

## Civil Military Cooperation Seminar EAGLE CIMIC FIDEL SUPPORTER 07

By LTC Math Weijers

On 13 and 14 Nov 2007, G9 Branch organized its annual Civil Military Cooperation seminar, this year called: EAGLE CIMIC FIDEL SUPPORTER 07. Guests and participants represented HQ SHAPE, NRDC TUR, Polish Central CIMIC Centre, NDC GRC, RRC FRA, CIMIC Group South, CIMIC Centre of Excellence, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Netherlands Defence Academy and

reconstruction and civil planning”.

The outcome and conclusions were clear: Military intervention always needs a decent civil plan to cope with the situation after the intervention. Close cooperation between military and civilians is for that reason a must. Professor Sjo Soeters from the Netherlands Defence Academy explained from a theoretical point of view

the importance of networking. His advice or message to the audience was: Talk with everyone and not only communicate with those who are easy to handle. After lunch, Mr Bas de Haan, working for the Cultural Affairs and Information Section within the Netherlands Army Staff, delivered a very interesting and useful briefing on



the Italian Military Red Cross Society from Legnano. The aim of the seminar was two-fold: firstly, to increase CIMIC awareness among HQ NRDC ITA Staff Officers as well as among the civilians who were attending the seminar. Secondly, to start preparations for a better understanding of the Afghanistan Theatre of operations.

After a very pleasant icebreaker on Monday 12 November, the seminar activities began during the morning of Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November. The work was opened by DCOM NRDC-ITA, Major General Bill CB who focussed on the importance of CIMIC in today's operations and the need for a good understanding of civil military cooperation.

The first briefer of the day, LTC Peter Houdijk from the CIMIC Centre of Excellence, began proceedings with an overall picture of what CIMIC is and what it is not. Ms Floor Plikaar who followed LTC Peter Houdijk delivered a lecture considered very challenging and maybe for some people provocative about "Regime change,

cultural awareness.

A lot of very useful *does* and *don'ts* were passed to the audience aiming on being better prepared to deal/discuss and work with the Afghans. The last briefer on the first day was Ms Caterina Pino from the NATO School Oberammergau.

Ms Pino focussed on the importance of Media and how and what CIMIC could contribute to spread the master message. After a long but very interesting day in which theory and practice was combined, the evening was spent to further increase the networking between all participants while enjoying a very good dinner in the Officers' Mess.

The second day of the seminar was mainly focussed on practical related briefings. Ms Tanja Carbone opened the day with an extremely interesting lecture on tribal issues. She highlighted the role and the importance of tribes and their interference in Afghanistan and the audience's interest was demonstrated by the many relevant questions addressed to the lecturer on the

issue. After that Lieutenant Colonel Gianpaolo Sordini from CIMIC Group South (CGS) informed the audience about CGS' experiences in Lebanon and Kosovo.

The lessons learned/observed by personnel from CGS showed once more the importance of having enough trained CIMIC personnel during deployments and how local reality can deeply affect operations. These lessons include: number of IO/NGOs to cope with in location, distances to be covered by CIMIC personnel to meet their counterparts, regional border crossing problems etc, which are just few examples of the huge amount of problems that can arise from the local situation. Col Hans van Griensven, Chief of Staff 13 (NLD) Mechanized Infantry Brigade, briefed the audience about his experiences as the second 1 (NLD/AUS) Task Force URUZGAN Commander: Some of his suggestions to take into consideration are: its all about the Afghan people, think Afghan style, build where possible, fight where necessary. Above all it was a very clear and comprehensive briefing with very useful hints.

Major Ronald van Essen continued the Task Force U R U Z G A N experiences from the CIMIC perspective. One of the most important issues raised was the increased attention paid by IO/NGOs to URUZGAN

province. Cultural awareness and the use of local interpreters are essential to deal with the situation accordingly. Following this, Captain Rob Ebbers informed the audience about his experiences as a

CIMIC member within the PRT. A very positive message was that several deficiencies experienced in 2005 were since then implemented. Furthermore, in the current PRT organisation the civilian body, responsible for development and reconstruction, was working very well. Lieutenant Colonel Sordini (CGS) closed the seminar activities with CIMIC Group South lessons learned. The main points raised were: there is a huge need for CIMIC liaison and planning capacity in the field; functional specialists are often employed for a very limited time in the theatre, too few in number and there is also a strong need for integrated Force protection teams in support of CIMIC personnel. At 17.30 hours the seminar came to an end. For those who took the opportunity to participate it was a very useful seminar thanks to the high quality of briefers providing their technical experience on a series of very interesting topics. The success of this year's seminar will be taken forward for future workshops. Representation of IO/NGOs in order to gather extremely useful information and hints from them will be incorporated in a next workshop. For those who could not join us, this was a missed opportunity to increase the CIMIC awareness as well as a lost chance to pick up useful information with regard to the future deployment to Afghanistan.

