



- The Italian Armed Forces in the 21st Century
- NATO Special Operations Forces
- In the footprints of the soldiers of the First World War in France from July to November 1918...



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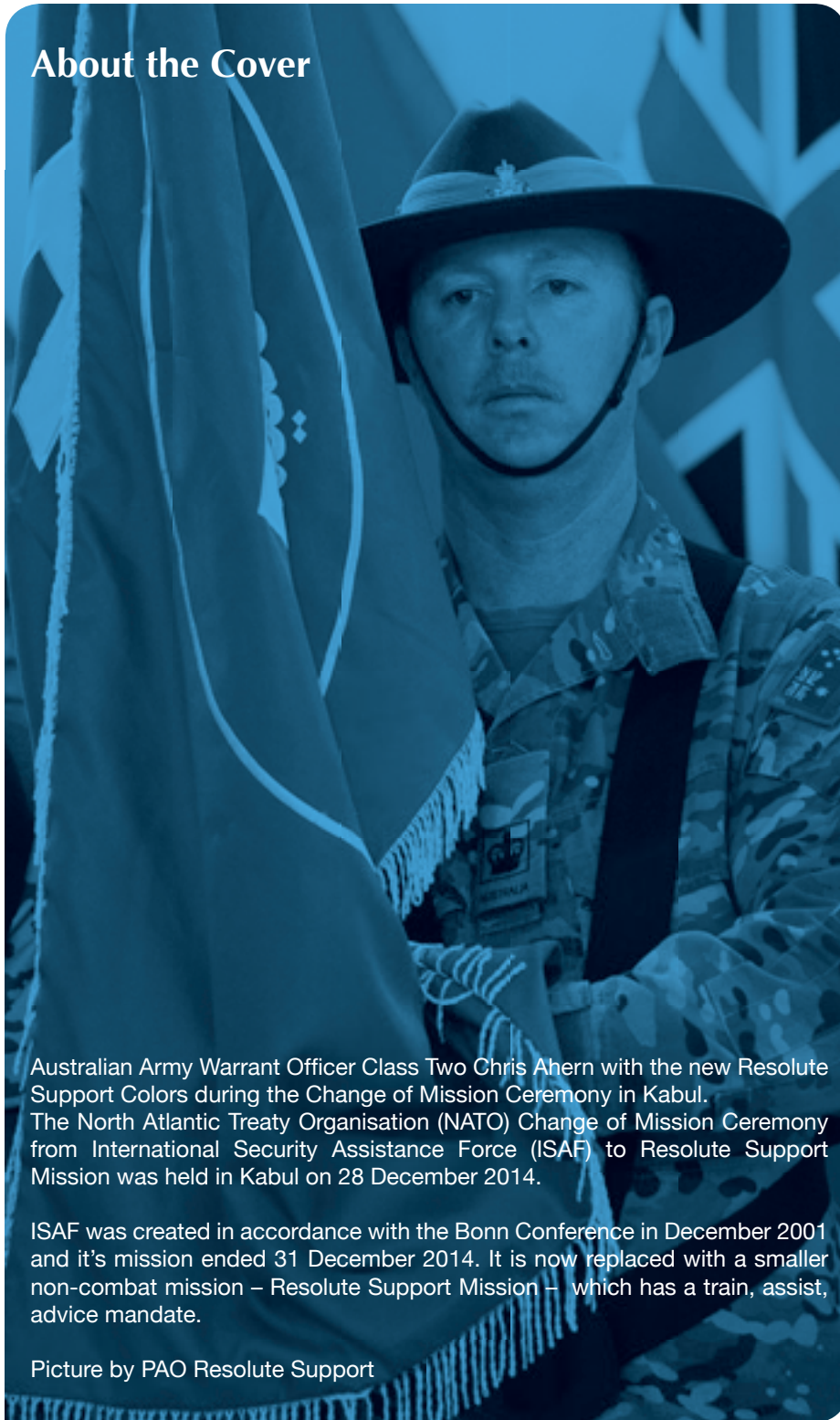
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About the Cover



Australian Army Warrant Officer Class Two Chris Ahern with the new Resolute Support Colors during the Change of Mission Ceremony in Kabul. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Change of Mission Ceremony from International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to Resolute Support Mission was held in Kabul on 28 December 2014.

ISAF was created in accordance with the Bonn Conference in December 2001 and its mission ended 31 December 2014. It is now replaced with a smaller non-combat mission – Resolute Support Mission – which has a train, assist, advice mandate.

Picture by PAO Resolute Support

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COMMAND GROUP CORNER

By Air Marshal Graham Stacey

Welcome to the first Command Group Corner of 2015. I hope that the majority of our personnel had an opportunity for quality time with family and loved ones over Christmas and New Year and have returned with their own version of our 3 Rs - Refreshed, Rejuvenated and Ready for the year ahead. It would be a very brave individual who tried to accurately predict the detail of 2015 but I do not think that boredom will be a feature of our HQ. In addition to our vitally important work facilitating and enabling the Resolute Support mission, Russia, the Readiness Action Plan and Assurance Measures will consume much of our capacity. Our NRF preparations and the major exercise at the end of the year will be challenging but offer huge opportunities for every level of the organisation. What else will we have to do? Only time will tell but I strongly recommend the old Boy Scout motto. Be Prepared (for anything)!

A question I often get asked is “we know what to do, but what is the priority?” I hate to disappoint our readers so early in the year but a simple priority list or guidance is not going to happen. Matching our capacity - human, experience and intellectual - to the multitude of tasks will require careful and thoughtful dynamic leadership and management across the HQ. Our mind-set should be surge when we need to, consolidate when we can and recuperate when we must. At the core of our thinking must be mission command, personal initiative and energy as well as teamwork and cooperation. This is nothing other than the agenda and the values that our COM has been driving for the past 2 years.

I think it is worth spending a few moments contemplating the importance of what we do. One hundred years ago Europe was a very different place. In February 1915 German Zeppelins commenced bombing London, starting a trend towards more civilians than combatants being killed in conflicts, and Chemical Weapons were used for the first time in WW1. The very nature of conflict was changing. Germany was being blockaded, Turkey launched an offensive into Russia and the French





commenced their second attempt to drive the Germans out of the Champagne area; a move that would soon descend into stalemate and see over 240,000 casualties. Why is it so important we remember these events? Quite simply, we bear a huge part to play in ensuring they do not happen again. Dwight D Eisenhower observed “I hate war as only a soldier who has lived through it can, only as one who has seen its brutality and stupidity.” Much of what we do this year in the HQ will be about being prepared, collectively and individually, for the worst case scenarios. What we must never forget is that, when this is done properly, our preparations will clearly display our capability, assure our friends and deter potential adversaries. That is the part we must play to help our politicians, diplomats and statesmen and women prevent a repeat of 1915. At stake are our freedoms, stability, values such as human rights and the future for our children. I can think of no greater Relevance than that.

One of the best aspects of my job is the quality of the people we work with. In addition to interacting with our “home team” I have had the privilege of visiting soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and civilians across the Alliance. I am always impressed by their professionalism, commitment and dedication. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all readers, families, friends and loved ones as well as serving personnel, for their sacrifice, support and comradeship during 2014 and wish you all a safe, happy and prosperous 2015. Whatever is thrown at us we will succeed but I would advise that we should fasten our seat belts as it could be an exhilarating journey!

Per Ardua,

Graham E. Stacey
Air Marshal

Second Participation of Spanish Air Force in NATO Baltic Air Policing

Story by HQ AIRCOM Public Affairs Office



The Spanish Detachment Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Enrique Fernández Ambel (right), shakes hands with the Detachment Chief of Operations, Major Eladio Daniel Leal Mozo (left with helmet) upon touching down at Ämari Air Base with his Eurofighter. Photo courtesy of Spanish Air Force.

With the arrival of four Eurofighter Typhoon jets at Ämari Air Base, Estonia, on 29 December 2014, the Spanish Air Force began their rotation of NATO's Baltic Air Policing, and immediately started their familiarization flights over the Baltic.

The Spanish Air Force took over the augmenting role for NATO's Baltic Air Policing from the German Air Force during a handover-takeover ceremony on 2 January 2015. This 37th rotation of the mission is led by Italy flying Eurofighters out of Siauliai, Lithuania, and augmented there by Polish MiG-29 fighters. Belgium is another augmenting nation with F-16 fighters temporarily stationed at Malbork, Poland.

"Spain is strongly committed to Alliance solidarity," said the Spanish Detachment Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Enrique Fernández Ambel. "With this mission we contribute to NATO Air Policing, sharing the security responsibilities of the Baltic nations. We are ready to operate on both the Southern and the Northern borders of the Alliance"

After 2006 this is the second time, the Spanish Air Force participates in this NATO mission in the Baltic region. The four Spanish Eurofighter Typhoons and the bulk of the 114 pilots and support staff are normally stationed at 11th Wing at Morón de la Frontera Air Base near Seville in Spain.

In May 2014, NATO increased the number of Allied fighter aircraft conducting Baltic Air Policing in line with extensive assurance measures. The Alliance takes its responsibility to ensure safety and integrity of NATO members' airspace very seriously – when an aircraft flies close to or enters this airspace without prior coordination or planning, both commercial and military air traffic could be placed in danger. NATO jets routinely identify, intercept, and escort such planes as a precautionary measure. NATO's Baltic Air Policing began in 2004 with the accession of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the Alliance. The 37th rotation will last until the end of April.



Spanish CHOD during Hand over Take over Ceremony

End of 2014 Marks Hand-Over of NATO's Baltic Air Policing

Story by HQ AIRCOM Public Affairs Office



Portuguese Air Force handed over the key to the Baltic airspace to the Italian Air Force

Ramstein, 1 January 2015 – As 2014 drew to a close on 31 December, so did the 36th rotation of the NATO Baltic Air Policing (BAP) mission. In a ceremony held at Šiauliai Air Base, Lithuania, attended by civilian and military representatives from Host Nations and Contributing Nations, the Portuguese Air Force handed over the key to the Baltic airspace to the Italian Air Force. Italy is the lead nation of the incoming 37th rotation.

“For a decade, NATO’s Baltic Air Policing Mission has been more than security assurance to the Baltic States,” said Colonel Audronis Navickas, Lithuanian Air Force Commander. “This collective effort is a good example demonstrating Alliance solidarity and commitment to provide the same standards of security to all its members.”

Four Portuguese F-16 aircraft, augmented by four Canadian CF-188 fighters, policed the skies over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania since September. Together with the two other augmenting Allies – Germany with Eurofighter aircraft out of Ämari Air Base, Estonia, and the Netherlands with F-16 jets out of Malbork, Poland – the NATO fighters conducted about 70 intercepts

over the Baltic Sea.

“We achieved a clear ‘mission accomplished’ here at Šiauliai,” says the Portuguese Detachment Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Francisco “Seeker” Dionisio. “More than 300 flight hours safely performed in over 150 sorties plus an added value from training performed with local and deployed forces show NATO’s greatest strength – joint air operations in a safe and efficient way.”

From 1 January on, Italy is at the helm of Baltic Air Policing with four Eurofighter jets. This is the first time Italy takes part in this NATO mission that started in 2004 when Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO.

“First of all I want to thank the Lithuanian Air Force for the warm welcome,” says the Italian Detachment Commander, Colonel Marco Bertoli. “The Baltic Air Policing mission is very important for my air force. Italy is now the first Ally to participate in all of NATO’s Interim Air Policing activities conducted over Albania, Slovenia and Iceland and – of course – over the three Baltic States”.

On 5 January, Polish MiG-29 fighter aircraft will arrive once again at Šiauliai to

augment the NATO mission that lasts until end of April. The Polish Air Force was the lead nation for the fifth time from May to September 2014.

In May 2014, NATO increased the number of Allied fighter aircraft conducting Baltic Air Policing in line with its assurance measures.

To complete the 37th rotation members, Spanish Eurofighters arrived at Ämari, Estonia on 30 December to take over from the German Eurofighters, and Belgian F-16s will relieve the Dutch F-16s at Malbork, Poland in January.

NATO Air Policing has been, and remains, a cornerstone of Alliance solidarity and cohesion. Preserving the integrity of NATO airspace is a collective task. The Alliance takes its responsibility to ensure safety of its airspace very seriously – when an aircraft flies close to or enters NATO members’ airspace without prior coordination or planning, both commercial and military air traffic could be placed in danger. NATO jets routinely identify, intercept, and escort such planes as a precautionary measure.

Headquarters Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum - Visits and Activities

Prepared by Adjutant Edwin Tromp, photos by PAO JFCBS

Headquarters Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum major activities are depicted along five lines of effort within the Brunssum Campaign Plan. Each of these activities requires an ambitious level of attention and effort. Beside routine staff work we plan and conduct special activities in the form of visits and training, as well as, social events on a regular basis. We would like to provide you an overview of those activities.

November 2014



Exercise Iron Sword 2014 Closes in Style

13 November 2014 - General Silvestras Žukauskas Training Range, Pabradė, Lithuania. At a ceremony attended by numerous Distinguished Guests from the international civil and military communities,

the Lithuanian President, Dalia Grybauskaitė, welcomed the opportunity Exercise IRON SWORD 2014 (IS14) provided Lithuania to train with NATO Allies and praised the Lithuanian Armed Forces' ability to host such a large-scale multinational exercise - the largest multi-national exercise to be held in Lithuania since achieving NATO membership in 2004.



JFC Brunssum Deputy Commander Visits Joint Force Training Centre

Newly introduced pre-deployment training designed for individual augmentees bound for NATO's Resolute Support (RS) mission in Afghanistan (starting 01

January 2015) has just been launched. Air Marshal Graham Stacey, Deputy Commander JFC Brunssum, visited the Joint Force Training Centre (JFTC) in Bydgoszcz, Poland, 18 November to observe the new package first-hand and determine if the newly designed curriculum meets the requirements. Importantly, he took the opportunity to personally engage with the Training Audience.



1st Deputy Chief of Czech General Staff Visits JFC Brunssum

24 November, Lieutenant General Josef Becvar, 1st Deputy Chief of the Czech General Staff, visited JFC Brunssum. The visit focus was to provide General

Becvar an introduction to the roles and responsibilities of a Joint Force Command within the Allied Command Operations military structure and afford him an opportunity to interact with Czech personnel working at the HQs.



Latvian Chief of Defence & Military Representative to NATO Call into JFC Brunssum

25 November, Lieutenant General Raimonds Graube (Latvian CHOD) accompanied by Major General Andis Dilans (Latvian Milrep) visited Joint

Force Command Brunssum as part of a tour that included a trip to SHAPE.



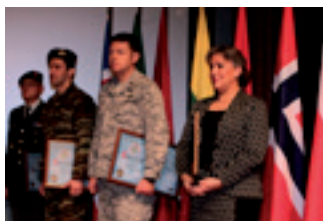
NATO Response Force Commanders Conference in Valencia (Spain)

NATO Response Force (NRF) Commanders Conference was hosted in NATO Rapid Deployable Corps Spain (NRDC-ESP) barracks

(Valencia) from 27th to 28th of November. The meeting was chaired by General Hans-Lothar DOMRÖSE, Commander Headquarters Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum (JFCBS).

Resolute Support Key Leader Training in Brunssum

Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum is hosting Key Leader training for the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan from 3-5 December. After an initial day at SHAPE Headquarters in Mons, Belgium, the officers tasked to join the Resolute Support mission in early 2015 arrived to JFC Brunssum for three days of training about the operational environment in Afghanistan. Then a second phase of the operational training process will take place during an In-Theatre Orientation later in the month.



General Hans-Lothar Domröse addressed his staff

On the 4th of December, the Commander Joint Force Command (JFC) Brunssum, General Hans-Lothar Domröse, addressed his staff and awarded 19

Commendations before the Christmas break period starts to begin.



Visit to JFC Brunssum by a Delegation of the Deputy Permanent Representatives Committee to NATO

Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum hosted a visit by a delegation from the Deputy Permanent Representatives

Committee to NATO on Friday 5 December 2014. Chaired by Madam Erica Schouten, Deputy NLD permanent representative to NATO, the Committee toured the headquarters and received a brief from the Commander, General Hans-Lothar Domröse, about its role as the lead for the NATO Response Force, as well as an update on operations in Afghanistan.



JFC Brunssum Deputy Commander Participates in Berlin Security Conference

Air Marshal Graham Stacey, Deputy Commander JFC Brunssum, visited the Congress on European Security and Defence which took place in Berlin (2-3 December). Discussion topics included areas of instability in European Union neighbouring countries and regions such as: the Middle East; North Africa; and Ukraine.



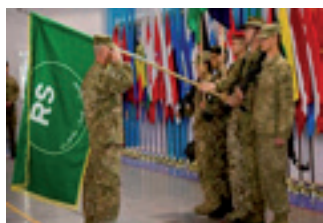
Air Marshal Stacey Visits Nato's Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence

Air Marshal Graham Stacey, Deputy Commander JFC Brunssum, visited the Alliance's Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence (CCOE) 04 December, in The Hague.



Gender in Operation Seminar

10-11 December, JFC Brunssum hosted its first Gender in Operations Seminar, in cooperation with the Nordic Centre of Gender in Military Operations (NCGM).



General Domröse Attends ISAF/Resolute Support Transition Ceremony in Kabul

Sunday 28 December General Hans-Lothar Domröse, Commander JFC Brunssum, attended the formal ISAF/

Resolute Support Transition Ceremony in Kabul, Afghanistan. Although the 13-year International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission does not officially end until midnight 31 December the ceremony marked the end of NATO's longest combat mission. That said, there should be no doubt that NATO remains firmly committed to Afghanistan and it's new mission – a train, assist, advise mission called Resolute Support – that is ready to start in Afghanistan on 01 January 2015. As he rolled up the green and white ISAF flag and unfurled the flag of the new international mission, General John Campbell (Commander ISAF) said: 'Resolute Support will serve as the bedrock of an enduring partnership between NATO and Afghanistan.'



Commanders' Conceptual Discussion

General Hans-Lothar Domröse, Commander JFC Brunssum, successfully hosted a two-day Commanders' Conceptual Discussion (CCD) 12/13

January, with the commanders of force elements nominated to comprise the NATO Response Force (NRF) in 2016. Since its inception the NRF has always been a catalyst for transformation and that remains the case today.



JFC Brunssum Host 4th NATO Electronic Warfare Working Group

Brunssum hosted the 4th NATO Electronic Warfare Working Group (NEWWG) Meeting over the period 1-5 December. The NEWWG develops NATO EW concepts and doctrine, and assists in the development of EW tactics, techniques and procedures. The conference was attended by specialist EW Subject Matter Experts, representatives from the NATO Joint Electronic Warfare Core Staff and National Electronic Warfare specialists. NATO's Signals Intelligence community was also represented.



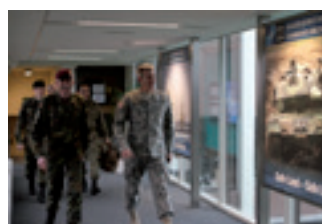
Annual JFC Brunssum Christmas Festival

11 December, Lieutenant General Janusz Adamczak, Chief of Staff JFC Brunssum, opened the Annual Christmas Festival. Attending his first Christmas in the Tri-Border area the General took the opportunity to say how much he enjoyed working with people from so many different countries and complemented the 18 nations who had actively contributed to the Festival.



JFC Brunssum Hosts International Organisation / Non-Governmental Organisation / Governmental Organisation Conference

17 and 18 December Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum hosted an Exercise Trident Juncture 2015 introduction seminar with International Organization, Non-Governmental Organization and Governmental Organization (IO/NGO/GO) partners.



Commander LANDCOM Pays Initial Call on JFC Brunssum

12 January, Lieutenant General John Nicholson, Commander LANDCOM in Izmir, Turkey, conducted his first visit to JFC Brunssum. Principally here to attend Exercise Brilliant Vision – a conceptual discussion with a focus on NATO Response Force 2016 (NRF16) – the opportunity was taken to brief General Nicholson on the roles and responsibilities of JFC Brunssum.

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The Italian Armed Forces in the 21st Century

Story by LTC Angelo Ciavarrella and pictures by ITA MOD



Freccia 8x8 Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV) during a check point in Afghanistan.

The basic mission of the Italian Armed Forces is to defend the Nation and to safeguard free national institutions from every possible threat. The nature of this mission, which has been significantly evolving in the past few years, will continue to be of a highly dynamic nature in relation to the changing international scenario. The global threat of terrorism, the potential use of weapons of mass destruction, regional instability and possible undermining of vital national interests, even outside of national territory, represent the great threats to security in the twenty first century.

Facing such dynamics requires a continued process of adaptation of forces, doctrine and capabilities of the military, coherent with similar processes begun both within the framework of NATO and the European Union, and by those Nations with which Italy maintains strong ties of cooperation.

The multi-layered and unpredictable nature of future threats, above all those of terrorism and failing states, demands development of a capability to prevent and, when necessary, to intervene

quickly and efficiently even at a great distance from the Homeland. In other words, unlike in the past, the military contribution to national security can no longer depend exclusively on the capability to guard and provide static defence of the metropolitan areas "Homeland Defence"; it must develop the capability to dynamically face threats whenever and wherever they occurs. In a few words, what is needed are "net-centric" Armed Forces that unite a high capability for surveillance, command and control with a ready availability of forces which must be flexible and essentially "expeditionary", trained and culturally prepared.

Tasks and missions of the Italian Armed Forces

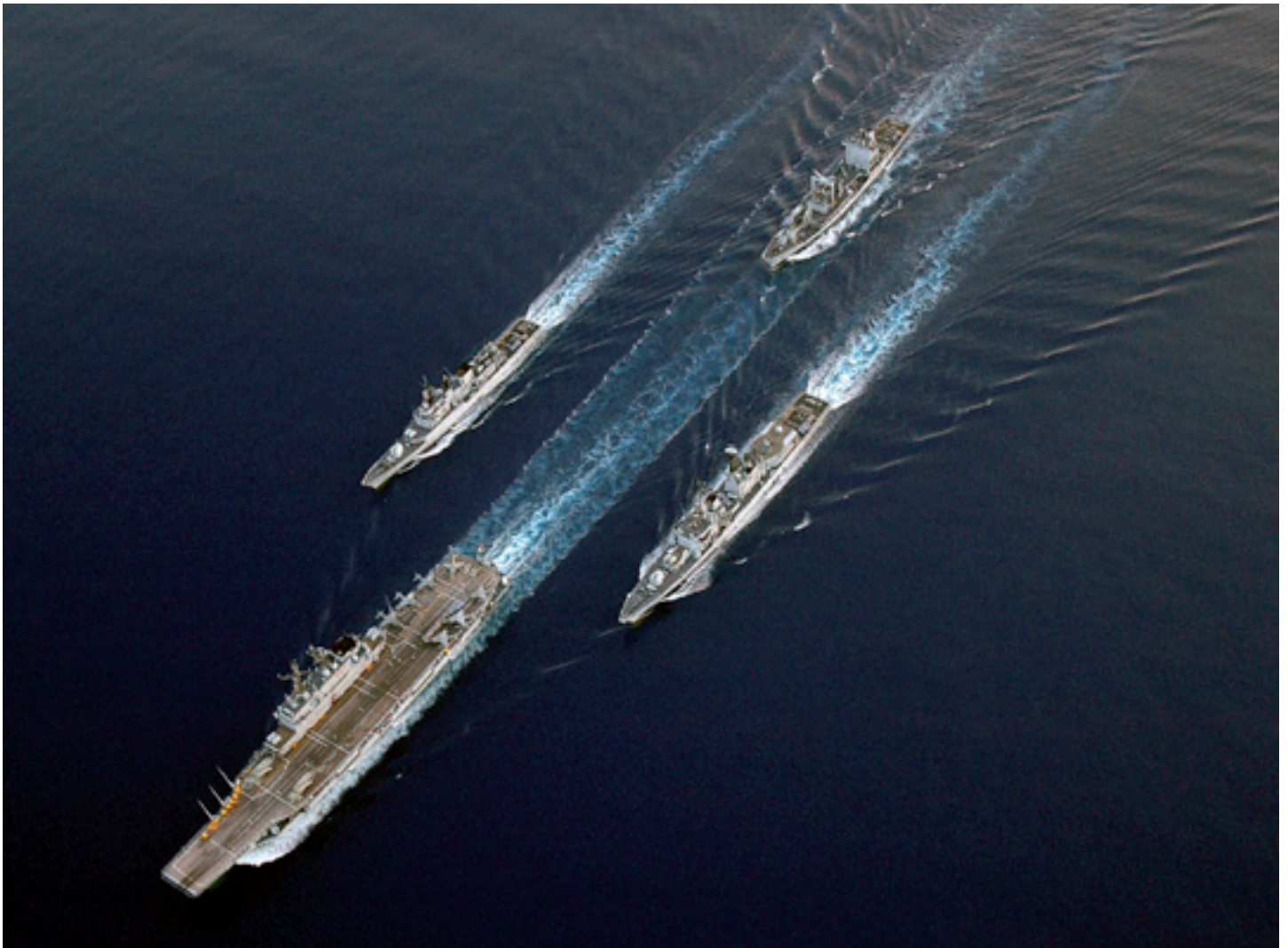
Tasks that have been established for the Armed Forces are listed below in order of strategic importance, which does not necessarily reflect the probability of their occurring:

- to defend vital interests of the Nation against any possible aggression, with the aim of safeguarding the integrity of national territory (land, territorial waters and air space) as well as the

security of lines of communication, areas of national sovereignty and of Italian citizens residing abroad;

- to safeguard the European-Atlantic area, within the framework of the Nation's strategic and/or vital interests, by contributing to the collective defence of NATO;
- to contribute to the management of international crisis, by participating in crisis prevention and management operations with the goal of guaranteeing international peace, security, stability and legitimacy, as well as affirming fundamental human rights, within the framework of international organizations and/or with bi- and multi-lateral agreements;
- to contribute in safeguarding free institutions and in carrying out specific tasks in the event of catastrophes and in other cases of extraordinary need and urgency.

For all four of the above-mentioned missions, there is the overriding necessity of extending military action to the most recent forms of asymmetric conflict, with particular reference to international



Italian Aircraft Carrier Vessel Cavour

terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Current scenario and commitments

Italian Defence has acknowledged the urgent need to reorganise its Armed Forces against the pressing requirements imposed by global challenges to security and the complex and difficult economic and financial situation. For this reason, in 2012 the Italian Parliament passed a Law which identifies the principles, criteria and objectives of Force Review. The Act envisages a deep and meaningful review of national military forces, in order to shape a financially sustainable defence system characterised by higher efficiency and operational effectiveness, and that can be fully integrated into the NATO and European Defence and Security Systems, with a focus on human resources.

The proposed reorganisation relies on the assumption that no new or additional public spending is required, while the standard European and

Allied expenditure standards are used as reference. The Law states that rationalisation of operational, logistical, educational, and territorial facilities falls among the main objectives of Force reorganisation as well as a 30% reduction in infrastructures. As a result of the spending review, the total strength will be reduced to 170,000 personnel by 1 January 2016, to further reduce the strength to 150,000 personnel in the mid-to-long-term.

Being clear that no nation can rest on the assumption that “far away equals to irrelevant and not dangerous” and no nation can autonomously face the entire range of risks and threats, Italian Defence is “operating while transforming” and continues to play a vital role for the international security and stability.

Currently, the Italian Armed Forces are engaged with more than 3800 troops in 35 missions in 30 different countries under NATO, UN and EU umbrella. Only to mention some of these missions, Italians are operating in the Balkans, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Somalia, Indian

Ocean and Iraq. During the past years the engagement of Italian troops reached peaks of 12.000 troops deployed abroad simultaneously but it slowed down in the last few years because of the international decisions of reducing the strength of the contingents deployed in Kosovo, Lebanon and Afghanistan. Even though the total commitment is now reduced, Italy is continuing to maintain the lead of Kosovo Force (KFOR), United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), European Union Training Mission (EUTM) in Somalia and is continuing to play a pivotal role in Afghanistan where has the lead of the Train Advise Assist Command West (TAAC-W).

Due to its geographic position, Italy represents a cultural and economic bridge between the two shores of the Mediterranean, which has always been a strategic crossroad for trades, cultures and religions. For these reasons Italy, while maintaining its commitments with the Allies, firmly supports the development of “capacity building” type of bilateral relations, aimed at

helping local governments to build up solid institutions, as it is happening with Libya, Lebanon, Somalia and Djibouti.

In addition to that, Italian Armed Forces have been heavily engaged to contribute to safeguarding public institutions and to accomplish specific tasks in the event of a public calamity and in other emergencies.

Future Operations

Future operations will tend to be more complex and multidimensional and will therefore require a strong capability to adapt to changes in operational scenarios, from high-intensity to post-conflict stabilization and peacekeeping. The challenges that the Armed Forces will need to face require first of all an innovative approach to the traditional concepts of employment of forces. The planning and execution of future operations will demand an ever increasing tendency toward “joint” and “combined” forces. This will require not only a greater coordination and integration within the Italian Armed Forces but also an increased interoperability with the Allied Forces. In addition to this distinctive capability toward interaction, the forces will have to be prepared to enter rapidly

and efficiently into complex scenarios, marked by the coexistence of actors, organizations, civilian and military realities that will be both multinational and diversified.

The capability to gather, organize and share acquired data, by means of a robust net-centric C4I system, will make it possible to transform the organizational structures of the units, formations and commands in order to render them more capable of confronting future operations. One of the key elements of success therefore rests on the exploitation of the opportunities offered by emerging technologies for the multiplication of forces and the rapid reconfiguration of equipment, with the goal of maintaining a clear technological and operational advantage. In order to carry out the assigned missions, the Armed Forces must be prepared to conduct operations aimed at deterring and combatting unexpected but foreseeably limited military and/or terrorist threats to the national territory. This requires presence and surveillance capabilities combined with the capability to respond quickly and flexibly, even at a distance, as required by the constitutional duty of defending the Country. Within this context are included the activities specifically connected with

“Homeland Security”, which require an elevated integration and interdisciplinary capability both at the national and at the multinational level (surveillance and protection of sensitive areas and targets, control/prevention of illicit traffic, antiterrorism and counterterrorism, etc.).

Outside national territory, the Armed Forces must be capable of sustaining various engagements related to the support of diplomatic action, crisis management, and low- or medium-intensity post-conflict management on a global level in support of national interests and within the context of coalitions or alliances.

Emphasis will be placed on the creation of “packages” with complete capabilities, limited in dimension, with a high level of operational readiness, capable of conducting multinational operations projecting high-intensity “early effect”, within a particularly complex and structured C4-ISTAR context.



Italian Air Force Eurofighter Typhoon deployed to Siauliai airbase (Lithuania) in the context of NATO Baltic Air Policing.

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In the footprints of the soldiers of the First World War in France from July to November 1918...

...was the theme of a professional development serial organized by JFC Brunssum's Deputy Chief of Staff (Support) – Major General Carmelo De Cicco - in December 2014, with a focus on the role of an Italian Army Corps.

Story by Maj Pierre-Yves, DCOS SPT office



Description of the battle of Chavonne

As 2014 marked the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, DCOS Support organized a professional development program with the aim to study a number of battles which took place in the Champagne region of France during that conflict. In particular, the role played by the Second Italian Army Corps during the second battle of the Marne in July 1918 was subjected to scrutiny.

The End of the First World War on the Western Front

In the spring of 1918, Germany signed the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty with Russia and moved divisions from the

eastern front to the western front. In the meantime, western Allies were being reinforced with the commitment of more and more American divisions following the entry of the United States to the war, in April 1917. However, the German high command was conscious that there was an opportunity to put an end to this extended period of conflict. Naval blockades and three years of hard fighting had exhausted central powers. A last exertion was needed to obtain a decisive victory and negotiate a cease-fire with the Allies. There was a short period during which the strength ratio was in favour of the Germans. In some months, the flow of American troops would have compensated and tipped the balance towards the Allies. So the

Germans mounted a series of spring offensives as of March. New tactics were revealed. Preparatory actions were very violent and shorter. And shock troops were engaged to crush enemy positions with surprise and aggression. In one week British troops withdrew 50 kilometres in Picardie and lost 160,000 soldiers. The Allies decided to establish a unified high command. Général Foch became généralissime for all the Allied troops. This decision, and the intervention of all the reserves, allowed the Allies to stop the enemy offensive for a time. Later, in May, from the area of Le Chemin des Dames, west of Reims, 42 German divisions launched a mass-scale attack with poison gas. They conquered a pocket of 45 kilometres



Description of the battle of Bligny

inside French lines but the German troops were exhausted and had to stop to rest. These two major attacks dug two salients in the western frontline. German troops were 70-kilometers from Paris.

The German high command took the decision to launch a last offensive. All efforts would be taken to break through the Allied lines and obtain a decisive military success. The operation was named *Friedensturm*, namely battle for peace, but history will keep the name: ‘second battle of the Marne’. The objective of the German troops was to

break through and seize Paris. To do this, their forces had to encircle the city of Reims and rapidly destroy two French armies. This attack should have obliged the Allied armies to commit the general reserve. In March, this reserve of 25 divisions had been able to stop the German offensive against British troops and was able to move everywhere in the front area to reinforce when necessary. Then, unable to react, Allies should not prevent the Germans from breaking through in the direction of Paris.

However, this last German offensive

was a failure. The Allied intelligence division had been able to discover the enemy plan. Air reconnaissance, interviews of captured soldiers and spies had determined the exact day and location of the planned attack. The Allied high command took this attack as an opportunity to inflict a severe defeat on the Germans and conclusively prevent new offensives. It was decided that three days after the initial attack, major forces were to launch a counterattack from west to east and close the salient. Numerous divisions were regrouped secretly west of the pocket,



Spring 1918 German offensives



1st WW Warring factions

ready for the counteroffensive.

When the Germans attacked on the 15th of July 1918, not only did they encounter fierce resistance but they were also surprised by a major counteroffensive from unknown and unexpected forces. After one month of bloody fighting, they withdrew from the pocket previously conquered with severe losses. At this point the Germans were no longer in a position to compensate for losses. Allied small tanks, close air support aircraft and intelligence gathering had all proved their efficiency. From this time on, aided by the continued arrival of fresh American troops, the strength ratio became increasingly favourable to the Allies. German troops succeeded in establishing a new frontline. But time was running out for the German forces. They would no longer be able to stop an enemy offensive.

The strategy of Maréchal Foch was now to create small salients inside the enemy frontline then launch flank attacks from these pockets to force the withdrawal of the adversary. These combined operations with tanks, bombers and heavy artillery support obtained greater successes. By the 8th of August, the entire German front collapsed. From this day on, the German high command became conscious that it would be impossible now to obtain a military victory. The new strategic goal of the German forces was to deny any opponent advance so as to keep the territory gained as this would act as a bargaining chip in peace negotiations. They had placed their hopes in the solidity of defence lines with concrete field fortifications, chosen high positions, shelters and other strong

points. By contrast, the Allied strategic plan was to prevent the immobilization of the front and conduct uninterrupted offensives – historians subsequently labelled this the ‘hundred-day offensive’.

Day after day, the German armies withdrew across every part of the frontline back to their national border. By the end of October, Germany had lost all its allied countries. Among German civilians, social disenchantment had been brewing and a revolution began with many mutinies and strikes taking place. The Kaiser was forced to abdicate and the new government asked for a truce. The Armistice was signed on the 11th of November 1918. Four years of bloodshed had come to an end.

Role of the Second Italian Army Corps.

By mid-1917, the Italians succeeded in stopping the Austrian offensive in the Piave area after the Caporetto disaster. During this battle, Italian forces had been supported by French and British divisions sent to reinforce the Italian Army – to demonstrate the solidarity and the cohesion of the Alliance. In return for this effort, and as a major German offensive was to be launched in the spring of 1918, Italy decided to commit an elite Army Corps in France commanded by Lieutenant-General Alberico Albricci.

From June to November 1918, Italian soldiers paid cruel blood money to show their courage during the last battles of the war on the western front. They distinguished themselves in two major engagements. During the second battle of the Marne, in July 1918, they

held the position of Bligny for three days. Germans fought fiercely, thinking that Italian troops would rapidly flee. However, the Italian Army Corps held its position despite substantial losses. One third of the fighting strength was lost, namely 9,000 men killed, wounded or captured. But the line was not broken. Two months later, in September 1918, the Italian Army Corps broke through the enemy defensive position at Le Chemin des Dames and exploited this success by continuing to move forward until November 1918.

Professional Development.

Our professional development began with a two-hour lecture designed to provide an understanding of the general context, learn a little of General Albricci, and comprehend the role of Italian troops in France during the end of the First World War. This prepared participants for a two-day trip to France's Champagne region. The battlefields of Bligny and Chavonne were visited, where our understanding of the battles was enhanced and the terrain analysis was conducted. Finally, the delegation visited the Dragon's Cave museum to discover the most famous fortification of Le Chemin des Dames, where French and Germans fought bravely in the corridors to occupy this strategic position.

Not only was this activity a unique opportunity to improve friendships and learn from history, it also served to underline that maintenance of alliance cohesion was as important to our predecessors as it is today.



Italian cemetery of Chavonne

Meet JFC Brunssum's new Political Advisor - Mrs Catherine Royle



Mrs Catherine Royle

Mrs Royle, a warm welcome to Joint Force Command Brunssum. You will be very busy settling in at the moment but thank-you for agreeing to this short interview. Could you provide our readers with a summary of your career?

I served as a member of the British Diplomatic Service from September 1986 – December 2014. I enjoyed a varied career covering Latin America (3 postings including as British Ambassador to Venezuela), Iraq and EU affairs. From September 2010 to March 2014 I served in Afghanistan in three different roles – Deputy Ambassador at the British embassy, Head of the International Police Co-ordination Board and Senior Adviser to the Minister of Interior.

What attracted you to apply to work for NATO?

I first visited NATO as a postgraduate student of Strategic Studies. It took me a while (over 20 years) to get a diplomatic job working with the Alliance, but my experience in Afghanistan reignited my interest in political-military affairs, and convinced me of the vital importance of combining military, police, diplomatic and development skill sets to manage comprehensively the threats and challenges we face. A role as POLAD in an operational Command seemed like a logical next step.

What would you say are your primary goals in your new position?

I have a lot to learn, so initially I want to listen and understand. And I am sure that my goals will evolve as my understanding grows. But my main aim is for the POLAD team to continue to add value to the work of the Command and be an integral part of delivering the Commander's intent.

Do you think your lack of previous exposure to NATO is a strength or a weakness? Please explain.

In classic political fashion I'll say that it's both. As a newcomer I face a steep learning curve and I'm expecting to have to work hard to understand NATO and the work of the Command.

But newcomers can also bring new ideas and perspectives that enrich an environment. If you are not familiar with the box, it's easier to think outside it!

Have you any other messages for our readers?

I'm very grateful for the warm welcome I have received. I hope I don't test your patience too much as I learn about my new job, and I am very much looking forward to meeting everyone and working with you!

Mrs Royle, we wish you the best of luck in your new position and hope you enjoy being part of the 'Brunssum team'. Thank-you for your time.



NATO Special Operations Forces: A Full Spectrum Capability applicable across the Range of Military Operations

Story and pictures by Scott A. Morrison, NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ)



There is an increasingly common question posed to members of the NATO SOF community, “What are you guys going to do as the mission in Afghanistan draws down?” The question indirectly conveys a common misperception that the role of Special Operations Forces (SOF) is limited to the realm of counter-insurgency and counterterrorism, and that the winding down of the NATO mission in Afghanistan portends the end of an era of very active SOF contribution to Alliance operations. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, SOF from Allied nations are extremely relevant and very busy in a number of areas that are simply not readily apparent to many observers. The purpose of this short piece is to provide some insight into what SOF from Allied nations are up to in order to convey there is no shortage or work for NATO SOF.

Limited Perceptions of the SOF Role

Part of the problem with understanding the role SOF can play is the lack of a baseline for what Special Operations are. Special Operations are defined as “military activities conducted by specially designated, organized, selected, trained and equipped forces using unconventional techniques and modes of employment.”¹ While clearly

the realm of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism are areas where SOF capabilities have enormous applicability, the three principal tasks of Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance, and Military Assistance are in reality applicable in both Small Joint Operations (SJO) as well as Major Joint Operations (MJO). With regard to high intensity MJO scenarios, SOF Special Reconnaissance and Direct Action have historically been oriented towards high value targets to achieve strategic and operational effects. SOF capabilities can be oriented upon critical target nodes such as command and control sites, interdiction of key lines of communication, or against multiple nodes of entire target systems. They can be used to penetrate deep into the enemy rear areas to disrupt logistics, interdict or capture senior enemy leadership, support partisan or guerrilla forces, gather intelligence, provide terminal guidance for standoff attacks, and conduct battle damage assessment of previously delivered effects. SOF can be used as an economy of force effort or in a deception role, and even the potential presence of SOF operating in rear areas of a contiguous battlefield can create psychological effects on an adversary and tie down enemy forces to protect high value assets. The point is, the use of SOF in MJO scenarios is only limited by the imagination, not by a narrowly defined applicability limited by those skill sets required for counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. While SOF are relatively new as a cohesive entity within the Alliance, make no mistake, there is a significant SOF role in support of the

NATO core task of Collective Defense.

Additional SOF tasks

The three principal tasks of Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance, and Military Assistance also lend themselves to other SOF activities beyond counter-insurgency and counterterrorism. These tasks allow NATO SOF to support Allied joint operations in the realm of countering proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) as well as Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) materials. Special Reconnaissance and Direct Action tasks, along with unique means of infiltration and exfiltration deep into hostile, denied, or politically sensitive territory, allow SOF to potentially support the WMD disablement phases of locate and secure WMD, CBRN weapons, devices, and material. While this is not a SOF specific mission set, there are instances where unique SOF capabilities are applicable to this target set. This requires an inherent interoperability between SOF and CBRN specialty forces in order to allow them to prosecute these targets together when required. It is not feasible for SOF to pursue time sensitive targets or to conduct these operations deep into denied or hostile territory without a suitable familiarity and working relationship with the CBRN forces they will operate with and support in the WMD disablement mission. This relationship and interoperability is increasingly maturing among SOF and CBRN specialists.

SOF also leverage the unique skill sets and undertake the tasks of Special

¹ The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2014), *Allied Administrative Publication -6: NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions*, NATO Standardization Agency, p. 2-S-8.



Reconnaissance and Direct Action to conduct Hostage Release Operations. These operations require the surgical application of force through target discrimination as well as specialized tactics, techniques, and procedures. Again, while these operations are primarily a national responsibility, there is precedent for NATO SOF providing support as requested by national SOF within this realm.

Finally, Faction Liaison is an additional task where the skill sets of SOF allow them to interact and liaise with a variety of actors in uncertain operational environments in order to gauge their perspectives and potential intentions. This additional task stems from the NATO Peace Enforcement operation in the Balkans where SOF ranged widely across the fault lines of the conflict to gain a sense of the various factions in the conflict.

SOF Potential in Cooperative Security

One of the most difficult areas in which to communicate the relevance and applicability of NATO SOF is in the Alliance core task of Cooperative Security. Due to legacy perspectives on SOF and misperceptions, SOF's role in these non-combat soft power functions are not well understood. The NATO Strategic Concept in 2010 described the need for the Alliance to "develop the capability to train and develop local forces in crisis zones, so that local authorities are able, as quickly as possible, to maintain security without international assistance." The Wales Summit Communique carried forward a very forward leaning posture continuing the same thought:

Today we have decided to launch a Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative to reinforce our commitment to partner nations and to help the Alliance to project stability without deploying large combat forces, as part of the Alliance's overall contribution to international security and stability and conflict prevention. The Initiative builds upon NATO's extensive expertise in supporting, advising and assisting nations with defence and related security capacity building. Building on our close cooperation and following their requests, we have agreed to extend this initiative to Georgia, Jordan, and the Republic of Moldova. We are also ready to consider requests from interested partners and non-partners, as well as to engage with international and regional organisations, with an interest in building their defence and related security capacity through this demand-driven initiative. We reaffirm NATO's readiness to provide defence and related security capacity advisory support for Libya when conditions permit.²

The Summit Communique also contained similar forward leaning language on

² NATO Heads of State and Government (05 September 2014), Wales Summit Declaration, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.



potential support to Iraq along the same lines:

We re-affirm NATO's continued commitment to the NATO-Iraq partnership, through which we will revitalise our effort to help Iraq build more effective security forces. That partnership encompasses, within the existing Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme, cooperation in the areas of: political dialogue; education and training; response to terrorism; defence institution building; border security; and communications strategy...We have also agreed that NATO will help coordinate among Allies and partners security assistance support to Iraq; this could also include helping coordinate the provision of lift to deliver assistance. Should the Iraqi government request it, NATO will stand ready to consider measures in the framework of NATO's Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative with an eye to launching such an effort in the near term. NATO will support ongoing bilateral efforts of Allies and partners by soliciting and coordinating, on a voluntary basis, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance assets.³

In both of these cases, NATO SOF have an enormous potential role to play. In many instances SOF from NATO member nations are currently employed in bilateral and multilateral efforts to work with local forces in precisely the manner described in the Strategic Concept and the Communiqué. NATO SOF have also been conducting these train, advise, and assist operations over the last several years of in Afghanistan under ISAF, and several of the NATO member nations also have SOF involved with capacity building efforts under a European Union mandate. Open source reporting also indicates a number of SOF from NATO member nations and NATO partners are supporting Iraqi forces to combat al-Dawla al-Islamiya al-Iraq al-Sham.

The NATO SOF principal task of Military Assistance provides a superbly flexible instrument to support preventative efforts by the Alliance in a manner wholly consistent with preventative options offered under

the NATO Crisis Response System, and in some cases might be exploited either within existent partnership programs or as part of the Defense and Related Security Capacity initiative. Military Assistance (MA) is defined as:

MA is a broad category of measures and activities that support and influence critical friendly assets through organizing training, advising, mentoring, or the conduct of combined operations. The range of MA includes, but is not limited to, capability building of friendly security forces, engagement with local, regional, and national leadership or organizations, and civic actions supporting and influencing the local population.⁴

MA typically involves some combination of training, advising, and mentoring or partnering with local forces and has been historically used by SOF to quietly achieve effects over the years in places like Oman, El Salvador, the Philippines, and Colombia just to provide a few examples. In Military Assistance efforts of this nature, the focus is on working with the local forces in precisely the manner referred to in NATO's Strategic Concept from 2010:

We will ensure that NATO has the full range of capabilities necessary to deter and defend against any threat to the safety and security of our populations. Therefore, we will...enhance the capacity to detect and defend against international terrorism, including through enhanced analysis of the threat, more consultations with our partners, and the development of appropriate military capabilities, including to help train local forces to fight terrorism themselves.⁵

SOF in Crisis Response

Beyond the relevance of NATO SOF to Collective Defense and Cooperative Security, the volatility of the international security environment would indicate NATO

unfortunately has not seen the end of Crisis Response operations. SOF's role in crisis response has significant precedent and is generally well understood. However NATO SOF need to assist with bridging the seam between Cooperative Security efforts and the transition to Crisis Response. In order to leverage the full value SOF can provide in the earliest stages of a crisis, due consideration needs to be given to SOF's role in preventative options, specifically to enable pre-deployment alert and preparation options similar to other NATO assets. Similarly, SOF's role in early strategic and operational level assessment and reconnaissance efforts during Crisis Response must be more vigorously explored in order to garner the full utility SOF offers.

Regardless of economic pressures and an obvious desire to reap a peace dividend with the draw down in Afghanistan, the reality is that circumstances of the international security environment have kept the Alliance continuously engaged in Crisis Response operations over the course of the last two decades. In fact the increasingly irregular and unconventional nature of warfare will likely find the versatile capabilities of SOF as a vanguard in this challenging realm.

Conclusion

A great deal of the misunderstanding and misperception of SOF stems in part from historical secrecy and isolation from conventional forces. While operations and Afghanistan and Iraq have gone a long way to closer integration of SOF and general purpose forces at the tactical level, some legacy perceptions remain as impediments. It remains an incumbent task therefore for SOF to continuously educate and inform senior decision makers as to the role, missions, capabilities and limitations of SOF. Within NATO, the NATO Special Operations Headquarters continuously seeks to refine a coherent foundation for NATO Allied and Partner SOF operations from the strategic political military echelon to the tactical level. This coherence will in turn enable provision of effective and efficient SOF capabilities integrated alongside air, maritime, and land forces in support of NATO's core tasks of collective defence, crisis response, and cooperative security.

³ NATO Heads of State and Government (05 September 2014), Wales Summit Declaration, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

⁴ NATO (December 2013), *Allied Joint Publication 3.5: Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*, NATO Standardization Agency, p. 2-1.

⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2010), *Active Engagement, Modern Defence Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members*, p. 17.

The flag of the International Security Assistance Force

Story by NATO PAO

The flag of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission has been brought back from Kabul (Afghanistan) to NATO headquarters in Brussels (Belgium), on Thursday (15 January 2015).



CWO Joe Ramsay CSEL JFCBS, hands over the ISAF Flag

“A flag is far more than a piece of cloth. It is a symbol. A nation’s flag is a symbol of unity, of history, of the sacrifices made by its people; and of the values for which it stands. And for the military, the flag is a symbol of pride,” NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said at a ceremony held today at NATO Headquarters. **“For over a decade, NATO Allies and partner nations from across the world have served under the ISAF flag. They have stood shoulder to shoulder with Afghanistan in the largest operation in the history of the Alliance. This flag is the symbol of that mission. Of what we achieved. And of the hard work and the sacrifices. It will be displayed here, inside our headquarters, visible to all , as a lasting memory and a enduring symbol of our ISAF mission in Afghanistan,”** the Secretary General added.

The ISAF mission was completed at the end of 2014, when the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) assumed full security responsibility throughout Afghanistan. The relationship between NATO and Afghanistan is

evolving and the scope of NATO’s support to Afghanistan has changed. A new, NATO-led mission (called Resolute Support) to train, advise and assist the ANDSF was launched on 1 January 2015. Also, NATO Allies and partners are contributing to the financing of the ANDSF and are deepening their political dialogue and practical cooperation with Afghanistan, within the framework of the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership.



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WWII Veteran Returns to Dutch Cave to Commemorate 70th Anniversary of Christmas Mass

Story and Pictures by Maj Richard Komurek, JFCBS PAO Office



The Mass in 1944

In September 1944 Maastricht was the first Dutch city to be liberated by the Allies during World War II. In the weeks before the Battle of the Bulge began, on 16 December, Allied troops set up camps and used a network of man-made caves in the region to store supplies and seek refuge from the war. It was a very cold winter with plenty of snow as 200-300 troops gathered at the De Schark Cave in Maastricht to celebrate a Christmas Mass together before returning to battle. Now in 2014, hundreds of American and Dutch military personnel, family members and local citizens know this wartime story not from a history book, television program or the internet, but first-hand from a soldier who lived it for real.

Robert Wisler, a 19 year old Army Supply Sergeant from Ohio, arrived to Maastricht in the winter of 1944 as part of the 55th AAA Brigade of the 3rd Army and he celebrated his 20th birthday in the cave right after the midnight mass finished in the early hours of Christmas Day. Now, on Christmas Eve 2014 just before his 90th birthday, Sergeant Wisler returned to share his memories and honor his comrades who lost their lives to liberate Europe from Nazi Germany.

"We had been here in Maastricht a

few weeks when the Brothers (of the Immaculate Conception) posted notice of a Christmas Eve midnight Mass for the troops in the area. They made a space on one of the walls for those attending the Mass to sign their names. A couple of days before the Mass, a few guys from our unit and I hung the American flag that's still there," said Wisler. "We were all very grateful that the Brothers had organized this Mass. All of us, especially those on the front lines, were tired, cold, scared and missing our homes and families. Growing up, my family had often gone to Midnight Mass, so the Mass in this cave that night brought a feeling of comfort, and helped me feel closer to those back home."

The return to the cave and the wartime memories was shared by more than 25 members of the Wisler family, to include sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren and great grandchildren who all came to the Netherlands to see the place they had heard about for so many years and to look for their grandfather's name written in charcoal on the dusty wall of the cave.

"Being in the cave with my Grandfather was something I will never forget and will always cherish. It gave me a chance to know him in a different way, on a deeper level, because I was able to glimpse a

bit of his experience that made him the man I have always known," said Kristen Wisler. "To see him look at the names and just hear him remember different guys and say where they were from and what they were like ... if they were a 'character' or 'a really nice guy' or 'really funny' gave life to those names. It gave me a much greater appreciation for the sacrifices that were made, both of the lives that were sacrificed and of the heaviness guys like my Grandpa have always carried with them for those they left behind."

For the Wisler family, sharing this experience with their father/grandfather was also like traveling back in time to see what Robert Wisler was like as a man barely out of his teens.

"Being there allowed me to see him as a young man, or really just a 20 year old boy, as an American Soldier who was there to do a job because it was the right thing to do. It didn't matter that they were all scared, it didn't matter that they were all missing home and missing their families, they had a job to do and they were going to do it until it was finished. That's just how those of the Greatest Generation did things, and because they did, the Dutch and I as well as many others have their freedom and their culture. God truly blessed us to

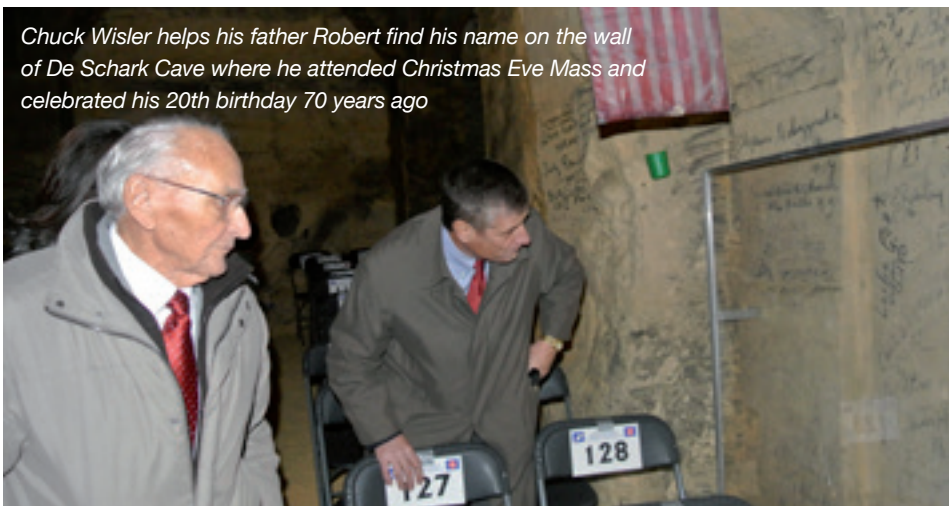
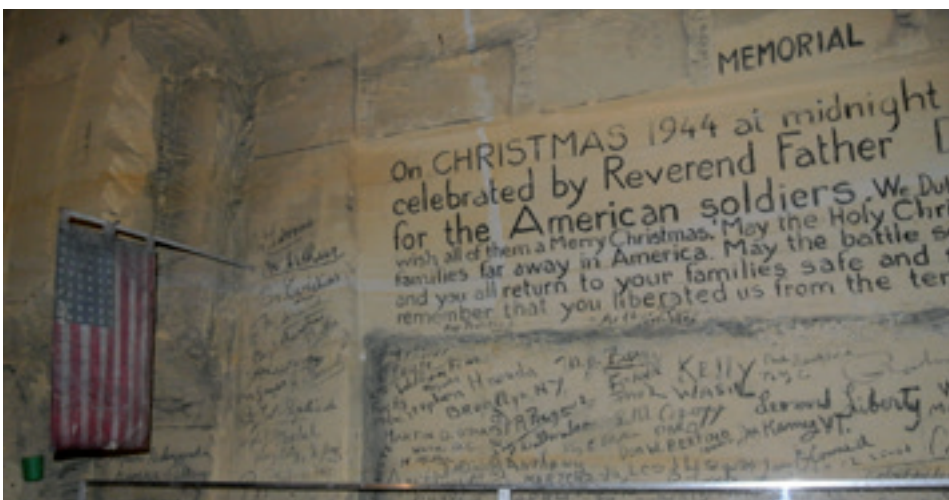
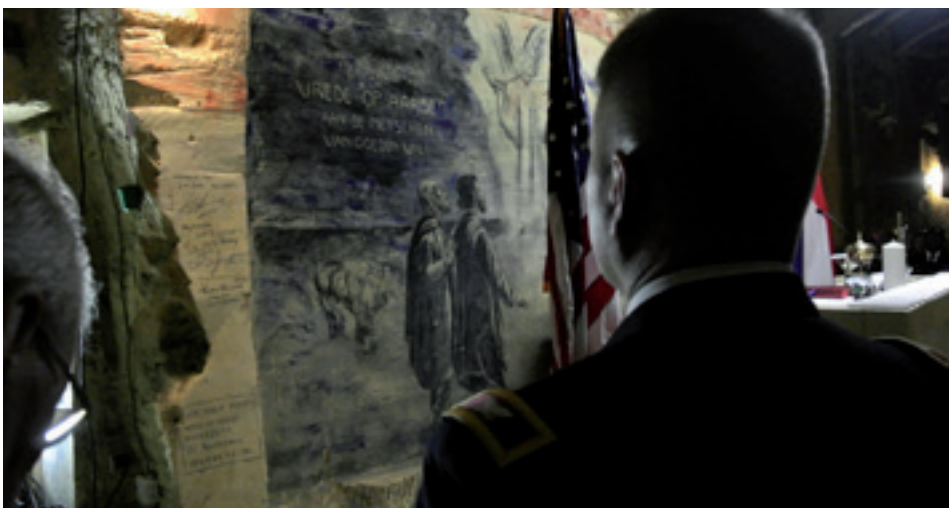
experience that and it was truly a gift to our family,” said granddaughter Kristen Wisler.

One of the U.S. participants in the 2014 Christmas Mass remembrance was Army Private First Class Shane Sital, from U.S. Army Garrison Schinnen, Netherlands, who served as a candle lighter and reader of scripture during the Mass. “It was an honor to be part of a ceremony recognizing such a big part of military history and the relationship between the Netherlands and the United States,” said Sital. “Seeing Mr. Wisler here makes you go back in time and think of the generations that have gone before us,” he said.

An interesting thing about the mass that was the same as it was in 1944 was the participation of a Polish-American Army chaplain, this time around being Lt. Col. Jerzy Rzasowski, from Joint Force Command Brunssum, Netherlands. “One of the main tasks for a chaplain is to honor the dead. This is the moment when we record sacrifice that was made, to which we as the military are potentially called. “For me there is another special meaning because the father that originally celebrated this mass was Father Boleslaus Dobrzynski who was of Polish descent like I am. I am also serving in the U.S. Army so I am following in his footsteps. He did not return from the battle of the Bulge so it’s an honor to be here, especially when the local people remember so much.”

Another similarity between the mass in 1944 and the one in 2014 was the warmth of love and compassion from those attending the service. Just as the Dutch and Americans had done 70 years before, everyone met together in a cold, damp and dusty limestone cave to celebrate the joy of Christmas and pray for peace in a troubled world.

“While I’ve forgotten a lot of things over the years, I will always remember the hospitality that you, the people of Maastricht, showed me in December, 1944. I am grateful to be able to be here with you. Thank you for all your efforts through the years to commemorate this Christmas Mass of 1944 that was so important to us back then and to keep alive the memory of those who served during the war. May it remind future generations of the sacrifices made by generations past and inspire them to work even harder for peace,” said Wisler.



Chuck Wisler helps his father Robert find his name on the wall of De Schark Cave where he attended Christmas Eve Mass and celebrated his 20th birthday 70 years ago

Voice from the past – Senior Aircraftman (SAC) Ted Caton RAF



Publicity Photograph of the author at his desk in HQ AAFCE, feigning work on 8 October 1954 (NATO Photo)



Signed photograph given to the author by Air Chief Marshal Sir Basil Embry on 26 October 1954 (NATO Photo)

As a teenage RAF National Serviceman, during the summer of 1953 I found myself security cleared to NATO's highest level, COSMIC TOP SECRET, to enable me to work at Fontainebleau, France, in the personal office of the Commander of Allied Air Forces Central Europe, the legendary Air Chief Marshal Sir Basil Embry KCB KBE DSO DFC AFC, one of the most senior and charismatic officers of the RAF. Sir Basil had succeeded USAF General Lauris Norstad as Commander a few months earlier. I was to be the junior member of a small, all RAF, staff and to deputise when necessary for the Warrant Officer who acted as Sir Basil's secretary.

When I was first required to take dictation from Sir Basil, he turned out not to be the ogre I had imagined. He asked whether

I preferred to rest my notebook on my knee or on his desk and, as I opted for the latter, he cleared a corner for my use and we sat more or less side by side. He dictated quite slowly (I was capable of a shorthand speed of 120 wpm) and, when he had finished, enquired whether what he had said was alright!

Advantages of the post included several flights home and one to Nice in Sir Basil's personal aircraft; an IBM electric typewriter; a relatively quiet life when Sir Basil was away, usually in West Germany; the ability to avoid parades (except once per year, this on a Saturday); and representing the Commander's Office in weekend exercises to rehearse transferring the Headquarters to its wartime location – from which Adolf Hitler would have directed Operation Sealion, the invasion of England. Unauthorised bonuses: the

wearing of, on different occasions, HRH the Duke of Edinburgh's Admiral of the Fleet uniform cap and Sir Basil's spare uniform jacket (which fitted quite well!).

That said, even I couldn't avoid one weekend guard duty at Melun/Villaroche airfield, where the RAF Communications Flight was based, or one duty destroying Headquarters "secret" waste in an incinerator in the grounds.

After about a year I left Sir Basil for demobilization ; he presented me with a signed photo of himself and called me "Clayton" to the last – never did get my name right! The year had been a wonderful experience; I must have done something right as my predecessor in the post had only lasted one week.

Major Veronika Golkova

When did you arrive in the Netherlands and which position have you taken?

My family and I arrived in the Netherlands in August 2013. My position is in the J9 / Military Partnership / Plans, Policy, Programmes & Execution Section. The Military Partnership Branch was growing and the majority of us arrived at the same time in the summer of 2013.

Tell us about your military career.

In 2000, after graduation from Palacky University in Olomouc with a degree in German and English Philology, I started to work as civilian interpreter and translator at the Land Forces Command in Olomouc. After two years in the Foreign Affairs Department, I decided to join the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic and went through the basic training as well as the Officers' course at the Military Academy in Vyskov. In 2002, the Land Forces Command was transformed into the Joint Forces HQ and the amount of foreign affairs activities tripled. As an officer, I gained more responsibilities. I was in charge of Protocol, organizing conferences, planning and executing foreign affairs activities, escorting foreign visitors at subordinated units, and translating briefings into German and English for both Land and Air Force components. Those eight years were very busy but extremely enjoyable. In 2010, I left for maternity leave and enjoyed the magic and pleasure of my child's smile. When I returned to the office, the amount of foreign affairs activities was reduced as the closure of the Joint Force HQ was approaching. I gained a new position in Prague and was searching for an apartment there ... when all of a sudden, I was informed that I would be deployed to JFC Brunssum. My dream came true..., almost. I had always dreamt about a deployment to Heidelberg. But being here, in the marvelous Limburg area, I feel very lucky and am very thankful to spend three years of my life here. Surrounded by charming nature, excellent hospitality and the genuine kindness of the Dutch people, plus my wonderful international colleagues, what more to wish for.

Tell us about your job in JFCBS and the challenges you are facing.

I am a member of the Military Partnership family now. The challenge was that when we arrived, none of us could claim to be expert in NATO Military Partnership; you must read and study a lot to become one. The Military Partnership Branch exists to strengthen partnerships with NATO Partners. I am in the planning section, but my colleagues from the Regional Coordination Section conduct Mobile Training Team events in



Czech Republic

Partner countries which are in the JFCBS area of engagement: Partnership for Peace countries (Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Finland, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and one Partner across the Globe country (Afghanistan). There are many challenges that confront us, but day by day we are becoming more experienced and better oriented in specific military objectives. All members of the Military Partnership Branch are enthusiastic and conscientious. There is a really good team spirit and I feel privileged to be here to experience this.

What are your hobbies?

My family is my hobby. I like to spend time and have fun with my four year old son and my husband. Limburg is ideal for trips, walking and cycle rides. If there is any energy left, I like running. If there is any time free after that, I like reading books.

Your future plans?

I have no plans as such. I learned that life is more about being prepared and taking opportunities, being open to new challenges. As Forrest Gump says: "Life is a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get."

I would like to take this opportunity to promote my home country a little. A nice-to-have dilemma for visitors to the Czech Republic is where to go after Prague. There are loads of worthy candidates (Český Krumlov and Karlovy Vary come to mind), but the often-overlooked Moravian city, Olomouc, has quietly pushed itself into the conversation.



Olomouc has it all, including UNESCO-protected architecture, great museums and energetic, student-oriented nightlife.

Olomouc, a stately former Moravian capital and Habsburg stronghold, plays an outsized role in Czech history. It was here in 1306 that young King Wenceslas III was assassinated in a murder that remains unsolved to this day. Centuries later, in 1848, Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph I was crowned here. There are many churches to visit, baroque fountains, the Holy Trinity Column and large park areas. The introduction of a new, high-speed rail service from Prague makes it easier to reach than ever. Once you visit this city, you will fall in love with it.



Did you know? The new National Military Museum

Discover the world of the Dutch Forces

Composed by Ed Frieser



During our search for a new series of articles for this 'Did You Know' chapter we came across the absolutely must see and recently opened Dutch National Military Museum. On 11 December 2014 HRH King Willem Alexander officially opened the Dutch National Military Museum at the former Airbase Soesterberg, once the home base for the USAF 32nd Tactical Fighter Squadron during the Cold War. Exhibits from the Dutch Military Aviation Museum at Soeterberg and the Dutch Army Museum, Delft, are brought together in this newly constructed military museum. The new museum demonstrates the past, present and future significance of the Dutch Forces.

Military Hardware

Military hardware, such as airplanes, guns, tanks, infantry vehicles and helicopters, is displayed in a complete and very interactive manner. Uniforms, paintings, ancient publications, utensils and personal true moving stories of soldiers and veterans from different eras complete the exhibition. In six themed areas, covering a floor surface of up to 35,000 square meters, the history of the Dutch army and air force is explained. All aspects of the Dutch Forces are explained and this serves to clarify the military's link to the world that surrounds us. Each of the displayed military hardware is a unique piece with a special story. Visiting, you will become acquainted with the most important military inventions and developments.

Education

The many activities, especially developed for the entire family, make a visit to the museum an ideal educational excursion. In the interactive area called "the Arsenal" children can take a seat in an F-16 fighter jet simulator, they can learn to be a sharp shooter, or even ride in a tank. And please do not forget to try the horse simulator! Learn how a 19th Century cannon works. And what kind of high tech equipment is part of a modern tank and an F-16. In the "Xplore" area you will come across many interactive displays. Children can learn how to make gunpowder, or take a seat in the turret of a tank and eliminate a hostile tank. There are five theme clusters: Weapons (fire and combat power), protection, communications, speed (mobility) and reconnaissance. Each cluster is sub-divided in three parts: historic development, insight into military technology, and how military technology has been applied. In short a visit to "Xplore" is a real experience.

As Her Excellency Mrs J. Hennis-Plasschaert stated during the opening ceremony: "Our forces form an organisation aimed at the future that continuously evolve. The long and moving history that characterizes the Dutch forces has unquestionably led to the outstanding quality of our military today. The National Military Museum reminds us that the army and the fleet belong to the oldest institutions of the Dutch State. And this museum explains and depicts the story of our military history. That history matters and will chase, occupy, worry, interest, thrill and fascinate us. I consider this National Military Museum a tribute to the work of the Dutch Forces."

Opening hours:

Tuesday – Sunday: 10:00 – 17:00 hrs.
During school holidays, the museum will also be open on Mondays. The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Kings Day (27 April), and Christmas Day.

Tickets

Order your tickets quickly and easily online.
<https://www.nmm.nl/plan-je-bezoek/tickets-en-prijzen/tickets/>
Unfortunately ordering tickets online is only available in Dutch.

Prices:

Adults	€9.75
Children aged 4-12	€4.75
Children under 4	free
Museumjaarkaart	free
(National museum pass)	

If you have a Defensiepas (Ministry of Defence card), Veteranenpas (Veteran's Card) or an ICOM card or if you are a Friend of the Museum, you can collect a ticket from the cash desk upon presentation of your card. This gives you free access to the museum.

Address:

The NMM is located at Park Vliegbasis (Airbase) Soesterberg.
Address: Verlengde Paltzerweg 1, Soest
Contact: 085-0036000



MOSAQUA

Subtropical swimming paradise

Come and enjoy yourself in our completely renovated Subtropical Swimming Paradise "Mosaqua" in Gulpen (The Netherlands)! Children or adults, everybody is welcome. It is a perfect place for a nice and complete day out, in all weather conditions, with friends, family or larger groups.

Join us on our trip through the Jungle: come and swim with the wild animals or have a chat with the parrots, but be aware of the swinging chimps. Enjoy the twisting wild water rapids from the Oasis to the Desert. Take a ride in our new 92 meter long and sensational slide with surprising light and laser effects, or maybe you prefer a ride on the family slide. You can also roll on the waves of the Maxawave in the 25 meter pool, where the water reaches a nice temperature of 30 degrees.

At Mosaqua you can treat yourself in the two whirl pools large enough for 8 people, in the unisex steam cabin and in 1 of the 5 infra-red cabins where you can settle down. You can also enjoy the mist shower. The little ones can climb and play on the adventurous pirate ship that is 15 meters long! Let them enjoy the aquaria with tropical fish and real piranhas in the stern of the ship. Go and splash together in the toddler Jungle pool with nice attractions that are especially meant for little guests.

Once you are tired of all this and you want to rest a little bit, there are many terraces, indoor as well as outdoor, where you can have a bite and a drink.

Outside everyone can enjoy the 3 toddler pools, 2 large pools with slides, a large sunbathing area, cosy terraces and the necessary devices for playing and sports. There is also free Wi-Fi, so you can enjoy a complete day out for the whole family!!

Indoor attractions

- Swimming pool with a wave generator
- Rapids
- Toddler pools
- Jungle pool
- 2 Whirlpools for 8 people
- Steam cabin
- 5 Infra-red cabins
- Mist shower
- Wild water rapid
- Star Glide (92 m)
- Family slide
- Pirate ship (15m)
- Television corner
- Snack bar
- 400 Seats
- Lockers
- Free Wi-Fi
- Terraces

Outdoor attractions

- 2 Large outdoor pools
- 3 Toddler pools
- 2 Mega slides
- Water playground
- Playground
- Large sunbathing area
- Beach volleyball area
- Football area
- Basketball area
- Terraces
- Snack bar

An ideal place for the family with perfect services Mosaqua is located only 30 minutes from our HQ so think about having nicely spent day at MOSAQUA in Gulpen.

Where: Gulpen, The Netherlands
Place to visit: Mosaqua, Subtropical Swimming Paradise
Open: Opening hours:
 Mondays/Tuesdays 19.00 - 21.30 hrs
 Wednesdays 14.00 - 21.30 hrs
 Thursdays 19.00 - 21.30 hrs
 Fridays 10.00 - 21.00 hrs
 Saturdays/Sundays 10.00 - 18.00 hrs

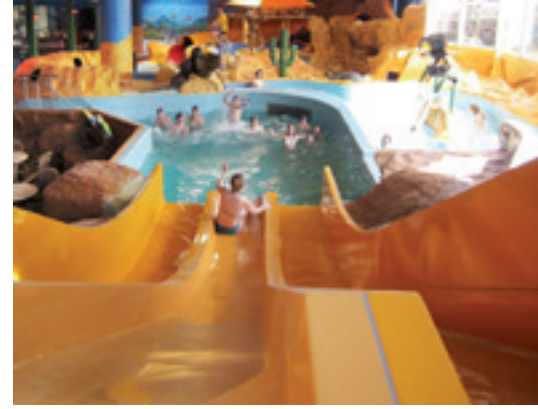
Opening hours: **summer season and holiday periods**
 Mondays to Thursdays
 10.00 - 21.30 hrs
 Fridays 10.00 - 21.30 hrs
 Saturdays/Sundays 10.00 - 18.00 hrs
 Depending on the weather the outdoor pools are open every day from May to September inclusive from 10.00 to 18.00 hrs.

Admission:

Single ticket (children aged 3 and over)	
Sept till April:	€ 7,95
Single ticket -	
May till August:	€ 8,95
Children	
(aged 2 and under)	€ 3,25
65+ & disabled people	€ 6,75
Groups of 25	
persons minimum	€ 6,75
Evening rate from	
19.00 hrs except on	
Friday evenings	€ 4,75
Aqua Disco on Fridays	
from 18.00 to 21.00 hrs	€ 5,75
Ten-visit ticket	€ 74,50

Parking: There are paid parking facilities at the entrances to the park.
 Distance: Approximately 30 km from HQ Brunssum.

Web address: www.mosaqua.nl
 (also in English)
Telephone: +31 (0) 43 450 74 00
 or +31 (0) 43 450 74 13
Address: Landsraderweg 11,
 6271 NT Gulpen



Win Tickets for MOSAQUA Subtropical swimming paradise

- We have 2 x 4 tickets for MOSAQUA Subtropical swimming paradise
- In order to win the tickets, please answer the following question:
- **Quiz Question: How long is the new slide**
Fill in this coupon and send it to PAO, or send an e-mail to pao@jfcbs.nato.int, before 15 February 2015
- For NATO ID card holders only
- The winners will be announced in the next edition of the Northern Star

Answer:

Division:

Full name:

Extension:



Movie Review



American Sniper

Genre: Drama ,Action & Adventure

Directed By: Clint Eastwood

Written By: Jason Hall

US Box Office: \$93.6M

Runtime: 2 hr. 14 min.

From director Clint Eastwood comes “American Sniper,” starring Bradley Cooper as Chris Kyle, the most lethal sniper in U.S. military history. But there was much more to this true American hero than his skill with a rifle. U.S. Navy SEAL sniper Chris Kyle is sent to Iraq with only one mission: to protect his brothers-in-arms. His pinpoint accuracy saves countless lives on the battlefield and, as stories of his courageous exploits spread, he earns the nickname “Legend.” However, his reputation is also growing behind enemy lines, putting a price on his head and making him a prime target of insurgents. Despite the danger, as well as the toll on his family at home, Chris serves through four harrowing tours of duty in Iraq, becoming emblematic of the SEAL creed to “leave no man behind.” But upon returning home, Chris finds that it is the war he can’t leave behind. (C) Warner Bros

Rating: R (for strong and disturbing war violence, and language throughout including some sexual references)



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¹ the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

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