the health risks they will be exposed to in their physical and social environment and my aim for this session was to educate them to the reality of experimenting with recreational drugs and the short and long-term implications.”

St John’s School teacher, Marina Lea, feels the relationship between the students, the police and the health authorities is key to getting the message through to her students.

She explained: “Creating a link between Community Officers, nurses and health workers is vitally important in schools. The Substance Misuse presentation we received allowed our pupils to access a fantastic professional and up to date breadth of knowledge.”
FIVE MEMBERS of British Forces Cyprus took part in Exercise Caribbean Express at the end of last year, which saw experienced and novice sailors develop their offshore skills in the challenging North Atlantic and Caribbean waters.

The expedition, which is run by the Joint Service Adventure Training Group, saw sailors tackle the waters around the beautiful Caribbean islands of Sandy Island, Iles des Saintes and Tobago Cays. The 15-man crew was given a true taste of life on the water as they all undertook watch duties to ensure the expedition ran smoother than the sea they were sailing on.

Sergeant Nick Plant, who works for J6 in Episkopi, explained a little more about the exercise: “The on and off duty watch rotated every four hours with the mother watch allocated for 24 hours. The skipper briefed the route, which saw the crew sail north from Grenada through the Eastern Caribbean, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, before heading towards the French region Guadeloupe and the stunning Iles des Saintes. This was the most northerly destination before making the return journey back towards Grenada.”

Port Louis Marina, in Grenada, acted as both the first and final destination for the two-week expedition and Sgt Plant revealed it was a memorable experience. “The days were challenging, with mixed weather conditions resulting in tiring work for the crew to ensure the sails were at their optimum, whilst a third of the crew struggled to fight sea sickness through choppy waters.”

But despite all the hard work, the sergeant said the crew did make time for some snorkelling, where he revealed they were confronted with a harsh reality. “Sandy Island prevents any commercialisation in order to retain its natural beauty,” he said. “But snorkelling here highlighted the sadness of climate change, where the majority of coral had depleted and lost its colour.”

This latest event highlights further how sport continues to be an integral part of the curriculum across MOD schools in Cyprus.

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.

Netball victory for Episkopi

EPISKOPI Primary School were celebrating at the end of last month after being crowned Super league and Premier Leaguenetball champions in the all-island school competition.

With two trophies up for grabs Episkopi’s A and B teams were unstoppable on their path to glory, with both sides winning all three of their matches.

Head of Physical Education at the school, Terence Fazackerley, was delighted with their performance during the tournament. He said: “Episkopi A and B teams were both victorious in their games and they were able to boast perfect records of played three, won three. “They were deserved winners. They are such a talented bunch and showed the high standards that they can achieve with hard-work, focus and determination. “The coaches, Mrs Fensom and Mrs Holmes, have done a brilliant job preparing these players and it paid off today.”

This latest event highlights further how sport continues to be an integral part of the curriculum across MOD schools in Cyprus.