



PLENARY 2009 - THE WAY AHEAD

■ by LTC (ITA A) Mauro SINDONI

On 15th October, the Plenary Conference for 2009 was held in SOLBIATE OLONA. This annual event is the most important meeting as far as the G1 Branch is concerned. This is the occasion when all National representatives are given the opportunity to share the options for changes identified during the last year's internal review and the last step in attaining the final endorsement for the layout of NRDC-ITA Staff for the year ahead.

The current Peacetime structure of the HQ was discussed during the last year due to serious concerns on its relevance to the basic requirement to keep a Rapid Deployable Corps (High Readiness) as lean and responsive as possible and the need to cope with new operational challenges for a High Readiness Corps in the Contemporary Operating Environment. Consequently the NRDC-ITA Commander's initial guidance was to keep the Staff as lean as possible in order to achieve a more coherent relationship between the PE and CE status of our HQ. In general, the most important effort was to balance the Divisional Chiefs' op-

erational expectations for their respective Division and the capabilities expressed by each contributing Nation for the sake of the NRDC-ITA HQ, within NATO's perspective.

Studies, briefings, meetings, emails, diplomatic approaches conducted at Corps and MoD level started after last Conference held one year ago with increasing pace, in order to define new capabilities within Branches, revise each Job Description, move functions across Divisions, and delete/ implement operational functions. It has not been an easy job, when considering the need to balance diplomatic efforts, National "footprints" within the Staff and paying attention to keeping the overall number of positions and costs as low as possible.

The conference itself was chaired by BG PRIMICERJ from the Italian Army General Staff (IAGS) and conducted by Col. CANAVESE NRDC-ITA ACOS G1, the main body of the members was provided by the national representatives. This was



the time when the bulk of the supporting paperwork became a real commitment from the Nations to fill posts, to implement functions and to discuss future possibilities. This was the moment in which the proposals given, became an operational reality. A glance, an impression, approval smiles or puzzled expressions, all were experienced but in the end cast iron and concrete decisions were made that will effect the future of the Headquarters for the better. It was also the occasion in which to meet each other and to realise that solving problems with people you already are in contact with, is significantly easier than trying to do the same hidden behind paper or by email.



All this was achieved in a relaxed but also committed atmosphere that started the previous day with an informal ice-breaker. This event allowed the participants to start the conference in a frame of mind conducive to meaningful and relevant debate. Everyone was given the possibility to properly represent his own Nation and get in touch with his respective counterparts and colleagues, thus realising and sharing the same difficulties and perspectives.



As a result the Plenary produced useful and positive results. A significant number of changes were proposed in line with the Commander's guidance, the major changes were the deletion of two Divisions and the consequent framework readjustments from seven to five, the implementation of Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) as a new operational function and the development of the Operational Analysis as a planning tool becoming more and more important in the forthcoming period. All this without exceeding in the overall balance of manning!



Although some solutions had been trailed during previous exercises, the restructuring phase will be completed in March 2010, when the Corps will train and operate with the new layout. Before that, new thoughts, new plans, new needs and priorities will be identified, and the planning phase for a new structure will continue to evolve. The Plenary allowed for a "living structure", it is therefore proof of a continuous stream of that involve all Staff members in search of a common goal for the better shaping of the Corps in order to meet the upcoming challenges during the year ahead and beyond. ■