It is now 30 years since the first troops of the MFO marched into North Camp on the Sinai Peninsula to commence their active peacekeeping role. This has been a unique endeavour and represents among the longest and most successful commitments to peace in the Middle East. Unique because it is subscribed to and financed by the two parties involved, Egypt and Israel, alongside their United States partner, and because it is an independent force outside the United Nations. Successful because, apart from the inevitable minor and mostly accidental infractions of the Treaty provisions, peace has been safeguarded in a region where those two parties had waged violent war on three occasions in the previous quarter-century.

New Zealand has been a contributing nation to the MFO since its inception and is looked upon by both parties to the Treaty as a valuable and reliable partner. The New Zealand Contingent has contributed in many ways to the life of the Force both on and off duty. It has been seen by the command in the Sinai and by other contingents as a thoroughly professional group which has a comprehensive understanding of its roles and how to perform them. And New Zealanders have always given their full commitment to its social, sporting and recreational programmes.

It is the responsibility of the Commanders to pause and reflect on what has been achieved by the MFO and by New Zealand’s commitment to it. We have been an integral part of the Force’s pragmatic and even-handed approach towards its responsibilities in this turbulent part of the world. Its successful commitment to preserving peace is respected and valued. I send greetings to all those who have served with pride in the MFO over its 30 years life and best wishes to those who are in the Sinai now continuing the fine tradition.

Best wishes

Don McIver (Lieutenant General, retired)

New Zealand has been contributing troops to the MFO since its inception, and some personnel, both within the NZDF and outside, question why we are still involved in this mission. After 30 years, is the MFO still relevant? The answer is easy, yes! The events in Egypt since the Arab Spring only confirm that answer.

1948 until 1973 was marked by a series of wars between Israel and Egypt. Both countries could see that this situation could not continue. However, it took two extremely brave and forward thinking leaders, Begin and Sadat, to sign the Peace Treaty that led to the formation of the MFO. Since 1973, a cold peace has existed between the two countries and I believe that this is the legacy the MFO has provided to the region.

Since the 2011 revolution in Egypt, there has been much rhetoric about scrapping, or at least amending, the Peace Treaty. We have seen a military dominated regime under Mubarak overthrown, but they at least fought in the wars of the 50s, 60’s and 70’s and knew the human cost. They were more than happy to preserve the Treaty.

We now have a democratically elected government in Egypt, with perceived strong links to Hamas in the Gaza Strip. There is resentment in Egypt to the limitations of their sovereignty and their ability to deploy troops when and where they wish in the Sinai. The new Government has continued to honor the Treaty. Why? They have seen that there is flexibility within the Treaty, albeit with the concurrence of Israel, to deploy troops throughout the whole of the Sinai. This is facilitated through the MFO, a valuable contribution within the current climate. Egypt is also committed to seeing that Egypt maintains security in the Sinai, even if it would appear that this is in self-interest. I would suggest that the real reason is that Israel would prefer to see a strong Egypt, rather than having one divided by internal problems that could have a long term destabilising influence on the region.

The Kiwis have made a significant contribution to this peace and the MFO. While they are few in numbers and deployed across a wide variety of roles within the MFO, from operations, liaison, personnel, engineering, driving and training; they touch everyone in the Force on a daily basis. Their unique culture, can-do attitude and ability to mix with everyone leads to a greater contribution than their numbers would suggest. I think the NZDF and New Zealanders generally should be proud of the contribution that this small band of Kiwis has made to the MFO and the region, continuing a legacy started by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles in World War One.

Kia Kaha

Major General Warren Whiting
Force Commander
The origins of the Multinational Force and Observers, headquartered in Rome, with peace keeping responsibilities in the Sinai, lie in Annex I to the 1979 Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel, entitled “Protocol Concerning Israeli Withdrawal and Security Arrangements.” The area subject to Annex I is divided into four zones, Zones A, B, and C in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt and Zone D in Israel. Zones C and D are adjacent to the international border. This Annex also establishes post-withdrawal levels of military personnel and equipment allowed in each zone and, in Article VI, states that both Parties would request the United Nations provide a force and observers to supervise the implementation of these provisions.

During the period leading up to the signing of the Treaty, it became understood that United Nations Security Council approval for the stationing of a United Nations peace keeping force in the Sinai would be unlikely. Therefore, on March 26, 1979, the day the Treaty of Peace was signed, United States President Carter sent identical letters to Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Begin specifying certain United States commitments with respect to the Treaty of Peace. These commitments included a promise that the United States would take the necessary steps to ensure the establishment and maintenance of an alternative multinational force should the United Nations fail to assume this role. In 1981, the Protocol to the Treaty of Peace confirmed the MFO as the alternative peace keeping arrangement to the envisioned United Nations force. The new independent, international organisation would be funded in equal parts by Egypt, Israel, and the United States, an arrangement that assured each that their governments would take an active interest in the operations of the organisation.
At first glance, the Sinai Peninsula appears to be no more than sixty thousand square kilometres of land stretching along the African and Asian continents in a triangular shape; bordering the Suez Canal and Gulf of Suez to the west, the Mediterranean Sea to the north, and Israel and the Gulf of Aqaba to the east. It is an extremely dry landscape with vast barren desert stretching along the Mediterranean coastline down to the southern mountainous region. Although dry rivers beds litter the southern landscape, the Sinai receives less than 100 millimetres of rain fall each year. While most of the Sinai Peninsula continues to include violent struggle and since World War II, Egypt and Israel have fought in the Sinai four times. Egyptian interference in Israeli shipping through the closure of the Strait of Tiran precipitated war in 1956 and again eleven years later. Israel captured the entire territory of Tiran from Egypt in the 1967 Six-Day War, resulting in a war in 1973 that ended in a stalemate. Yom Kippur War saw Egypt fight back although Israel retained control of the Sinai until the final stage of the 1979 Camp David accords were implemented in 1982. At the same time, the Peninsula was divided into a number of zones of demilitarisation, to be monitored by the newly formed independent organisation, the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO).

The mission of the MFO is to monitor the truce between Israel and Egypt, by observing, reporting and verifying any breaches. New Zealand has been actively involved in the MFO since 1982 and continues to deploy 26 NZ Defence Force personnel at a time for six month rotations. Personnel are drawn from the NZ Army, Royal NZ Navy and Royal NZ Air Force. The current Force Commander of the MFO is a New Zealander; Major General Warren Whiting. The MFO’s mission is to monitor the truce between Israel and Egypt, by observing, reporting and verifying any breaches. New Zealand has been actively involved in the MFO since 1982 and continues to deploy 26 NZ Defence Force personnel at a time for six month rotations. Personnel are drawn from the NZ Army, Royal NZ Navy and Royal NZ Air Force. The current Force Commander of the MFO is a New Zealander; Major General Warren Whiting.

MFO members are given the opportunity to explore Egypt including a tour to Cairo and its environs and the pyramids at Giza. On the tour a local tour guide will explain the historical and religious significance of the pyramids and to also to visit the Tombs of the Pharaohs. New Zealand has been actively involved in the MFO since 1982 and continues to deploy 26 NZ Defence Force personnel at a time for six month rotations. Personnel are drawn from the NZ Army, Royal NZ Navy and Royal NZ Air Force. The current Force Commander of the MFO is a New Zealander; Major General Warren Whiting.

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While the MFO’s Director General and headquarters is in Rome, the Force Commander and main body are located in North Camp. The MFO operates numerous other remote observation posts scattered throughout the Peninsula. The mission of the MFO is to monitor the truce between Israel and Egypt, by observing, reporting and verifying any breaches. New Zealand has been actively involved in the MFO since 1982 and continues to deploy 26 NZ Defence Force personnel at a time for six month rotations. Personnel are drawn from the NZ Army, Royal NZ Navy and Royal NZ Air Force. The current Force Commander of the MFO is a New Zealander; Major General Warren Whiting.

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The ongoing Kiwi contribution to the MFO continues to cement our influence on what is arguably the most successful peace keeping mission ever formed. Its location in one of the world’s political and military hotspots and in particular its proximity to the Gaza Strip, regularly places the MFO in an unenviable position.

The often volatile region is routinely described as a tinderbox and yet the continuing goodwill of Israel and Egypt along with the ongoing monitoring of the MFO mission, ensures that the aging truce agreement is upheld. In the meantime and with no indication of NZ’s involvement ending, 26 NZ Defence Force personnel continue to deploy on their mission to the far off land that is the Sinai.

This essay was provided by Flight Sergeant Grant Seales, who served at the MFO in the role of Acting Warrant Officer in 2007/2008.
The MFO is an independent, international organisation whose expenses, less contributions from the Governments of Japan, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Germany, are funded in equal parts by the Arab Republic of Egypt, the State of Israel and the United States of America. The 12 Participating States—currently Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Colombia, Fiji, France, Hungary, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, the United States, and Uruguay—provide the MFO with military contingents that make up the Force and perform specific and specialised tasks. Though not technically a Participating State, Norway, provides the MFO with five staff officers.

Responsibility for the direction of the MFO is vested in the Director General by the Protocol to the Treaty of Peace. He exercises his authority through his staff at the Headquarters in Rome, the Force Commander and his staff in the Sinai, and the Director General’s representatives and their staffs in Cairo and Tel Aviv.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL
MFO HEADQUARTERS, ROME

MFO headquarters in Rome oversees all MFO operations, including legal and financial matters, contracts, procurement, personnel and...
**THE FORCE AND OBSERVERS**

The Force Commander, currently Major General Warren Whiting, stationed at North Camp, is responsible for the command and control of the MFO in the area of operation. The Force Commander is responsible for approximately 2000 multinational military and civilian personnel, principally located at two main sites in the Sinai.

**NORTH CAMP**

The MFO’s North Camp is the site of the Force Commander’s headquarters. It is located at el Gorah in the northern Sinai, approximately 20 kilometers south of the Mediterranean coastline. It provides facilities for both the operational and logistical needs of the Force as well as a suitable living environment for military and civilian personnel. Covering approximately 2.7 square kilometers (660 acres) reclaimed from the desert, the camp has aviation support buildings, a gymnasium, a theatre, barracks, support buildings, a gymnasium, a theatre, barracks, and a travel agency are also available at the camp. South Camp receives its potable water from a reverse osmosis water desalinisation plant and from the local Egyptian water system originating at wells in the el Tor area near the southwestern coast of the Sinai Peninsula. As at North Camp, an electric power plant runs the MFO provides a reliable source of electricity.

**SOUTH CAMP**

The smaller South Camp, near Sharm el Sheikh on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, is situated on a bluff overlooking the Red Sea. The camp contains facilities such as a laundry, Force Exchange, library and gymnasium, an adjacent beach, clubs and a travel agency are also available at the camp. South Camp receives its potable water from a reverse osmosis water desalinisation plant and from the local Egyptian water system originating at wells in the el Tor area near the southwestern coast of the Sinai Peninsula. As at North Camp, an electric power plant runs the MFO provides a reliable source of electricity.

**REMOTE OPERATIONAL SITES**

Since 1998, 30 remote operational sites (ROS) have been located throughout Zone C. The MFO’s soldiers at these sites perform the vital “observe and report” functions of the peace keeping force, and are supported at their posts by the MFO logistics and communications systems. All required water, food and fuel for on-site generators and other necessary supplies must be transported from the main camps. The soldiers who are on duty at these generally isolated sites.

**THE CIVILIAN OBSERVER UNIT**

A large part of the MFO’s basic mission in the Sinai is performed by the relatively few men and women who comprise the Civilian Observer Unit (COU). The COU has its origins in the United States Sinai Field Mission (SFN) which came into existence with the Sinai II Agreement of 1975. On April 25, 1982, SFN ceased operations and its members transferred to the MFO. SFM’s Commander’s headquarters and central CPs were established. The forces are on duty at these generally isolated sites.

**THE INFANTRY BATTALIONS:**

**COLOMBIA, FIJI AND UNITED STATES**

Three battalions, one each from Colombia, the Republic of the Fiji Islands and the United States, perform observation duties throughout Zone C. The Colombian and Fijian Battalions are based in North Camp, while the United States Battalion is located at South Camp. The battalions are responsible for the command and control of approximately 150 soldiers at these isolated sites.

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three ships is commanded by a Navy Commander; all personnel are part of the Coastal Patrol Unit except one Officer who works in the Liaison branch.

THE AUSTRALIAN CONTINGENT

Australia has a long association with the MFO, and was one of the original contributing nations. Australia and New Zealand contributed the Force’s Rotary Wing Aviation Unit (RWAU), a combined Air Force helicopter squadron, from March 1982 until April 1998. Australia renewed its commitment to the MFO in January 1993, with an Army contingent of 26 personnel. Australian Citizen personnel are all based at North Camp. The Contingent currently consists of 25 personnel ranging in rank from Corporal (Cpl) to Lieutenant Colonel (L Col). Personnel are posted unaccompanied to the Sinai for a six-month tour, with half the contingent rotating every month. The only exception to this is the Commander, who rotates every twelve months.

The three-month rotation plan allows key staff, including the Provincial Commander, who rotates every twelve months.

THE CANADIAN CONTINGENT

The Canadian Contingent consists of 28 members of the Canadian Forces ranging in rank from Corporal (Cpl) to Lieutenant Colonel (L Col). All three branches of service, Army, Navy and Air Force are represented. Canadian personnel are posted to the Sinai for a period of either six months or one year. Members of the Canadian Contingent represent a wide variety of positions across all branches of the MFO. All Canadians are based at North Camp, El Gorah, Sinai. Key MFO positions held by Canadians are the Chief of Liaison, who is also the Commander of the Canadian Contingent, and the Force Sergeant Major (FSM). The Chief of Liaison is the primary officer responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Force Liaison Branch. The FSM is the senior soldier within the Canadian Forces and has a wide variety of responsibilities. These efforts include assuming the duties of Force Engineering Office (FEO) and the Operations Branch, New Zealand holds several high profile Force staff appointments. The Canadian Contingent also provides a transport section of eight personnel, to provide a Training & Facilities Engineer Officer Remote Site (North) who is part of the Operations Branch, New Zealand

THE FRENCH CONTINGENT

France’s commitment to the MFO has been unbroken since 1982. Until June 2013, France provided the MFO with fixed wing support which included aircraft, crew and staff officers. Currently, the French Contingent consists of two Army Lieutenant Colonels who work within the Liaison Branch, one in North Camp as the Deputy Chief of Liaison and the second as the senior South Camp Liaison Officer. The tour of duty for these personnel is one year.

THE HUNGARIAN CONTINGENT

The Hungarian Contingent has been part of the MFO since September 1995. The Contingent is comprised of forty-two personnel. All members of the contingent are military police serving with the Force Military Police Unit (FMPU) except for two members serving on the Force staff; a Doctor and an Information Officer (Major) and Force Engineering Staff Officer (Major). All Czech officers serve a voluntary one-year tour of duty with the MFO.

THE CZECH CONTINGENT

The Czech Contingent is the newest member of the MFO family of troop-contributing nations. The first soldiers arrived in the Sinai on 17 November 2012. Czech Contingent members are three staff officers in the following positions: Assistant Chief of Staff (Colonel), Deputy Force Protection Information Officer (Major) and Force Engineering Staff Officer (Major). All Czech officers serve a voluntary one-year tour of duty with the MFO.

THE ITALIAN CONTINGENT

Italy has provided the MFO’s Coastal Patrol Unit (CPU) uninterruptedly since 1982 and during the period March 2000–2007, the MFO’s Force Commander, Roberto Martellini. The mission of the CPU is to provide security and patrolling of the Straits of Tiran and its approaches to ensure that freedom of navigation is maintained. As additional tasks, the Unit also provides support to the local Egyptian authorities in search and rescue (SAR) operations and anti-pollution patrol, which are both in-theatre duties for the Italian Navy. The Italian Contingent comprises both military and civilian personnel, all of whom serve a one-year tour of duty with the MFO.

THE NEW ZEALAND CONTINGENT

New Zealand (NZCMFO) has been a member of the MFO since its inception. Participation by New Zealand originally took the form of Rotary Wing Air Support and subsequently evolved to its present form. In 1999, New Zealand increased its participation to twenty-six personnel. The primary tasks of the NZCMFO are to provide a transport section of eight personnel, under the operational control of the Uruguayan Transportation Unit to drive and maintain vehicle(s) as required by the Force and to provide a Training & Facilities Engineer Officer to cover the officer’s absence. Another key appointment filled by New Zealand is that of the Force Commander’s Aide-de-camp. A mixture of diplomacy and a firm understanding of the nature of the multinational environment are a necessity for this appointment.

The New Zealand Contingent also provides a Staff Officer in the Operations Branch, a Liaison Officer and the Clerk to the Liaison Branch. Also part of the Operations Branch, New Zealand contributes an Officer to fill the position of Deputy Chief of Operations for Plans (DCOP– Plans). The DCOP-Plans is also responsible for

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The Norwegian Contingent (KFORCON) consists of three staff officers. They hold the following key positions: Chief of Operations (Colonel) and two Force Field Liaison Officers (Majors). The Norwegians have been with the MFO since its inception. Over one hundred Norwegians have served with the Force. Norway has also provided a total of four Force Commanders. For Norwegian officers, service in the Sinai is voluntary, and assignment to the MFO is highly desirable and sought after within the Norwegian Army. Norwegian forces serve in a one-year tour of duty with the MFO.

**The United States Contingent**

The United States Army provides the largest contingent to the MFO. The US contingent provides a key position to the MFO: as the Force Chief of Staff (COS) and also commands Task Force Sinai. As the Chief of Staff, this officer coordinates and directs all staff actions within the Force and answers for the Force in the Commander’s absence. As Task Force Sinai Commander, the US Army’s COS provides direct logistical support to all twelve contingents within the MFO at both base camps and all 30 remote sites. AVCO provides rotary and fixed wing aviation support to the MFO. Rotary support consists of eight UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and the fixed wing aircraft is a C-23. All aircraft are provided by the US Army. AVCO runs simultaneous operations at North and South Camps and provides general aviation support missions at both, including Civilian Observer Unit rotations, unexploded ordnance (UXO) deactivation, and humanitarian demining efforts. AVCO arranges for the transfer of personnel to and from the Sinai and organizes support airlifts for the entire Sinai. The Air Warrior Program (AWP) is also operated by AVCO. It includes three personnel and five cargo aircraft for cargo and humanitarian missions.

**THE URUGUAY CONTINGENT**

Uruguay has provided a contingent to the MFO since 1982. Currently, the Contingent provides a Transport and Engineering Unit (TREU) in support of the MFO mission and authorized strength is 58 personnel. One hundred Uruguayan soldiers serve in the Sinai. Since June 2007, a significant number of newly arrived MFO personnel on the recognition of Civilian Observer Units (COUs) and families of departed COUs. The Contingent also provides a Staff Officer who operates as a Liaison Officer, linking the Uruguayan Transportation Unit. Additionally, the Contingent provides a Medical officer to support the Force Medical Center, providing medical assistance to all personnel.

**CIVILIAN SUPPORT**

The Force Exchange is supported by MFO direct hire civilians and contractor personnel. The MFO directly hires civilians from various countries, who play a vital role in procurement, contracting, morale support, secretarial services, and legal and financial functions. The Force Exchange (shop) and the libraries are staffed by civilians.

Key to the smooth functioning of the Force is the work carried out by the support services contractor. These services consist of vehicle, utilities and facilities maintenance, food services, laundry, fire protection, grounds maintenance, custodial services, as well as clubs, shoe repair, hair cutting and tailoring.

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