



NRDC-IT Magazine

Issue n. 7 - Summer 2006



New COS



Giving wings to Hope



ISAF VIII Reviewed





FOREWORD

Dear readers,

After a long period, exactly a year, we are back to you with a new issue of our magazine which focuses on our experience in Afghanistan as framework headquarters for the ISAF mission. It was a great mission both from a professional and a human point of view, granting all of us the chance to see a fascinating country, meet extraordinary people and be part of an important international effort. All the challenges of NATO's priority mission, which we faced during our tour, were met; the successful and safe conduct of parliamentary elections and the preparation for mission expansion to the demanding South of the country.

In the meantime the NRDC-Italy family has grown and now there are two new contributing nations: Bulgaria and Slovenia; we are happy to welcome them and we are confident that their presence will contribute to improve our headquarters from a cultural and professional point of view.

After a deserved rest and recuperation period the NRDC-Italy staff are already back at work preparing our next deployment exercise, Ex Eagle Blade 06, that will take place in November 2006 close to Rome. After our first operational tour our focus is back on training and preparation as we approach the ninth rotation of NRF from July 2007 to January 2008.

Riccardo Cristoni
Ltc. IT Army
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Front page:

Flags on parade in Duomo Square in Milan during the Ceremony for the Return of HQ NATO Rapid Deployable Corps - Italy from deployment as HQ ISAF, Afghanistan on 13 May 2006.

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Commander's Foreword

Ceremony for the Return of HQ NATO Rapid Deployable Corps – Italy From deployment as HQ ISAF, Afghanistan Milan, 13 May 06 Commander's Address

The Right Honourable Minister of Defence, The Mayor of Milan, The Italian Chief of Defence Staff, Respected Civil and Military Dignitaries, Esteemed Guests, The Officers and Soldiers of HQ NRDC-IT and representatives of Italian and other Armed Forces.

It is a moment of real pride for all of us to have present so many persons of great import; a presence which confers a particular gravity upon this ceremony; the return of this HQ after 9 months in Afghanistan and command of the NATO mission in that country.

A mission, which has seen the Corps deployed to a distant land, in an austere but at the same time fascinating country, and which put to the test the professional and human capabilities of its personnel.

The operation in Afghanistan, which is deemed the Alliance's priority mission, was given to NATO Rapid Deployable Corps, Italy and was carried out by the personnel from its 13 different constituent nations, the flags of which you see paraded before you, and from the military of other nations, 10 of which come from outside the NATO membership countries.

A demonstration, in the form of the uniformed men and women from 36 nations, of the will and cohesion of the international community, rallying behind the United Nations mandate of the mission to advance the democratic process of that country.

At the end of this experience, in such an impressive setting as the Duomo Square in Milan, it is appropriate to sum up the main achievements.



Commander NRDC-Italy, Lt Gen Mauro Del Vecchio



Commander's Foreword



Gabriele ALBERTINI - Mayor of Milan

The city of Milan is proud to host the official return from Afghanistan of the contingent deployed in command of the ISAF VIII peace support operation. Thanks to their marvelous supporting efforts and their contribution to security and protection, on 18 September 2005 Afghanistan held free and regulated democratic elections which gave life to a new national parliament in December 2005, the first in 23 years.



The nine months during which the Deployable Corps was deployed in Afghanistan have been characterised by the following important events:

- The expansion of the area of responsibility of NATO to more than half the country's area;
- The preparation of the final expansion phase which will see NATO operate throughout the whole of Afghanistan by the end of this year;
- The support to the Afghan security forces for the maintenance of a framework of security and stability which has allowed the continuing physical reconstruction of the country and the growth of its democratic institutions;

It is worth particularly underlining two events which happened during the nine months of

this Headquarters' watch; the national assembly and provincial council elections and the inauguration of the new parliament.

The importance of these events will maybe not strike those who are not current with the situation in Afghanistan.

Antonio MARTINO - Minister of Defense

The reasons for our presence in Afghanistan are noteworthy. We are defending the civil powers of a country devastated by decades of violence and which had become a sanctuary of international terrorism. By such methods we also defend, both our national security and that of the international community, from the emergence of new threats, preventing terrorists from establishing bases and obtaining support.



In reality, these have been incredibly important steps for the country, which is trying to raise itself from a legacy of 25 years of war and which can now boast its first freely elected parliament in 30 years.

Intimately involved in this process were the men and women of the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps, Italy and those of the other countries participating in the mission, who faced numerous challenges during 9 intense and difficult months.

They operated, respecting the culture and traditions of an ancient land, rich in history, and developed strong links with the country's institutions and people.

They can be proud and fully satisfied with their achievements.

Commander's Foreword



But the Corps' mission in Afghanistan was also characterised by important gestures of solidarity which, through the military framework, the international community was able to extend to the Afghan people.



Admiral Giampaolo DI PAOLA Chief of Italian Defense Staff

In these nine months you have made a crucial contribution, essential to the process of stability. Thanks to your endeavor and your mission we have taken many positive steps; your professionalism was particularly noted by our allies.

Within this area must be noted the work of the city of Milan and the institutions of the Lombardy Region which, standing shoulder to shoulder with we military in the humanitarian effort to help the Afghan people, provided an important contribution to the improvement of their quality of life.

To the Mayor of Milan I say "Thank you - for what your city, our city, has done".

Thank you to the people of Lombardy for roundly demonstrating to the Afghan people, the solid commitment of the international community and of Italy.

Thank you, finally, for the continuous expressions of support for those who were operating in Afghanistan.

A support exemplified by the Milanese flags, entrusted to our Corps before our departure for that country and now returned, brought back with us and placed here, in the symbolic heart of this city.

But, Honourable Minister, Sirs, valued guests, the officers and soldiers of the Corps paraded in front of you, are not able to close the chapter in their lives of their mission to Afghanistan, without pausing for a reverent and moving thought for the soldiers of so many countries, who lost their lives during the operation in that far country, or other operational theatres.



Their thoughts go out to those who they lost in the last nine months, who were close to them in Afghanistan and with whom, day after day, they shared their anxieties, their difficulties, the happy moments and the sad.

They shared a common bond in that country - those soldiers from Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Britain and Sweden, who are no

longer with us - the conviction of those who know they are contributing to the growth of a democratic process, and the hope of those who want to help a people in suffering.

General Filiberto CECCHI Chief of the Italian General Staff

This is not only the end of your delicate and tough operational deployment, but also of a longer process, started at the end of 2001 in order to meet NATO's request to set up deployable and high-readiness headquarters so as to face the new threats worldwide.

After just four years, NRDC-IT has been able to meet these requirements and effectively cope with its first demanding challenge.



For such an expression of solidarity, they paid with their own lives.

Their names, which will be read one after the other, during a deferential silence from all who aspire to a democratic and secure World, will never be forgotten.

ISAF VIII Reviewed

By Maj A. ELMES, SO2 Media Briefer

Great Game Over: HQ NRDC-Italy completes its first operation, 9 months in charge of NATO's ISAF Mission.

After more than a year's preparation and nine long months deployed in one of the World's most testing environments, HQ NRDC-Italy has completed its first operational tour and demonstrated its value to the Alliance by commanding the priority NATO mission during a testing and historic period.

The Build-up

Preparation for the mission began in 2004, with the NRDC-Italy Command Group and the operational planning group outlining the training package that would be required to make the Headquarters ready. Training proper began in January 2005, with a series of lectures and seminars delivered by experts in all areas of the Afghan theatre, mission analysis and discussion within branches and working groups, and the Corps reconfigured to the structure of HQ ISAF to prepare to take on the challenges the mission would present.

The HQ-sponsored training culminated in Ex Eagle Action, held in Solbiate Olona and designed to "beat up" the staff in preparation for the test exercise, sponsored by the operational command J F C - Brunssum, which would take place in NATO's Joint

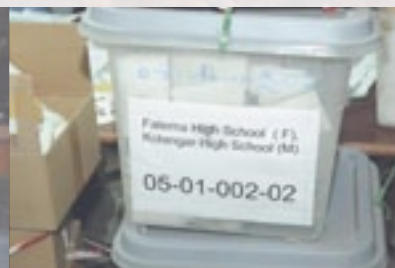
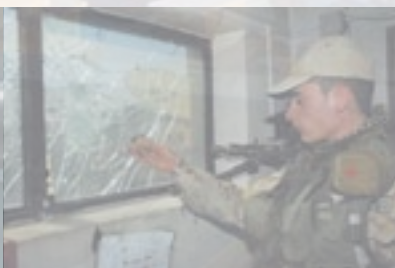
Warfare Centre in Stavanger, Norway. Here, the HQ met and trained with some of the key NATO augmentees, advisers and staff officers, who would bolster the ISAF VIII complement in key roles in Kabul.



The overall training package represented the most complete preparation any NATO HQ had undergone to assume command of the ISAF mission; and rightfully so, because the Italian-led mission would be faced with considerable challenges and have to be immediately effective in support of the Afghan Government on arrival in Kabul.

Hitting the Ground Running

Deployment into Kabul, using leased American C17s out of Ramstein Airbase, was phased over four weeks for the elements of the Corps HQ, Signal Brigade and Support Regiment who would each take their place in the ISAF structure. The staff took over their roles from their counterparts in NRDC-Turkey who had been the framework for HQ ISAF VII, and with a change of command ceremony on 04 Aug05, attended by Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini and Commander JFC Brunssum General Gerhard Back, ISAF VIII was ready to face its first challenges; its mission, to assist the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in providing a safe and secure environment within its area of operations (AOO), which will assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.



ISAF VIII Reviewed



humanitarian and civil-military cooperation projects in Kabul and its surrounds.

Along the Road to Democracy

The immediate test facing the HQ, even while coming to terms with the daily challenges of the mission, was to support the looming National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections, scheduled for 18 Sep 2005. Organisation of the poll was the responsibility for the Joint Afghan Government and United Nations Electoral Management Body, or JEMB. The event was seen as crucial to the future stability and prosperity of the country as an Islamic democracy

and followed the successful presidential elections in 2004 which saw President Hamid Karzai brought to

power. ISAF, along with the US-led Coalition Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), committed to provide third tier support to the Afghan Security forces and was allocated more than 2000 extra troops, equipment and aircraft from ten nations to bolster the security presence in its AOO. To ensure the most complete support, ISAF embedded liaison officers in the JEMB centres, followed developments of the poll and counting and assisted with moving Afghan security forces to best position them to protect the vote.



Election Day passed very smoothly with 6 million Afghans across the country turning out to vote for the some 5600 candidates, with no significant security or organisational challenges, and after recovering the ballots and completing the counting process, the country was able to announce the members of its new parliament and provincial councils.

The completion of the process was to see the inauguration of the new parliament, with upper and lower houses installed in their chambers in Kabul and the historical opening ceremony of Afghanistan's first democratic parliament in 28 years. Again ISAF was intimately involved, as the parliament building is located in Kabul within the ISAF AOO. A comprehensive security



ISAF VII Reviewed



operation was coordinated by the police and Army, with ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom resources in support, and the inauguration on 19 December 2005 passed smoothly, attended by international VIPs including US Vice President Dick Cheney.

An Ever-Expanding Mission.

With ISAF's assistance, two daunting hurdles had been successfully cleared by the country's fledgling security forces, but now the NATO Headquarters turned to face its own challenge; the future of the mission.

During 2005, the ISAF AOO was expanded to comprise the Kabul, Northern and Western Regions of the country. In the capital, home to ISAF HQ and Kabul International Airport, the capability was centred on the Kabul Multinational Brigade. In the Northern and recently created Western Regions, nine PRTs were under command of ISAF with assistance from regional area coordinators and the backing of forward support bases in each of the regions.

In October 2005, during a visit to Afghanistan by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and the NATO's decision making body the North Atlantic Council (NAC), NATO looked at the plan to restructure the ISAF chain of command and expand the ISAF mission beyond its current areas of operation into the South and eventually Eastern regions, to take over from OEF and provide security assistance to the Afghan Government throughout the whole of the country.

The visit, which involved comprehensive briefing, political discussion and recce of ISAF PRT structures and the southern region, allowed the NAC on 08

December 2005 to sanction the next phase of expansion, "Stage 3" for ISAF to operate in the four southern provinces during 2006. In preparation, Canada, UK and the Netherlands agreed to deploy some 7000 extra troops into provinces of the Southern Region in 2006, initially under command of the US-led coalition, taking over PRTs and support bases which will return to NATO command later this year. This will take the eventual strength of ISAF to some 15,000.

The Constant Struggle for Security and Stability.

Despite a strategic atmosphere of democratic progress and positive political support, Afghanistan remains a desperately poor and fragile country, with regional pressures, significant security challenges from crime and terrorism and the all-pervading influence of the narcotics trade. Within this environment, ISAF troops from 36 nations patrolled in support of Afghan security forces, engaged with communities, undertook humanitarian projects and dedicated themselves to supporting the international agenda to assist Afghanistan. Elsewhere, commanders and staff officers were engaged



ISAF VIII Reviewed



in the political and diplomatic struggle to move forward the agenda of rebuilding a shattered country and economy; centred around the security

sector reform "pillars", ISAF maintained a prominent role in supporting the growth of an effective Police and Army, the creation of an potent justice system, the disbandment of illegal armed groups and most importantly the tackling of the narcotics trade, which touches every layer of society and prevents real progress in any area.

The mission was not without its casualties. During its tenure, ISAF VIII saw an increase in incidents throughout its AOO, especially in Kabul, including greater use of

roadside bombs and an indication of increased sophistication in such attacks. Accidents were an ever-present danger in a country where the terrain and weather are so hostile, and the crash of a Spanish helicopter near Herat on August 16, with the loss of 17 soldiers, gave the mission a harsh early lesson, constantly reinforced by a number of smaller

tragedies. During the tenure of ISAF VIII, altogether 25 troops from 6 nations were killed, 4 from hostile action. Their loss was mourned by their nations, the Afghan people and all serving in ISAF, but the commitment to the mission and its importance was reinforced each time.

Looking to the Future

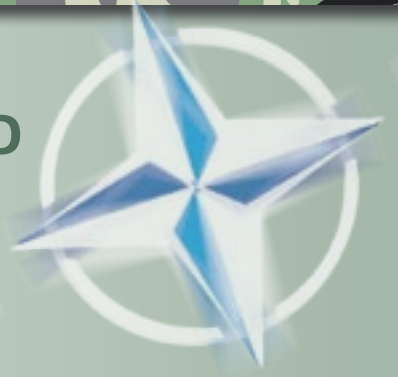
On 05 May 2006, General Del Vecchio returned the ISAF flag to General Back of JFC Brunssum, who duly handed the baton of the mission to General Richards of the ARRC, commander of ISAF IX. The incumbents had already helped the incoming officers in their preparation at the Joint Warfare Centre, and hosted them for recce missions where they learnt, among other hard lessons, the difficulties of transport in winter over the Hindu Kush! Since taking command, ISAF IX has already seen the change of regional area coordinators to assume command status over their PRTs.



Though its first mission is complete, HQ NRDC-Italy's ISAF role is doubtless not yet finished; with new commands to train and advise as they prepare for NATO's most important mission, the officers and soldiers still have a part to play in assisting that most worthy cause; providing security assistance to the Afghan Government and people.



Major General ITA Giuseppino VACCINO Chief of Staff NRDC-IT



Major General Giuseppino Vaccino was born in Vercelli the 6th of March 1952. After secondary school he attended the Military Academy in Modena, the two year course at the Branch School in TORINO and on 1 September 1975 was commissioned into the 4th alpini Regiment of the "Taurinense" Brigade.

Early appointments included platoon leader in both "Saluzzo" and "Susa" alpini battalions and company commander when the "Susa" Battalion was part of SACEUR's AMF(L) Rapid Reaction Force. In this period he participated with his company in numerous exercises in North Norway and Denmark.

After attending Italian Army War College in 1986 he was appointed S1 and subsequently S3 in the "Bassano" Battalion of the 6th Alpini Regiment in San Candido.

In 1989 he attended the General Staff Course and was subsequently appointed Chief Operations in the 4th

Alpini Corps Headquarters in BOLZANO. From 1991 to 1993 he assumed Command of the "Tolmezzo" Alpini Battalion of the "Julia" Brigade in Venzone. From 1993 to 1995 he was appointed Chief of Staff of the "Tridentina" Brigade in BRESSANONE.

Promoted Colonel in 1995 he was appointed Commander of the 3rd Alpini Regiment, during which tour he deployed with his regiment to Bosnia

Herzegovina on Operation "Constant Guard".

In 1997 he assumed the post of Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations of the 4th Corps Headquarters in Bolzano. In 1998 he was appointed Defense Attaché in Ljubljana (SLO). Promoted Brigadier General in 2001, upon his return to Italy he assumed Command for 2 years of the Military Mountain School in AOSTA. Subsequently in 2003 he was appointed Commander of the "Taurinense" Alpini Brigade and concurrently Commander of the NRF 3 Land Component.

In October 2004 he moved to Sarajevo and assumed the appointment of Deputy Commander of European Union Force for Operation "Althea" in Bosnia & Herzegovina. On 15 May 2006 he was appointed as Chief of Staff of NRDC – Italy.

He is a graduate in Strategic Science at the TORINO University, is a

specialist in mountain and arctic warfare and speaks English, French and Slovenian.

He is married to Emanuela, with whom he has a daughter Stella and three sons Matteo, Stefano and Emanuele. His interests include mountaineering, gardening and good food.



Giving Wings To Hope



Giving Wings To Hope

By Maj V. CIARAFFA, COS Executive Officer

HQ NRDC-Italy's "Fai Volare la Speranza" initiative delivers help and hope to Afghanistan



Giving Wings To Hope

We in the West are accustomed to being masters of our destiny and fortunes, with our democratic systems developed over 2000 years through revolution, demand for human rights and equality, and the globalisation of

knowledge. Our lives are motivated by self-belief and the pride of our national and civic achievements and were part of the inspiration for operations such as ISAF, in support of the nascent Afghan democracy.

On 7 December 2005, while the majority of the Corps was deployed in Afghanistan, the remaining personnel in Solbiate Olona conceived a humanitarian initiative called "Fai Volare La Speranza", or "Giving Wings to Hope". The title of the project came from the ideas of some children in the Olona Valley who, when told that the Taliban used to outlaw Afghan children from flying their kites, wanted to help their distant peers to visibly celebrate their new found freedom. American actress Jessica Polsky agreed to become the children's ambassador and face of the charity project.

The children involved their parents, and in turn mayors, companies and a host of other parties were caught up in this chain reaction of solidarity, but the project desperately needed an organisation which could turn good wishes into reality, providing storage in Italy and Afghanistan and prioritise, handle and transport the offerings some 10,000km.

Within days, NRDC-Italy had created a project team headed by ACOS Org and Coord Colonel Giuseppe Paternosto, to receive and store over 150 tonnes of donated



Giving Wings To Hope

goods and manage the funds of the "Pro popolazione Afghana" fund. In less than a month the first fruits of aid from the project began to arrive in Kabul; money, stoves, hydraulic pumps, blankets, school benches, food and medicine were the priority items despatched. A number of lives were surely saved thanks to this outreach from the Italian people, specifically by the quantities of drugs and medical supplies, costly and impossible to obtain in the Central Asian country, which gave hope and future prospects to entire families.

Through the command of ISAF VIII, and through the "Fai Volare la Speranza" project, NRDC-Italy obtained results which certainly went beyond its given mission and initial expectations. Through the export of its knowledge and democratic ideals, Italy showed the Islamic world that the democratic market economy mechanisms for creating wealth can be shared for the benefit of all, teaching tolerance and mutual respect. This is not economic philosophy, not a comment on natural rights in a country where more than half the population is illiterate, but the practical advantages of democracy, highlighting a lesson from Adam Smith's theories on economics, where the progress of a society depends closely on the material interests of individuals.



Milan Parade Photo Gallery

By WO F. CIVITELLI and Cpl S. PICONE, NRDC-IT Photographers



Milan, Piazza Duomo





13 May 2006



Milan, Piazza Duomo





Milan Parade Photo Gallery



Ex Snow Master

By Ltc. M. STOCUTO, SOI Info Ops

The mountain challenge

From 23 to 30 January 2006 the Eagle flew to his mountain nest.

The famous Alpine winter resort of La Thuile in Valle d'Aosta, with its slopes reaching across hundreds of kilometers of the Franco-Italian border, hosted HQ NRDC-Italy's Exercise EAGLE SNOWMASTER 2006.

With instructional and logistic support from the Italian Military Alpine Training Centre, this remarkable arena assured the HQ's 70 participants, fresh from Kabul, a different and more relaxing environment from their recent experiences in the Hindu Kush, although opportunities for risk and personal trial were to be found aplenty as individuals tested their alpine skills in such a challenging winter mountain scenario.

NRDC-IT personnel were hosted in the "Monte Bianco" Barracks. The facility, built in 1934 for the Italian Border Troops deployed on the western border, is now the seat of the 88th Alpine Coy who provided the adventure training exercise with excellent support. The old-style barracks, which exterior hasn't changed since it was built, creates an atmosphere of frontier, calling forth images of a time when soldiers were alone to face the mystery and perils of the mountain.



The exercise aim without any doubt was fully accomplished: teamwork and team building!

The marvelous snow-white environment surrounding La Thuile offered a splendid scenario, amplifying the excitement of all skiing activities. Both skiing and snowboarding were practiced according to students' individual abilities.

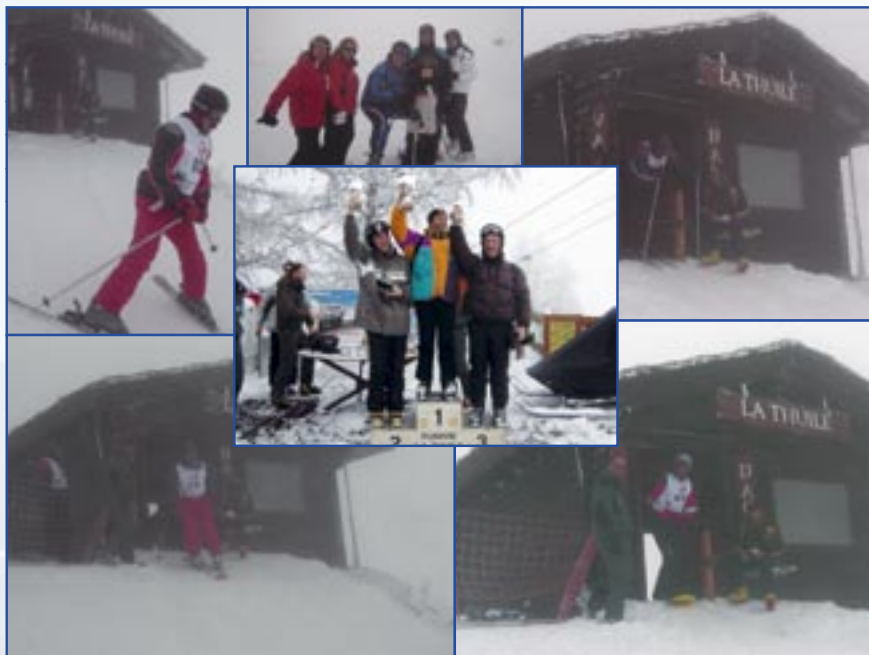
The Participants, from 6 Nations, were divided in 9 groups, and led by a military instructor of the Alpine Training Centre and from the local skiing school so they could improve daily their technique and familiarity with the skiing environment.

More than 150 Km of slopes of La Thuile (IT) and La Rosiere (FR) were tracked by our fellows, daily becoming more and more confident in their descents. The white landscape of the skiing arena facing the massif of Monte



1st NRDC-IT Giant slalom Trophy

Ex Snow Master



Bianco, at 4,848m Europe's highest peak, offered some breathtaking backdrops.

The weather represented the only missing cherry on the sweet cake of this superb training period, instead proving an obstacle to the quality of the training. Initially charmed by splendid sunshine, the second part of the training week was disturbed by low clouds and snowfalls. Nevertheless no one let it affect the pleasure of descending even the more challenging slopes, under the skilful direction of instructors, teachers and sometimes just more experienced colleagues.

The practice developed day by day whilst beginners, intermediates and experts improved own personal capabilities which culminated with the 1st NRDC-IT Giant Slalom Trophy, raced by all participants on Monday 30th January, despite the extreme weather conditions which added an extra challenge to the event.

The Trophy, arranged by the Director of La Thuile Lifting Service, Dr. Giordano and under the outstanding organization of the Director of La Thuile Ski Club, WO Tognetto, was raced in a foggy day, but all participants were guided through the poles by the light of De Coubertin spirit. All could experience once in their life the feeling of the epic feats of Alberto Tomba and Herman Mayer, albeit at

the finish the gaps in the rank-list were negated by the common "esprit the corps" and everyone warranted a place on the highest step of the podium.

The NRDC-IT organization team would like to thank the many members' families whose presence helped in achieving the most important of the results: to contribute to team building and reciprocal better knowledge. The valuable effect of gathering staff members and relatives was soon clear when the groups started to meet for lunch or just to drink a typical "Bombardino" at one of the several typical fashion bars in the skiing arena during pauses between lessons.

The two social events organized were also a great success.

The first was a typical dinner in a Local "Baita", reached by snowmobiles along the snow-covered San Bernardino pass road. The guests were warmly welcomed with an outdoor aperitif of "vinbrulé" which allayed the -17 C° night-time temperature.

The "Raclette" speciality entree and a friendly "caffé a la Valdotain", drunk from a typical wooden "Grolla", to wrap up the dinner, helped to reinforce the good mood and new friendships.



La Thuile 2006



The second social event was a formal thank you from NRDC-IT and addressed to all whose support had been vital to the success of the exercise.

Organised in one of the best pubs in the village, it was an opportunity to deliver presents, prizes and NRDC-IT gadgets to the instructors, Military Alpine School members and local supporters and friends as recognition for their efforts. It was also a final opportunity to bring together once more the participants in a pleasant, informal and relaxed environment.



The NRDC-IT senior representative, BG NAGY, took the opportunity to address those gathered, outlining how "...such a kind of activity is important to pave better understanding among the multinational HQ environment and improve thereby also the working relationships". He continued "...welcoming the participation of the members' family in preparation of a mutual supportive NRDC-IT community when the HQ deploys".

Look forward to next year's Eagle SNOWMASTER!

1 ST NRDC-IT GIANT SLALOM TROPHY			
	Beginners	Intermediate	Advanced
1 st	CMS NARDACCI	CMS FESTUCCIA L	CAPT GENTILE
2 nd	WO MAGNI	CMS PRONESTÌ	LT COL ARRIGHI
3 rd	WO STAGLIANO'	CMS FESTUCCIA E	LT COL STOCCUTO



The Team:

Ltc. ARRIGHI
Ltc. STOCCUTO
Capt. TARTAGLIONE
WO1 IANNONE

Visits and Events

By Maj A. ELMES, SO2 Media Briefer

HQ NRDC-IT UK Contingent Afghanistan Medal Parade

Watched by their families and loved ones, upon return of the HQ from the ISAF mission, the UK Contingent of HQ NRDC-IT were presented with the UK Afghan campaign medal in a small parade on Ugo Mara Barracks parade square on Friday 12 May 2006.

Presenting the UK General Service Medal with the Afghanistan clasp, Deputy Commander of HQ NRDC-IT, Major General Roger Lane, commended each recipient for his contribution to a long and difficult mission, their pivotal role within the Headquarters and the unwavering support of their families and the support staff in Italy.

After the parade the contingent and their families were toasted in the Officers' Club, where the General bade farewell to his Military Assistant, Lt Col Chris Luckham and wife Elaine. Lt Col Luckham leaves the Headquarters on promotion, after only a year in Italy of which 9 months were spent in Kabul!



Visits and Events

A new contributing Nation: Slovenia joins NRDC-IT

On 03 May 2006, NRDC-IT welcomed the arrival of a new member among the contributing nations: **Slovenia**, the 13th nation to join the Italy-based Corps Headquarters and sponsoring an officer, of seniority OF3, to work in the HQ's Combat Service Support Division.



30th June 2006

Celebration of the United States of America Independence Day





By Maj A. ELMES, SO2 Media Briefer

PORTUGUESE CUISINE

Portuguese cuisine is often confused with neighbouring Spanish cuisine however it is actually quite distinct due to its cultural isolation and historical background.

With such a large coastline, it should not come as any surprise that the sea has always been one of the main sources of food in Portuguese cuisine. Although not much is known about early culinary habits, archaeological evidence does show that by the end of the Palaeolithic period, about 7000BC the valley of the Tagus River was populated by hunter/gatherer/fishing tribes. The remains of shellfish and crustaceans, as well as the bones of oxen, deer, sheep, horses and pigs have been excavated from this period.

By 3000 BC Neolithic peoples had begun to practice agriculture and were practised in the use of polished stone tools and ceramics however it was the arrival and settlement of Celtic peoples by 600 BC which was to have a more profound culinary influence - more

so even than it's Spanish neighbour. The peoples occupying Portugal took advantage of the fine pasture-land, both for raising livestock and farming although wild game, shellfish and honey formed the basis of their diet. They also gathered nuts, in particular chestnuts, which they roasted and made into bread.

The arrival of the Romans had an effect on the dietary habits in this area. By the 2nd Century AD their building of new roads meant that food could be transported more easily, thus introducing new ingredients such as wheat to the different parts of the country. It is thought they also introduced olives (therefore olive oil), onions and garlic - three ingredients which are indispensable in Portuguese cuisine.

The Arabs who occupied the southern parts of Portugal from the early 8th Century AD also had a huge effect on Portuguese cooking, not only in the types of foods grown and eaten, but also on the preparation of foods. They introduced new irrigation methods which turned otherwise barren areas into agricultural land enabling fresh and new produce (such as almond trees, figs and citrus) to be grown. They also introduced new ingredients such as rice and spices and at least one cooking technique which still features in Southern Portuguese cuisine today, namely the Cataplana.

By the early 15th century, Portugal's sea-faring explorers were to add another dimension to the cuisine. The expansion of their

empire led to them introducing spices such as coriander, saffron and ginger to Europe, as well as tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and many other ingredients from The New World. Further driven by the desire to find exotic spices, it was a Portuguese, Vasco da Gama who discovered the sea route to India and the Far East. It was also around this time that what many think of as being the national ingredient of Portugal, came into popularity. Salted Bacalhau (cod) was used as a supplement to the usual cured pork to feed the sailors on the long voyages to the Far East.

Breakfast

Portuguese breakfast is light and usually consists of milk, coffee (cocoa for children), bread or toast with butter, jam, cheese or ham. Croissants and cakes may also be included. Coffee is consumed by the Portuguese not only at breakfast, but throughout the day, especially as espresso. Eggs and meat are generally excluded.

Fish and seafood

Portugal is a sea-faring nation at heart, and this is reflected in the amount of fish and seafood consumed by the Portuguese. Fish is served grilled, boiled (in this case it is always flavoured with olive oil), fried or even roasted. Foremost amongst these is bacalhau, or salt cod, which is perhaps the most consumed type of fish in Portugal and of which it is said that there are more than 365 ways to cook, one for every day of the year. Also popular are sardines, especially when grilled as *sardinhas assadas*, as well as octopus, squid, crabs, shrimp, lobster, hake, horse mackerel (scad), lamprey, sea bass, scabbard (especially in the islands) and a variety of shellfish. *Caldeirada* is a stew consisting of a variety of fish and shellfish with potatoes, tomato and onion.

Meat

Meat is widely used, especially chicken, pork, beef, lamb, turkey and kid. Roasts and stews are the most common ways of preparing these. There is a frugal approach to ingredients, with nothing wasted. This emphasis is evident in the large number of dishes that make use of offal and the more unusual cuts of meat. This can be best observed during a *matança do porco*, or pig killing

Seafood Cataplana

15 mins

Serves 4 Ingredients

225g/8oz Fresh Mussels (in shell), scrubbed
225g/8oz Fresh Small Clams (in shell), scrubbed
225g/8oz Raw Prawns (in shell)
225g/8oz Baby Squid tubes, cut into rings
120ml/4fl.oz. White Wine
4 Garlic Cloves, chopped
8 sprigs of Fresh Thyme
1 Bay Leaf
60ml/2fl.oz. Extra Virgin Olive Oil



Preparation

- ◆ Place all the ingredients in the bottom of a cataplana or a wide saucepan with a close fitting lid. Place over a low/medium heat, cover with the lid and cook for 5-8 minutes until the mussel and clam shells have steamed open.
- ◆ Stir well and remove and discard any mussels or clams which haven't opened. Serve immediately.





festival, where dishes are served using all parts of the animal. What cannot be served immediately is turned into a wide variety of cured or smoked meats, especially spicy sausages. These include *linguiça*, a seasoned pork sausage with onions, garlic and paprika, *chouriço*, a spicy dried sausage, *farinheira*, a sausage made of pork fat and flour and *negrinha* or *chouriço de sangue*, a sausage of pork blood similar to black pudding. A traditional meat dish is *cozido à portuguesa* consisting of boiled pork, beef, chicken and sausages with cabbage, carrots, potato and rice. In the north, especially in Porto, a stew made with beans and tripe is traditionally served.

Cheese

There is a wide variety of Portuguese cheeses, especially made from goat's or sheep's milk, or both together. Usually these are very strong-flavoured and fragrant. In the Azores, there is a type of cheese made with cow milk with a spicy taste. (queijo de S. Jorge). Traditional Portuguese cuisine does not include cheese in its recipes, so it's eaten by itself before or after the main dishes. Another well known cheese is Queijo da Serra da Estrela D.O.P., very strong in flavour, can be eaten soft or more matured. It is handmade from fresh sheep milk and a cardoon "Cynara Cardunculus".

Vegetables

Vegetables that are popular in Portuguese cookery include tomatoes, cabbage and onions. There are many starchy dishes, such as *feijoada*, a rich bean stew, and *açorda*, a thick bread-based casserole generally flavored with garlic and cilantro or seafood. Many dishes are served with salad usually made of tomato, lettuce and onion flavoured with olive oil and vinegar. Rice is widely used, as are potatoes. Soup, made from a variety of vegetables is commonly available, one of the most popular being *caldo verde*, made from potato, thinly chopped collard greens and slices of *chouriço*.

Drinks

Portuguese wine is of high quality and in last years has been considered by specialists among the best in the world. Port wine is a fortified wine of distinct flavour produced in Douro normally

Pastry

- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 10 tablespoons chilled unsalted butter, cut into 1/4 inch cubes
- 5-7 tablespoons ice water

Custard

- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 6 egg yolks
- 12 tartlets Change size or US/metric
- Change to: tartlets US Metric

Make the pastry:

- ◆ In the bowl of a food processor fitted with a metal blade, pulse the flour, salt and sugar to combine.
- ◆ Add the butter and pulse until the flour resembles coarse, uneven cornmeal, about 10 1-second pulses.
- ◆ Drizzle 5 tablespoons of the ice water over the mixture.
- ◆ Pulse several times to work the water into the flour.
- ◆ Add the remaining water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and continue pulsing until the mixture develops small curds.
- ◆ Turn the dough out onto a work surface, shape it into a disc and cover with plastic wrap.
- ◆ Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.
- ◆ On a lightly floured surface, roll half the dough to 1/16-inch thickness.
- ◆ Cut out 6 (4 1/2-inch) circles. (If you don't have a cookie cutter, a wide-mouth jar works well.) Ease the dough circles into a 12-cup (4-ounce capacity) nonstick muffin tin, pressing out any overlapping folds.
- ◆ Repeat with the remaining dough.
- ◆ Place the tin in the freezer for 5 minutes.

Pasteis de Nata (Custard Tarts)

40 minutes 20 mins prep



- ◆ Remove and trim any overhang with the back of a knife so that the pastry cups are flush with the top of the tins.
- ◆ Line dough cups with cupcake papers and fill with dried beans or pastry weights.
- ◆ Bake at 350°F (180°C) for 8 to 10 minutes to set.
- ◆ Make the custard.
- ◆ Dissolve the cornstarch in 1/4 cup of the cream in a medium bowl.
- ◆ Add the remaining cream and sugar, and stir until the mixture is smooth and the sugar dissolves.
- ◆ Check for sugar granules with a spoon; none should remain.
- ◆ In a small bowl, blend the yolks with a fork until smooth.
- ◆ Add the yolks to the cream mixture, stirring gently to combine.
- ◆ Ladle the egg mixture into the partially baked pastry cups, filling to 2/3 capacity.
- ◆ Bake in at 350°F (180°C) until the edges of the custard are puffed and middle is still jiggly, about 20 to 25 minutes. (The custard will continue to cook.) Cool completely in the tin. The pastéis are best when eaten the same day.

served with deserts. *Vinho da madeira*, is a regional wine produced in Madeira similar to sherry. From the distillation of grape wastes from wine production is made a variety of brandies which are very strong tasting.

Desserts

The Portuguese have a very sweet tooth, and especially enjoy rich, egg-based desserts. These are often seasoned with spices such as cinnamon and vanilla. Perhaps most popular is *leite-creme*—a set egg custard. Also popular is *arroz doce*—rice pudding, although *aletria*—

a similar dish, this time based upon a kind of vermicelli—is common. These are often decorated with elaborate stencilled patterns of cinnamon powder. Other custards include *pudim flan*—a kind of crème caramel. Cakes and pastries are also very popular. Most towns will have a local speciality, usually egg or cream based pastry. Originally from Lisbon, but popular nationwide, as well as among the diaspora, are *pastéis de nata*. These are small, extremely rich custard tarts, which are best eaten with a strong coffee.

