



EXERCISE EAGLE TOUR 09

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The yearly NRDC-ITA Battlefield Tour was conducted during the period 28th September – 02nd October 2009 in Slovenia and Italy and was focused on study the 1st World War Battles of Caporetto (XII Battle of Isonzo) and Vittorio Veneto.

The exercise, named “EAGLE TOUR 2009”, was addressed to the NRDC-ITA key leaders (Command Group, DCOSs, ACOSs, and National Senior representatives of the 15 Contributing Nations) and aimed to prepare them for large-scale operations and train them in decision-making.

Study Day

On October 2009, 16th, a preparatory study day was run in Solbiate Olona in order to give to the Exercise participants a first flavour of the historical facts occurred during the 1st WW along the Italian and Austro-Hungarian front and an overview about the exercise key points and main admin issues. This activity, settled by the Engineer Branch, primary responsible for the whole exercise, gave the chance to the

audience to have an initial snapshot of the approaching activity.

Battle of Vittorio Veneto

On Monday, 28th, the group left the “Ugo Mara” barracks very early in the morning and reached, by plane, the airport of Treviso. Then, by coach, straight to Nervesa della Battaglia where is located the 1st WW Montello Ossuary with a very interesting museum and a good view towards the Piave valley.

Two military historians, COL (ITA-A) Antonino ZARCONE, Head of the Army Historical Office in Rome, and LTC Lajos NEGYESI, from the Hungarian Historical Department in Budapest, gave the historical background mainly focused on the Battle of Vittorio Veneto, October 1918.

After a short lunch-break in town centre, the group was conducted to the 1st WW museum, hosted in a sixteenth century palace, where two local guides illustrated the collections of field-materials, the official battle-documents and the photo gal-

lery of the relevant personalities and events of the battle.

Battle of Caporetto

On Tuesday, the morning program included the visit of the Sv. Gora (Monte Santo), which offered some very beautiful views towards the Sabotin ridge, the Bain-sjce plateau, where the VI and XI Isonzo battles took place respectively.

The next day was completely dedicated to the visit of the Isonzo valley. The personnel from the Headquarters were able to visit and see the locations where the harsh fighting occurred. First stop was in the 1st WW museum of Caporetto where the director gave a complete overview of the facts occurred in 1917 and lead the group along the very interesting and well-kept rooms of the museum.

In the afternoon the group had the opportunity to visit the Kolovrat range which offered a very good view-point towards Tolmin and the places where the German started their offensive through the Italian lines. The spot was also an open-air museum where Italian trenches have been recently restored.

At the end of the tour in the Isonzo valley, on Thursday, the visit followed in Bovec and Ravelnik, defensive positions of the Austro-Hungarian Army.

Along all the historical stands, the two historians gave personnel the narration of the historical facts during the war-campaign, which engendered useful discussion among the audience. Their lectures were mainly focused on the opposing plans, opposing commanders and tactics employed during the battles at both the tactical and operational level.

Ceremonies

Along the visit of the named historical stands, the group had the chance to pay respect to the hundred – thousands fallen during the war of both the Italian and Austro-Hungarian / German sides. Some simple wreath laying ceremonies were carried out in the largest Italian memorial and in the Austro-Hungarian cemetery in Redipuglia, then in Italian Ossuary in Ca-



poretto and in the Austro-Hungarian cemetery in Ravelnik.

SVN Units

The last day was dedicated to the visit of the 1st Infantry Brigade in Lubiana where the Brigade Commander and his staff gave some presentations depicting the structure and the capabilities of the Slovenian Army, the Brigade itself and the SVN Battle Group recently affiliated to NRDC-ITA. Afterwards a static display and a dynamic demonstration were presented under a heavy rain. They gave the opportunity to the participants to be aware of the out-standing training level reached by the named units.

Social and Cultural events

A social dinner hosted by the NRDC-ITA Commander, LTG Gian Marco CHIARINI, that saw the participation of the whole delegations and some Slovenian Army guests, was held in a Slovenian traditional restaurant on the hills of Medana, near Nova Gorica.

Furthermore a visit to caves of Postumia was settled to give the delegation the unique chance to see the huge and amazing natural beauty that the caves may offer.

Conclusions

The Exercise EAGLE TOUR 2009 has been a unique opportunity for the NRDC-ITA delegation to better understand the problems faced by the old generations of soldiers during those battles and take from them lessons to improve their professional skills. Moreover it made easy the mutual relationship among the multinational members of the Headquarters. ■