

Exercise EAGLE TREK 2008 There, where the Eagles dare

by Maj Lorenzo Guani

Introduction

Exercise Eagle Trek is an NRDC-ITA HQ annual mountain exercise conducted each summer. As with the winter exercise "Snowmaster", the aim of Eagle Trek is to develop teamwork, capability and the individual qualities of the participants through numerous training activities in a challenging mountain environment. The most important aspect comes in the form of "team building". The participants, from across the different Divisions, were divided into teams according to physical fitness and climbing skills. The exercise was designed to test the participants' physical and mental toughness. I can safely say that this year all of them succeeded and that at the end, all were able hold their heads high, and with good sun tan, be proud of what they achieved.

Staff and location overview

The exercise was conducted between the 7th and 14th July and included 40 NRDC-ITA staff personnel with the support from the HQ Spt. Bde, led by WO Gaetano Ziccardi. Maj Lorenzo Guani organized the exercise, and planned the vital logistical and operational support with the help of the Italian Army Alpine Julia Brigade in Udine. BG Luigi Scollo was the Exercise Director and LTC Giuseppe Colombo the G8 representative for all the contracting issues. The training area used for the exercise was Tarvisio and the surrounding areas within the Julian Alps. Tarvisio became Italian after the World War I; situated on the Austrian-Slovene-Italian border it is an enchanting area of natural beauty surrounded, by historical and artistic treasures with great opportunities for practising sports and outdoor activities. During the exercise we discovered the breathtaking view of the mountain peaks of Jof de Miezegnot and Jof Fuart and the delightful of Lake of Fusine surrounded by woods and tracks. The 8th Alpine Regiment accommodated us within their "La Marmora" barracks, and gave us first class military hospitality. The trekking and climbing activities were carried out with great success thanks to two highly skilled Alpine Julia Bde instructors, WO Luciano Scano and WO Giuseppe Merendino, and our own NRDC-ITA military climbing instructor's: WO Pasquale Dionisio, WO Antonio Rea, WO Riccardo Benvenuto and WO Massimiliano Corno.

The training activities

The schedule was ambitious; two travel days, five days trekking/training days, and one overnight stop in the alpine Refuge "Corsi" (1874m). As an additional cultural activity, we were able to visit the Military Historical Museum at Predil. On the 11th July, the personnel, divided into teams, under the leadership of the military instructors and conducted a climb along the "via ferrata" to "Vallone Peak" (2368m), hence the title of this article: **there, where the eagles dare**. The participants, equipped with climbing helmet, harness and ropes, were amazed to succeed in such fantastic mission, which we achieved due to their huge physical efforts, determination and teamwork. The 8th Alpine Regiment kindly provided all the alpine climbing materials and also made the arrangement at the Refuge; it was a truly memorable experience.

Conclusions

The program was very ambitious but now that it is over, I believe that everyone will look back on the events with pride and a sense of achievement. All participants will remember what they saw, what they did, and how much they suffered! Above all they will remember how much they enjoyed themselves in such sensational and fascinating mountains. It is very difficult to find the right words to describe those hours and those feelings that one gains from spending time in the mountains. A picture can capture the beauty of the mountain peaks but cannot capture the atmosphere and joie de vie that one gains through spending time removed from the rigours of daily at altitude in some of Europe's most beautiful scenery. For those members of the Headquarters who were not able to attend Eagle Trek there will be another year when more of us can experience the wonderful Julian Alps. As the Project Officer I would like to thank all the participants, they are the ones who made the exercise possible. I am very proud of them. They can now be called, "strong alpine men". Next year we will once again return to the mountains for Exercise Eagle Trek 2009, I hope more personnel will be able to attend so that they can experience the maxim, **there, where the eagles dare**.

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