

By LtC P. CAPORELLI, SO2 GI RSC

## The Eagle soars high on the mountain

The Eagle left her nest to reach the mountain. This year, HQ NRDC-IT conducted its annual winter training "Exercise Eagle Snowmaster 05" in La Thuile, in Valle d'Aosta, with the instructional and logistic support of the Italian Alpine Training Centre.

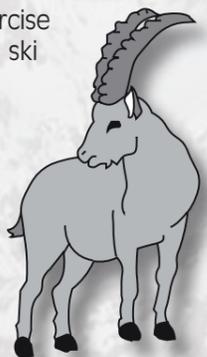
The exercise took place from 7 to 14 March 2005 involving 80 personnel from HQ Staff and Signal Brigade, with the aim of developing teamwork and individuals' qualities in a challenging winter mountain environment. Officers, NCOs and soldiers from the contributing nations participated. The exercise consisted of two main activities: march and ski training.

The marvellous winter environment of La Thuile offers a splendid scenario for very exciting excursions. Accompanied by Military Instructors of the Alpine Training Centre, NRDC-IT personnel completed two marches. In the first one, retracing the route of Hannibal's elephants 2000 years ago, we

braved snow covered paths and trees eager for the coming spring.

In the second one we tested our fitness on a 630 metre climb to reach the ruins of an old Savoyard fort that dominates the entire area of La Thuile.

Our diverse group, representing all military arms, had the presence of a rescue team, composed of expert alpine soldiers, equipped to face any emergency during the march.



The skiing took place in the large splendid area above La Thuile - 150 km of ski runs where, divided in classes of different skill level, we had lessons from both military instructors and civilian ski teachers. Beginners, intermediates and experts improved their personal capability on skis. In particular, the beginner class received the praise of the ski teachers for their rapid progress on the basics; attaching 2 strange planks to their feet on Wednesday, wondering why they had left their stable chairs at the Headquarters, by Saturday they were able



the barracks, its exterior unchanged since its construction, gives an atmosphere of frontier, taking us back to days when soldiers were alone to face their personal challenge with the mystery and perils of mountains.

In this atmosphere the NRDC-IT eaglets nested for a time getting familiar with the winter mountain environment, savouring the freezing air of the Alps and occasionally looking ahead to the East, where the Hindu Kush is already awaiting for the next flight of the Eagle.

to descend all kinds of ski run, fancying themselves as incarnations of Alberto Tomba or Herman Mayer.



The weather made a great contribution to the success of the exercise; although a strong cold wind blew all over the plateau, causing the closure of some ski lifts one day, the sunshine shone all the time over the ski runs giving our party the chance to conduct all the activities scheduled on the programme and, at the same time, to enjoy the beauty of the mountain environment.

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 excellent support. The old style of

