

The human factor in operations

ISAF VIII's teamwork

by WO Nicola Amato

Beyond any technical issue that has certainly arisen several times, I would rather highlight the human factor of NRDC-ITA's ISAF VIII mission.

Before leaving our HQ, we were clearly aware of the challenges we were supposed to face whilst on ISAF deployment. As soon we got there, we easily realized how important the human factor was while working in a team, other than all technical and logistic aspects.

We soon learnt a life lesson than could be expressed in a few sentences.

"When you are struggling with a deadline or dealing with delicate decisions, the last thing you want to deal with is "people". When the fight is really on and the battle is undecided, you want your team to act co-operatively, quickly, rationally; you do not want a disgruntled colleague complaining about life, you don't want a worker who avoids work, you don't want your key players being tired all day because they are homesick".

But this is what really happened over there and we had to deal with it. We faced the problems using the strongest means: friendship and co-operation. Comradeship is quite unique. Men and women from different backgrounds sharing a common, familiar space, the military base, discovering the beauty of friendships which was more intense though fleeting.

The ISAF mission created such an intense bond among soldiers. I personally run into people that I haven't seen in years and we could just pick up where we left off, like we'd been around each other the whole time.

During my five months of deployment I saw people exhausted and tired. Most of the time I read into their damp eyes sadness and pain. But I also saw people ready to help them out with a smile and an encouraging pat of their shoulders. Because this is the real meaning of comradeship: giving any kind of support to whoever is facing difficulties, especially if they are concerning variations of emotional states that can affect the whole functionality of the working team.

Now, back from ISAF VIII, I have the certain and strong perception that everybody is proud for having placed with professionalism his own piece in the puzzle of the social rebuilding of Afghanistan, notwithstanding all difficulties met.

But, beyond all operational lessons-learnt identified, we cannot avoid taking into consideration also the high importance of the human factors in a military environment.

