

EAGLE TOUR 2008



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The Commander, the Deputy Commander, the Chief of Staff of the Head Quarters NATO Rapid Deployable Corps – Italy (NRDC-ITA) and a group of 40 officers belonging to all the Contributing Nations participated to the Exercise Eagle Tour 2008, the yearly Battlefield Tour, that took place in the island of Crete, Greece, during the period 12th – 16th May 2008.

The aim of the exercise was to study, on site, "Operation Mercury" during 2nd WW in Crete, in order to prepare HQ NRDC-ITA key leaders for large-scale operations and train them in decision-making. The main training objectives of the Exercise Eagle Tour 2008 were to identify enduring

lessons relating to joint operation planning with reference to LCC level, to study the nature of high command and leadership in the battle (with particular reference to the Battle of Crete, 1941), to provide Commander HQ NRDC-ITA with the opportunity to train his staff key leaders in decision-making.

It was a valuable training event, highlighting the challenges of conducting large-scale multinational operations, a particular pertinent theme for a HQ staff composed of personnel drawn from 15 Contributing Nations.

With reference to the Tours run in the past, the format of the Exercise has been reshaped to a Staff ride, more concentrates on the analysis of the operations rather than on providing an historical narrative.

Also a Training Exercise Without Troops (TEWT) with a modern hypothetical scenario conducted on actual terrain, employing contemporary operational arts, techniques, tactics and procedures, has been submitted to the audience in order to train them in decision-making.

So, looking at the German Airborne Assault and the Allied Operations in 1941, all the participants have been involved in work-group discussions regarding the historical facts occurred during those 2nd World War days in Crete, trying to analyse the decisions taken by the Allied and German Commanders at operational and tactical level and how and why the Allied were so rapidly defeated by the German invaders.

Syndicates analysed also the importance of a so large scale Airborne Operation, the first in history in which an island was taken by an airborne assault.

During the week several activities have been carried out in the area of Chania, where the group was hosted.



On Tuesday 13th May the Commander of the NATO Missile Firing Installation (NAMFI) located in the Souda Bay area welcomed LTG Gay and his staff to the officers' club where a briefing and a video regarding all the international activities of the range have been shown to the NRDC-ITA personnel. After that the group has been hosted on a tour of the Bay aboard of a Greek Military boat and the places where several

facts occurred during 2nd World War. Some visits have been performed to the major locations where the battle of Crete was fought in 1941. The first was on the Top of Hill 107, just in front of the airfield of Maleme took by German after one day of fighting and where the Allied lost the chance to defend their positions. The other historical stand visited was the top of Cemetery Hill in Agia Valley (also called Prison valley, due to the presence of an old jail, still active, took by the German troops during the Battle). In the programme were also inserted three simple ceremonies in which three wreaths were dedicated to the soldiers died in those days: the first in the Maleme German Cemetery (located on Hill 107) to commemorate the German deaths and the second and the third done in the Greek Cadet Monument in Kolimbari and in the Commonwealth Cemetery in Souda to commemorate the Allied soldiers.

In the evening of 14th May, a social dinner was organised in the NAMFI officers' club and three local Commanders has been hosted by LTG GAY to familiarize each other and to thank them for all the support offered during the tour to HQ NRDC-ITA. The Commander of The NAMFI, Major General Georgios TSARTSARIS, the Commander of the Naval Base of Crete, Commodore Stilianos FENEKOS and the Commander of the 5th Infantry Brigade, Brigadier General Stavros DERMATSAKIS, took part to the event in which a dancing folk group showed to the participants the old and traditional Cretan dances.

