



# Ca.STA - Alpine troops ski competition

by LTC ITA A Giulio DI MARZIO

## Historical Background;

This important event, held annually in the Pusteria Vally of the Dobbiaco-Candido ski resort is organised by the Three Star Alpine Troops Command of Bolzano, Italy. Now into its 61<sup>st</sup> year, the competition was established to test and evaluate military skiing within the Alpini units.

Since 1979, CaSTA has included an international dimension with the inclusion of mountain troops from other nations. This has given rise to the Friendship Trophy, contested by representatives from allied nations, NATO commands, as well as Partnership for Peace nations.

As it stands today, the competition perfectly combines and enhances the different aspects which are the foundation of the Alpini: training and professionalism coupled with the reality of winter operations; particularly survival ability, mobility and operative efficiency in a snowy environment.

The races that take place during the CaSTA provide exciting moments from any point of view. Challenging conditions and arduous environment for both individual and team competitions, are aimed at improving the tactical skills allied to skiing and shooting. The competition comprises the following events: Cross Country Team sprint , Cross Country 15 Km, Downhill Giant Slalom, Nocturne skiing touring and Platoon Competition (25 Km Biathlon).

Therefore as the nominated manager, I was able to build a strong team around a nucleus of the two previous year's competition with Ltc Sorvillo Francesco from ITA Support Bde (team Captain & skiing instructor) and WO Ranzinger Franz, from GE NSE. Later Maj Rupert M. Jackson from G7, WO Scorrano Giovanni, ITA Support Bde, and WO Soldavini Marco from G3 OPS joined us. The final member, SGT Hammick Joanne was talent spotted during a training activity last December on the slopes of PILA.



Training has continued from the 4<sup>th</sup> Dec., every Thursday in Cervinia, Gressoney and Champorcher according to team needs. Since then we performed a total of six ski sessions to refine our downhill skills and to complete some good preparatory work, not just on the technical skills but also as a team. Unfortunately, in the build up to the race, we lost a couple of guys with physical injuries.

As well known, this year this skiing competition is taking place during NRDC-ITA deployment for ISAF 09/1 but nevertheless our HQ would be present and consolidate the excellent performances of the past five years. Thus we were able to approach the competition confident in our abilities and our commitment and support to one another.

The message is the “NRDC-ITA CaSTA Team is ready to go!!!!!!”

## The Competition

This year’s competition drew a smaller field than in previous years with representatives from NRDC-ITA, and the ARRC as well as national teams from Italy, Germany, USA, Spain, Slovenia, Argentina, Chile, Romania, Croatia, FYROM and for the first time Lebanon.

While the two NATO HQs were represented by personnel who had limited training opportunities and a rather high average age, the national teams were mostly represented by young, professional and very proficient athletes, whose performances were of an exceptionally high standard. The opening ceremony took place, under falling snow, on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009 in S.Candido and included an opening speech from Vice Secretary of Defence from ITA MOD Mr. Guido Crosetto. During the following days the NRDC-ITA team trained on the South Tyrol slopes by using poles and gates in order to refine their techniques prior the race. Concentrating over all days, the competition requires a great deal of stamina, skill and team tactics. This training culminated with the day of the Giant Slalom on the 5<sup>th</sup> February. Maj Gen Capewell visited S.Candido to watch the racing and to encourage the team. He also attended a music concert and was pleased to award medals to the winners of our Male Giant Slalom.

With the Chief of the Italian Army Military in attendance, LTG Fabrizio Castagnetti, we were privileged to witness the closing ceremony and the extinguishing of the CASTA torch with an “Arrivederci” or “Goodbye” to everybody until next year’s competition.

## A Beautiful Ending

Taking into account the individual skills of the participants and the amount of training conducted prior of the competition, the overall performance of the team and that of the single athletes is deemed more than satisfactory. The giant Slalom performances were in total much better this year thanks to the dedication and training conducted in the weeks and days prior the competition. Sgt Hammick ‘s performance remains worthy of note, finishing in fourth place in the Female Giant Slalom race. All the team performed well and with only few days of dedicated race training and the results correspond with each individual’s experience and skills. NRDC-ITA attendance at the Championship was appreciated and provided visibility of this HQs in an event that is of Media interest.

So the NRDC-ITA Team competed only the Giant Slalom both Female and Male and reached a final position of 12<sup>th</sup> out of 14<sup>th</sup> overall. This was quite a good result in the Friendship Trophy, reflecting the commitment, professionalism and dedication of all the team working together to win the event. Team building is one important outcomes of CaSTA because striving toward a common goal as the CaSTA helps to build a common understanding of each nationality’s difference in culture and behaviour.

This is one of the beauties of being part of a great multinational environment. Anyway the whistling wind carries away all the stories and memories and says that CaSTA 2009 is over. A period with a fantastic team is ending. It felt like yesterday that I started to work with the team and now in the blink of an eye it is history; all the more so as some of the team will soon be leaving the headquarters.

But I am conscious that, just as I took over from Ltc Mastrotto, whoever takes up the challenge next year will be successful and that the NRDC-ITA spirit will be the same as well as the commitment and that the new team, armed to the teeth, will continue this habit of success!

