



Deputy Commander Visit to the Italian 2nd Bridge Engineer Regiment

Story by Lieutenant Colonel ITA (A) Marco Schinzari, ENG Branch , Photos provided by 2nd Bridge Engineer Regiment

On July the 7th 2011, Major General GBR (A) Thomas A. Beckett, NRDC Italy Deputy Commander, visited the 2nd Italian Army Bridge Engineer Regiment, based at Piacenza, Italy. The aim of the visit was to be informed about the ongoing activities and training techniques of the Italian engineer unit, which is subordinated to the Italian Engineer Command, under the responsibility of the Italian Land Support Forces HQs, and has been affiliated to NRDC-ITA Headquarters since 2002.

General Beckett, accompanied by Colonel ITA (A) Vittorio Stella, Assistant Chief of Staff Engineer, was warmly welcomed by the Regiment Commander, Colonel Fabio Cornacchia and his Staff.

During the visit, the General toured the main Regiment sites, the Regiment historical museum, and other facilities. He was briefed on the unit's history and capabilities, and assisted at some training activities performed by the Sappers of the regiment at "Scalo Po" training area. In particular, General Beckett attended a session of specific pontooniers training, to include the construction of a floating bridge, an exercise on navigation procedures on the Po



Maj.Gen. Beckett signing the Regiment Book of Honour

River, and the construction of a Bailey fixed bridge.

Part of the demonstration was also the "Off Shore" section training activity, where NRDC-ITA DCOM saw a race preparation activities. To be noted that the 2nd Bridge Regiment is the sole unit in the Italian Army to be able to provide such a capacity. Among the others, the Off Shore section took part to the 2011 World Championship competition race in Finland last 17th July reaching

the second position.

The visit presented the General with a perfect opportunity to also get acquainted with the main equipments and techniques used nowadays by the Italian military engineer units deployed for Emergency and Natural Disaster Relief operations.

At the end of the visit General Beckett signed the Regiment's Honour Book.

The origin of the 2nd ITA Bridge Engineer Regiment traces back to the 1st of January 1883, when the 4th Bridge Engineer Regiment was established. Several years later, the 4th Bridge Engr Rgt took part to the WW1 operations, in the period from 1915 to 1918, emplacing several crossing points on Isonzo and Piave rivers (North-East of Italy), and giving support to war-fighting operations against Austro-Hungarian troops. Afterwards, on the 15th of May 1933, the

regiment's denomination has been modified in the 2nd Bridge Engineer Regiment. Then from 1935 till 1936 the 2nd Bridge Engineer Regiment was involved in the operation of Eastern Africa Campaign. Also, from 1941 to 1943 for WW2 operations, the Unit was deployed to perform war-fighting operations in the Greek-Albanian and



Maj.Gen. Beckett receives the Regiment crest from Col. Cornacchia

From the Staff



Russian Campaigns. 1951 and in 1966 the 2nd Bridge Eng Rgt was deployed to provide Engineer Support to the national Authorities and civilian population to the flooded areas of Polesine, Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna regions.

Also, the Unit was tasked to support national civilian population for earthquakes in Friuli and Irpinia regions, respectively in 1976 and in 1980.

Since the very early stage of the Balkan crises, the Regiment took part in various national and NATO and UN Operations. It started with the Italian Operation codenamed "Pellicano", in Albania, 1991-1992, and, almost at the same time, it took part to the UN mission in Somalia, in 1992. Later, the regiment deployed several times in support to the various NATO Missions and Operations in the Balkans:

- "Joint Guardian", Kosovo, 1999 and 2001;
- "Joint Forge", Bosnia, 2002;
- "Decisive Endeavour", Kosovo, 2004;
- "Joint Enterprise", Kosovo, 2005 and 2006.

Furthermore, in 2007, the Italian regiment provided support to the "ISAF" mission in Afghanistan.

Minor contributions were also provided to the disaster relief operation "Indus", for the Pakistani earthquake in 2005, and, again in the Kosovo in 2008, for a Natural Disaster emergency operation.

The homeland activities of the Regiment are linked to main flooding happened in the recent past in different Italian Regions:



A moment of the exercise on navigation procedures

Piemonte in 1994, Emilia Romagna in 1996 and 2000 and Campania in 1998. Besides, the Regiment was tasked to support the civilian population of Abruzzo region, badly hit by an earthquake in 2009. Finally, the Unit was tasked to support to the activities aimed at preventing impending environment disasters in Campania region, in 2008, and along the Po River in 2010.

Today, the Regiment is based only on one Bridge battalion. This configuration will be modified in the next future, when the current capabilities will be doubled with one more Combat Support Battalion. This will eventually enable the unit to provide both Engineer Combat Support, as well as all Mobility tasks, in addition to normal River Crossing operations activities, enhancing the unit's flexibility, combat power and capability to perform a wider range of military tasks.

The 2nd Italian Army Bridge Engineer Regiment is a peculiar unit, ready to be employed for

Homeland and Abroad missions, and represents a great credit for the Italian Army and the NATO Alliance as a whole.



A soldier from the 2nd Regiment during a drill (dated 1917)

From the Staff