

Digest of Information relating to the state of UK troop accommodation at the Ledra Palace Hotel since 2005.

MOD internal email on the progress on improving Ledra Palace Hotel, 17 January 2008

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This is the latest report from Lt Col Warwick in Nicosia:

“Work on the palace is progressing and the Public Works Dept (PWD) have appointed a new project Manager to act as the interface between UNFICYP's Chief Engineer, Sector 2 (URR), PWD and the commercial contractors. the outline schedule of work produced by PWD is largely the same however is things develop changes are inevitable. PWD's main aim to start the replacement of the roof in Apr 08. To facilitate this they have rehabilitated 10 rooms already on the second floor and are beginning the rehabilitation of the same 10 rooms on the first and third floors to facilitate the partial clearance of the top floor - work begins next week.

Discussions with the incumbent Regt (10 Transport Regt QOGLR) have indicated that it would be impossible to clear the entire top floor across the entire building given the current availability of rooms and the additional bodies would place a increased workload on the already hard pressed internal infrastructure ie sewage, water etc. It has been agreed therefore that the replacement of the roof will be staged, with the rear complex starting first, then the two wings one after the other and then the main building. The URR will move troops around in response to this plan and the planned works.

The public rooms downstairs (dinning room and gym) have been partially refurbished as has the main kitchen. The two Messes are also in plan along with some of the bicommunal rooms. All in all the quality of the accommodation is improving steadily, however this is a 2 year project, involving some major structural and environmental works. The Mission Chief Engineer who has been here for 5 years is satisfied that this he has seem more progress since Sep 07 than he has seen in the last 5 years and is convinced it is happening XXXXX.”

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Email from British Defence Attaché Nicosia to MOD Desk Officer, 23 October 2007

Just spoken to Chief Engr for UNFICYP and the QM in Ledra Palace.

Both confirm work has started. Work will be done in 3 phases:

Phase 1. Oct 07 to Oct 08. Replacement of roof. This Phase started on 1 Oct but before work starts on the roof the soldiers on the top floor have to be given new accommodation. So this phase starts with the refurbishment of 10 rooms to allow the top floor to be vacated. That work is happening as we speak - in fact the Greek Cypriots are refurbishing 12 rooms.

Phase 2. Oct 08 to Oct 09. Basement work, notably the removal of asbestos lagging. Installation of heater and boilers.

Phase 3. Oct 09 to Oct 10. The interior.

Hope this answers the first question. Rules on Visas and Sovereign Base Areas to follow.

John

Email from British High Commissioner, Nicosia to FCO, 31 May 2007

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I asked Mrs Marcoullis (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) about the President's meeting about Ledra Palace.

She said the meeting had agreed that most of the work should now be done by a private company. It would be supervised by the Ministry of Public Works who had been instructed to meet UNFICYP as soon as possible to draw up the full list of technical work that needed to be done. The Ministry would then "assign" this work to a private company.

I asked whether a deadline had been set. She said that the President had ordered that there should be "no delay".

She also fished for information on the suggestion (by Mr Hoon) about alternative accommodation, while making clear that there was no suggestion that UNFICYP would have to move out of the hotel altogether. I said that it would be preferable to make arrangements with UNFICYP to move the troops around the hotel so that large sections could be refurbished quickly at the same time.

Comment: the pressure has worked. It now remains to be seen whether the Ministry can deliver. We will talk to UNFICYP and I will seek an opportunity to thank Papadopoulos.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX So no celebrations yet.

Peter Millett
Nicosia

Relevant extracts from an electronic telegram from UK Mission to the UN New York, 12 June 2007

1. “On 8 June, Special Representative of the Secretary General Moller briefed the Security Council on the Secretary-General’s (SG) latest report (attached) on the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP).”

3. “.....Moller also raised the issue of the state of UNFICYP accommodation at the Ledra Street Palace, and the recent commitment by the Republic of Cyprus to addressing this issue.”

7. The UK (Deputy Permanent Representative)” “On the Ledra Street Palace, DPR welcomed the recent steps taken by the Republic of Cyprus.

Relevant Extract from Michael Moller’s briefing to the Security Council, 8 June 2007

“The Secretary-General mentions the poor conditions under which UNFICYP troops are living in Ledra Palace Hotel and the urgent need for the upgrading of that facility. Since the writing of this report, I am pleased to inform that we have seen considerable progress towards the resolution of this long standing problem. The government of Cyprus has now committed itself to the refurbishment of Ledra Palace. Considerable investment is being committed, work has started, and it is expected that, within the next two years, the accommodations will meet the necessary statutory, health safety and environmental standards.”

Email from British High Commission Nicosia to FCO, 21 May 2007

“I called on Tzionis on Friday.”

“I also raised the issue of Ledra Palace. He said that the President himself was chairing a meeting on Tuesday with the Minister of Finance, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Archbishop (the church own a significant slice of the property). I underlined the importance for both the UN and the UK on the health and safety issues. Rapid progress needed to be made to refurbish the building. He undertook to let me know the outcome.”

.....“Comment.....XX We have tipped off the UN about tomorrow’s Presidential meeting.”

Relevant extract from email from UK Mission to the UN New York to FCO, 14 May 2007

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1. Emyr met the Cypriot Permanent Representative (Mavroyiannis) this morning for an exchange of views on the forthcoming UNFICYP Security Council Resolution and related issues.

Ledra Street Palace

2. Mavroyiannis handed over the attached note verbale. He understood our concerns. He himself had in May 2005 made a statement to the 5th Committee committing Cyprus to taking the necessary steps to provide UNFICYP with appropriate accommodation. It was clear things were moving too slowly, although there had been problems on all sides. The plan now was to give the contract to a private contractor in order to speed things up. But this was subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers and could take 'a few days'.

Relevant extract from email from British High Commission Nicosia to FCO, 17 May 2007, reporting on meeting with Michael Moller

“ The key elements he would like to see highlighted in the resolution are:.....

“Some reference to health and safety in Ledra Palace. ”

Relevant extract from email from British High Commissioner Nicosia to FCO, 2 May 2007, titled Lunch with Mrs Marcoullis

“I turned to Ledra Palace: the work was too slow. It was inaccurate to suggest that the obstacle was the presence of the soldiers: there was enough room for them to move and for the work to be speeded up. Our Ministers were prepared to look at providing temporary accommodation. She said they were willing to look at a package which involved the MOD providing temporary accommodation. They in turn were considering using an outside contractor to do the health and safety work (this is not yet their formal proposal). I said that we would be prepared to look at such ideas working through UNFICYP. “

Relevant extract from electronic telegram from British High Commission Nicosia, 27 April 2007. Title: MR HOON'S VISIT TO CYPRUS, 25 APRIL

“Ledra Palace

7. Mr Hoon raised the appalling condition of the accommodation in the Ledra Palace Hotel, which houses the British contingent of UNFICYP. He asked Lillikas to take a

personal interest in improving the situation and urged him to consider the UN's preferred option of a temporary container park in the grounds of the hotel. Lillikas claimed that the reason for the slow pace of the work was that the UN refused to relocate the soldiers. Mr Hoon said the UN needed to remain on site for operational reasons. He hoped a way forward could be found, and suggested the UK might look at providing temporary container accommodation if some were available.”

Relevant extract from email from British High Commission Nicosia to FCO, 18 April 2007.

Ledra Palace accommodation [Tom Fitzalan-Howard/DA met the UNFICYP point-man on Ledra this morning, and will email you with the latest, incorporating Peter's recommended line to take] ;”

Relevant extract from email from UK Mission to UN New York to FCO, 13 April 2007.

“Response requested before 19 April - LEDRA PALACE ACCOMMODATION”

“I raised the issue with the Cypriot Deputy Permanent Representative here, explaining that there was much UK parliamentary interest. He conceded that things were moving slowly, but also said that (a) the Palace was actually owned by the Orthodox Church, not the Government (b) they had offered to build a new facility for the UK contingent in the buffer zone but this offer had been rejected (c) the work was taking a long time because they had to do it bit by bit (because of our 'refusal' to move out while the work was done).”

Email from the British Defence Attaché , Nicosia, to the MOD. 11 October 2006.

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“Attached to the briefing note is a chronological list of events from Jun 04 when the UN first expressed concern to the RoC about Ledra Palace Hotel until Aug this year when the RoC was informed about a serious sewage incident when sewage flowed into the accommodation area and contaminated the drinking water.

You are aware that Min (AF) is now fully briefed and it is intended that the Parliamentary Select Committee for Defence will be shown the conditions when they visit in early Nov 06.

The High Commissioner will add his concern to that of the UN when he meets with the appropriate officials within the RoC. I am hoping to get him an office call on the new Defence Minister in the next few weeks and this will be a suitable time for him to raise this subject.

Tom
DA

Relevant extract from email from British High Commission Nicosia to FCO, 24 March 2005

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I called on Counsellor Orphanides today, and asked him to tell me where the Republic of Cyprus had got to with the provision of alternative accommodation for UNFICYP.

According to Orphanides UNFICYP submitted its technical assessment of the troops' accommodation to the MFA in December. These were passed to the Ministry of Communications and Works for technical evaluation. This evaluation is complete in respect of Ledra Palace but not the other buildings involved.

Orphanides is also waiting for the Ministry to identify suitable government owned land that could be used for temporary accommodation while Ledra Palace is repaired. He expects to receive a report next week.

The third stage will be for the Ministry to produce a study on the infrastructure (sewers etc) that will be required for the temporary site.

Once this has been completed the department will look at commissioning the work required....

He said that the Republic were moving as quickly as possible and were treating the issue as a priority (adding however, that there was only so much he could do to force the issue with other government departments). He could not give me an estimate of when the alternative accommodation would be available.

Comment

It appears the Republic of Cyprus are only part way through a long, bureaucratic process to which no conclusion is foreseeable in the near future. In light of the health and safety concerns you refer to, it is understandable that UNFICYP want to take control of solving the problem.

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Relevant extract from email from British Deputy High Commissioner Nicosia to FCO, 18 March 2005

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1. I asked Wlodek Cibor (number two at the UN/UNFICYP mission here) whom you should pursue within the Cyprus MFA. He said they'd dealt with President Papadopoulos's Diplomatic Adviser, Tassos Tzionis, and with the second in command at the MFA (and head of the Cyprus Question Division), Erato Marcoulis - and, in her absence, with **Efstathios Orphanides**. I suggest you start with him.

2. Cibor was glad to see that the UK was tracking this closely in New York. Through our own contacts within UNFICYP (e.g. Chief of Staff Ian Sinclair) we'd know that they (UNFICYP) were telling no less than the truth: the **Ledra Palace Hotel was falling down**. (Comment: this is indeed what Ian Sinclair told Lyn Parker last time he briefed the High Commissioner.)

3. He gathered that, in New York, Cyprus was suggesting that UNFICYP had jumped the gun in bidding for new accommodation. That was simply not true. **They had been trying to draw the MFA into a proper discussion of alternatives to Ledra Palace since before September** last year, but to no avail. UNFICYP was now having to respond to engineering considerations.

Rob

Relevant extract from British High Commission Nicosia to FCO, 16 March 2005

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“What I can say is that on the accommodation situation, the High Commission was briefed by UNFICYP chief of staff in recent weeks and was supportive of their proposals. The current accommodation - Ledra Palace Hotel, is in a terrible state, and the cost of refurbishment would be far greater than the cost of providing the temporary accommodation proposed. A capital investment is hardly worthwhile if, as we hope, the mission will be downsized significantly in the near future.”

I hope this is helpful.

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<http://www.britain.org.cy>
