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# UN Field Service

## The first foreign experience of the Austrian police

The participation in international peacekeeping operations to date represents one of Austria's most significant contributions to the maintenance of peace and security. Following the restoration of state sovereignty in 1955, the deployment of the armed forces' paramedics in the Congo (1960–1963) and from the civil perspective, the deployment of police contingents on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus (1964–1977) are considered the first official peace missions with Austrian participation. Both cases were missions of the United Nations, thus, 1964 counts as the beginning of the Austrian police's decades-long commitment to peace policy. However, its first experience took place earlier. From 1958, that is two years before the first federal army members marked the official restart of Austrian foreign commitments, officials of the Austrian police force were deployed in the UN Field Service. However, these provided their service not as Austrian security forces on the basis of an appropriate UN mandate, but rather acted by means of individually concluded UN service contracts and were on leave of absence from their domestic security service for the duration of their UN deployment. This article will enable an overview of this first foreign experience of the Austrian police, before official Austrian police contingents were deployed from 1964 on, which have participated in over 30 different missions worldwide since then.



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### GENERAL CONDITIONS AND CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

In December 1957, the Federal Ministry of the Interior sent out a circular letter to the subordinate gendarmerie and police stations in order to point out the possibility which it had only just become aware of – that in the future, Austrian law enforcement officials could also apply for service in the “United Nations Police Task Force” (in the sense of the “UN Field Service” created in support of UN operations).<sup>1</sup> Prospective applicants had to be between 23 and 40 years of age, have a height of at

least 1.77 metres and be able to demonstrate at least three years of police service. Good English language skills were made mandatory, additional knowledge of French was advantageous. In addition to the obligation to wear a uniform, the applicants had to be “at least reasonably good marksmen”. The possession of a valid driving licence, a very good state of health proven by a medical certificate, as well as the willingness to be deployed anywhere in the world completed the requirements. The members of the UN Field Service were primarily intended to guard personnel and property of the United Nations, in particular in

the context of the observation mission of the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) in the Middle East. In addition to these security tasks, however, activities such as chauffeur services or clerical work were included among their tasks.<sup>2</sup>

Although there had been no legal basis on which a posting of Austrian police officers could take place, in 1957, the Ministry of the Interior conducted an ongoing call for expression of interest until February 1958. Albeit at this time it was not clear how many Austrian applicants the UN could take, a large number of applications was expected. For good reason, as in addition to the international working environment with the associated broadening of horizons and personal development, as well as the high social prestige as a UN employee, the pay was also very attractive. Depending on the area of deployment, due to the high dollar exchange rate, this amounted to four or five times the Austrian salary.<sup>3</sup> The expectations were confirmed – by February 1958, 145 applications had arrived, of which 91 were from Vienna, from various federal police agencies. The respective service authorities had to support the application for admission to the UN Field Service or at least confirm that the applicant fulfilled the admission conditions. Nevertheless, minor repeated deviations made by the Ministry of the Interior were determined, such as not quite having reached the minimum height or the lack of possession of a valid driver's licence. In addition, the knowledge of the specific foreign languages was generally not verified.<sup>4</sup> Since at that time, it was already clear that there would be enough applications and further subsequently submitted applications were expected, the extent to which applicants could comply with aspects of employment law was initially explored in consultation with the Federal Chancellery for Foreign Affairs<sup>5</sup>, the Federal Ministry of Finance

and the Health Insurance Institute for federal employees. In the process, unified service legal guidelines had to be set as soon as possible for all applicants from the staff of the Federal Police and the Federal Gendarmerie. The result finally provided that each Austrian law enforcement officer who was taken by the United Nations under contract had to take a leave of absence without domestic salary. The leave of absence was initially granted for one year, whereby the period of the leave of absence could not be taken into account for advancement into higher salary bands, nor for pension assessment. The latter measure was implemented in order to avoid a duplicate pension calculation, as the United Nations offered its own pension scheme and the applicants would be treated as members of the UN personal pension fund in accordance with the UN conditions of employment and would thus have the appropriate contributions deducted from their salary. In addition, a voluntary life insurance could be concluded on a voluntary basis via the United Nations. The period of leave of absence was taken into account in Austria for the determination of service rank and service allowance. If the respective leave entitlement was not used, it was calculated into the time of the UN service and thus the leave of absence first began at the time of the exhaustion of the leave entitlement.<sup>6</sup> The transport costs for the journey to the respective place of service and the costs of the return journey after the end of the service were assumed by the United Nations, provided that the service relationship was not resolved before its expiry and without consent. The United Nations also reserved the right to a 30-day notice period.<sup>7</sup> Each officer had to use his leave entitlement after resuming service in Austria for the duration of the return journey, which was mostly undertaken by car or ship. On request, the Minis-

try of the Interior could additionally grant a “leave for special reason”, the duration of which was at the discretion of the service authority, which as a rule was 14 days.<sup>8</sup>

### FIRST ASSIGNMENTS

In June 1958, the Human Resources Department of the European Office of the United Nations in Geneva announced its intention to include the first Austrians in the UN Field Service.<sup>9</sup> A few weeks later, the first seven members of the Austrian police received their marching orders to travel to Jerusalem and report to the command of the local UN observation mission UNTSO, as well as the Field Service to subsequently, depending on requirements, be allocated to the various UN departments and agencies in Gaza, Jordan or Lebanon. At the same time, the Federal Chancellery of Foreign Affairs informed the Austrian missions<sup>10</sup> in Tel Aviv, Cairo and Beirut of the arrival of national officials, whereby it was determined that “by the inclusion in the United Nations Police Task Force, the Austrian officials – and any other Austrian police and gendarmerie officials that were included in the UN Field Service – [are] namely UN officials and as such consequently hardly in a position to avail of the protection of the Austrian representative authorities; however, those affected will be pleased to know that the locally responsible Austrian representative authorities have been informed of their presence”.<sup>11</sup> In addition, it was announced in the letter that the UN Human Resources Department in Geneva envisaged including further Austrian candidates in the UN Field Service soon.

In January 1959, a letter from the Austrian embassy in Beirut rocked the boat in Vienna. The background was the allocation of Austrian police officers to the UN observation mission UNOGIL, which was deployed in Lebanon from June to Decem-

ber 1958 to monitor illegal border crossings and smuggling of war materials.<sup>12</sup> When in the course of the dissolution of this UN observation group, the service contract of two Austrian officials of the UN Field Service was terminated, a controversial message of another unnamed Austrian UN official reached the Austrian mission in Beirut, which claimed that the two Austrian police officers deployed in the context of the UNOGIL mission had in reality been dismissed due to incompetence. According to the allegations, one of the two had no idea about driving a motor vehicle and the other had not even had the most primitive knowledge of English. In addition to the Austrian officials, Irish, Norwegian, Japanese and Greek UN employees were dismissed at this time, whereby “a representative of the competent UN secretariat, which had checked the dismissals on the spot in Beirut, [should have] prescribed that applications for the UN police from those states which had endorsed their nationals as UN police officers, although these did not meet the prescribed conditions for inclusion in the UN police force, would be checked more rigorously in the future”, so the

Source: Sabitzer 2011, 27



Austrian member of the UN Field Service (Jerusalem)

Austrian mission in Beirut therefore found itself obliged to “make a report, in order to at least prevent the appearance of Austria in the UN Institute in question, namely the UN police force, being damaged by Austria not carrying out appropriate preliminary checks of candidates”.<sup>13</sup>

In Vienna, they endeavoured to gain an overview of the actual situation as quickly as possible. Thus, it was established on the basis of UN testimonials that the two returning Austrian officials “had been deployed as security officers, their performance had been satisfactory in all respects and their behaviour was excellent”. It was further “confirmed” that the dissolution of the service relationship was solely due to the dissolution of the UN mission in Lebanon, by which the Viennese Ministry of the Interior, “reckoned with the possibility that the unnamed informant of the Austrian mission in Beirut either had knowingly given false information for whatever reason or at least passed on rumours not checked for detail in a frivolous manner”.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, it was also very self-critical as to “what the checking of applicants for admission to the police force of the United Nations meant”, as here “it was determined that such had not taken place on the side of the Austrian service authorities, at least it is [...] not known whether the individual authorities, for example, check whether the applicant actually has the specified knowledge of the English language or the ability to drive a motor vehicle. It should probably be sufficient for an officer to indicate in his application that he is in possession of an Austrian driving licence and also has knowledge of English.”<sup>15</sup> The need for urgent action by the Ministry of the Interior was located here and thus the subordinate gendarmerie and police forces were requested, with regard to the admission of police and gendarmerie officials

into the UN Field Service “to check all officials who have applied for such service precisely as to whether they meet the [...] specified admission conditions. It proved particularly crucial to check each applicant as to whether he really has the ability to communicate well in English. Even the possession of a driver’s licence is not sufficient; it must rather be checked whether the applicant also has the necessary practical skills that put him in a position to be able to take over the driving of a motor vehicle at any time.” Finally, it was clearly stated that “such a conscientious check of all applicants is necessary in order not to endanger the reputation of Austria in the United Nations Police Task Force by the posting of not fully qualified officers”.<sup>16</sup>

#### **CONTRACT EXTENSIONS AND NEW DEPLOYMENT LOCATIONS**

The service contracts of the Austrian UN members were, as stated, on a yearly basis. In summer 1959, the UN offered to extend the service contract of a number of Austrian UN officials by a further year; therefore, the Austrian service authorities soon received the first requests from those police and gendarmerie officers seeking an extension of the leave of absence, initially granted only for one year. With success: the contract extensions offered were well received in Vienna, so it was assumed that the United Nations must be very pleased with the performance of Austrian police officers. The Ministry of the Interior stated: “It means an undoubted honour for Austria to be represented in the United Nations Police Task Force by some officials. Accordingly, there would be no objection to extending the leave of absence for a further year for specific purposes. However, then”, according to the restriction, “a further extension should no longer be envisaged in order not to completely alienate the officers from the Austrian police

service.”<sup>17</sup> By alienation, the authorities understood that the Austrian officials would lose their domestic contact to their profession and following their return could no longer be entrusted with the laws and regulations or the development of national laws (the overhaul of the Austrian traffic laws was mentioned repeatedly), or that their deployment in areas far from home carried health implications which could later be expressed in the form of a lack of suitability for law enforcement duties. Moreover, the question was raised as to “whether the officials would still be satisfied following their final return to Austria with the foreknowledge of the Austrian police service with its relatively low salary when they were used to years of drawing salaries amounting to somewhat more than five times their Austrian remuneration”.<sup>18</sup>

In any case, a one-off extension of leave of absence was agreed in the Federal Ministry of the Interior. When, however, in the spring of 1960 the first Austrian policeman sought an extension, the need for action arose. A repeated approval of the UN contract extension would already increase the cumulative period of service of the national officers in the ranks of the UN Field Service to three years. This triggered uneasiness, since a year before the “alienation from national police service” had already been identified, therefore, they did not wish to envisage further extensions. The Austrian police officers however did not apparently wish to simply accept the official position “that service in the United Nations Police Task Force is indeed honourable, however, it cannot be extended indefinitely”.<sup>19</sup> The officials stationed in the Middle East prompted the competent UN command in Jerusalem with a “request for assistance” regarding the “approval by the responsible Austrian authorities for an extension of the contracts” to confront the Austrian mission in Tel Aviv, which

Source: Sabitzer 2010, 37



**An Austrian UN Field Service officer with a damaged UN vehicle (Congo)**

dutifully forwarded the applications in question to the Foreign Office in Vienna.<sup>20</sup> The matter culminated in a memorandum from the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, in which it was stated “that from the point of view of the United Nations, it would be highly desirable if experienced and efficient staff could remain in deployment for as long as possible”.<sup>21</sup> The Ministry of the Interior had to decide on and, more importantly, adopt a basic procedure. This was achieved with a directive from the then Minister of the Interior, Josef AFRITSCH (term of office: 1959–1963), in which it was established that the Austrian officials in the service of the UN Field Service could be granted a leave of absence of a maximum of three years and any additional request beyond this would be rejected.<sup>22</sup>

When it became known in the summer of 1960 that an Austrian UN official of the new large UN operation (ONUC) had been transferred to Leopoldville (today Kinshasa) in the newly independent Congo, this once again caused a stir in Vienna. The Ministry of the Interior assumed that the officer concerned had voluntarily reported for service in the Congo on the

basis of corresponding financial incentives, although the tense security situation in the second largest country in Africa, which was already on the brink of a civil war with riots and unrest, prompted fears that the Austrian law enforcement officers could get caught up in unforeseeable consequences in the crossfire.<sup>23</sup> Thus, concerned, the Ministry of the Interior determined that: “It is of course not possible to foresee the development in the Congo now, and the situation will probably calm down soon. In the current situation, however, UN officials are in grave danger. It is highly undesirable that an Austrian national should come to harm, especially by the granting of the extension of a leave of absence, which would be the clear indication of the official endorsement of such an undertaking.”<sup>24</sup>

Vienna was not happy about the new area of deployment, but could see no way to counteract it. The uneasiness increased when it came to light in the course of the following months that further police officers were planned for deployment in the Congo and the UN Human Resources Office in Vienna had begun to recruit staff specifically for the Congo operation. In April 1961, finally, the first Austrian officer was directly drafted to the Congo. More would follow.<sup>25</sup> The Ministry of the Interior, however, only commented that “it is hardly possible to raise serious reservations about the United Nations regarding area of deployment, because in this case the officer is, from the outset, largely worthless to the UN troops. Even the UN forces”, as clearly stated, “can only be powerful if they can be deployed at any time and in any place.”<sup>26</sup> Vienna came to terms with the new area of deployment, however, in December 1961, they declined the informal request of the UN Secretariat for the secondment of an Austrian police contingent to protect the refugee camps in

Katanga with reference to the tense personnel situation of the Austrian officers.<sup>27</sup>

### **MOMENTUM OF OPERATIONS AND ESCALATING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

In the spring of 1961, some Austrian police officers, despite the generally known directive of the Minister of the Interior to only grant a leave of absence for the purpose of service performance in the UN Field Service for a maximum period of three years, made a further application to extend their leave of absence. The United Nations’ stance towards a renewed contract extension was positive and the Austrian police officers reinforced their desire to continue their deployment as well. They argued with reference to the international reputation of Austria and said that key positions and leading functions in the UN Field Service would have been lost if experienced Austrian officers had been withdrawn.

Vienna, having realised in the meantime that the UN police operations had developed a certain momentum, saw the matter differently. The Ministry of the Interior found the envisioned third extension of the leave of absence and an associated service exemption for a fourth year undesirable. Beyond the already mentioned fears of alienation from national law enforcement and any consequential damages to health – additionally, an increased risk could be assumed due to new areas of deployment (e.g. in the Congo) –, staff shortages expressed increasingly by various Austrian police authorities played an increasingly important role. Moreover, several Austrian officers had been released for service in the UN Field Service, which, despite the return of veteran police officers, assured an Austrian presence in the UN Field Service. With regard to the arguments put forth by the Austrian police officers that key po-

sitions would be at stake for Austria, the Federal Ministry of the Interior was in possession of information which painted a completely different picture. Through reports from police officers who had already returned, as well as personal contacts and some private correspondence between employees of the Ministry of the Interior and various persons of trust, it was known that in the aforementioned UN departments, “this did not concern leadership positions, but rather modest command posts”. In addition, it was recognised “that the Scandinavians set the tone for the UN Police and the Austrians are only used in completely insignificant functions, because they are not spoken of very highly. These resentments”, according to the expressed suspicion, “apparently go back to the time of World War II, when numerous Austrians belonged to the occupation forces in Norway and Denmark.”<sup>28</sup> The Scandinavian officers had already served three to four years longer in the UN Field Service than their Austrian colleagues, generally vested with higher service posts and not infrequently headed sections, departments or outstations. However, through the years of service, the Austrian officers developed an ever better position. They served as cypher service managers, group leaders, general drivers or as security officers and ran the overall supervision of various sections such as the courier or the diplomatic post. All were areas of responsibility that required a sophisticated service application and a certain preparatory period or operational experience.<sup>29</sup> It is no wonder that many Austrian police strove every year to extend their leave of absence from national police service anew, in order to be able to gradually pursue their burgeoning career in the ranks of the United Nations.

However, the Ministry of the Interior initially remained adamant. Those applications seeking extensions beyond the

agreed leave of absence were rejected. It became even more irritating when it turned out that the corresponding replies often missed their mark and experienced Austrian police officers had flouted the decision. It was often the case that they had already arbitrarily extended their service contract with the United Nations and were prepared in the case of a negative response from the national authorities to voluntarily withdraw from federal public service and focus completely on their service as UN Field Service officials. Vienna was faced with a dilemma, since it was feared that this approach would set a precedent: “It cannot be in the interest of the Federal Ministry for the Interior [...] from an official consideration that police officers, after they have spent years tied to positions and who were released from police service, eventually terminate their service and provide them to the UN akin to soldiers who no longer act on behalf of their homeland. [...] For this reason, time could be bought by granting a fourth year of absence [...] in order to intervene at the UN via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the sense of the intentions here.”<sup>30</sup>

Initially, this was about buying time for a viable solution and to get in touch directly with the United Nations via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Granting a fourth year leave of absence would provide the time needed, so the Minister of the Interior ordered in July 1961 “that those members of the Austrian police who are performing service with the UN Police Task Force will also be granted a fourth year of service exemption upon request”.<sup>31</sup> Immediately thereafter, at the beginning of August 1961, the Ministry of the Interior explained to the Foreign Ministry the background for this: “Naturally, it cannot be in the interests of the Federal Ministry of the Interior that active police and gendarmerie officers, whose training and equipment have caused

significant costs for the country, terminate their Austrian service relationship as a result of their service exemption temporarily granted by us, and enter into private agreements with the Human Resources Department of the United Nations. We placed a great value on the fact that the representatives of Austria in the United Nations Police Task Force are active Austrian police officers, who are providing this service with the full authorisation of their Austrian service authority. We thereby issue an invitation for an intervention at the Human Resources Department at the United Nations, so that in the future, the service contracts of Austrian officers in the UN Police Task Force can only be extended conditionally through an Austrian service authority approval. Otherwise, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, out of concern that it would lose numerous officers due to private agreements with Austrian law enforcement agencies with the UN, would have to make use of a complete block on the release of UN Police.”<sup>32</sup>

In this sense, the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs intervened with the competent offices of the United Nations in New York. However, ultimately unsuccessfully, as the UN Secretariat assessed the situation differently: “Service agreements are undertaken in the context of the UN Field Service on the basis of a service contract between the UN and the concerned applicant as an individual. The accepted applicant, as a rule, receives a contract for a year and has the opportunity at its end to renew the contract for a further year. If the required preconditions are met, the contract may be converted into one of a permanent service relationship with the United Nations. In this sense, the Field Service positions do not differ from the other positions in the Secretariat. The United Nations are of the opinion that they cannot exert any influence over the deci-

sion of individuals to apply for a further commitment or not. A request for further commitment is a personal choice of the applicant; it will only be judged by the United Nations according to the existence of the required conditions. Should a government wish for one of its nationals not to apply for a further commitment, the government is free to take all measures in their power against the person concerned. The influence can however only be exerted by the government on the individual and not by the government on the United Nations or by the government through the United Nations on the applicant. The United Nations also had to strictly reject this for reasons of principle, due to the intervention of a member state not to approve applications for further commitment that were worthy of approval.”<sup>33</sup>

This view met with incomprehension in the Ministry of the Interior. It was determined in an internal document that the opinion was “legally unfounded, and was rather based on considerations of principle” and it would at least have been expected that the “United Nations would, as an employer, consider the interests of a member state, which had officially provided personnel [...] to this employer”.<sup>34</sup> In a slightly sharper tone, the Ministry of the Interior remarked: “If the United Nations believe that they, for reasons of principle, cannot exert any influence on the further commitment of these officers contrary to the wishes expressed by their administrative authority, then the administrative authority, on similar grounds of principle, can no longer grant leave of absence for UN Police officers either. This can and should in no way be regarded as a mere reprisal, as the years of exemption from service in the case of police officers has already represented an enormous burden for the administration authorities who are suffering from a shortage of staff. The secondment

to the UN was, however, as now proved, the starting point for a development which is officially absolutely intolerable, namely that security personnel, whose training and equipment has incurred enormous costs, tied themselves in the status of leave of absence for the UN Police to their Austrian positions, and when their leave of absence was not extended indefinitely, they completely terminated their Austrian service relationship.”<sup>35</sup>

This position was neither made known officially to the Foreign Ministry, nor was it communicated to the UN. Internally, however, its own approach to the matter was handled more strictly. Already granted leaves of absence longer than the maximum of four years would no longer be extended, and in the future, unauthorised further commitments would be considered as absence from service without permission or refusal to work, and were punished accordingly. Furthermore, in December 1961, a block on leave of absence for active or new law enforcement officers for the purpose of service at the UN Field Service was implemented in principle.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the resistance in the subordinated authorities increased, as these, in light of the “ever more tangible” staff shortages “for some time in the police force [...]”, feared “the permanent loss of their officers seconded to the UN Police”. “Accordingly”, as the Ministry of the Interior determined at the beginning of 1962, “the delegation of Austrian police officers to the United Nations Police Task Force will encounter greater difficulties than previously.”<sup>37</sup>

In the spring of 1962, it was time again: after some extensions to the leaves of absence of Austrian police officers who had not yet reached their maximum deployment period of four years were approved, in May 1962, the first request to grant a fifth year of absence arrived in Vienna. In order not to undermine their credibility

and not to set a precedent for similar cases, the request was rejected.<sup>38</sup> Further requests for authorisation of a fifth year followed; partially with the clear indication from the officer that he, in the event of a refusal of the extension request, would voluntarily withdraw from the police force. These requests were also refused. The Ministry of the Interior was adamant as it had been considered “pointless to give in to these ‘threats’ year after year”, especially since in the meantime it had become clear that officers “who had already been away from their Austrian police duties were, as a result of unequal income ratios, already definitively lost to the Austrian police force.” A decision was made to consider possible consequences and to no longer authorise any leave of absence above the agreed amount “because a gap has opened up, through which Austrian police officers and also gendarmerie officers have permanently terminated their Austrian service”.<sup>39</sup> In addition to the immediate cessation of payments, a disciplinary procedure was initiated against officers who had not returned to their employment in Austria following the expiry of their leave of absence. Moreover, the Minister of the Interior, Josef Afritsch, in light of the tense personnel situation, enacted a regulation stipulating that until further notice, no new leaves of absence for the purpose of service in the United Nations Police Task Force would be granted.<sup>40</sup> Only officers who were already deployed as members of the UN Field Service could continue to seek an extension of a total of four years (each year) to their leave of absence.

#### **LAST EXTENSIONS, THE “CYPRUS SPECIAL OPERATION” AND THE END OF DEPLOYMENTS**

Consequently, these new guidelines rules (i.e. leave of absence for up to a maximum of four years and no approval of new ap-

plications) were strictly adhered to. The requests for extension of leave of absence to five years arriving throughout 1962 and 1963 were all rejected. However, this approach began to falter already at the beginning of 1964. The first cases of hardship stood out, which finally had to be dealt with and a decision had to be made at the highest level. Therefore, there were interventions by official departments as well as directly by letter aimed at the new Federal Minister for the Interior, Franz Olah (term of office: 1963–1964), which bore witness to the excellent and exemplary performance of the Austrian law enforcement office in the service of the United Nations. While the Austrian consul active in Leopoldville (Congo) at the request of the United Nations decidedly recorded in a personal letter to the Federal Ministry of the Interior “that it can only be beneficial to the reputation and standing of Austria if proven forces [...] are left in foreign service”<sup>41</sup>, Austrian officials in the UN Field Service emphasised their successful international career and numerous awards for their extraordinary commitment in other letters; in particular with the appeal that the “remaining [Austrian police officers] globally

seen are really doing more for Austria and the general public than they are able to accomplish at home”.<sup>42</sup> Even more so, as at that time, other countries were especially interested in placing their own compatriots within the ranks of the United Nations.<sup>43</sup> However, in personal conversations with official representatives of Austria, Austrian UN officials expressed their dissatisfaction that “their immediate superiors [...] have no understanding of their service abroad and only their dollar salary is seen, the danger of their service is not”.<sup>44</sup>

In the Ministry of the Interior, the first voices began to sound louder saying that they were not averse to a final extension of the leave of absence for Austrian police officers if it concerned leading or higher positions of the UN Field Service. On the other hand, it was also noted that “a departure from the hitherto compliance with the directive [...] stemming from the example that would be set by this could not be recommended. Besides”, as was clearly expressed, “such an approach would also mean discrimination against the previously rejected officers.”<sup>45</sup> The decision lay ultimately with the Minister of the Interior in person and he noted on 10 March 1964 “that Austria affirms the tasks of the UN and a modest participation on Austria’s part is required to solve these tasks”. Minister of the Interior, Franz Olah, therefore decreed that in exceptional cases “the leave of absence” of some officers could be extended “finally by a year to a then total of five years”.<sup>46</sup> This decision had consequences. Not only that it was thus in breach of the previous procedure from the highest level, but also renewed requests for extensions of the leave of absence by a fifth year piled up – with reference to the decision of the Minister of the Interior. Insecurity was spreading among the civil servants of the Ministry of the Interior itself. How was the hitherto maximum limit of four years

Source: Sabitzer 2010, 36



Officials of the UN Field Service (Congo)

of leave of absence to be handled now? How could the exceptional cases for a possible fifth year be determined? And how were the secondments for the international police mission to Cyprus initiated in April 1964 with Austrian participation to be classified? In May 1964 the competent section head again urged the Federal Minister to make a fundamental decision. The Minister of the Interior, Franz Olah, finally decided on 26 May 1964: “1. Basically no extensions for the officers currently serving in the UN Service for the moment. 2. No further leave of absence for officers for the UN – except for the special operation in Cyprus!”<sup>47</sup>

This “Cyprus Special Operation” would mark the official start of a still ongoing participation of Austrian police contingents in international peace missions. The Austrian law enforcement officers particularly in Cyprus were operating no longer as UN employees with individual UN service contracts for the Field Service, but rather acting as members of an Austrian police contingent under the supreme command of the United Nations. For the operation in Cyprus, following the beginnings in the Congo, for the first time, a police component of a UN operation was planned, which would be referred to as “Civilian Police” (CIVPOL) to distinguish them from the military police.<sup>48</sup> Already on 3 March 1964, the UN had requested Austria and a number of other states for the provision of troop contingents for the UN peace mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP). The Austrian federal government decided on 17 March 1964 on posting a medical contingent of the armed forces, and on 2 April 1964, on the additional deployment of Austrian law enforcement officers. When the Austrian police contingent arrived in Nicosia on 14 April 1964, Austria supplied the first UN police contingent on the island, before police teams from other countries gradu-

ally arrived and strengthened the civil component of the UNFICYP.<sup>49</sup>

Apart from the postings of Austrian police contingents in Cyprus, all further requests for further extensions of leave of absence for service at the UN Field Service were rejected in accordance with the directive of 26 May 1964. As in the meantime three officers were granted leave of absence for the total amount of five years, “whereupon”, as it was noted, “the Federal Minister has taken every individual decision as an exception”<sup>50</sup>, great resentment was felt among those officers whose request for extension had been denied. Some officers drew their conclusions from the negative decision and voluntarily announced their withdrawal from the federal civil service in order to be able to continue their career in the service of the United Nations. The obvious difference in treatment led at the beginning of 1965 to the additional intervention (in contrast to the former SPÖ Minister associated with the ÖVP) of the Secretary of State, Franz Soronics (Secretary of State between 1963 and 1966, then Minister of the Interior from 1968 to 1970) in the matter.<sup>51</sup> Finally, on 7 May 1965, under Hans Czettel Minister of the Interior (term of office: 1964–1966), the further procedure was regulated as follows: he decided, “that for all officers who are currently serving with the UN Police, leave of absence will be granted for the last time until the end of the year 1965”.<sup>52</sup> Further requests and intervention letters did not take long in coming, however, no more exceptions were made, “because each breach of this principle, as past experience has already demonstrated, leads to unclear consequences”.<sup>53</sup> The Ministry of the Interior noted: “after 31 December 1965, there will thus – with the exception of the Cyprus action – be no more police officers serving in the United Nations”.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, in June 1965, the first solid legal

basis for Austrian foreign postings was created.<sup>55</sup> The right steps were thus made for the foreign missions of the Austrian police to ensure proceeding in an orderly fashion in the future.

### CONCLUSION

Apart from the members of the Austrian police contingent in Cyprus, from 1 January 1966 on, there were no de facto Austrian police officers serving in the United Nations.<sup>56</sup> From 1958 to 1965, a total of 24 Austrian police officers served in the UN Field Service. They were on leave of absence from their domestic police service for years during their UN deployment. The maximum duration of such leave of absence was four, or in exceptional cases, five years. At the end of their leave of absence granted by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and a reasonable time for the trip home from the respective area of deployment, the officers had to resume their duties in Austria. However, only twelve of the 24 officers appeared for duty within the prescribed time limit. Seven had already declared their voluntary withdrawal from the federal public service and five officers were dismissed after conducting a disciplinary procedure initiated against them for “non-commencement of service”. The officers leaving the Austrian police service

generally pursued their career in the ranks of the UN Field Service and following their first five years of service, they generally received permanent UN contracts instead of their then yearly contracts.<sup>57</sup> Some of them applied later for the “grace to annul the disciplinary dismissal” and thus to return to the Austrian police service, however, these attempts were ultimately unsuccessful.<sup>58</sup> The Ministry of the Interior had drawn the line.

With the release of police and gendarmerie officers for the UN Field Service, particularly in the difficult early days of UN missions, Austria, not even three years after its admission to the UN in December 1955, made a small but important contribution to international crisis management and hence also strengthened the reputation of Austria internationally. Conversely, at least half of the seconded officers returned to domestic police service and were able to utilise their international experience there. The experience and knowledge that was gained from long-term deployments in the UN Field Service had some influence again from the middle of the 1960s in the UNFICYP mission in Cyprus, which marked the beginning of the “regular” civilian UN Police, and where, from 1964 to 1977, numerous Austrian police contingents were deployed.

<sup>1</sup> The UN Field Service went back to the plan of 1948 of the first UN Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, to set up its own “UN Guard Force” of initially around 800 (and later several thousand) men to protect UN observers and negotiators in the field. This plan was never realised, but formed the background for the creation of a uniformed but unarmed UN Field Service. Therefore, the Austrian formulation of the “United Nations Police Task Force” is not as far-fetched as it seems at first glance. Cf. Schmidl 1998, 66 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 160.312-3/57 (for ref. 160312-3/57), Admission of police officers to the United Nations Police Task Force, 14.12.1957; Sabitzer 2011, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 31.649-3/58 (for ref. 20505-3/58, Admission of police officers to the United Nations Police, 17.02.1958.

<sup>5</sup> Until 1959, the Foreign Ministry belonged administratively to the Federal Chancellery. In the First Republic, incidentally, the Directorate General for public security was under the umbrella of the Chancellery, but after 1945, it was relocated to the Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. various BMI personnel files from 1958 and in particular Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 40.7943/58 (for ref. 20505-3/58, Admission of police officers to the United Nations Police Task Force, 08.03.1958 and attached No. 226.647-5A/58, Admission of gendarmerie officers to the United Nations Police Task Force, 25.02.1958 and the following remarks in No. 228.280-5A/58, 18.03.1958.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the conditions of a UN appointment decree of 25.04.1961 listed in an act of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 65.730-3/61 (for ref. 600253/61), Leave of absence for the purpose of service to the United Nations, 16.05.1961. No

names are mentioned here and in all following cases for the purpose of data protection.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. various BMI files, here Ministry of the Interior, No. 62.556-3/64 (for ref. 60827-3/64), letter to the Federal Minister regarding extension of leave of absence, 21.02.1964 as well as Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 62.522-3/65 (for ref. 610083/65), request for the granting of holiday for the purpose of returning home after ending service at the United Nations Police, 17.02.1965.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Federal Chancellery of Foreign Affairs to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 550.283-Pol/58 (for ref. 20505-3/58), Admission of Austrian police and gendarmerie officers to the UN Police Task Force, 18.06.1958.

<sup>10</sup> At that time, there was still a distinction between embassies (which originally only the leading powers had) and lower-rank diplomatic missions. It was not until the 1960s, according to the UN concept of equality of all states, that the diplomatic missions were converted to embassies.

<sup>11</sup> Federal Chancellery of Foreign Affairs to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 551.853-Pol/58 (for ref. 20505-3/58), Admission of Austrian gendarmerie and police officers to the United Nations Police, 23.07.1958.

<sup>12</sup> After the Suez Crisis of 1956, 1958 brought new unrest in the fragile balance of power in the Middle East. On 1 February 1958, Syria and Egypt proclaimed the “United Arab Republic”, which Yemen also joined shortly afterwards. When two weeks later the Hashemite kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan, backed by the West, joined forces in the “Arab Federation”, this set off a coup in Iraq, to which King Faisal II and the monarchy fell victim. Iraq became a republic and the last British soldiers had to leave the country by 1959. As a result, the Ba’ath Party came

to power in Iraq. At the same time, the delicate balance of the denominations began to falter in Lebanon. The opposition accused the (Christian and pro-Western) President Camille Chamoun of vote-rigging. There was violent fighting between his supporters and the National Unity Front led by the Sunni Prime Minister Rashid Karami, which called for at least 2,500 deaths. In July 1958, the USA intervened with approximately 14,000 men (“Operation Blue Bat”, until the end of October 1958) at the request of President Chamoun to stabilise the situation, while British troops supported the government in Jordan. Since Chamoun accused Syria of intervention in Lebanon, in 1958, the UN Security Council established the observation mission UNOGIL (UN Observation Group in Lebanon) with Resolution 128 to monitor the Syrian-Lebanese border. The up to 600 observers were partially removed from the UNTSO and the mission ended in December 1958. For Austria, the Lebanon crisis was far too politically sensitive, as the question of the monitoring of Austrian airspace was discussed in the course of overflights of American troop transports from Germany via Tyrol towards the Levante. Cf. also Blasi 2000, 239–259.

<sup>13</sup> Austrian Mission in Beirut to the Federal Chancellery of Foreign Affairs, No. 18-res/59, UN policepersons of Austrian nationality, dismissals, 19.01.1959.

<sup>14</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 33.114-3/59 (for ref. 20307-3/59), The United Nations Police Task Force; dismissals of Austrian police staff, 19.02.1959.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, attached letter of 27.02.1959.

<sup>17</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 86.675-3/59 (for ref. 20307-3/59), Requests for extensions of leave of absence, 06.06.1959.

- <sup>18</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 67.129-3/61 (for ref.-60025-3/61), Requests for a further extension of the leave of absence for the purpose of service in the United Nations Police Task Force, 09.06.1961.
- <sup>19</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 63.360-3/60 (for ref. 61414-3/60), Service by Austrian gendarmerie and police officers in the United Nations Police Task Force, 26.03.1960.
- <sup>20</sup> Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 32.281-1(Pers)60, Service by Austrian gendarmerie and police officers in the United Nations Police Task Force, 23.02.1960. As it turned out later, the Austrian staff of the UN Field Service station in Jerusalem had previously invited members of the Austrian mission in Tel Aviv to a New Year's Eve party (31.12.1959) in order to make an appeal for a positive attitude, and to intervene in favour of an extension of the leave of absence for the Austrian police and gendarmerie officers stationed in the Middle East. Cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 67.129-3/61 (for ref. 60025-3/61), Requests for a further extension of the leave of absence for the purpose of service in the United Nations Police Task Force, 09.06.1961.
- <sup>21</sup> Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 32.281-1(Pers)60, Service by Austrian gendarmerie and police officers in the United Nations Police Task Force, 23.02.1960.
- <sup>22</sup> Cf. 64.676-3/60 (for ref 61414-3/60), Service by the Austrian gendarmerie and police officers in the United Nations Police Task Force; extension of the contracts and leave, 09.04.1960.
- <sup>23</sup> For the mission in the Congo cf. Schmidl 2010.
- <sup>24</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 70.259-3/60 (for ref. 61414-3/60) Admission to the United Nations Police Task Force, 18.08.1960.
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. Sabitzer 2010, 36 f.
- <sup>26</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 64.294-3/61 (for ref. 60025-3/61), Requests for a 1-year leave of absence for the purpose of service in the UN Police, 07.04.1961.
- <sup>27</sup> Cf. Schmidl 2010, 99.
- <sup>28</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 67.129-3/61 (for ref.-60025-3/61), Requests for a further extension of the leave of absence for the purpose of service in the United Nations Police Task Force, 09.06.1961.
- <sup>29</sup> Cf. various requests for extensions from the years 1961 and 1962, in particular the overview in the act of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 66.061-3/62 (for ref. 604733/62), Austrian Law enforcement officers in the service of the UN, leave of absence; extension requests, 26.05.1962.
- <sup>30</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 69.205-3/61 (for ref. 60025-3/61), Voluntary further commitment in the service of the United Nations, 04.08.1961.
- <sup>31</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior – Directorate General for Public Security, Service notice, 13.07.1961.
- <sup>32</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 69.205-3/61 (for ref. 60025-3/61), Voluntary further commitment in the service of the United Nations, 04.08.1961.
- <sup>33</sup> Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 32.439-4a(Pol)61, Voluntary further commitment of Austrian nationals in the service of the United Nations, 21.11.1961.
- <sup>34</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 73.915-3/61 (for ref. 60025-3/61), Voluntary further commitment of Austrian nationals in the service of the United Nations, 02.12.1961.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> See the internal representation of the facts in the Act of Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 65.376-3/64 (for ref. 608273/64), Applications of Austrian nationals for admission to the United Nations Police Task Force, 15.05.1964.
- <sup>37</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 61.107-3/62 (for ref. 60473-3/62), Applications from security guard officials for admission to the United Nations Police Task Force, 02.02.1962.
- <sup>38</sup> Cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 66.087-3/62 (for ref. 60473-3/62), Requests for extension to leave of absence for the purpose of service in the United Nations Police Task Force, 01.06.1962.
- <sup>39</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 68.394-3/62 (for ref. 60473-3/62), Non-appearance for duty after expiry of leave of absence, 30.07.1962.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 69.229-3/62 (for ref. 60473-3/62), Service in the United Nations Police Task Force, 10.09.1962.
- <sup>41</sup> Austrian Consulate / Consulat d'Autriche Leopoldville to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, C-1159/64, 31.08.1964, in: Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 72.394-3/64 (for ref. 608273/64), Letter to the Austrian Consulate in Leopoldville, 11.09.1964.
- <sup>42</sup> Personal letter of an Austrian UN police officer stationed in Jerusalem to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Franz Olah, 12.02.1964, in: Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 62.5563/64 (for ref. 60827-3/64), Letter to the Federal Minister of the Interior regarding extension to leave of absence, 21.02.1964.
- <sup>43</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Vote.
- <sup>44</sup> Letter from the Secretary of State in the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Carl Bobleter) to the Federal Minister of the Interior (Franz Hetzenauer) about a personal conversation with Austrian police officers in Jerusalem, 16.06.1967.

<sup>45</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 62.556-3/64 (for ref. 60827-3/64), Letter to the Federal Minister regarding extension to leave of absence, information for the Federal Minister, 21.02.1964.

<sup>46</sup> See the internal representation of the facts in the Act of Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 65.376-3/64 (for ref. 60827-3/64), Applications of Austrian nationals for admission to the United Nations Police Task Force, 15.05.1964.

<sup>47</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 67.364-3/64 (for ref. 60827-3/64), Applications of Austrian nationals for admission to the United Nations Police Task Force, 30.05.1964.

<sup>48</sup> More detail on this: Schmidl 2011 41 f.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior/ Security Academy 2014, 30–35.

<sup>50</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 68.158-3/65 (for ref. 61008-3/65), Service in the UN Police, 12.07.1965.

<sup>51</sup> Letter of the Secretary of State (Franz Soronics) to the Head of Section I and Director General for Public Safety (Kurt Seidler), 02.06.1965, in: Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 68.158-3/65 (for ref. 61.008-3/65), Service in the UN Police, 13.07.1965.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 75.940-12/65 (for ref. 61008-12/65), The United Nations' request for extension of the release for service in the Police in the Congo, 23.11.1965.

<sup>54</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 73.448-12/65 (for ref. 61008-12/65), The United Nations' request for extension of

the release for service in the Police in the Congo, 28.10.1965.

<sup>55</sup> On 30.06.1965, the posting of Austrian agencies was regulated for the first time with the so-called "Federal Constitutional Law on the posting of Austrian units for assistance in foreign countries at the request of international organisations" (BVG). This law was replaced due to new requirements by the "Federal Constitutional Law on cooperation and solidarity in the posting of individuals and units in foreign countries" (KSE-BVG), which came into force in 1997 and is still valid today. Cf. Sikl 2011, 159.

<sup>56</sup> However, there were *de jure* officers, since several disciplinary proceedings could only be completed in the following years.

<sup>57</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 69.604-A/68 (for ref. 69604-A/68), Service by Austrian police officers in the United Nations Police Task Force. Information for the Federal Minister, 10.07.1968.

<sup>58</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, No. 76.243-12/68 (for ref. 69604-12/68), Requests for reinstatement, 12.02.1969.

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#### Further literature and links

Bundesministerium für Inneres/Sicherheitsakademie (Ed.) (2011). Auslandseinsätze der Polizei. Eine Studie des Bundesministeriums für Inneres (= Sicherheit und Gesellschaft 2), Wien/Berlin.