



THE PRESIDENT

GORIZIA (ITALY), 2 JUNE 2014

ITALIAN LAND FORCE

**(by Brigadier General Federico Maria Pellegatti and Blaise Nkfunkoh
Ndamnsah)**

1. REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

The changed international scenario of recent years has led those armed forces belonging to NATO and not only to adopt provision, training, operational and logistical strategies that will be able to cope with tasks assigned in relation to the new challenges imposed by a situation in which, beyond classic warfare, military operations aimed at the management of international crises (the Balkans, Afghanistan, Somalia, Lebanon, etc.) have been added, including perhaps simultaneously in different theatres. These latter operations are generally conducted under the aegis of an international organisation (UN) or a regional organisation (NATO, EU...) and include contingents belonging to different nations under a single command and control chain, something that was unthinkable only twenty years ago, at the time of the “Cold War”.

Italy, as with other European partners, has begun a 360° review programme of its own national military apparatus, rationalising its existing operational capacities and equipping units with adequate tools for the conduct of operations even with little advance notice, including sustainable logistics sufficient for the tasks assigned to it. In the context of that review of national operational capacities, the Defence General Staff, in collaboration with

the Army General Staff and the Navy General Staff, created a new operational structure in 2005 called the National Sea-Based Projection Capability (Italian Land Force – LF). This new reality with its clear, inter-force characteristics must permit the Italian military to be able to conduct “expeditionary” operations, also for prolonged periods, that envision insertion in an environment that is hostile, uncertain and yet permitting a LF arriving by sea as component of a “forcible entry”, which would perform a previously determined mission. This LF should constitute the premise for successful insertion, in the area of operations (AOR) of other units also arriving by sea, belonging possibly to coalition forces. The structure, as mentioned above, must possess the capability to conduct operations for a prolonged period of time of thirty days or more, projecting its own land units and penetrating its AOR according to operation orders received and on the basis of the situation of the moment. In this regard, it would therefore be necessary to ensure logistical support to embarked units and to cover consumption of materiel through an adequate system of ship-land supply. Of fundamental importance, during the planning phase of the mission, would be to confer enough autonomy to the deployed logistical structures as to permit resupply of land units for the entire engagement period.

2. IT-LAND FORCE COMPOSITION

For the purpose of satisfying the multiple operational needs as a function of the range of missions to perform, within the context of the Italian Defence establishment already existing assets were identified which for their capabilities are necessary for the constitution of a Land Force, both in terms of assets for “combat” manoeuvres and for “combat support” as well as technical and logistical support (combat service support). On the basis of what is available two elements were identified for the transport function, with previous experience in the amphibious field: the “San Marco” regiment of the Italian Navy, stationed in Brindisi, and the “Serenissima” lagoon troop regiment belonging to the Army and stationed in Venice. In this regard it was necessary to proceed first to a comparison of their respective amphibious capabilities and then to the comparison of their respective staff, so as to create, or rather have available, two similar interchangeable units able to operate jointly. The standardisation of the training courses of the soldiers was also established, as well as their principal materiel and individual equipment (arms, equipment, munitions, means of transport and various other materiel). This activity will permit the availability of “mirrored” and

inter-operable units with conventional and amphibious capabilities that range from amphibious assault to land-based attack operations as well as the management of international crises. As regards instead the remaining units of the capability basket the following have been included:

- **Landing Force Command with personnel from the Navy and the Army for the LFC function. The general staff of the LFC has been established permanently at the Brindisi base and provides for the planning, organisation and conduct of capability basket activities. The function of the LFC during operations/exercises is organised personally by the CHOD, between the commanding admiral and general-vice commander of the force, according to a practise that envisions alternation between the two flag officers;**
- **Two armoured companies for the land exploration function, hidden reconnaissance through cover of fire, taken from the “Genova Cavalleria” regiment based in Palmanova (Udine) ;**
- **Two artillery batteries and a command post for the land-based firing function, located in Milan and belonging to the cavalry artillery regiment “Le Voloire”;**
- **Two engineering companies for the mobility, counter-mobility and engineering intelligence function, taken from the 3rd engineering regiment of Udine;**
- **An anti-aircraft battery with “stingers” based in Sabaudia (Latina);**
- **An attack helicopter company with “sea-based” capabilities from the 5th “Rigel” regiment stationed in Casarsa della Delizia (Udine);**
- **An inter-force logistical battalion (CSS) for the logistical support of the LF;**
- **A platoon of military police (Carabinieri);**
- **Land-based assets of various composition, normally platoon, such as: PSYOPS, CIMIC, EOD, NBC...;**
- **Inter-force C4I transmission assets at a company level to guarantee land and naval communications, through inter-operable command, control and communication systems throughout all phases of the operation;**
- **Special forces of appropriate dimensions for the mission;**
- **ROLE 2 type health organisation on board;**
- **Naval units able to ensure the command, control and communication functions (C4IW) both for the LCF and the CATF,**
- **Amphibious naval units for the transport of the LF, including LPD/LPH, with helicopters on board;**

- **High-seas naval units appropriate for the type and number of missions;**
- **PA naval units assigned in an adequate number to perform their assigned tasks.**

All the units cited both of the Army and the Navy are normally under their traditional respective commands and only upon order of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CHOD) do they pass under a single command to perform their assigned tasks. Obviously, over the course of the year a series of training activities are developed at the bases of the “San Marco” and the “Serenissima” including basic and specialised amphibious courses, training both for officers and the capability basket (CB) units with exercises for Command Posts at the respective bases or in a single area or on board naval transport, and amphibious modular exercises with the engagement of naval transport units at the firing ranges of the Apulia region or Sardinia as well as at sea with the constitution of an amphibious force. Personnel belonging to the CB must perform, according to their rank and charge, whether operational or logistical, a basic training course of variable duration. For the Army personnel of the Serenissima regiment, the “amphibious qualification” course lasts four to eight weeks, according to the specialisation; operational personnel, for example amphibious riflemen, attend a further course at the Amphibious School in Brindisi lasting four weeks to obtain the “Amphibious Qualification” licence that permits them to operate in the first wave on board warships. Instead, Navy personnel of the San Marco regiment attend a course at the Amphibious School lasting 12-24 weeks, including in that period both an amphibious module and a land module, already acquired by Army personnel. In addition, for the staff personnel of the CB training courses with variable duration are arranged (S1-G1, S2-G2, S3-G3, ...) at the Amphibious School in Brindisi or attendance at courses at the Quantico Marines School (USA) for a limited number of officers.

3. SIGNIFICANT TRAINING ACTIVITIES

To confer to the project relative to the creation of a national sea projection capability its special units and begin a process of integration among the different CB elements, an Amphibious Integration Centre (AIC) was created in 2005 based in Brindisi and commanded by an Army brigadier general with specific amphibious experience. The centre, made up of amphibious personnel of the Army and the Navy, is composed of two offices, “training and exercise” and “verification and inter-operability”. Their principal

task is to define annual integration objectives to be reached also in terms of materiel and equipment as well as the training activities to conduct with a part of the CB assets on the basis of budget availabilities assigned by the Ministry of Defence to satisfy needs. The project, founded in 2005, as mentioned above, has included participation, with great success, both of the manoeuvre forces of the San Marco and the Serenissima, side by side, together with components of other CB assets, in numerous national and international exercises in the Adriatic Sea, in the Sicilian Channel, in the Sardinian Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, as well as in training areas such as Capo Teulada and Torre Veneri or several firing ranges in Senegal south of Dakar together with European amphibious forces from France, Great Britain, Spain and Holland. We should also mention that the force has participated with its manoeuvre elements, the San Marco and the Serenissima with components of the CSS and CS and other naval units of various types, in sea projection in the south of Lebanon (Naqura area), in the context of the United Nations operation (Operation Leonte) conducted beginning on 2 September 2006 and still under way, obviously with other forces, in respect of Security Council Resolution no. 1701, only a few months after its constitution, thus giving proof, recognised also in the international sphere, of the great capability and professionalism of the participating personnel of every order and rank, and not last, of the validity of the project. And yet again, the manoeuvre elements, after 2007, conducted together at a regimental level, inserted in the context of the brigade operational structures of the “Sassari” and “Pozzuolo del Friuli”, operational shifts of six months in Afghanistan in the Western sector (Herat and Farah) and again in the south of Lebanon, furnishing a critical contribution in the long and tormented regional stabilisation process of two crisis areas of fundamental importance for peace and international security.

4.CONCLUSIONS

It may be evinced from the above information how Italy has begun a process of modernisation and integration of its amphibious structures, defining in the context of these both training priorities and standardisation of materiel, equipment and combat vehicles as well as technical and logistical support elements, so as to have available in reasonably short timeframes an LF with all its components adequate for operations in the context of international amphibious formations in the vast and varied range of conventional and peace-support operations.

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Gen. Dr. Federico Maria Pellegatti (IT-Marines)
(Former Director of Amphibious Integration Centre, 2009-2012)

Blaise Nkfunkoh Ndamnsah (Cameroon)
(Doctoral Candidate in Strategic Studies, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)