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“With effort and dedication towards spreading democracy, liberty and equality”

It is my exquisite honour and pleasure, to state, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, that you, the members of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, constitute one of the pillars of Macedonian integrity and independence, you are the shield of our freedom, security and stability.

I am deeply proud to state that the Army of the Republic of Macedonia has met the criteria for NATO membership and is actively contributing to the peace missions as a true member of the Alliance. I closely monitor the situation of the Army contingents that contribute to the establishment and maintenance of global peace in operations led by NATO, as well as the EU and the UN. Our peacekeepers are a true model of dedication and persistence of our strategic goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay my public tribute to and honour all peacekeepers from the Army of the Republic of Macedonia who have invested a lot of effort and dedication in their engagements in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon. They contributed to the establishment of peace in the countries of their engagement, affirming thus internationally our country. I believe that in the near future, the Republic of Macedonia will formally become part of the Euro-Atlantic brotherhood of peoples dedicated to establishing greater security, democracy and human rights worldwide.

Gorgje IVANOV, Ph.D.,
President of the Republic of Macedonia,
Commander-In-Chief of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia
IN DEFENCE OF CONTEMPORARY VALUES

THE MACEDONIAN PEACEKEEPERS DESERVE IMMENSE RESPECT

★ PHD FATMIR BESIMI,
MINISTER OF DEFENCE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
the Republic of Macedonia is a country of equals, a country among equals. This maxim describes the principle we follow and shall continue to follow, presenting our capacities and capabilities for an effective and efficient contribution to the establishment of the contemporary values on the global level. There are several basic elements that serve as a direct or indirect supportwall to our efforts that are in correlation with the efforts of our partners and the Alliance, which we are striving to join. We first start from ourselves, from the development and support of the democratic and reform processes in “our own yard”, as a means of investing in our own security capabilities and capacities for achieving the common values and interests. To that end, the Ministry of Defence does not concede from its path towards development, which gives us the possibility to underline with self-confidence that the Army of the Republic of Macedonia is an army of all citizens, an army which compared to the other institutions, enjoys the greatest confidence of the citizens of this country and an army that is without any doubt our best ambassador in the world. The development of an efficient security system as our imperative enables us to have a pool which we will use to maintain our capability for contribution to the global efforts. The Republic of Macedonia is our home in which we should all together turn towards building a common future. The expression “E pluribus unum”, or “Out of many, one”, clearly indicates the manner in which we all wish to build our country. It is in this context that the Army of the Republic of Macedonia should be considered, as one of the most important state institutions, an institution that should reflect the ethnic structure of the country. Confidence is not something to be presented as a gift – it is acquired, and mutual respect and cooperation are the key catalysts in this process. I would also like to underline that we are working and shall continue to work in this area, with the sole thought of creating together one out of the many. This complex area demands continuous and parallel work in several segments. Development, however, in the material – technical, human and any other sense, is a process that began with the very establishment of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia and therefore, we cannot, and even more importantly, must not stop this process. However, there have been and will be obstacles on this road. The global financial crisis, followed by the extensive economic crisis, was the last “big bite” we still feel. However, our determination, resolve, persistence and devotion to this development enable a certain, although slow, accomplishment of our goals. We are working on raising the standard in every barrack, every unit, every individual, since it is very important to us. Raising the standard is what actually guarantees the freedom of our own motherland and it will also create the image of Macedonia throughout the world, especially in the missions where our soldiers spread the values which we enjoy and which are part of our every day life.

REGIONAL BONDS – A SHORTCUT TO EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION

From a backward perspective, the picture does not include only the Republic of Macedonia. On the contrary, the mosaic is much more complex and vivid and are not anything new for the Balkan region. This statement is supported by facts – the development of regional centres is an imperative for us and our partners. In fact, the Republic of Macedonia has offered several realistic options that are already functioning in practice. The Regional Communications Training Centre that is to be transformed into a Training Centre of the Partnership for Peace, the Medical Training Centre, as a manner of training the regional medical forces and the initiative for establishing a Peace Centre directed towards post-conflict building of state institutions and society, are only a segment of the ways in which the Republic of Macedonia can contribute to regional cooperation. In terms of the more specific ways of pooling, I would highlight the Project for improving the conditions and capacities for accommodation, staging, training and exercises at the Training Area Krivoklak, which will enter the second stage of development in 2013, as well as the Balkan Regional Approach to Air Defence, as an entirely new tool for promoting efficiency and effectiveness.

The sensitivity and openness of the Balkan nations ensured the serious consideration of all these projects, as well as many others; moreover, some of them have already been placed on firm grounds. The successful regional bonding and the establishment of strong and indivisible contacts in regional context gives us the possibility to clearly underline that we have the capacity to step out of our boundaries and give a real and unambiguous contribution on a much broader level.

THE CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS – FACTS TO BE RESPECTED

The transition period of the Republic of Macedonia from a peace consumer into peace provider was very brief. The first
contribution to the establishment of global peace began in the distant 2002, from today’s perspective, when the Army of the Republic of Macedonia deployed its first members in the NATO-led ISAF mission in Afghanistan. The success of the contingents that have demonstrated in continuity their undisputed capabilities, professionalism in executing the assigned tasks and serious approach to their work, enabled an ever increasing contribution to the mission. Namely, the greatest contribution was made in 2010, a contribution Freedom when the Army of the Republic of Macedonia took again its place at the forefront of liberty with a total of 11 rotations, or 490 personnel. And, we did not stop there. Six years ago, we became part of the EU-led operation EUFOR – ALTHEA with a helicopter detachment (by 2008), a medical team LEVEL 1, a Legal Advisor (LEGAD) and a preventive medicine NCO. As of the following year, 2007, we deployed representatives in the UN-led operation UNIFIL in Lebanon (a staff officer). In addition, the Republic of Macedonia has been providing constant support to KFOR in Kosovo since 1999. Our overall contribution in international missions heretofore has provided several elements that have taken place since the first rotation, the first executed mission. Our members deserve immeasurable respect. They are great professionals, peacekeepers and providers of peace, security and democracy. Given the fact that all the above is not stated solely by the country they come from, but rather by all instances of the global security architecture without any exceptions, its importance is multiplied. Facts indicate that about 1900 decorations have been presented to the Macedonian peacekeepers to date. Four peacekeepers of the ARM have been awarded medals of honour for outstanding achievements in the mission Iraqi Freedom and six ARM peacekeepers have received medals for outstanding achievements in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. These figures are the best indicator of the image of our peacekeepers, whom we usually call our greatest “ambassadors of peace”.

CLEARLY TOWARDS OUR GOAL
The Republic of Macedonia is prepared, with all its available potential, to deal with the emerging challenges equally with the other nations. Our capabilities are evident, our wish is great. We feel the benefits of democracy and equality, non-discrimination and open possibilities and therefore, we are striving resolutely on the road towards providing these values in every home, every country. Preparedness does not bear great importance without commitment and therefore we must once again stand up and declare: We are committed. We are resolute. We do not concede. We shall remain on our traced path and shall be another force more, force that fights for what is most sacred – peace.

PROMOTION OF THE UNIVERSAL VALUES
“...my visit coincides with three events important for the Republic of Macedonia: 11 October, the day when Macedonia said “yes” to freedom; 20 years of its independence, when Macedonia said “yes” to independence and 10 years of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, when Macedonia said “yes” to coexistence and democracy. I am pleased that you are in excellent health, that you are executing your assignments with professionalism and dignity and that you are conducting your mission successfully. I congratulate you on the successful action you conducted on 13 September, which is a proof of highest professionalism. In this way, you are building the image of the Republic of Macedonia as a country with high standards and qualities for promotion of the universal values.”

Excerpt from the address of Minister Besimi during his visit to the Macedonian contingent in Kabul, Afghanistan (11.10.2011) (11.10.2011 год.)

INVALUABLE WEALTH AND EXPERIENCE
“I have not enough words to express the gratitude, on my personal behalf and on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, for your engagement, your actions from the most humane aspect, saving human lives on the battle field, taking care of the health of all members and affirming proudly the cosmopolitanism of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia and your motherland. You have instilled your cheerful spirit, expertise and competence in the structures of the Norwegian battalion where you executed your assignments.

I believe that your presence in the field hospital of the Norwegian battalion and the team working with your Norwegian and American fellow colleagues helped you refresh, expand and upgrade your knowledge, which is an invaluable wealth and experience for your future engagements in this profession.”

Excerpt from the address of Minister Besimi during the ceremony of awarding decorations and plaques to the participants in the third rotation of the surgical team in ISAF (07.06.2012)

on the highest level, when by deploying 250 members of the ARM, the Republic of Macedonia became the fourth contributing country to the ISAF per capita. Moreover, the contribution to ISAF will continue in the future as well. It is part of the 2012–2017 Long-Term Defence Development Plan, which envisions further contribution and support to the Afghan Security Forces beyond 2014. The cooperation with our true partners, the United States of America, was proved in practice in the mission Iraqi...
THE MACEDONIAN AMBASSADORS OF PEACE

TRUSTWORTHY

MAJOR GENERAL GORANCHO KOTESKI,
CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF OF THE ARM
When we speak about the Macedonian peacekeepers, we speak with a feeling of piety for what the Army of the Republic of Macedonia has achieved over the past period and about the contribution provided by our peacekeepers, who have been called for a reason our best ambassadors of peace and our country's respect worldwide.

The contribution of the Republic of Macedonia in international operations is a concrete confirmation of the success achieved in defence reforms, as well as of the strong strategic commitment of our country for NATO and EU membership. The Republic of Macedonia is currently providing contribution to three international operations abroad (NATO, EU and UN led operations ISAF, ALTHEA, UNIFIL Lebanon) and is heading the fourth operation for providing permanent logistic support to NATO KFOR in Kosovo through the Host Nation Support Coordination Centre (HNSCC).

The current total contribution of the Republic of Macedonia globally comprises 171 peacekeepers deployed in operations led by NATO, the European Union and the UN. Including the host nation contribution, in 2012 the Republic of Macedonia reached a level of contribution of about 190 personnel, which is a level of deployment of about 3% of the overall land force of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia in peace operations worldwide.

This percentage of contribution deserves full respect due to the fact that many NATO and EU member states have not reached it. Hence, in 2012, only in Afghanistan, the Republic of Macedonia is contributing per capita more than any other country from this Region and many other NATO countries, and its contribution approximates the contributions of the United Kingdom, the USA, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark. The Republic of Macedonia is committed to further reinforcing the future contribution to global security and peace by gradually increasing its contribution to international operations and achieving in the long run deployability of 10% of the armed forces.

What makes us especially proud is the fact that in the course of the overall contribution of the Republic of Macedonia to NATO, EU and UN led operations to date, the members of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia demonstrated and proved that they deserve the confidence entrusted to them. With their sacrifice, professionalism, discipline and dedication to the assigned tasks, they represent their country in the most dignified way. A pride for their country and its ambassadors, our peacekeepers are a confirmation that the Republic of Macedonia well deserves the equal membership it is aspiring to achieve.

The Macedonian peacekeepers are a proved, respected and desired partner. The best confirmation for this is the recognizable Macedonian flag and its identification with peacekeepers with the highest standards. An additional confirmation are the highest decorations that our peacekeepers have regularly received in all contributions to date.

With its 20 years of independence and 10 years of contribution to world peace, the Republic of Macedonia and the ARM have achieved the highest standards through the rotations conducted in international missions to date, returning to their motherland with abounding experience.

The Macedonian peacekeepers who marked symbolically the beginning of our contribution to peace operations for the first time in 2002, waving the flag of the Republic of Macedonia in Afghanistan on the Independence Day, 8 September, continue to be our ambassadors who affirm our country's respect worldwide.

The benefits that the RM has received by taking part in the peace operation ISAF, primarily in terms of the lessons learned and the acquired experiences are yet to be felt to their highest extent. For a country with modest economic development as Macedonia, having highly trained soldiers of this calibre who are capable of demonstrating a high level of professionalism and contributing at the same time to the overall positive picture of ISAF, is an exquisite honour. The Republic of Macedonia and its citizens have always been proud of the ARM personnel, who are in this period not only keepers of the peace and sovereignty of our country, but also the ambassadors of peace. Thus, together with their fellow colleagues from NATO they help in the establishment of democratic development of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

CONFIRMATION OF THE STRONG COMMITMENT

The Republic of Macedonia confirms its strategic commitment for achieving membership to the European Union by expressing its strong political commitment to support the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and by declaring a concrete contribution to the civilian and military operations in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU.

The participation of the Republic of Macedonia in the EU crisis management military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ATHEA, marks the first of the series of concrete and significant contri-
of the experience acquired in the international environment and a political manifestation of the strategic commitment of the Republic of Macedonia. According to the assessment of its capabilities and capacities, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia is prepared to continue its participation in peace operations in the upcoming period as well with the same, even increased capacities, especially in EU BG where we have declared a mechanized infantry company (125 personnel), NBC section (9 personnel), HUMINT team (3 personnel), the National Support Element (NSE) (5 personnel) and staff officers in the EU BG HQ (8 personnel), or a total of 150 personnel.

In 2013, we will continue our engagement in the peace operations in Afghanistan with 150 personnel. Having in mind the commitment of the Alliance to deploy security forces to Afghanistan, we will be directed towards mentorship, assistance and training of the Afghan forces.

The declared mechanized infantry company is prepared for deployment in mission and has the required operational capability.

Thus, the Republic of Macedonia remains on the road it has set since 2002 and our peacekeepers will continue to be ambassadors of peace in the world in the future as well.

In May 2007, the Republic of Macedonia began its participation in the UN led peace operation in Lebanon, UNIFIL with one member of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia as a staff officer in the Joint Operations Centre in Lebanon.

The declared contribution of the Republic of Macedonia with a staff officer was based on a decision adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia on 27 April 2007. The decision was effectuated on 16 May 2007.

**IN THE BEST LIGHT**

By a political consensus of all political subjects in the Republic of Macedonia and the overall Macedonian public in regard to the support provided to the Coalition for fight against terrorism, the Republic of Macedonia took an active part by deploying its units in the mission Iraqi Freedom.

In the execution of the mission, our soldiers and officers faced various challenges, threats and dangers arising from the mission and their profession. In the course of the mission, the members of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia demonstrated professionalism, high level of training and preparedness. With their dedication, courage, responsibility and patriotism, shoulder to shoulder with the fellow soldiers from the US and other coalition partners, represented our country, Republic of Macedonia, with dignity and in the best light.

The Army of the Republic of Macedonia gave a concrete contribution to the building of strong and credible democratic institutions and highly trained security forces in Iraq, forces that guarantee the future of their country and the stability and security in their immediate and broader environment.

**WE CONTINUE OUR PARTICIPATION IN PEACE OPERATIONS**

The continued contribution of the Republic of Macedonia to the effective multilateralism is yet another confirmation of the Republic of Macedonia’s strong commitment to the EU Common Security and Defence Policy and the Common Foreign and Security Policy, as well as a confirmation of the overall efforts of the Republic of Macedonia for integration in the European Union.

**CONFIRMATION OF THE EFFECTIVE MEMBERSHIP TO THE UN**

Security and prosperity in global frames are increasingly dependant on the effective multilateral system. The strategic partnership with the United Nations, whose Charter constitutes the fundamental framework of the international relations, is the priority of the EU and NATO on the international security scene. Hence, the contribution of the Republic of Macedonia in the military segment to the EU led missions is a confirmation of the effective membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the Organization, as well as of its strategic commitments.

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Thus, the Republic of Macedonia remains on the road it has set since 2002 and our peacekeepers will continue to be ambassadors of peace in the world in the future as well.
“Achievements will bring you to your well deserved place in the NATO family”

Colonel Aleksandar ALEKSANDROV, Chief of NATO Liaison Office in the Republic of Macedonia

Security has lately grown indivisible and universal. The challenges have become more complex and unpredictable. The fast, complex, and dynamic changes and the new asymmetrical threats such as terrorism, transnational organized crime, proliferation of weapons for mass destruction, religious radicalism, illegal migration, rogue, failed states, and cyber attacks require coordinated multilateral action.

The most effective way to provide for security is prevention. Your country and the whole society have well understood that contributing to peace support operations and keeping the threats far from the national borders is actually protecting its national security. It is for this very reason that the country has committed itself to continuously participate in NATO and EU-led, and UN peace support operations, and thus contribute to the Regional, the Euro-Atlantic, and global security and stability. Therefore the responsibility to provide the ARM deployed forces with everything necessary for them to dignifiedly fulfill their tasks for the sake of prosperity and the wellbeing of the population.

Considering its aspiration to join NATO, another benefit from this participation is that it helps develop the ability of its armed forces to work closely together with members of the armed forces of NATO and partner countries and raise the level of interoperability. It also facilitates defence reform.

Over a number of years your country has contributed forces to peace support operations, such as the Iraqi Freedom, the ongoing NATO-led ISAF in Afghanistan, EU ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and UNIFIL in Lebanon. The country also continues to provide valuable host nation support to KFOR troops transiting its territory. NATO has all along highly appreciated all of this and has on a numerous occasions expressed its gratitude.

I, personally believe that your country, with its achievements in the area of security and transformation, will obtain its well deserved place in the NATO family.

“Important contribution to Europe's overall security and defence capabilities”

Mr. Aivo ORAV, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Macedonia

“The European Union appreciates your participation in international peace keeping and peace making operations under UN, NATO and EU leaderships. Through this active participation it contributes to building peace and stability in the world, one of the paramount policy objectives of the European Union. Thanks to the democratic transition over the recent years, the country has been building its capacity to actively participate in this process.

The EU has been satisfied with the quality of political dialogue with the country on foreign policy and defence issues. We praise your active and continued involvement in the European Security and Defence Policy. This involvement has been highlighted in the Progress Reports issued by the European Commission over the past few years.

We also appreciate your continued participation in the EUFOR Althea mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have welcomed country’s declared commitment for participate in the EU BG II/2012 that has been made operational for the second half of this year. By participating in the EU BG II/2012, together with EU partners, you can importantly contribute to Europe’s overall security and defence capabilities.

It also should be noted that in October 2012, the Agreement between the country and the European Union on Establishing a Framework for the Participation in Crisis Management Operations of the European Union has been signed in Brussels. It will undoubtedly facilitate further participation of your army in the EU crisis management operations. Moreover, the signing of the Agreement is yet another step forward in developing our relations of partnership under the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union.”
“Mutual trust and cooperation”

“Most of the hardest security challenges the world today is facing can be best addressed through an efficient international cooperation. The Army of the Republic of Macedonia and its civilian leadership support these efforts, providing substantial contribution to the peace and coalition missions on both regional and global level. Sharing shoulder to shoulder the security obligations as partners, we can achieve more as collectively rather than individually.

Over the past years, more than 2100 Macedonian soldiers have been deployed together with the US soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, the deployment in the operation ALTHEA (the EU peace mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and in the UN Interim Forces in Lebanon, proved once again that Macedonia is a stale partner who wants to give a significant contribution to the accomplishment and promotion of peace and stability.

During all joint peace operations, our military troops developed mutual trust and cooperation that continued to further develop and expand. This mutual trust was most evidently demonstrated during the successful joint deployment of the Macedonian soldiers integrated in the Vermont National Guard units in Afghanistan.

Macedonia is an appreciated friend and partner to the United States since its independence and we are convinced that we will continue to cooperate in the future as well, addressing jointly, shoulder to shoulder, the common challenges of tomorrow”.

Paul D. WOHLERS, US Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia

“From early deployments of the Scorpions several years ago until the present day, the armed forces of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Macedonia have been continuously deployed on operations in Afghanistan as part of ISAF.

Their close cooperation continues with a twice-yearly air bridge provided by the UK for the ARM contingents and the provision of UK logistic support services to Macedonian troops.

Both countries play a vital ongoing role in maintaining a safe and secure environment for the Afghan population, as they build a new future for their country and deny a safe haven for terrorists.

The professionalism and dedication of both armies in a difficult environment is an excellent example of how such cooperation can produce results on the ground. It also demonstrates Macedonia’s contribution as a force for positive change. The capabilities of ARM and its readiness for full membership of NATO are very evident. The respect and reputation of the Macedonian Armed Forces earned through such deployments stands high and the UK is proud to have played its part in supporting these achievements.”

HMA Christopher YVON, British Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia

“OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES ON THE MACEDONIAN PEACE OFFICERS

“The reputation of the Macedonian Armed Forces stands high”
The Macedonian Armed Forces proved to be a reliable and trustworthy partner.

Lieutenant Colonel Arnold MEIER, Defence Attaché of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Macedonia

The Germany armed forces have been closely cooperating with the Macedonian Armed Forces for several years now. In addition to the bilateral cooperation which, above all, is constituted of mutual informative visits and specialization activities, we should underline here the cooperation in the international missions. The Macedonian bilateral assistance in the execution of the successful NETO-led operations “Essential Harvest”, “Amber Fox” and “Allied Harmony” was essential for the stabilization of your country from 2001 to 2003.

We should especially underline the engagement of the Macedonian Armed Forces in Afghanistan. As of 2003, some of these soldiers and officer have been placed under German leadership. Where they have always given their best in the execution of their tasks conducting them in a highly professional manner. Moreover, the logistic support that you have been providing to KFOR ever since 1999 is important as well. Primarily, the Host Nation Support Coordination Centre was coordinated with the Main NATO HQ in Skopje. After the Main NATO HQ was dissolved, the Host Nation Support Coordination Centre assumed the overall responsibility for providing logistic support to KFOR.

The cooperation as part of the ALTHEA operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the Macedonian Armed Forces contributed their airlift capabilities with two helicopters was overshadowed by the helicopter crash in 2008, which resulted with 11 deaths.

The cooperation as part of the EU BG is our new joint challenge. In the second half of 2012, under the German leadership, Macedonia is providing its significant participation, thus contributing not only to the operability of this battle group, but also to the political goals of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union.

The years long German-Macedonian cooperation was reaffirmed in all our engagements, where simultaneously the Macedonian Armed Forces proved to be a reliable and trustworthy partner.

Gürol SÖKMENSÜER, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the Republic of Macedonia

“Our Friends and Allies on the Macedonian Peace Officers

“Macedonia’s overall commitment to international peacekeeping operations will remain at the same high level”

National and regional crises and conflicts have come to the forefront in the era following the end of the Cold War, along with the risks and threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. As a result of these new security requirements, peace support and peace-keeping operations have increased significantly.

In this context, as a country attaching utmost importance to the regional and global peace, security and stability, Turkey remains grateful for Macedonia’s contribution to the UN, NATO and EU-led peace-keeping operations in Afghanistan (ISAF), Iraq (Iraqi Freedom), Bosnia and Herzegovina (ALTHEA), Lebanon (UNIFIL), and Kosovo (KFOR).

Although the Republic of Macedonia went through difficult times in the 90’s and during the 2001 conflict, today it has been proved that Macedonia is fully committed to contribute to the international peace and security by taking an active part in various peace-keeping missions. I am sure that Macedonia’s overall commitment to international peace-keeping operations will remain at the same high levels as in the past.

As an evidence of outstanding bilateral relations between our two countries, it is worthy of note that Macedonia’s participation in the ISAF operation began in August 2002, with sending of two officers as part of the Turkish contingent in Afghanistan.

On this occasion, I would like to express once again our strong support for Macedonia’s goal of achieving full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, which will further contribute to the prosperity and stability in the region and abroad.”
“Macedonia has proven to possess a strong military medical capacity”

Nils RAGNAR KAMSVÅG, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway accredited for the Republic of Macedonia

Our joint deployment in ISAF has been an important element in the positive development of the bilateral relations between Macedonia and Norway over the last years. Not only has the joint deployment brought us closer together in practical terms, it is also a solid benchmark in our joint efforts to create mutual benefits in an operation where medical service is of key importance. I know that providing the Norwegian-led hospital in Meymaneh, Afghanistan would not have been possible without the Macedonian surgical teams. Macedonia provided surgical teams to 7 contingents in the Norwegian Provincial Reconstruction Team in Meymaneh. The level of competence and professional commitment shown by the Macedonian personnel has been truly impressive and has saved lives. Overall, Macedonia has proven to possess a strong military medical capacity. I am honoured that Norway was able to contribute to strengthening this capacity through the donation of a field hospital in October 2012. I am confident that our strong ties within the military medical field will continue to grow. Norway will continue to support projects in Macedonia with the aim of furthering Euro-Atlantic integration and encouraging the continued implementation of the on-going reforms. Norway appreciates Macedonia’s substantial contribution to NATO’s operations and supports Macedonia’s ambitions for joining NATO. We sincerely hope that the field hospital will be deployed in future UN or NATO operations, and that this capability will further strengthen Macedonia’s active role in regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.
Figures speak for themselves. When it comes to the participation of the Macedonian peacekeepers in peace operations, we have something to boast with: Macedonian peacekeepers are among the leading countries in the world per capita and we are indeed proud of the decorations they have received for their professionalism and demonstrated courage and resourcefulness in the execution of the tasks as warriors of peace.

**PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE OPERATION ISAF IN AFGHANISTAN**

The Republic of Macedonia began its participation in the NATO-led operation ISAF in August 2002 by deploying two officers as part of the Turkish contingent. On 8 September, the Independence Day of the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian flag was waved for the first time in Kabul. In March 2003, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia increased its contribution to ISAF by deploying a section from the second infantry brigade as part of the German contingent. As a result of the successful execution of the mission and the high grades of evaluation received for their participation in ISAF, as of August 2004 by the end of 2006, the ARM took part in the mission with a mechanized infantry platoon from the unit Leopards. Concurrently, in August 2005, medical personnel was deployed in ISAF as part of the Combined Medical Team in A-3 format (Macedonia, Albania and Croatia) that successfully executed tasks at the Kabul airport (KAIA), first within
of Norway, the Macedonian medical personnel was represented by a surgical team in the organizational structure of the surgical unit of the Norwegian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Maymana, Afghanistan. The participation of the Republic of Macedonia and the Army of the Republic of Macedonia in the NATO-led peace operation ISAF further increased. Hence, as of January 2009, three (3) additional ARM members (two officers and one NCO) were deployed as part of the OMLT in the Kunduz province for mentoring the ANA members. In March 2010, in the framework of the bilateral cooperation with the US Armed Forces, more specifically, the Vermont National Guard, USA, 79 (seventy nine) members of the Special Operations Regiment and the Military Police Battalion were deployed in one rotation to execute tasks as part of the peace operation ISAF. The increased participation in this peace operation entails greater obligations and responsibilities. Therefore, one ARM officer was deployed for the first time with the rotation of the mechanized infantry company in July 2009 as the senior national representative in the peace operation ISAF.

The participation of ARM members in the peace operation ISAF has been highly evaluated by the NATO member states and the partner countries. Hence, for the purpose of enhancing regional cooperation and the joint process of establishing world peace and in accordance with the A-5 initiative (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro) with the support of the US and Slovenia, as an associate member, in 2011 preparations were initiated for deploying personnel in the peace operation ISAF, as part of the NATO training mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A). The Republic of Croatia is the lead nation in the project for mentoring the ANA personnel in the military police school in Đurulaman garrison in Kabul province. The first contingent within this regional initiative was deployed in September 2001 and the Republic of Macedonia took part with 3 (three) staff officers. In February 2012, the participation in this regional initiative increased by additional five (5) personnel as part of a mobile training team.

Currently, the Republic of Macedonia is participating with a senior national representative, a mechanized infantry company (a hundred and forty nine soldiers), one officer in the ISAF International Joint Command in Kabul, one NCO at KAIA airport, five officers as part of the multinational OMLT in Mazar-e-Sharif and two officers in the ANA Military Police School in Kabul province. The total number of participants is currently 159 (one hundred and fifty nine). To date, the Republic of Macedonia has participated in the ISAF mission with a total of 2,169 (two thousand one hundred and sixty nine) personnel.

**OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE EU CRISIS MANAGEMENT MILITARY OPERATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – ALTHEA**

The Agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union for participation of the Republic of Macedonia in the operation ALTHEA, signed on 3 July 2006 in Brussels, Belgium, was the starting point of the first contribution of the Republic of Macedonia to the EU led operation in July 2006 by declaring a ARM helicopter detachment consisting of two Mi-8/17 helicopters and 21 crew.

In November 2006, the Republic of Macedonia reinforced its own contribution to the EU operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ALTHEA, by declaring a medical team of 10 members for ROLE-1 medical assistance at Camp Butmir.

Due to the significance of helicopter support in the execution of the missions as part of the operation ALTHEA, especially in the period of the ongoing EUFOR transformation, upon a request for continuation of the mission of the Macedonian helicopter detachment, a second and third rotation of the same detachment were conducted subsequently.

In addition, the contribution of the Republic of Macedonia to ALTHEA was reinforced by declaring additional staff, one military assistant, one legal advisor in HQ EUFOR (as of 20 June 2007). Thus, the overall contribution of the Republic of Macedonia to the operation ALTHEA, including the helicopter and the medical capacities, comprised 2 Mi-8/17 helicopters and 32 personnel.

In regard to the fourth rotation of the helicopter detachment (January – June 2008) and based previous analyses and assessments, the Republic of Macedonia made a decision reflecting the need for withdrawal of the helicopter Mi-8/17 in view of achieving the required level of operational capability for future contributions. In conformity with this Decision, the fourth rotation of the helicopter detachment in the peace operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina comprised one transport helicopter Mi-8/17 and 12 crew members.

On 12 January 2008, a tragic helicopter accident occurred at Katianovsko Blace in which 11 ARM members lost their lives on the way back from the successfully conducted mis-
sion in Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of the third rotation of the helicopter detachment.

In February 2008, the Republic of Macedonia deployed an additional NCO for preventive medicine in HQ EUFOR, reaching thus a total contribution of one transport helicopter Mi-8/17 and 24 personnel in the peace operation AL THEA.

With the completion of the fourth rotation of the helicopter detachment in July 2008, a decision was made to end the contribution with helicopter capacities in the EUFOR operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, AL THEA with four completed rotations (July 2006 – July 2008).

After the withdrawal of the helicopter detachment, the Republic of Macedonia continued to contribute with one ROLE-1 medical team for providing medical assistance at Camp Butmir consisting of 10 personnel, one assistant legal advisor in EUFOR HQ in Bosnia and Herzegovina and one preventive medicine NCO in EUFOR HQ, totalling 12 personnel.

In the course of 2009, 2010 and 2011, the Republic of Macedonia continued its participation with the same capacity. In accordance with the new EUFOR force structure in the operation ALTHEA, the forces have been reduced and hence the position NCO for preventive medicine was terminated in January 2012. The remaining contribution in this peace operation in 2012 comprises a medical team and a legal advisor, totalling 11 personnel.

The ARM has participated in the peace operation UNIFIL in Lebanon with a staff officer since May 2007. To date, 6 rotations have taken part. The sixth rotation with 1 member is underway.

The mission began by deploying 2 officers – national representatives in the US Central Command in Tampa in March 2003. In the aftermath of the main combat operations and following the toppling of the regime of Saddam Hussein and the adoption of Resolution 1546 of the Security Council of the UN, in June 2003 a decision was made and a special purpose platoon was deployed within the 4th infantry division of the Multinational Force Iraq. In 2008, our participation in the peace operation Iraqi Freedom was expanded with an additional platoon. In the period June 2003 – December 2008, 11 rotations were conducted in total. The eleventh was the final rotation that completed our participation in the mission in Iraq. The total number of troops that took part in this mission was 493. The participation of the ARM in this operation ended in December 2008.

In the framework of this operation, the ARM also deployed staff officers in USCENTCOM, in Tampa, Florida in the period June 2003 – June 2010 totalling 15 personnel.

THE MISSION IRAQI FREEDOM

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RESPECTABLE RESULTS

The Republic of Macedonia, despite the fact that it is not a NATO member, is one of the leading nations, contributing to world peace per capita. To date, a total of 2,821 Macedonian peacekeepers have taken part in NATO, UN and EU peace missions on three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. Among them, 127 were women peacekeepers. Currently, 171 peacekeepers are deployed in peace missions, out of whom 9 are women. Our peace ambassadors have been awarded 1,828 medals, mostly in NATO missions – 1,666 medals, 5 medals in the UN mission and 157 medals in the ALTHEA mission.

THE UN PEACE OPERATION IN LEBANON, UNIFIL

In 2007, the Republic of Macedonia began its contribution to the peace mission UNIFIL in Lebanon by deploying one staff officer in the Joint Operations Centre in Lebanon.
Women’s rights, the impact of conflicts on women, as well as the contribution that women can provide to the enhancement of peace and democracy worldwide, were well neglected aspects in the last century. However, some twelve years ago, the adoption of one of the most important UN resolutions, the Resolution 1325, gave us, the female members the opportunity to turn a new page and enter the new century freed from marginalization, inequality and discrimination of women.

Resolution 1325 is the first resolution of the Security Council that links the experiences of women from conflicts with the maintenance of international peace and security, which confirms the leadership of women and their role in conflict resolution, peace talks and reconciliation and calls for increasing the response capability from a gender perspective in peace missions and gender training for those involved in maintaining peace and security.

In the upcoming period, the number of women participating in the decision making processes related to peace and security is to be increased, so as to enable the participation of women in peace talks, provide information pertaining to women and armed conflicts in the country reports to the Security Council, and of course, facilitate the training on gender perspectives and armed conflicts in order to address the gender perspective in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. The analyses conducted to date indicate that it is necessary to develop a strategy for increasing the number of women peacekeepers and decision makers in the area of peace maintenance. In addition, through the global institutions, it is necessary to develop a global report on the participation of women in peace building, and furthermore, all countries should enable the UN bodies to collect data on the position of women in post-conflict situations, appoint gender advisors or advisors for protection of women in peace missions and develop a global collection of indicators for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and propose mechanisms for implementation of the strategy in each country and in broader terms.

Women account for half of the world’s population and have a particularly important part in social life and hence, it must be underlined that one of the main pillars of the Resolution, the pillar of participation, indicates the essence of the equality and equity. Women simply need to be involved in the decision making processes on all levels – national, regional and international level, as well as in the mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution in peace negotiations.

By establishing the Gender Equality Committee, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Macedonia has joined the efforts for promotion of gender equality. The implementation of gender perspective and non-discrimination is founded on several elements, inter alia, the participation of women in the management structures of the Ministry and the Army of the Republic of Macedonia. The very establishment of the Committee is an evident proof that we are working on providing equal opportunities for women and men. The Army of the Republic of Macedonia has a significant number of women in its lines, who alongside their male fellow colleagues take part in the most difficult missions and tasks. The Macedonian Army is the foundation of our independence and sovereignty and its female members are yet another guarantee for the success of its mission.

We are actually obligated to attach special attention to the female ARM members. Despite the small number of women in the Army participating in missions (about 8%), the 123 ARM female members that have taken part in international peace missions have achieved outstanding results. This gives us the motive and strength to invest efforts and change the current picture of the representation of women in the MOD and ARM structures, a picture that is still not appropriate to the role and place of women in the defence sector. The reason for our commitment is simple – we are all equal!

Selvet Baruti,
Chairperson of the Committee for Gender Perspective and Gender Equality in the Ministry of Defence and Head of Department for Support to the Defence Minister
ne of the smallest countries in the world, in terms of size and population, the Republic of Macedonia, can boast with its small, but excellently prepared army, capable of responding to the challenges of the new era. The most indicative fact in support of this statement are the successes that our soldiers have achieved in international and other exercises and activities, as well as the words of praise for our peacekeepers that are alongside the soldiers from the NATO armies in missions. In accordance with the commitment of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia to accept the OCC and the expert talks held with a NATO team, the ARM declared its units in the pool of forces based on this Concept. One mechanized infantry company, one pioneer and one road engineering platoon, one Military Police company and a helicopter detachment were the first declared units, immediately followed by a long-range reconnaissance company.

In May 2007, Self Evaluation Level 1 (SEL1) was conducted for the above mentioned declared units, with the exception of the long range reconnaissance company, which underwent the SEL1 in October 2007. These units passed the evaluation successfully. According to the Partnership Goals, in 2008 the declared units included the long range reconnaissance company, the helicopter detachment, the MP battalion and the medium infantry battalion. In May 2008, NATO Evaluation Level 1 (NEL1) was conducted first for the long-range reconnaissance company and then during the national Evaluator Training Course (in addition to 33 trainees from the ARM, it included 3 trainees from the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Albania each) the medium infantry battalion and the MP company underwent SEL1. The course management and the team leaders were from the ARM and the activity was supported by SHAPE.

In October 2008, NEL1 was conducted for the MP company, the medium infantry battalion and the helicopter detachment. The evaluation took place during the 14th Evaluator Training Course organized by SHAPE, which included trainees from NATO and PfP countries and 6 trainees from the ARM, while one officer was an instructor (team leader). In 2008, 4 ARM officers completed the Evaluator Training Course abroad.

This completed the Level 1 evaluation of the declared units according to the OCC and the units were evaluated as interoperable according to NATO standards. In 2009, Level 2 evaluations were conducted with the units that passed the Level 1 evaluation successfully. In May 2009, the long range reconnaissance company underwent Self Evaluation Level 2 (SEL2). In October 2009, the MP company and the medium infantry battalion successfully completed the SEL2. In addition, ARM representatives took part in the Level 2 Evaluator Training Course at the NATO school in Oberammergau and in Croatia (total 9 ARM personnel).

In line with the OCC Implementation Plan and the Declared Units Evaluation Plan several activities were undertaken in 2010. Some of these activities include the 18th Level 1 Evaluator Training Course organized and conducted by SHAPE,
which in addition to trainees from NATO and PfP countries was also attended by 13 ARM members where one officer was an instructor (team leader). The unit which was evaluated during the course was actually the unit to be deployed in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

At the 19th Evaluator Training Course conducted in Austria in June 2010, one ARM member took part as a trainee and one officer was an instructor (team leader). In October 2010, NATO Evaluation Level 2 (NEL2) was conducted for the long range reconnaissance company, the MP company and the medium infantry battalion. The units passed the evaluation successfully and were evaluated as operationally capable for participation in NATO-led operations. Thus, these units completed the overall evaluation process according to the OCC, valid for a period of three years. In addition, SEL2 was conducted for the helicopter detachment.

In the first half of 2011, in April, the SEL1 of the medium infantry battalion group was successfully conducted; moreover, the 21st Level 1 Evaluator Training Course was organized by SHAPE, in which in addition to trainees from NATO and PfP countries, 5 ARM members took part and one ARM officer was an instructor (team leader). The declared mechanized infantry company and the NBC section from the EU BG II/2012 were also evaluated (NEL1).

In the course of 2012, in the framework of the NATO/PfP Cooperative Longbow/Lancer Exercise, held in May, the medium infantry battalion group underwent NATO evaluation. The evaluation was conducted as part of the 23rd Level 1 Evaluator Training Course organized by SHAPE, in which in addition to trainees from NATO and PfP countries, 9 ARM members took part and one ARM officer was an instructor (team leader). It is important to note that this was the largest course organized to date according to this Concept. All evaluations and courses were preceded by the required advisory visits (prior to the evaluations) and coordination meetings (prior to the courses). In addition to the Level 1 evaluator courses, where we currently have about 80 certified evaluators, our representatives have successfully passed the Level 2 evaluator training course for evaluation of the operational capability of the land force (CREVAL) and the air force (TACEVAL), with a total of 20 personnel (CREVAL 14, TACEVAL 6).

In addition to the evaluations of the units declared in the pool of forces according to the OCC and the support provided in the organization of Level 1 evaluator training courses, the ARM, as the host institution, successfully organized other activities related to this concept. In October 2010, an Annual Conference according to the OCC was organized in Ohrid. In addition to the organizational activities, 2 ARM representatives also took part in the Conference. The Republic of Macedonia and the ARM received the highest grade by NATO for the organization of this Conference. In June 2010, expert talks were held regarding the implementation of the OCC in Montenegro by ARM representatives. As a result and in order to support and assist the Director of the evaluation process, one ARM member took part in SEL1 of the declared infantry company of the Military of Montenegro in November 2010.

In December 2010, two ARM representatives took part and successfully completed the training for working with the OCC data base in Finland and Switzerland in November 2011. In both trainings, one representative was an instructor. In February 2011, expert talks were held regarding the implementation of the OCC in the Republic of Serbia by ARM representatives.

In March 2011, expert talks were held regarding the implementation of the OCC in Bosnia and Herzegovina by ARM representatives.

In June 2011, one ARM representative took part in SEL2 of a unit in Ukraine as an evaluator, while in August 2011, one ARM representative took part in SEL1 of a unit in Ukraine as a junior NATO monitor. The participation of ARM representatives in Ukraine continued in 2012 upon the request made by SHAPE for the Republic of Macedonia to provide support to the OCC activities due to the lack of trained personnel in the NATO commands.

In terms of the activities according to the OCC, the evaluation of the medium infantry battalion group is planned to be continued in the upcoming period:
- SEL2 in October 2013;
- NEL2 in October 2014 – certification valid through October 2017.

NEL2 of the helicopter detachment in October 2014, which will complete the evaluation process for this unit and will be certified by October 2017.

Level 2 evaluation of the field hospital:
- SEL1 in June 2013;
- NEL1 in October 2013;
- SEL2 in April 2014;
- NEL2 in October 2014 – certification valid through October 2017.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above is that not only has the ARM implemented the OCC for evaluation of its declared units and has certified evaluators for Levels 1 and 2, it has also assumed the lead role in the region regarding the implementation of this concept, which is recognized by NATO and also by Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This recognition is evident by the participation of ARM representatives in courses outside the Republic of Macedonia as instructors in evaluator training courses and in evaluation of units from other armies.
MACEDONIA IS PROUD

MACEDONIAN PEACEKEEPERS

Macedonian peacekeepers, wherever they are, have always represented us with due dignity. They are regarded as extremely professional soldiers by everyone, a model for the others. Moreover, they are well known for their hospitality and sociability. In their free time, they often make Macedonian dinners, invite guests from other armies at their dinners, sing “Makedonsko Devoche” (Macedonian Girl) together, wave the Macedonian flag, make cakes in the shape of Macedonia and recreate the atmosphere in distant Afghanistan or any other place characteristic of a traditional Macedonian home, at least for a moment.

Yet, the greatest experience for them is to have guests from our Macedonia for dinner, especially if those guests include the President of the Republic of Macedonia and Commander-in-Chief of the ARM, Gjorge Ivanov, the Minister of Defence, Fatmir Besimi and the Chief of General Staff of the ARM, Gorancho Koteski.

This happened on 11 November 2011, when President Ivanov met our peacekeepers. He was accompanied by the Chief of General Staff of the ARM at that time, Lieutenant General Miroslav Stojanovski and the current Chief of General Staff of the ARM, Major General Gorancho Koteski, who was Aide-de-Camp to the President and Commander-in-Chief. As true hosts, our peacekeepers wished them a warm welcome, served Macedonian coffee for the guests, exchanged nice thoughts and small, but unusual gifts.

“Macedonia should be proud of the participation of our soldiers in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, said President Ivanov on that occasion, since they best represent all reforms in our army. Our soldiers carry out all their assignments professionally. They are respected by their fellow colleagues and the local population. Although a small country, we contribute in this way to the stabilization of one part of the world”, stated President Ivanov.

The visit of the Minister of Defence, Fatmir Besimi, and the Chief of General Staff of the ARM, Major General Gorancho Koteski, to the Macedonian contingent in Kabul, Afghanistan on the occasion of the state holiday 11 October, the 20th jubilee of the Independence of the Republic of Macedonia and the 10th anniversary of the Ohrid Framework Agreement was of a similar character. The Minister of Defence, Fatmir Besimi, visited our peacekeepers in the ISAF mission in November 2012 as well.
I am pleased and proud to hear only words of praise here for the representatives of the Macedonian army. Macedonia, together and equally with the other NATO member states, is giving its contribution to peace and stability in the world. Macedonia meets the standards required for NATO membership, underlined Minister Besimi with a good reason.

“Based on my views and the conversations we had with the senior NATO representatives, stated the Chief of General Staff of the ARM, Major General Gorancho Koteski, I believe that the Macedonian soldiers are successfully providing force protection to the ISAF HQ in Kabul. The psychological and physical fitness and the health condition of our soldiers are good and they will carry out their regular and combat assignments with success”. During their visit to our peacekeepers in October 2012, they also had a meeting with ISAF Commander, General Allen, who stated that he greatly appreciated the Macedonian peacekeepers and that he was happy they were part of ISAF. “We were convinced that the Macedonian army stands shoulder to shoulder with the great powers. Macedonian soldiers are an important part of ISAF and they are excellent and brave soldiers. I am proud of them. My day begins

and ends shaking hands with the Macedonian soldiers. They represent their country well”, underlined General Allen. In October 2012, President Ivanov and Minister Besimi, in separate visits, visited our medical team in the EU mission ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They had the opportunity to hear only words of praise for the work and professionalism of our medical team. On that occasion, President Ivanov and Minister Besimi laid wreaths on the monument in Butmir and paid their respects to the killed members of the Macedonian detachment in the helicopter accident at Katlanovsko Blace.

Shtit Editorial Board
The names of the first staff officers deployed in a peace mission and of the first soldiers who, for the first time in the history of the Republic of Macedonia and the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, in a section formation, were deployed in a real peace support mission, are written in stone in the history of the Republic of Macedonia. They paved the way for the future peace missions and built the respect for the ARM and the Republic of Macedonia in the world with their professionalism, discipline and dedication to the assigned tasks, representing their country in the most dignified manner.

In July 2002, based on Resolution 1413 of the UN Security Council and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Republic of Turkey, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia passed the first decision for deploying the first two staff officers in the ISAF mission. On 7 August 2002, for the first time in its existence, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia deployed Captain Zoran Janev, as a signals staff officer and Lieutenant Marjan Nakov, as an assistant operations officer in the Turkish battalion, part of the Turkish contingent in the Multinational Brigade and the ISAF Force HQ in Kabul – Afghanistan. On 8 September 2002, a ceremony was held in the ISAF HQ in Turkey on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Macedonian state, and Captain Janev and Lieutenant Nakov hoisted the Macedonian flag. This officially marked the beginning of our mission in ISAF.

Prior to this engagement, our peacekeepers underwent preparations in Ankara, as part of the Unit for preparation of the Turkish peace units for SFOR, KFOR and ISAF. During their stay, they were trained, together with the Turkish officers and soldiers, on peace operations and firing with the infantry weapons of the Turkish Armed Forces. On 16/17 August 2002, our officers assigned to ISAF departed to Kabul with a special flight of the Turkish Armed Forces. They were part of the mission by 27 December 2002, when they were rotated with new staff officers Captain Marjan Ugrev and Lieutenant Vase Pachemski. After their four and a half month-stay in Kabul and their successful execution of the assigned tasks, the Macedonian officers – participants in the first historic peace mission were replaced by new officers. Upon the
Following the completion of the mission, the Macedonian officers received the highest grades for their performance representing the ARM to the other 22 ISAF member nations in the best light as an equal partner. On 20 December 2002, Captain Marjan Ugrev from the First Infantry Brigade and Lieutenant Vasko Pachemski went to Turkey and joined the Turkish battalion within ISAF in Afghanistan. Thus, the Republic of Macedonia and the ARM continued providing their tangible contribution to the fight against world terrorism and peace building.

THE FIRST ARM UNIT IN PEACE MISSION

The wish to participate in peace missions with smaller size units led by NATO was soon materialized. The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, in January 2003, passed the third decision, or the first decision for deployment of the first ARM unit in a peace mission. In the period February - August 2003, the first infantry section from the 2nd infantry brigade Leopards was deployed as part of the German contingent in the Multinational brigade – Kabul – ISAF 3. On 7 March 2003, a section from the 2nd infantry brigade was deployed for a six-month international peace mission ISAF 3 in Afghanistan as part of the German contingent. The small well selected team of ARM members included: Lieutenant Feto Bajrami, Staff Sergeant Xhemail Demiri and the soldiers Marjan Markoski, Halil Babik, Mirche Eftimov, Goce Georgiev, Stojanche Jankov, Dejan Sekulov, Shpent Hamiti and Toni Trajkovski. They were armed with the conviction that they will give their best in the stabilization of peace and the development of democracy in Afghanistan, and prove that the ARM deserves to work together with much more powerful armies and that we are taking big strides towards our goal of becoming an equal NATO member.

Our peacekeepers, the Leopards, as the first ARM formation unit, led our further participation in the peace mission for providing assistance to the Afghan people and the establishment of peace as part of the German national contingent within the Multinational brigade Kabul. The participation in the peace missions ISAF in Afghanistan, as well as the recognitions that came from there, primarily by the German contingent where we carried out our assignments, were yet another confirmation of the results achieved by the ARM members. Good reputation and image are created only with hard work and results and the members of this and the subsequent contingents in the ISAF mission enjoyed precisely such reputation. In July 2003, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia passed its fourth decision (or second) for deploying an ARM unit in the peace mission ISAF 4. An infantry section from the 2nd infantry brigade Leopards took part in the mission under the command of the German contingent in the period 7 August 2003 – 19 February 2004.

On 5 February 2004, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia passed its fifth (or third) decision for deployment of an ARM unit in the peace mission ISAF 5 in the period February – August 2004. Other units followed at section and platoon level until the deployment of the first unit at company level, consisting of the Scorpions from Skopje, in 2006. All these contingents complied with the principle of ethnic representation of the officers and soldiers. The International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan – the Multinational Brigade Kabul had a very complex task in its area of responsibility, spreading over the city of Kabul and its surroundings. The members of the first sections had the following priority tasks in the execution of the mission: supporting the government institutions in the provision of security and stability in Kabul and its surroundings; providing security and assistance in distributing humanitarian aid to the population in the area of responsibility; helping, training and providing assistance to the police forces in the execution of their regular assignments; assistance in providing personnel and medical personnel in the field; assistance in implementing the CIMIC projects, together with the other military and civilian contingents.

HIGH EVALUATION AND RECOGNITIONS

The members of the first Macedonian contingents received well deserved recognitions for their outstanding resourcefulness and professionalism demonstrated in the execution of the assignments, which is due to their quality training and preparation for the mission.

In terms of their training, physical fitness and operating the weapons, our soldiers matched equally their German and other fellow soldiers. The best confirmation of this were the compliments expressed by the German officers and the high acknowledgements and decorations presented to our peacekeepers. The evaluation and the recognition of our engagement in the preservation of peace and the execution of the basic tasks of the mission in all rotations at section and platoon level only reiterated the preparedness, high morale, professionalism and physical fitness of the ARM members, who represented not only our Army, but also the Republic of Macedonia in the most dignified manner.
THE FIRST OF THE FIRST

MAJOR FETO BAJRAMI, COMMANDER OF THE FIRST ARM SECTION DEPLOYED IN AFGHANISTAN
When Feto Bajrami, a fresh graduate from the Military Academy of the Republic of Macedonia, but with great enthusiasm and wish to achieve something important in his life, found himself among the Kichevo Leopards, he never dreamed that he would be the leader of the first team, the first section that the Republic of Macedonia and the ARM have deployed in a NATO-led or any other peace mission. The young, but experienced lieutenant, undergoing intensive pre-deployment training in the 2nd infantry brigade, set off to write new pages of ARM history. The ARM contingent, led by Bajrami, started the mission under the command of the German contingent in the ISAF mission, which soon grew into a NATO mission. Thus, Lieutenant Bajrami became the first commander of a contingent to be deployed in a peace mission and will be remembered as such in the annals of the ARM.

You were the commander of the first ARM contingent in the ISAF 3 mission. What did it mean for you specifically?

– It’s been ten years, but I remember everything, as if it happened yesterday. The Macedonian contingent, at section level, was deployed in Afghanistan for a six-month mission within the German contingent on 7 March 2003. It was the first experience, a challenge first of this kind, something you cannot forget. I was in a mission for the second time from July 2007 to January 2008, this time at company level. How much do these experiences contribute to a more efficient execution of the assignments?

– We all worked as one. It is typical not only for the Leopards, but for all Macedonian soldiers. This time, the contingent protected the base and the HQ in Kabul completely, and also patrolled in the broader area of responsibility in the police district 10, protected the convoys organized by the base hospital and executed other assignments. At no time did we differ from the other soldiers in ISAF in the execution of our assignments. Maybe we were not equipped too well, but our high quality training and the adjustability to the real situation, combined with our previous knowledge for the coexistence here, enabled us to be even a step further in many things. This contributed to the fact that all 126 soldiers were commended and received a NATO medal for their participation in the ISAF mission.

You have acquired invaluable and unique experiences. How much did these experiences help you in your every day work in the unit?

– I am now back among the Leopards in the 3rd mechanized infantry battalion. I was and I remain a Leopard and I think it will always be that. Immediately after my return, I was actively involved in the pre-deployment preparations of the units by organizing the training or preparing the training instructors. We are trying to prepare the soldiers to the maximum extent, because the primary goal is to return the members of the contingent home, safe and sound. In addition to the other things, we timely inform the soldiers about the real situation in Afghanistan so that they can understand all the potential risks and take preventive and other measures and reactions from possible threats. When we talk about Afghanistan, it is difficult to present to our people the true situation and what is happening there in reality. It means a lot to live and work 24 hours a day during the entire six months of deployment. There is a saying that best reflects this reality “Only the spoon knows what is stirring in the pot”. This is precisely the reason why the experiences acquired in Afghanistan or other missions are extremely important.

Upon returning from the missions, our soldiers have broader horizons and perceive things home differently. This is our benefit from the missions. My greatest pleasure today is to sit for a coffee with the people who were together with me in the missions and talk about every day things. I am especially pleased that these people respect me and often ask me for my opinion or advice. I have never turned them down.

V. D.
The 1st Mechanized Infantry Brigade is an ARM unit which was the first to deploy its members in several peace missions outside the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. In 2002, they deployed one staff officer from its ranks in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan for the first time. In 2003, one section from the 1st MIBG was deployed in the IRAQI FREEDOM mission. In 2006, in addition to its staff officers in the ISAF mission, the 1st MIBG also deployed its first bigger contingent of 90 soldiers and officers in the same mission. In 2008, the size of the contingent for the ISAF mission was increased to 127 members, and from 2009 to date, the 1st MIBG has been deploying its contingent of around 150 personnel in Afghanistan twice a year. In May 2007, for the first time in the history of independent Macedonia, the 1st MIBG sent its own staff officer in the UNIFIL mission under the auspices of the first global organization responsible for maintaining and advancing world peace, i.e. the United Nations, which, by the way, is the only organization where the Republic of Macedonia is also a member.

The Republic of Macedonia received and still receives a large number of praises and recognitions for its participation in the fight against global terrorism and maintaining world peace, and the Army of the Republic of Macedonian has been receiving recognitions for its discipline, the high level of training and commitment of the personnel in carrying out the assigned tasks in these missions, not just for the staff officers, but for its contingents as a whole.

In addition to the regular medals for participation in the missions, a large number of personnel from the 1st MIBG returned from these missions with med-
THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, ESPECIALLY WITH THE PARTICIPATION IN THE NATO, EU AND UN PEACE MISSIONS, HAS ALREADY ACHIEVED TOP RESULTS, EQUAL TO ALL NATO MEMBERS, AND THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MISSIONS HAVE BEEN RECOGNIZED AS HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL AND SUCCESSFUL WARRIORS OF PEACE. MANY OF THEM WERE DECORATED FOR THE ACCOMPLISHED RESULTS.

THIS TIME WE ARE SPEAKING ONLY WITH SOME OF THEM, EVEN THOUGH ALL THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PEACE MISSIONS, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL AND OTHER EXERCISES, ARE NOT BY CHANCE THE BEST AMBASSADORS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA IN THE WORLD

HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL AND SUCCESSFUL WARRIORS OF PEACE

With our peacekeepers and best ambassadors of the Republic of Macedonia

tals for special dedication and sacrifice in carrying out certain specialized and dangerous tasks during the execution of the missions.

Among the others, Major Vasil Mitevski from the Engineer Battalion, Captain Sasho Spasovski, Staff Sergeant Bekim Limani, Corporal Orce Petkovski and Corporal Arben Dalipi from the 1st MIBG were decorated with the special medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, by the American Embassy in Afghanistan in January 2009.

“All of them, together with the personnel from one mechanized infantry company from the 1st MIBG, with a certain dose of uncertainty from the new surrounding, as Staff Sergeant Bekim Limani stresses, departed in July 2008 for the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. The departure for the mission, for which they had heard a lot from their colleagues who were part of the previous contingents, represented a major challenge for them. But all uncertainty and a certain dose of fear, disappeared several days after their arrival in Afghanistan, when they got introduced with the tasks and area of responsibility”, stresses Staff Sergeant Limani.

In addition to carrying out its regular tasks, in November 2008, all units received information about an explosion of a car bomb near the US embassy in Kabul through the ISAF Mission Operations Centre in Kabul HQ. After having received the information, since the explosion site was part of the area of responsibility of the Macedonian contingent, the QRF – Quick Reaction Force, where the members of the 1st MIBG were on duty at that moment, was immediately engaged. In just a matter of minutes, both APCs (Hermelin) of the Macedonian contingent were the first to arrive with their crews on the explosion site ahead of all other bodies that are to react in such circumstances, i.e.
the Afghan police and some other units, stresses Staff Sergeant Limani. Right after the arrival at the explosion site they secured the area and performed all procedures according to the Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) for such and similar situations. They were the first to provide the required information for the ISAF Mission Operations Centre. After the arrival at the car bomb explosion site, Staff Sergeant Limani recalls, there were six civilians killed and several injured, also civilians, citizens of Kabul. For the timely reaction and successfully carried out task, in January 2009, prior to the completion of their six-month mission, these five members of the Macedonian contingent were invited to visit the US embassy in Kabul. In a cordial reception in the US embassy, Lieutenant Colonel Othell Hamlett from the US Armed Forces, awarded them medals for their dedication and sacrifice in carrying out the tasks in the composition of the mission.

During the six-month mission we had several situations where even our lives were threatened, recall Corporals Petkovski and Dalipi, who have two six-month ISAF missions each. Despite the dangerous circumstances, we are prepared to participate with our units in any kind of mission anywhere in the world, Petkovski and Dalipi agree.

PHOENIX – A CHALLENGE FOR THE BEST

The Phoenix mission filled us with pride because of many things. We will mention but a few: 1. this was the first joint mission with members of the US Armed Forces; 2. the members of the mission impeccably carried out important tasks; 3. a large number of members of the mission have been decorated for the demonstrated high level of professionalism and skilfulness.

The Phoenix-component in the ISAF mission is operationally the most complex task that has been confided to our members and we spoke with several of them about the content, rich with events, to explain what exactly was going on, in what direction were things going, the dangers, contacts, friendships, responsibilities, awards. All agree with one thing: that the ARM is a serious power in Afghanistan, which in the presence of much bigger and more powerful armies than itself, equally participates in the execution of tasks and performs them with maximum professionalism, and for all of this it receives the treatment it deserves.

This time we are talking only with a few participants in the mission – members of the Ranger Battalion from the Special Operations Regiment of the ARM and from the Military Police Battalion. “I participated in the Phoenix mission from March 2010 to October 2010, states the Staff Sergeant from the Ranger Battalion, T.A. I was decorated with a NATO-medal. This was a joint mission with the Vermont National Guard. Before departing for Afghanistan we were on joint preparations here in the Republic of Macedonia and in the USA. We were together in the base, in identical conditions for all soldiers. In one significantly difficult mission we all co-operated flawlessly, regardless of our national or other affiliation. I was especially impressed by the friendly contacts with the population in Afghanistan in the region where we operated. We often drank tea with the officers in the villages. Fortunately, everything went well. Afghanistan is different from all my experiences thus far. Very different. Now, I am in Macedonia. I am happy to belong to the ARM and enjoy the family life with my wife and my son”.

The members of the Military Police Battalion also felt the dust from the Afghan sand. Great people for great tasks, honest interlocutors, extremely well informed of the task that they have carried out, spoke practically in one voice about the joint episode, far from their
Sergeant, Sinisha Krstevski, Captain Krunoslav Velkov, Corporal Oliver Spirkovski and Staff Sergeant Blagoj Gjorgjiev recollected on the "powerful Afghan episode" from their military life and noted very interesting details. The mission lasted from 1 April to 24 November 2010. The NATO/ISAF-medal and the Combat Action Badge are decorations that can be the source of envy for members of many armies. They were accommodated in the Parwan province in the Bagram Airfield. Two groups of 16 persons each deployed in two companies carried out tasks in urban surroundings, provided exterior protection of the base, patrolled, controlled check-points, performed parachute landing, supplied facilities and separate bases, provided death-watch. An extremely dangerous mission where each member of the contingent had over one hundred and fifty missions outside the base from twenty four hours to seven days. This means many complex activities which require major psychological and physical preparations and skilfulness to quickly react to challenges that mostly occur in a split second. The contacts with the population in these surroundings were not very regular. Taj and Pashtun ethnic groups, divided and separated by tribes, are the ethnic composition of that part of Afghanistan. Our military policemen had direct meetings with the Taliban and with the remaining terrorist formations in that part of Afghanistan and managed with their combat operations to contribute to decreased by ninety percent the attacks on the capital city Kabul to be. The ARM members, together with the members of the US Armed Forces, were section commanders and team leaders and managed to execute the task in the best possible manner, succeeding without any losses to bring the mission to an end. Everyone agrees in one thing: having in mind the singularity of Afghanistan as a problematic region and the security problem that may easily progress, the ARM managed to perfectly position itself and demonstrate military skills in Phoenix worthy of respect.

The Military Police Battalion is an excellently structured ARM military formation whose compactness, solidarity and openness can be seen on the ground. The general conclusion is that they are very well informed in their profession. They speak spontaneously about their thorough pre-deployment preparations. Among other things, they were prepared well with knowledge about the geography of Afghanistan, about the ethnic-religious character of the ethnic groups there, about the character of the terrorist groups, as well as the movement routes, the theoretical platform of the Taliban and about their operational activities, even including the characteristics of the soil in Afghanistan and the chemical composition of the white soil that they saw in parts of that country. They absolutely agree in one voice that this mission was one big and irreplaceable experience. This, indeed, is a characteristic of anyone who has been, at least once, under the flag of our country, deployed in a peace mission in this very region that is, in essence, very different from ours.

"Nothing is easy, our interlocutors say. Peace does not come by itself. It is difficult to provide it, but it is the most difficult to maintain it. I hope that the Afghans will remember our contribution in providing their civilization rights. We did our best to reach that goal. They are all unanimous in one more thing: just like all members of the Military Police Battalion, they are prepared for any kind of future challenges.

THE MOBILE TRAINING-TEAMS DEMONSTRATED TOP SKILLS

The expert, competent, systematic and approachable transfer of knowledge enabled some of the members of the Military Police Battalion to also demonstrate their top skills in the composition of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan as instructors in mobile training-teams for training of potential military policemen for the needs of the Afghan Army. A significantly generous, professionally levelled, expertly demonstrated and technically complex mission, that enabled our military policemen to demonstrate their knowledge in the most representative manner, putting themselves in the service of the allied forces with the goal of training the Afghan Army and to give concrete contribution to the development and organization of the Afghan Military Police.

We spoke on this specific topic with the Military Police Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Tasevski, a participant and leader in the mission. The current course for training members of the Military Police of Afghanistan is a project whose existence is very justified, and which is planned to run by 2014, which is foreseen as a sufficient period for training of that type for the needs of the Afghan Army. "We gave guidelines, mentored members of the Military Police of Afghanistan through planned two-week courses to train and qualify them for more successful execution of the assigned tasks. Their further obligation is to be able to transfer their gained knowledge and train their members. The Croats were leaders in this course and in
addition to us there were also members from other armies: the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Army of Montenegro and the Army of Albania. In the work we strictly spoke in English language for communication and lecturer on the planned topics and we instructed very clever, intelligent persons, who, we are convinced, managed to understand the essence of the foreseen course and to function professionally in that direction. We travelled every day for the courses, exposed to all related dangers. Fortunately, we did not suffer any serious incidents that could have culminated with dangerous consequences, with deaths or tragedies of any type. According to our interlocutors, it is interesting that a large number of female members can be seen in the Afghan Army. Among the trainees, there could have been members of terrorist groups with concealed weapons. Our instructors and course lecturers, dressed in everyday attire and without weapons, were exposed to everyday risks, which they surmounted with major skilfulness and composure.

“This was a very dangerous mission”, adds Lieutenant Colonel Tasevski, “because you cannot always get through to the minds of the course trainees, their mentality, being aware that they have been raised in one very traumatized region, where human life has always been less worthy and where very little is needed to insult someone’s vanity to grab a weapon and create chaos”.

Our other interlocutors also tried to explicitly recapture personal experiences from their presence in Afghanistan. For Staff Sergeant Sashe Toshevski, this was the first mission, from February 2012 to September 2012. He has been commanded by NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, as well as by the Commander of the contingent, Colonel Tomislav Galic from the Croatian Army. “We were located in the Darulaman region in Kabul, in a well secured zone. Thankfully, we did not experience a direct attack and we left the base almost every day, travelling to the training site”, stresses Staff Sergeant Toshevski, proudly presenting his experiences from the ISAF mission. He and his colleagues, Staff Sergeant Jovica Kolevski, Staff Sergeant Kire Nikolov and Sergeant 1st Class Robert Banskoliev, had extensive working tasks: they carried out training, provided security to the instructors and the VIPs. For their overall engagement they have been decorated with the “Bronze Star” by the Chief of General Staff of the ARM, which makes group the first to have been collectively awarded this decoration after returning from a mission. They have been awarded several diplomas by the private company RONCO, meritoriously for providing security to VIPs during their working stay in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.
This may be the most specific mission in content of the ARM members in Afghanistan. A multilayer activity dominated by the curriculum, to educate members of the Afghan Army through courses. The multi-nationality of this mission also reaffirms the great potentials of our Army to transfer and gain experience from their colleagues in the direction of further interoperability “under the umbrella” of NATO. Having in mind the weight of the tasks that our members executed in this mission in Afghanistan, this gives us the right to conclude that we have major resources, in the human sense, which,

Previously, representatives of the ARM Military Police carried out military-police tasks in Afghanistan within other units. It will remain noted that the first among them, in a six-month mission in this country, was Master Sergeant Gorancho Angelevski. In Kabul, in 2008, professional soldier Dushica Aleksova was also in a military-police mission. She responds moderately and steadily to the questions regarding her stay there. Her voice only quivers when she speaks of the case when an Afghan girl approached her with a bloody hand. She was the only female in the patrol and the girl felt that only Dushica could help her. “She approached me”, she recounts, “with trust in her eyes. I bandaged the cut on her hand. I don’t know why, but that event, that episode of a soldier’s life, I still remember. Probably because of the trust the girl showed in me that only I could help.”

THE IRREPLACEABLE WOLVES AND RANGERS FROM THE SOR
In post-conflict Iraq, the ARM members were in the composition of the international forces responsible for organizing the life in the country, creating and affirming democracy, keeping the civilian values and securing the future of this middle-east country. As an aspiring country for NATO accession and a member of the Partnership for Peace, the Republic of Macedonia has made its military potential available to the allied forces for their needs in Iraq.
Firstly the Macedonian Wolves and after them the Macedonian Rangers from the Special Operations Regiment of the ARM were deployed in this newly positioned trauma point on the map of global security and peace.
Captain N. V. from the Ranger Battalion was in Iraq in two missions. The first IRAQ 4, from December 2004 until June 2005, and the second IRAQ 10, from December 2007 to June 2008. Making a serious distinction between his two Iraqi experiences, the Captain told us that the second mission was much easier than the first, that there was a serious difference in the development of Iraqi democracy amid these two missions and that the soldier life was much more organized during the second mission. For the mission IRAQ 10, he was decorated with the Army Commendation Medal – ARCOM. According to him, both missions were similar, with the same location of accommodation, and that is the Taji from the aspect of global security, can successfully represent the ARM in the most dangerous regions and leave a towering impression with their deeds, which they have professionally decided to carry out.
The Military Police Battalion is a respected partner by its colleagues from the friendly armies with whom they execute assignments far from their mother countries. This is the reason it will not be unusual for our military policemen to represent a serious trump of the ARM in the requirement of missions led by the NATO-Alliance in the future in critical regions where the professional experience will be necessary in the biography of the soldier.
Camp, 20 km north of Baghdad. He executed his tasks devotedly and responsibly and was proud to have affirmed the ARM. He also stresses that their American colleagues had wholeheartedly accepted them as partners, with absolute trust. He still remembers the smiles of the local children, when they gave them footballs, school bags, chocolates and other things. The Captain is married and has one daughter. The professional call-up entails him to always be prepared for new ordeals, even if they are in the Iraqi desert again under totally other circumstances.

The Staff Sergeant from the Ranger Battalion, J. O., also had to “eat” the missionary bread two times in Iraq. He was in the mission IRAQ 6 from December 2005 to June 2006 and in Iraq 11 from June 2008 to December 2008. In the first mission he was decorated with the AAM-medal for achievement and he received the ARCOM medal from the second mission. In both missions he was on the same, well-known location in the Taji base. He remembers well the contacts with the Iraqis, the life in the base, the distance from his loved ones. Yet, most of the recollections spring from the free time spent with their American friends. “We regularly beat the Americans in football”, he states, “and often our teammates were other colleagues from other countries. In the second mission we had internet-communication, library, a swimming pool. Iraq is a conservative, religious state, but, on the other hand, much more open than many Arab countries in that part of the world”. Major B.N from the Special Purpose Battalion, or the popular Wolves, was one of our interlocutors. From June 2006 to December 2006 he participated in the Iraqi Freedom 7 mission. From there this senior officer from our army returned proudly with the Army Commendation Medal – ARCOM. The support of the mission for peace in conjunction with the Americans expanded his professional horizons, introduced him to a new culture and enriched his knowledge in all aspects. “Above all, I learned a lot about the Americans, about the US Armed Forces, about their outstanding logistics, about their flexibility in missions and about all timely corrections they make for an even more successful execution of the planned tasks. In extremely complicated weather conditions, when summer heat reached 70 degrees centigrade in the sun, we demonstrated outstanding psycho-physical preparations and achieved outstanding results in the foreseen activities. Yet, the decently organized life in the base helped us there, far from our own country, to live a life that looked like regular life at least to a certain extent. Now I am married and I have a daughter”, were the words of this experienced Wolf from the ARM lines.

Master Sergeant I.M. from the Special Purpose Battalion also proudly boasted with the IRAQ 1 mission, from June 2003 to December 2003, and with IRAQ 8 from December 2006 to June 2007. The ARCOM medal is also his attribute in the decorations, and the Taji base was his former place of professional development on two occasions. The first mission will remain in his remembrance after the many contacts with the local population in Iraq, and from that the conclusion that their mentality is very similar to ours, that they are in a friendly mood, that they have heard of Macedonia and that they specially respect the Macedonians in these missions. He will never forget that inter-human communication with the Iraqis. He treats the second mission as an exceptional mission in terms of quality in all spheres: outstanding kitchen, internet cafe, frequent inter-human communication. He also visited Babylon, was in Tikrit in the complex of Saddam Hussein and knows the green zone in Baghdad very well. The transport in the second mission in the route Taji – Baghdad was carried out by helicopter, which represented a handicap from the security aspect for the circumstances at that time. He will also never forget the three-day holiday in Qatar, which he was allowed to take while serving in the mission. The Master Sergeant is married and has one child. The participation of our peacekeepers in the Iraqi Freedom mission undoubtedly represents a major experience for them, and the ARM has definitely positioned itself on the scale of professional and respective armies. Amongst the largest, the strongest, which it is striving to reach and with which without dilemma deserves to stand. This mission was confided to our most prepared professionals, capable to respond in identical challenges in the future as well. The Special Operations Regiment is the key factor in the implementation of these big endeavours of the ARM, which is intended to affirm and achieve operability and productivity even in significantly difficult and complex security regions such as Iraq is today.
As a result of the successful execution of the mission and the high grades received for its participation in ISAF, the ARM participated with one mechanized infantry platoon from the unit Leopards, from August 2004 until the end of 2006. Based on the grades by the Alliance for the declared ARM units that achieved the required strict standards in training and the SOPs and in accordance with the OCC, in June 2006 the Macedonian Army deployed a unit at company level for the first time in a peace mission, that is, a mechanized infantry company, part of the 1st mechanized infantry brigade within the British contingent in ISAF. 6 officers, 15 NCOs and 69 professional soldiers took part in the mission and they were all trained and equipped with the necessary materiel to successfully carry out all assigned tasks. The Commander of the first company level unit of the ARM was Captain Stojanche Kostov.

The mission objective was to execute stabilization operations aimed at creating secure environment and facilitating the humanitarian aid activities of the international government and non-government organizations. All participants from the Ministry of Defence in the mission ISAF 9 were awarded monetary rewards of USD 1200. The unit was commended by the most senior officers of the Main HQ in Kabul for its successful mission. The JOC Commander and the Commander of the 1st Mechanized Infantry Brigade also received appropriate recognition for the successfully conducted mission.

In the second rotation of the company responsible for providing force protection of the ISAF HQ, the Republic of Macedonia increased its participation from 90 to 127 members, whereas in January 2008 it also deployed three staff officers in the ISAF HQ in Kabul.

In the 13th rotation of the peace mission ISAF in Afghanistan, in which the ARM participates with a mechanized infantry company, in July this year 149 members of the 1st mechanized infantry brigade and the senior national representative have been deployed in the ISAF Main HQ in Kabul.

In the following six months, the Macedonian peacekeepers will execute their tasks within the contingent of the United Kingdom where they will be responsible for providing force protection of the ISAF Main HQ in Kabul. The Macedonian soldiers in Afghanistan are respected as exquisite members of the ISAF team. Their work has become an example of professionalism, team work, adjustability and courage that can be envied by many members from NATO countries that serve alongside our soldiers. By taking part in multinational missions, the Macedonian Army demonstrates that it is a well trained and fully operational force that is prepared to respond effectively to the global security threats together with its NATO partners.

The invaluable experiences that the leaders and the entire personnel acquired in the peace mission in Afghanistan will be implemented in the work plans and the military special training of the other personnel in the unit so as to create the conditions for continuous participation in peace missions.

Shit Editorial Board
THE LEOPARDS JUSTIFIED THE TRUST IN AFGHANISTAN

WITH THE SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA IN THE MISSION, LIEUTENANT COLONEL KIRO KALKOV

The Macedonian contingent in Afghanistan entered the fourth month of the six month mission in ISAF HQ, where they carried out one of the most complex and most responsible tasks. The mission for providing force protection to the ISAF HQ in Afghanistan has, in continuity from 2006, been confided to the Macedonian contingent as a task. The soldiers and officers from the twelfth rotation are more than proud for the shown trust and assigned responsibility for providing force protection to the Main Command, aware of the endeavours and efforts of their predecessors in building the image and character of the Macedonian peacekeeper, and at the same time worthy of the task and challenge for finding permanent solutions for creating a secure working environment in the ISAF HQ. The devotion and approach by the Macedonian soldiers in carrying out tasks are recognized and highly appreciated by elements of the ISAF Command Structure in Afghanistan, the Macedonian state and military authorities, but also by the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. The valorisation of the shown professionalism, combat training and level of readiness of the contingent in Afghanistan, represents the strongest trump in the affirmation and overall commitments of the society for integration in the NATO-security structures.

For the participation and contribution of our peacekeepers in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, we spoke with the senior national representative of the Republic of Macedonia in the mission, Lieutenant Colonel Kiro Kalkov.

Mr. Lieutenant Colonel, how does the Republic of Macedonia contribute to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan?
– The Republic of Macedonia unselfishly contributes to the establishment of peace, stability and democratic values in the IR of Afghanistan, with active participation and deployment of forces of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia on different locations and with different missions. Currently, in the ISAF mission, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia has deployed: one mechanized infantry company with 150 members for ISAF HQ, five mentors in the Partnering and Advising Task Force in Mazar-e-Sharif, two staff officers in the Joint Command at KAIA Airport and two instructors in the Military Police Training School. The continued participation of the Republic of Macedonia with its own forces makes it a vital contributor in accomplishing the goals of the ISAF mission in the IR of Afghanistan.

How do our partners evaluate the presence and contribution of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan?
– The Army of the Republic of Macedonia, as I previously mentioned, participates with its own forces in a wide spectrum of operations in the ISAF mission. Our units and teams are deployed in different locations and are operationally subordinated under different commands, but it represents an honour to hear the appreciations of the work by their superiors. Namely, the partners use every occasion to express gratitude and satisfaction from the contribution of ARM members in the composition of the ISAF units and commands, where they carry out their functional tasks. In that context, I wish to mention the statement by the Chief of Staff of ISAF HQ, General Bavinkov, during his visit of the contingent in the ISAF HQ, since the force protection was provided by the soldiers from the Macedonian contingent who carry out a very significant task. This, actually, makes you one of the best in the world. I also have positive impressions from my contacts and working meetings for cooperation and execution of the tasks confided to all members of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia. The soldiers and officers adequately present their professionalism and training gained in direction of the intensive cooperation and promotion of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia in front of the partners. The results from the accomplished level of interoperability are our biggest bargaining chip in the aspirations for gaining the status of a fully-fledged member of the NATO Alliance.

What do you think about the cooperation of our contingents with the remaining partici-
We talked about the details regarding the deployment of the 12th rotation of the Macedonian contingent in ISAF as well as their tasks and responsibilities, in the period July 2012 to January 2013, with the Commander of the contingent, Lieutenant Colonel Dushan Stankov.

Lieutenant Colonel, Sir, as the Commander of the contingent what is your imperative in the completion of the mission tasks?

- The contingent performs regular activities aimed at securing the outer perimeter of the base from watch towers, patrols in the area of responsibility, ensuring a certain level of readiness of all the quick reaction forces, control of the entrance at the main and rear gate of the HQ, check-point control and securing the classified area of the ISAF HQ. The company is also engaged in providing VIP protection for ISAF HQ visits. Only in the course of this year there have been visits by the NATO Secretary General, Prime Ministers, ministers, senators and congressmen of foreign countries, as well as senior representatives of the Afghan government. The combat readiness of the company is constantly verified. We carry out exercises in order to improve the manner of reaction as well as the time necessary for the deployment of quick reaction forces by conducting company level exercises, as well as monthly exercises that involve all the HQ Support Group elements. In short, the company is the only armed force responsible for the overall security of the base of the ISAF HQ.

What are your plans and directions for the remaining period of the mission?

- The company shall continue conducting its regular and additional tasks in accordance with the Rules of Engagement and the Standard Operating Procedures related to the work of the company. I believe that to date we have successfully completed the tasks we have been entrusted with and we have constantly worked on improving the working conditions and the infrastructure of the premises as well as on raising the level of readiness of the company. General Bavinikov, Chief of Staff of the ISAF HQ, readily expressed his appreciation for our work and the professionalism demonstrated in performing our tasks during a recent visit. As I highlighted before, my priority are the lives and well-being of all my officers and soldiers, as well as fulfilling the expectations and the confidence we have been entrusted with by our superior officers. I wish that we continue like this, and complete the mission accordingly.

The Editorial Board of Shtit thanked their guests and wished them a safe completion of their mission tasks. The success story of the mission and ratings of the Leopards in Afghanistan continues.
When talking to Lieutenant Colonel Mice Koteski, hours pass by like minutes. Even though there is plenty to say for the 12 months he spent as a Commander of two contingents at the ISAF mission. He has received a NATO Medal of Merit, but still he prefers to talk about the others. Everything I have achieved, he says, is a result of a joint effort. Therefore, he adds, this medal is an acknowledgment for all the members of the Macedonian contingents.

As a member of the Kichevo leopards, you were the leader of two Macedonian contingents in Afghanistan in 2006 and 2007. What are your experiences from the period and how do you see the peace missions from today’s perspective?

– I am very proud with the fact that for eight years I belonged to a unit whose members proudly wear the Leopard crest and the motto “Force for Peace”. I had the particular honour and pleasure to lead two contingents from that unit. The experiences gained from successful missions attribute particular importance to the selection of candidates, which should be exclusively in the hands of the platoon and section commanders (they will surely select the best ones). The commanders that will lead the mission should always be supported. It is necessary to also define and respect criteria in the selection of key personnel especially in the following elements: psychological and physical fitness, training, loyalty, team spirit, leadership skills, patriotism, dedication etc. We should also include the application of the lessons learned from the previous contingents.

We have completed our tasks well, but of course, we could have done better. There is always room for improvement. Currently, the nature of my position doesn’t allow me to influence the work of the contingents and I don’t have enough available information about their work.

Almost 1000 members from the Kichevo Leopards have taken part in peace missions, in the ISAF mission and in the Iraqi Freedom mission. They are now part of the 1st Mechanized Infantry Brigade. Do you think that the Leopards are yet to catch the public eye as one of the most professional units of the Macedonian army?

– It is very difficult to achieve excellent results if there is no modernization of the unit’s equipment. There is of course room for improvement in multiple segments, first and foremost in personnel selection, preparation of the unit, tactics and techniques in the completion of tasks as well as putting to use the lessons learned by the contingents of the Macedonian Army, and also benefiting from the experiences of the NATO-alliance member countries. There is a saying that wisdom comes with age, and so the Leopards are more mature with every year passing by, hence my expectations that they will have better and better results in time.

You were awarded with the NATO Medal for Merit in the Service. This is the first such medal to be received by a member of the Macedonian army. What was the occasion for you to receive such a medal?

– The occasion for awarding the Medal for Merit in the Service was after my participation in two peace missions in 2006 and 2007, with a break less than six months in between. The contingents independently or in a mixed structure have completed more than 700 patrols by walking or using motor vehicles in the area of responsibility and during this period no incident had taken place. You will agree with me that this is a result that deserves respect. After I was awarded the medal I stated, and I shall repeat once again that even through I was the one presented with the Medal for Merit in the Service, the merit for that goes to all the members of the Macedonian contingent. They earned this medal with their professionalism,
discipline, responsibility and dedication in completing their tasks. I am particularly proud with the results achieved in the CIMIC segment, accomplished with international, but also government and non-government organisations in the area of responsibility of the unit.

The proposition to award the medal was given by Colonel Brian Haebig, ISAF HQ Support Group Commander. Somewhere in the middle of the mission I felt that there would be such a proposition. The Commander expressed his content with the work of the unit members not only in words, but in his action as well. He would never miss an opportunity to visit our TOC or wish a happy birthday to the peacekeepers by presenting him a modest gift, given from his heart and with a smile.

In your old office in Kichevo, in the central spot of your wall, there is a picture of you in the company of British soldiers. Why is that?

– After one and a half months attentive observation of the work of the Macedonian contingent, the responsible officers from the British Army decided to re-subordinate their platoon to the command of the company. For me this was a challenge that required a new approach, but also one that would require an even more active usage of the English language in the everyday operations, especially when creating the TOC papers. To be in charge of soldiers and officers – members of a powerful army, army with a long-standing tradition, required major investment by the officers in company command. To my surprise, the members of the British contingent quickly adapted to the new situation, and also learned how to handle our contingent’s firearms and equipment. Of course, part of our soldiers, also learned how to handle the firearms and equipment of the British contingent. We carried out joint trainings, but also performed situation shooting with our personal firearms. We learned from each other, mainly when it came to tactics and techniques in performing our tasks. The platoon commander, Lieutenant Alex Horner, wrote on a regular basis for one of their magazines. Referring to their relations with the members of the Macedonian contingent he wrote: “The opinion of the Macedonian soldiers about the American soldiers is identical to our own”.

The company command had established a practice to choose the soldier of the month from all the platoons. We included the British soldiers in this as well. It was very pleasant to see the best British soldier of the Delta platoon proudly wearing the leopard crest on his lapel. You can see this on the background of that picture. Namely, we were invited very often to participate in their patrols. On one occasion, during one of these patrols, they had lined up to place the BB Morrow equipment and they invited us for a family photo. A day or two before they left Kabul, in front of the ranked unit, the platoon commander gave me the photo that will stay on the wall of my office forever.

You were actively engaged in transferring the training experiences, as well. As of 2007 you got involved in the process of evaluating the declared units as a certified Level I and Level II evaluator, or to be more precise to evaluate the interoperability and combat readiness?

– The predeployment preparations of the unit are conducted by the unit command, however the brigade command has its role as well. I was a member of the group that was responsible for predeployment preparation of every contingent. Knowing how serious the task they are about to face was, I invested my every effort to achieve the required readiness level of the unit.

The superior officers from the ARM General Staff and the Joint Operations Command noted my efforts and decided to refer me to an Interoperability Evaluator Training Course. After several successfully completed evaluations I was referred to Combat Readiness Evaluator Training Course. I started the course as a trainee, and ended up with the duty of Director of NEL2 of the company declared for EU BG, of which I am particularly proud. I believe that the superiors were pleased with the completed evaluation, and that the subordinates learned some positive experiences from the evaluation.

What message would you convey to the members of the Macedonian Army that are yet to prepare for mission participation?

– I would say the following: they can take away from you almost anything, but they cannot take away your knowledge, capabilities and skills. These things are yours and yours only. Therefore, only through hard work, a lot of effort, self-criticism, discipline, self-sacrifice and self-confidence, fight for your place in the future contingents of the Macedonian Army abroad, exporting peace where it is needed the most.

V.D.
The evidence substantiating the capabilities of our members is nothing new or surprising. The members of the Macedonian Army, as many times before, have demonstrated and shown that our country knows how to produce worthy personnel whose level of preparation is the same with those of the NATO member countries. This was the case in the task mission Phoenix, as well. When it comes to resourcefulness in a multiethnic environment such as Afghanistan, they are even one step ahead of them. Therefore, it was no surprise to hear the news that 73 members of the Macedonian Army have been decorated with medals and honours. In the nine months period while they were on a mission, the joint mission members with the members of the Vermont National Guard, USA, and the USA Armed Force, have passed on the Macedonian continuity of principles, readiness, partnership and responsibility. It was an exceptionally complex mission, one that by itself required a lot of preparations and energy. Guided by the need for solidarity and the sentiment of responsibility and abiding to its principles, the Republic of Macedonia has without hesitation accepted to further continue the partnership with Vermont with a new and a different mission. Aware of the reality, but also convinced of our virtue, we continued with the enormous contribution of our country to peace missions with the same intensity. “The quality preparations that took place prior to departure, the well selected personnel, as well as the consistent execution of all assigned tasks by all contingent members individually, have contributed to the successful completion of the overall mission”, says Major Kocho Hristovski, Commander of the Task Forces. The members of the Macedonian Army, as always, have reaffirmed their professionalism, responsibility and discipline. The difference of the Phoenix mission compared to the others is obvious. Namely, the 79 members of the Special Operations Regiment (SOR) and the Military Police Battalion (MPBn), alongside their colleagues, the members of the Vermont National Guard, USA, and the US Armed Force, were performing missions related to the training and mentoring of the Afghani National Army and Police, missions in support of peace and stability in this Middle East County, missions for VIP protection of NATO and ISAF military personnel members, and together with the NATO and US coalition forces acted in support to the Afghan National Army and Police for a period of 9 months. The mission members, by completing their tasks, “have vastly contributed to the support, stability and building democracy in Afghanistan”, as underlined by Major General Koteski, Chief of General Staff of the Macedonian Army.

What we should be impressed by the most is the fact that the successfully completed obligations did not go unnoticed. Additionally, all members that were part of this task mission received gilded and silver coins, while 4 plaques with the Ministry logo were also awarded to the Special Operations Regiment, the Military Police Battalion, the Rangers and the Wolves by the Minister of Defence. These medals and honours, complemented by the high marks received for the professionalism shown in day-to-day operations, are a confirmation for the interoperability of the Macedonian Army with the NATO Alliance member countries.
The contribution of the Republic of Macedonia to the ISAF mission is not perceived only through the participation of the contingents at section, platoon and company level, but also envelopes concrete contributions in multiple spheres. Among other things, the Macedonian Army has been participates with staff officers in the ISAF mission ever since August 2002. A total of 39 persons have participated in 12 rotations to date. In support of the efforts for self-sustainability of the Afghani National Army (ANA), as of March 2008, the Republic of Macedonia has referred two members (one officer and one NCO), as part of the Joint Multinational Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) in Mazar-e Sharif. The participation of the Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonian Army in the NATO-led ISAF peace operation continued to increase. Thus, as of January 2009, 3 additional members of the Macedonian Army (two officers and one NCO), were referred to the region of Kunduz as part of the OMLT, in order to mentor the members of the ANA. Currently, the OMLT III mission includes five mentors deployed as part of the task forces for partnership and counselling in Mazar-e Sharif. The OMLT is an operation-
al team of officers from several countries tasked to advise, mentor and assist the key personnel at the ANA Commands and Staffs, in their respective fields, in terms of building the unit management system, planning and executing combat operations and drills, as well as in the everyday operations of the units.

MILITARY POLICE OFFICER AT THE KAIA HQ
As of 7 January 2009, the Macedonian Army has designated one member of the Military Police (MP) to the International Military Police at the KAIA HQ, in Kabul, Afghanistan. The MP Officer is part of the staff personnel of the Macedonian Army, alongside the engineering mentoring and liaison staff officer in the ANA, at the IJC command, NORTH KAIA HQ. As of 7 January 2009, the Macedonian Army has designated seven MP officers to the International Military Police of the KAIA HQ at the Kabul International Airport, which is currently the 8th MP rotation at the KAIA HQ, Kabul International Airport. As a member of the International Military Police of the KAIA HQ at the Kabul International Airport, our MP Officer performs the assumed duties in accordance with the SOP (KAIA Command at the Kabul International Airport Military Police Standard Operating Procedures) and other duties in accordance with the other SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures), alongside the other members of the International Military Police coming from several countries that are part of the ISAF – Afghanistan peace mission. In addition to performing his duties at the International Military Police of the KAIA HQ at the Kabul International Airport; our MP Officer provides major support to our peacekeepers deployed in Afghanistan. As of 7 January 2009, the ARM MP Officers at the KAIA HQ, Kabul International Airport, were praised and honoured by the KAIA superior officers as well as the International Military Police Commander, for their efforts and professional completion of their professional tasks, on many occasions.

R. Stojcheski

OPERATIONAL MENTOR AND LIAISON TEAMS, MILITARY POLICE AT THE KAIA HQ, SEEBRIG AT COMMAND LEVEL IN AFGHANISTAN
SEEBRIG AT COMMAND LEVEL IN AFGHANISTAN
Eleven members of the Macedonian Army, Staff Officers and Staff NCOs, were deployed in Afghanistan, as part of the South Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) Command peace mission, in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan, from January to August 2006. This was the first deployment of a SEEBRIG unit in a peace mission. The attainment of the Initial Operational Capability (IOC), in March 2004, was followed by the Full Operational Capability (FOC) which was marked by awarding a capability certificate to the Peace Operations Brigade Command, as evaluated by the NATO command in NAPLES. October 2004 marked the start of the SEEBRIG Command deployment stage. Since then, the role of SEEBRIG has changed from a unit for regional security to a unit that aims to contribute to strengthening the security of the other crises regions in the World. SEEBRIG KMNV IX had the following tasks: provide support to the Afghan Authorities in their efforts for stabilization of the country and region; provide support to the UN and other international organizations in building the country; contribute to improving the security in Kabul and its surroundings; support the regional reconstruction teams through CIMIC activities.
The nations from the Adriatic Charter: Macedonia, Albania and Croatia, alongside the NATO members: Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, have not only improved regional security, but are also giving concrete contribution, effectively involved in the NATO missions abroad. The deployment of the Combined Medical Team as part of the NATO forces in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan was the first joint step towards achieving this goal. The deployment and preparedness of the Combined Medical Platoon of Macedonia, Albania and Croatia in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, represented a significant step towards building a mini-regional security system and confirmation of the capability of the Adriatic Group to contribute to the stability and security in the region and the world.

In 2002, the ARM declared a medical section for NATO peace missions and PfP missions, composed of 1 medical doctor, 2 technicians, 2 medics, who are also signals officers, with completed courses for communications, as well as 2 medics-drivers. The team was composed of 12 persons, three of which were doctors, six medical technicians and three medics, and drivers at the same time. Macedonia, Albania and Croatia participated in the team with one doctor each, two medical technicians each, and one medic each. The official language of the team was English, and the position of Commander rotated among each nation, ensuring at the same time that this person would always be the doctor from the leading nation. The missions ran for six months for each rotation.

The first Combined Medical Team departed from Thessaloniki to Kabul on 8 August 2005. This was the first participation of the ARM in a mission with a mixed contingent of peacekeepers. By that time, in Iraq and Afghanistan we deployed units exclusively composed of Macedonian soldiers. The ARM also deployed a female for the first time in a mission. Four ARM members (Lieutenant Sasho Kapsirev, military doctor and Commander of the Combined Medical Team, Daniela Kostovska and Sergeant 1st Class Bajram Ademi, medical technicians, and professional soldier Igor Mitkov, medic), as part of the Combined Medical Platoon of Macedonia, Albania and Croatia, which consisted of 12 members in Afghanistan (within the Greek contingent in ISAF), resided for 6 months.

The Combined Medical Team had joint training in Albania and Macedonia, and during that time the team members got acquainted with each other, worked together and applied the same standards in the medical procedures, where the team showed major preparedness and coordination. This coordination and preparedness was confirmed in the best possible manner during the stay in Afghanistan. There, as part of the Greek field hospital, they had everyday duties in the admittance and triage ambulance, taking care of the patients in the hospital. In addition, they also carried out tasks outside the hospital, such as: medical assistance in the demining and Crash crew-duties for the needs of the airport, where the hospital is also located. As a team with the most extensive experience, they were also engaged in MEDEVAC/CASEVAC-tasks, together with the Italian marines.

"The mission was a major challenge for all of us", remembers the Commander of the first combined trilateral medical team in ISAF, Afghanistan, Major (Lieutenant at that time) MD Sasho Kapsarev. This was the first time that we were in such joint mission and in the composition of peacekeepers from the Balkans.
the Greek Field Hospital. “The conditions in the field hospital were excellent for work, we were received very pleasantly, above all, thanks to the Greek Commander of the hospital, but also to the other members in the composition of that approximately 50-member personnel of the hospital. We spent really excellent six months”. There were several events and developments during the mission. The team participated in giving medical aid to the military personnel and the local population in Kabul, especially to the people that were involved in the demining.

“The me and Asan Bajram, now Master Sergeant in the ARM, established contact with the American representatives in Kabul and got involved, on 4-5 occasions, in humanitarian convoys that were organized by the Americans, so that with the materials provided by the Americans, and with their company, we visited several refugee camps in the vicinity of Kabul and within those few hours in these positions, we provided medical aid to the refugees there. All those going out and the participation in those convoys and the environment where we were situated, carried a major risk, yet we undertook that risk, and participated with our American friends in the humanitarian convoys.

As a result, at the end of the mission we received praise from a four-star General”, Kapsarev told us.

The first Combined Medical Team received significantly high marks from the superior command for its participation in the mission in Afghanistan. And for the next 7 medical teams (total 8 rotations with the participation of 32 persons) in the framework of the Greek and Czech hospitals in ISAF, positive marks came out of Afghanistan. This is the case, actually, with all ARM units that represent our country outside the borders of the fatherland. They are always among the best and an example for the rest. They are ARM real representatives and warriors of peace of the new era.

K. I.
MEDALS FOR PARTICIPATION IN MISSIONS IRAQI FREEDOM AND ISAF
By 2003, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, taking a series of reform activities, was slowly but surely adapting to the requirements of modern times and the collective membership. The contours of the future Macedonian Army were clearly established: small, mobile, efficient and interoperable army, compatible with the armies of the Alliance member states with a clearly defined core of the armed forces in the special units, capable of participation in international missions. At the time, on the international scene, the US-led anti-terrorism coalition conducted operations in Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein. After the major combat operations, the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein’s regime and the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546, the Republic of Macedonia, at the request of the U.S. government, decided to contribute its forces to the Operation Iraqi Freedom, as part of the great coalition in the global war against terrorism. The decision on the participation of the Macedonian troops in Operation Iraqi Freedom was adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

The U.S. government asked for support from the Republic of Macedonia for the
mission in Iraq, because the situation on the ground required specially trained personnel to perform specific activities as part of the mission. When in May 2003, the first twenty-eight members of the Army, composed of Macedonian Wolves and Scorpions of mixed ethnic composition, flew to Baghdad on a special flight, no one assumed that they opened a new page in the history of the ARM. This step, actually, practically initiated the profiling of the new ARM, professional, modern, well-trained, well-equipped and, above all, maximally ready to meet the new challenges.

Although the composition of the contingent was not large, according to the character of the deployed teams one can conclude that the primacy of operations undertaken in Iraq at that time was given to the small mobile highly professional special units trained to perform tasks in cooperation with the U.S. Armed Forces. The operations and activities undertaken and conducted by our members were part of the so-called peacekeeping, peace enforcement operations, conflict prevention and humanitarian operations. In military-doctrinal terms, stabilization and peace support operations, according to what I had promised six months ago; to work professionally, decisively and responsibly. We have demonstrated that the unit is able to perform such operations everywhere and in all weather conditions. We have built an empirical base to solidify the partnership that Macedonia is building on its path to NATO.

“I cannot describe the joy to finally arrive in Macedonia. The results that the Macedonian contingent has achieved are excellent and there rarely is a country that can boast with similar results. The greatest goal we have achieved is to bring everyone back safe and sound in Macedonia, without any injured soldiers,” said Major Zoran Sekulovski, today a Colonel, upon his return to Skopje. Major Sekulovski was in the Coalition HQ in Iraq.

In the course of 2003 and 2004, the ARM contributed to Operation Iraqi Freedom with teams from the special unit Wolves, performing a variety of actions in the area of unconventional warfare, along with the soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division of the U.S. Armed Forces. Following in the footsteps of the first contingent, the new Macedonian Army contingent composed of 31 members of the Special Purpose unit Wolves left for Iraq to serve in the Operation Iraqi Freedom.

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The Macedonian Wolves, who were considered to be the single ARM unit that could meet the new challenges, as well as the Scorpions, who were preparing for peacekeeping missions around the world for a long time, were ready to leave. On this occasion, the contingent commander, Captain Metodi Hadzi Janev, said that he was proud to lead the contingent in that historic mission for the country. “This will be the operationalization of all Macedonia’s efforts to join NATO and the opportunity to show what we know, which will prove that Macedonia is ready to bear the burden even on a large scale.”

The members of the contingent were part of the Fourth Infantry American Division, located near the town of Taji. Earlier, the liaison officers, Major Zoran Sekulovski and the Lieutenant Colonel from the Military Aviation Ljupco Stojanovski traveled to Baghdad via Kuwait.

Our first fully professional unit, the Wolves (then part of the Special Purpose Squad, today an integral part of the ARM Special Operations Regiment), was the one who penned one of the most important chapters of the most recent stage of the Republic of Macedonia and the Army of the Republic of Macedonia and created the new profile and a new image of the Macedonian warriors of peace.

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Since most of the U.S. troops from the
4th Division had not undergone special training for operations in an urban environment; very soon, our Wolves became the leading force in the force protection joint operations with the U.S. troops. They, very soon after landing on the ground, were able to plan and carry out the anticipated missions themselves. The tasks of the teams from the ARM special units at that period in Iraq were to provide support to the U.S. troops, as leaders in performing special operations. They successfully carried out many actions and operations. And so they did. Again there were a handful of praises, because the Macedonian contingent in Iraq demonstrated their highly-trained, professional and always ready unit, which knew how to carry out the given assignments in the best possible way. The third Macedonian contingent of the Macedonian Wolves received the same acknowledgments. They, like their predecessors, also showed the highest military and human qualities, characteristic for the Macedonian warriors from the Macedonian territory. In recognition of their top-flight training, professional performance of tasks and the achieved results in the mission, the US Secretary of Defense awarded the Order of Merit to several members of this unit. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the
first Order of Military Merit in the Republic of Macedonia was presented to the Special Purpose Battalion, known as the Macedonian Wolves. The Order was presented on the ARM Day, 18 August 2005. Since the beginning of 2005, the mission in Iraq was assigned to the members of the Ranger Battalion from the SOR. The first contingent consisting of Macedonian Rangers was the fourth rotation of contingents in the mission in Iraq. The mission was assumed from their colleagues the Wolves who had previously conducted three successful missions, representing the Republic of Macedonia in a dignified manner setting incredibly high standards of military professionalism. The Ranger Battalion was faced with a very difficult task: to continue with the execution of the mission, and at the same time not allow for the coalition partners to feel any difference in the performance of duties, as well as to continue with the dignified presentation of the Republic of Macedonia.

All Macedonian contingents deployed in the Iraq mission were located in the Taji Base, thirty kilometers north of Baghdad. The life at the base was not bad for our warriors. They had all the necessary conditions for normal life and work, but the base was used only for rest, nutrition, preparation for missions, briefings and debriefings. The Rangers spent most of their time off base in the area of responsibility, conducting operations independently or as part of the 70th Engineering Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, First Armored Division in order to provide communications and bridges, find positions from which the anti-coalition forces acted with missiles and mortars against the coalition forces and the local population, discover locations for keeping arms, ammunition and artillery shells, discover locations for making car bombs and improvised explosive devices, search and arrest individuals listed for apprehension etc.

The rotation of contingents was performed at the beginning of June 2005. The fifth contingent in the Operation Iraqi Freedom continued to perform the assigned tasks with an augmented pace. The changes occurring on a daily basis in Iraq heightened the pace of engagement of our Rangers. With the presence of the Coalition, Iraq undertook the necessary democratic processes enabling the Iraqis to vote for their future. In this context, the Macedonian Rangers were engaged – to create conditions for the smooth voting of the population. The Macedonian Rangers, as their predecessors, enjoyed an exceptionally high rating among the allies. “The Macedonian Ranger Platoon is very well trained and disciplined. They, in addition to being well trained, have the technical and tactical knowledge and are a very important part of our task force,” were the words of U.S. Master Sergeant Anthony Keidy, the person who directly collaborated with the Macedonian Rangers in delivering multiple tasks as part of the mission in Iraq, which best describe the reputation and authority of the Macedonian Rangers. The Rangers have received similar assessments, praises and accolades from many prominent political and military figures, but the recognition of one’s fellow is still the greatest recognition. The next contingents of Macedonian “Rangers” followed in their footsteps in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In 2008, our participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom was increased by another platoon. After 11 rotations, the Macedonian soldiers have completed their participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Around 450 peacekeepers from the ARM underwent through 11 missions in Iraq, Wolves and Rangers from the SOR, and Leopards from the 2nd MIBG of the ARM in last two rotations who presented us in Iraq in the true light, as peace warriors who can and are professional, disciplined and, above all, respond effectively to the assigned tasks. That, in fact, earned them the well deserved recognition from their superior commands, as well as the highest military decorations from the U.S. and our country. In the five years spent in Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Macedonian warriors of peace wrote one of the most important chapters of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia and of our country. They returned home with invaluable experience, which meant a lot in tracing the future development of the ARM, especially in the area of training.
plans for the attack on Iraq were dating back from the 1999 Operative Plan, and by this, the assumptions were a bit different. Such assumption influenced the delay of logistics, but also efficiency. The System fell apart due to poor assumptions that were outdated, as well. No one among the American commanders expected to conduct post conflict operations through a police model – securing the public peace and order. However, thanks to the team that I had with me, we overcame these challenges (such as only 3 liters water per day at extremely high temperature, eating only canned food for 4 months etc.) very quickly. The commanders were very well prepared and through personal example helped me maintain the leader’s initiative in front of my subordinates. Additionally, the extreme preparations allowed us to adapt to these conditions in a very short timeframe.

I remember that soon after your departure, reports started coming from the field about the success of the Macedonian contingent. Tell us more specifically about an action where the Macedonian Wolves were exceptional.

– Of course. However, before I share what impressed me the most, I would like to point out something to make things more clear. Looking at it from a time distance, but also working later on the preparation of the other contingents, I think that the real ‘boom’ of the operations took place not only due to the success that we had, but also, to be perfectly honest, due to the hidden doubt that was creeping in the public eye on whether we...
were capable of such a thing. As the rotations changed after us, the public got used to it all, so even the biggest sceptics would rush to conclude that maybe it isn’t that difficult for our members when they go there. There are people who think like that today as well, but this is a legitimate position, one with which I, of course, strongly disagree with. I would say that I learned rather quickly that success would need to be measured, not in how many kinetic operations we have performed, but in how many lives we have saved and how much authority we have managed to build with the local population. It is true that initially the kinetic operations – ambushes, assaults, captured prisoners, firearms and material and technical means, created our image of, as we were called in one report, ‘warriors with the sun’; however, the biggest benefit of that rotation was the added element of the 1st Infantry Brigade. The operations that we performed with this element in the field of CIMIC operations as a special line of operations saw the offensive elements of the task force at much better level than they would have been without them. Hence, the awards that followed came in this line, for saved lives, that thanks to the group from the 1st Infantry Brigade could be instantly carried out by the Wolves. As to your direct question, I would say there were several such operations. I would mention the operation Cowpens, which was successful due to the element of surprise, thanks to the excellent planning and in the entire command segment, then the operation White House, which highlighted the good coordination of the groups’ commanders, and many other operations and actions in which we not only took part, but also led. Still, what impressed me the most was the operation Wolfhound Crunch, in which we captured mercenaries that had infiltrated from Syria. Though we were advised to perform the operation during nighttime, we carried out the operation during daytime on our own initiative, since we wanted to have the element of surprise. My biggest fear during the planning of this operation was the risk of potential exchange of fire while we were moving into position across the line of attack (they were in a better position than us). The surprise element was the key point, since as soon as we managed to move position without being noticed, we managed to capture them without firing a single bullet. I would like to highlight that I was very impressed with the US High Commanders. The grandeur in which they marched in procession as leaders taught me how to respect your subordinates. They allowed our propositions to be carried out, naturally, after we convinced them.

What followed were acclaim, decorations and other honours. Upon your return home, you continued to build your career in two directions, as a member of the Special Forces, but also as a Master of Science, and then Doctor of Philosophy in International Law. How much did your field experience help in your academic career?

– My field experience helped a lot. Though I had an MSc degree when I left for Iraq I had one philosophy on fighting terrorism, but as many others, changed it drastically upon my return. That is why I chose that my doctoral dissertation would be dedicated to the international legal aspects of the global war on terror.

You had an attempt in terms of literary writing, as well. Your book ‘The Road to Babel’ is one with obvious autobiographic elements. In the book, we perceive the mission to Iraq from both the perspective of an experienced Special Forces Officer and Commander, as well as from the perspective of a young man who is thousands of miles away from his wife and daughter. Tell us a bit more about the book, its odyssey and what it means in your life.

– Well, just like the entire mission, the book as well was about team work, or semi-team work. I had the idea and the contents, but lacked the practical aspect. The book was offered to the superior army structures, but probably due to valid reasons, the book was rejected as a project. Then, I made peace with it and waited, until one of our members left the army and came to a position where he could help me out. Thanks to him and the ‘Kul-tura’ publishing house, the book saw the light of day. I would like to encourage the other commanders to do the same, since it is the only way to confirm ones positions and thesis that every mission is a successful and unique story by itself. The book had a good reception by the reading audience, but also by the experts. It was translated into English and parts of it are being taught at the Fort Leavenworth Military Training School as lessons for small unit tactics.

Today, you are a professor at the General Mihailo Apostolski Military Academy. How do you perceive this part of your life, being the Commander of the first Macedonian contingent at the Iraqi Freedom mission, dealing with challenges that could cost you your life in the field, from today’s perspective?

– I think that this is another new page in life that maybe wasn’t necessarily planned, but one that I have come to love very much. Today, I am proud to be a docent at the Military Academy, which I must say is very different from the time when I was a cadet there. Today, the program is modernized and standardized. We have cadets from other countries indicating that we can be leaders in some projects. Through the curricula and the other instruction forms such as the Summer Campus, I do my best to transfer my experience to my junior colleagues, as well as the cadets. I am very grateful to the senior colleagues who know how to handle my dynamics and make the best of it for everyone. I don’t like monopolies and I try to insist on this as a practice in what I do today. I see progress as the product of a constructive disagreement and I am strictly against patterns. I try to give the cadets and the students the thing I know the best, teach them where and how they can look and find what they don’t know, teach them to always have a vision, but also the will to accomplish something. Though my methods at the beginning are perhaps among the easiest and the most popular ones with the students, in time they realize that in the long run these methods will be instrumental for them. I respect teamwork very much and try to teach them to respect it as well.

Zhanet Ristoska, Ph.D.
The Republic of Macedonia confirmed its strategic orientation for membership in the European Union (EU) through its strong political commitment to support the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) by giving a concrete contribution to the civil and military operations under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) of the Union. The participation of the Republic of Macedonia in the EU-led military operation, the ALTHEA mission, marks the first in a series of specific and significant contributions that our country would give as part of the civilian and military ESDP-operations, aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Union.

On 22 May 2006, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a historic decision for the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian Army and the Army Air Force to deploy a unit to participate in the European Union peacekeeping operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR ALTHEA. The unit, i.e. the helicopter detachment was composed of two Mi-8/17 helicopters and 17 staff personnel in the following composition: Liaison Officer and Staff Officer in the EUFOR Command in Sarajevo, six officer pilots, an air force engineer officer, four NCO-technicians-fliers, four NCOs and a professional soldier - air force technicians.

The Kingdom of Belgium expressed its interest in the joint participation and formation of a joint Belgian-Macedonian contingent, prompting the specific activities and preparation of the personnel and helicopters. The Agreement on the participation of the Republic of Macedonia in the EU-led operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina – ALTHEA was signed on 3 July 2006 at the EU Council Headquarters in Brussels. The ALTHEA mission was the third international peace mission of our country, after the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, however it was the first mission as part of the European Union.

FIRST ROTATION

The official ceremony for the departure of the first rotation of the ALTHEA mission, on 14 July 2006, was attended by the top state officials of the Republic of Macedonia. The first Macedonian Helicopter Detachment Commander, Major Kire Kolevski addressed the members of the Air Force. In his address, he referred to the day of departure for the mission as a historic day for all members of the Air Force.

The first historic international mission of the Macedonian Air Force, known as Bukefal (Bucephalus), began when the Mi-17 and Mi-8MT helicopters with EUFOR symbols, left the airbase Petrovec and, after a two-hour flight across Albania, Montenegro and Croatia, entered the airspace of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The detachment contingent was under the operational control of the Commander of EUFOR for the ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina based in Sarajevo, and the location and logistics were under the command of the multinational forces for the southeast sector Salamander, based at the airport in Mostar, afterwards the Butmir Base in Sarajevo.

On 10 October 2006, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a Decision amending the Decision for deployment of units from the Army of the Republic of Macedonia for participation in EU-led peacekeeping operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR ALTHEA. According to the new decision, the helicopter detachment was supplemented with one meteorology officer, one intelligence officer and fuel tank handlers.

The first flights over the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina were flights for introduction and acquaintance with the area of the possible missions. The familiarization flights covered the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, starting from Mostar, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka, Zenica, and the landing on all military and civilian airports. Special attention was given to the numerous helicopter landing spots (HLS) which were actually connected to the liaison observation teams (LOT), i.e. small EUFOR posts located on the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the interior, with the constant need of helicopter transport, especially in winter.

A major advantage was the experience of the senior officers of the detachment, Major Kire Kolevski and his deputy, Major Toni Spasovski, who spent their academic years being educated and trained at the Air Force Academy in Mostar. Their English language proficiency of the standard aviation phraseology and experience from numerous NATO / PfP exercises have proven to be an important prerequisite for the high-quality execution of missions over Bosnia and Herzegovina.
The first Macedonian helicopter detachment in the ALTHEA mission, and the next three by 2008, performed operational missions in day and night conditions (using NVG equipment) in the domain of: transport of passengers and troops, materiel, i.e. internal and external cargo, reconnaissance, and VIP transport, in conjunction with members and equipment of other contingents in carrying out various missions such as: SAR, CSAR, CASEVAC, and MEDEVAC. The overall engagement of the Macedonian detachment was highly rated by the EUFOR Command, which can be substantiated with the official statement of the EUFOR Spokesperson, the British Captain Nick Foster.

Due to the importance of the helicopter support in fulfilling the missions from Operation ALTHEA, especially in the ongoing transformation of the EUFOR mission, there was an extension request for the Macedonian helicopter detachment which continued in the subsequent rotations.

SECOND ROTATION

The mandate of the first rotation of the Macedonian helicopter detachment ended by January 2007, when there was a shift of personnel with the second rotation. The Head of the Macedonian helicopter detachment deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina was given to Lt Col Borche Jefremov.

On 9 January 2007, in the National Hero Straso Pindzur Barracks in Petrovec, a ceremony was held on the occasion of the deployment of the second contingent. In his address, the Commander of the second Macedonian contingent said: “The previous year, 2006, was crucial for the Air VING, since as of July last year, after thorough preparations, the Air VING has been participating in the international peacekeeping mission ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That was the first test of the willingness of the members of the Air VING and their adaptability with other NATO structures. Our declared force today is leaving for the second rotation of the multinational EU-led peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Macedonian flag will keep waving proudly in this international mission, demonstrating the unwavering commitment of the Republic of Macedonia to walk on the path of democracy and integration.”

The Macedonian contingent spent part of its rotation at the airport in Mostar, followed by the Butmir Base in Sarajevo.

THIRD ROTATION

On 4 July 2007, in the National Hero Straso Pindzur Barracks in Petrovec, once again there was an official ceremony on the occasion of the deployment of the new Macedonian contingent - the third rotation in the peacekeeping mission ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On this occasion, the Commander of the third Macedonian contingent, Major Ton Spasovski in his address stressed the following: “The tasks that we shall perform in Bosnia and Herzegovina are part of the overall commitment of the multinational force and relate to the transportation of people and materiel, the transport of VIP CASEVAC and other similar tasks that we perform in conducting our everyday activities. The training of the cockpit and technical staff was timely prepared in accordance with the NATO standards in multinational environment.”

The duration of the third rotation was extended for additional three months after the change of the detachment commanders, so that Major Kire Kolevski was appointed as the new commander for the following three months.

Upon the return of the third rotation from the ALTHEA mission, on 12 January 2008, the Mi17 with a record number VAM – 304 had a helicopter accident in the locality Katalovski Blace. The death of 11 peacekeepers 20th anniversary of the Army, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Georgiev, posthumously presented the Medal for Bravery to the 11 ARM members, heroes of our modern times.

FOURTH ROTATION

Concerning the fourth rotation of the helicopter detachment (January - July 2008), based on the previously performed analyses and estimates the Republic of Macedonia made a decision that the need for withdrawal of one Mi-8/T7 helicopter, so as to achieve the necessary level of operability for future contributions. In accordance with the decision, the fourth rotation of the helicopter detachment in the ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina consisted of one transport Mi-8/T7 helicopter and 12 personnel as part of the helicopter detachment.

At the National Hero Straso Pindzur Barracks in Petrovec, on 17 July 2008, an official ceremony was held on the occasion of the return of the fourth rotation and the successful completion of the participation of the ARM helicopter detachment in the peacekeeping mission ALTHEA. "I am proud of our members and it was a great honor to lead them to the successes they achieved in the ALTHEA mission," said Lt Col Ile Trajkov, the commander of the fourth rotation of the ARM helicopter detachment at the ceremony.

All members of the Macedonian detachment were awarded by Brussels on the occasion of their participation in the mission. The medal was awarded for their consistent engagement and timely execution of missions.

CONCLUSION

With its four rotations, Macedonia confirmed its strategic orientation for attaining membership in the European Union. By the end of the final rotation of the helicopter detachment in July 2008, the Republic of Macedonia decided to end its contribution with helicopter capabilities in the EUFOR-led ALTHEA operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a total of four rotations (July 2006 - July 2008).

The participation in the ALTHEA mission with two helicopters demonstrated that the ARM has the potential to participate in missions outside the Republic of Macedonia with its most sophisticated segment and simultaneously provide logistical support for smooth execution of the flying missions. The members of the helicopter detachment showed that we stand shoulder to shoulder with the members of the NATO and PFP Air Force. Given the excellent results we achieved in the execution of all the assignments given by the EUFOR Command, we attracted the sympathy of the international public and gained authority worthy of respect. During this mission, we carried in ourselves the positive spirit of cooperation with the other participants in the mission. The Macedonian flag proudly waved in this international mission, demonstrating the unwavering commitment of the Republic of Macedonia to continue on the path of democracy and the Euro-Atlantic integrations.

Dragan Pavlovski
that the end of the ALTHEA mission for the VING at that time, today's AFBG was a kind of new beginning in which the experiences, combined with the training in the future, ensured the success of the future missions involving units of the Air Force Brigade at the ARM JOC.

The beginning of the mission was characterized by intensive activities for our accommodation and adaptation, which was followed by the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), STANAG and acceptance of numerous papers in the field of flight. Also, the English language proficiency, standard aviation phraseology and experience from numerous NATO/PfP exercises have proven to be an important prerequisite for the high-quality execution of missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, we had to analyze the local civilian procedures, so as not to conflict our flying activities with the civilian ICAO procedures, in accordance with the orders of the EUFOR Command. Simultaneously with the operational deployment of the detachment, all members of the MHD passed through various trainings, such as training for identification and extraction from minefields. Nevertheless, the training was useful, considering that at the time in Bosnia and Herzegovina there were officially over 18,000 minefields.

The first flights over the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina were flights for introduction and acquaintance with the area of the possible missions. The familiarization flights covered the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, starting from Mostar, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka, Zenica, and the landing on all military and civilian airports. Special attention was given to the numerous helicopter landing spots (HLS) which were actually connected to the liaison observation teams (LOT), i.e. small EUFOR posts located on the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the interior, with the constant need of helicopter transport, especially in winter.

I believe that everyone should take pride with the members of all four missions in the ALTHEA mission, especially with their exceptional readiness, resourcefulness and skill to find their way in the performance of the regular tasks in all situations and their compatibility with the other NATO struc-
The members of the helicopter detachment successfully mastered this challenge, as reflected in the high marks from the EUFOR Command in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**This was the first solo mission of the ARM. What does that mean specifically?**
- The helicopter detachment was part of the EU ALTHEA mission to maintain peace and security in BiH, actively participating on the entire territory of BiH with its transport facilities. The first rotation of the ALTHEA mission had 21 members of the ARM VING, who carried out their tasks with the Belgian contingent in Mostar, with the exception of one liaison officer assigned to the EUFOR Command in Sarajevo.

The first Macedonian helicopter detachment, by engaging the Mi-8 and Mi-17 helicopters for the ALTHEA mission, from mid-July 2006 to January 2007, successfully performed operational missions in day and night conditions, transport of troops and materiel, reconnaissance, VIP transport, in conjunction with mem-

bers and equipment of other contingents in carrying out various missions such as SAR (Search and Rescue), CSAR (Combat Search and Rescue) and CASEVAC (Casualty Evacuation). In the course of the mission we were daily engaged in various missions and tutorials, in accordance with the operational command Bukefal (Bucephalus), with 60 flight hours per month, thus satisfying all the missions given by the EUFOR Command in Sarajevo.

The proper human and flight resource management enabled the members of MHD to make, in the first six months, close to 320 flight hours with a hundred percent accuracy during all 180 days at a ratio of 70.30% in favor of operational missions for the EUFOR requirements in accordance with the contract of the ARM and EUFOR Command.

The experiences gained in working in a multinational environment are of great importance for the AFBG, as the process of obtaining, preparation, execution and analysis of missions in real-time and in cooperation with units from other countries, is a special experiential benefit that develops through operational missions. The human and flight resource management as well as the temporal coordination and meteorological flight preparation activities in conditions of unknown terrain with high altitude and rapid change of the weather situation are also part of the experience obtained during the mission.

No less important are the friendships and relationships forged with members of the foreign contingents and the friendly peoples of BiH.

Unfortunately, in our profession the tragedies are accidents that should always remind us that only with better training and material investments we can prevent unwanted moments as was the case with the eleven members of the ARM Air VING, who upon return from the ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina tragically gave their young lives. They were the heroes of the new age, who left behind their deeds, indelible traces that will forever remain inscribed in the history of the Macedonian aviation as top professionals and Macedonian ambassadors of peace. We are proud that we had such military officers and comrades, friends and professionals who knew how to share work responsibilities, difficult moments, and also moments of joy and happiness.

**During the ALTHEA mission, all members of the Macedonian detachment were awarded the Medal of the ALTHEA mission in Brussels. You received a special award from the High Representative of the EU?**
- The Medal awarded to the members of the ALTHEA was for their consistent engagement and timely execution of missions. Along with the medal, the members received a certificate signed by the High Representative of the Union for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana. After the end of the third rotation in ALTHEA, I received a special recognition from the EUFOR Commander, the Spanish Major General Ignacio Martin Vilialain, for the successful execution of the given missions as part of the third rotation of the MHD in EUFOR. Moreover, the overall engagement of the Macedonian detachment was highly rated by the EUFOR Command.

**What is the way ahead?**
- We continue with the everyday training and maintenance of the aviation technique, thus providing support to all ARM units, and beyond, within the country, as best as we can. We provide support to the state institutions during natural disasters (delivery of food and medicine in conditions of heavy snowfall) and large fires on inaccessible terrains. We continue with the modernization and adoption of the latest technology for equipping the aircraft, and of course, continue providing support to the Pilot Training Centre which is to give the first pilots for the AFGB in the forthcoming period.

The Air Force Brigade, in accordance with the given partnership goals, actively maintains the helicopters and personnel to participate in future peacekeeping missions of the helicopter detachment. We have already passed the self-assessment Level 1 and 2, as well as NATO Evaluation Level 1 (NEL-1), and are preparing for the NATO Evaluation Level 2 (NEL2). If the need arises, we can leave for a mission as early as tomorrow.

**VD.**
The Republic of Macedonia confirms its strategic orientation for attainment of membership in the European Union by declaring a concrete contribution to the military operation as part of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU, ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union on the participation of the Republic of Macedonia as part of Operation ALTHEA was signed on 3 July 2006 in Brussels.

The initial contribution of the Republic of Macedonia to the EU-led operation was launched in July 2006 by declaring the ARM helicopter detachment composed of two Mi-8/17 helicopters and deployment of 21 personnel. The contribution with helicopter facilities lasted from July 2006 to July 2008. In November 2006, the Republic of Macedonia strengthened its own contribution to the EU-led Operation ALTHEA in BiH by declaring a medical team composed of 10 personnel as part of the ROLE 1 Medical Assistance to Camp Butmir. The thirteenth rotation of the ALTHEA medical team is currently underway.

Additionally, the contribution of the Republic of Macedonia to the ALTHEA was strengthened by declaring 1 military officer as an Assistant Legal Advisor in the EUFOR HQ (from June 2007). The Assistant Legal Advisor is a member of the Office of the Legal Advisor in Command executive group of COMEUFOR. He provides legal advice to the COMEUFOR and DCOM, who also performs the function of Chief of Staff to the other members of the EUFOR HQ in the area of international and local law and the interpreting of the provisions of the General Framework Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UN Security Council resolutions.

The eleventh rotation on this position is underway, and the twelfth rotation of the Assistant Legal Advisor will start in December 2012. This duty is of particular importance to the ARM in order to further strengthen its own position in terms of the key duties in the peace missions, and thus emphasize their own values through the professional execution of responsibilities in the structure of the multinational force.

The first medical team ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina consisted of 2 doctors, 6 medical technicians and two drivers. They were located at the Butmir Base. The obligation of the team was to ensure the provision of health services to the multinational force in Bosnia, Sarajevo. They had an excellent cooperation with all national contingents, they did not have any problems, and many doctors from other contingents even sought services.
from our contingent. They absolutely carried out all the tasks that were set before them.

“The day we arrived”, Dr Krsto Blazhevski, the leader of the first medical team in ALTHEA (now a retired colonel) recalls, “we opened the materials, and the next day we informed that we were ready for work. The first patients were treated appropriately and what made things easier was our good command of the English language. I can boast that we with chronic diseases who were under constant control.”

“Being in a mission brings about gaining invaluable experience in a different environment. Our goal was human, to deal with people who may be attacked. We are soldiers by vocation and that means that all uniformed are to provide security and all injured must know that there will always be someone who will save their lives. There were even soldiers from other contingents who came to us, bypassing their doctor. We behaved professionally and there was no improvisation. We were all professional and all came to us with confidence, not with fear. Sometimes, for example, during our tours of duty, people sought help for banal things, such as minor cuts. We did these interventions alone without having to call the surgeon. We were trained for that too,” adds Colonel Blazhevski.

They had two medical vehicles so as to perform the tasks, which were maintained by the Turkish contingent.

Valuable assistance to them, as Krstevski said, for all contingents, was the training that took place in the Military Hospital with the help of the Swiss delegation, who donated this valuable equipment.

The ARM medical section performs its mission in BiH independently, which is not the case with other missions where the ARM has deployed its members. This means that the supply of medicine and other medical equipment for the needs of the mission is done with their own funds. The medical section of the ARM has set up a medical station at Airport Butmir, which, for the requirements of EUFOR, provides general medical care and other tasks in the domain of medical assistance as part of the mission.

In addition to the day-to-day care of the sick and wounded from the Butmir Camp, the first and the other Macedonian medical teams regularly participated in missions for providing medical assistance during cultural and sporting activities in and outside the camp, by orders of their direct superior command.

In the past six years, the ARM medical team has demonstrated the capabilities and interoperability of the ARM within the EU mission in the best possible manner, thus simultaneously contributing to the affirmation of the ARM and the Republic of Macedonia, which is confirmed by the high grades obtained from the EUFOR Command.

“Each following mission, as the Minister of Defence, Fatmir Besimi emphasized, on the meeting with the members of the ARMY who were part of Operation EUFOR-ALTHEA-12, and for a good reason, sets new and higher standards, and this rotation is no exception.” On this occasion, the ARM CHOD, Major General Gorancho Koteski awarded a Silver ARM Badge to the contingent Commander, Colonel Dushan Stojanovic, the other members of the contingent received an ARM Bronze Badge.”

The latest 13th rotation of the medical team left for Sarajevo on 31 October 2012. The ARM medical team is composed of 10 personnel, qualified medical and assisting staff. “Our obligation is to confirm the already acquired reputation and raise the high professionalism in the performance of tasks to an even higher level,” said the team leader Elizabeta Naumovska Petrevska. We believe that they, like their predecessors, will respond to the tasks in the mission conscientiously, professionally and with discipline and thus, once again, confirm that the ARM is ready to perform tasks alongside the other peacekeepers.

Christina Iljevska
The UNIFIL (United Nation Interim Force In Lebanon) Mission is, we are free to say, the longest mission of the United Nations. In March this year, the mission reached 34 years since its establishment in 1978. Many countries from all around the world have participated and still participate with troops in this mission. Since May 2007, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia has been participating with one staff officer in the mission Headquarters. The decision on the declared contribution of the Republic of Macedonia with one staff officer as part of the UNIFIL peacekeeping operation, the mandate of which is given by Resolution 1701 of the UN Security Council, was adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia on 27 April 2007, and conducted on 16 May 2007. After the departure of the first officer in June 2008, the contribution continued by sending a new staff officer, as the first rotation as part of UNIFIL, and currently the Army of the Republic of Macedonia is undergoing its sixth rotation on the staff officer position in the Joint Operational Centre (Major Besnik Halili). Since it is the only UN-led mission in which among the flags of 32 other nations, as of May 2007, the flag of the Republic of Macedonia is waving, it deserves a more elaborate review regarding the beginnings of the establishment of this mission. The peacekeeping force of the Organization of the United Nations in Lebanon came in the distant 1978, three years after the start of the civil war (1975) and two years after the Syrian occupation of parts of Lebanon (1976). However, the UNIFIL (United Nation Interim Force In Lebanon) Mission was not established neither as a result of the civil war, nor as a result of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. There were several reasons for the outbreak of the civil war in confessional Lebanon, one of the most important was the status of the Palestinian refugees which settled on the territory of Lebanon after Black September in Jordan in 1970, when more than 100,000 Palestinians arrived in Lebanon. With them, the Lebanese territory (mainly in the south of Lebanon) was inhabited by the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and its leader, Yasser Arafat. In the initial phase of the civil war, the Palestinians acquired a high level of autonomy, having more and more militant Palestinian organizations using Southern Lebanon (where they wanted to establish their own country) for attacks on Israel. One such attack of Fatah (faction of the PLO) against Israel, 11 March 1978, known as the Massacre, near Tel Aviv, resulted in 34 killed and 70 wounded Israelis, which was the reason behind Israel's involvement in the chaotic situation in Lebanon.
To solve the security problem on the border with Lebanon, on the night between 14 and 15 March 1978, Israel commenced Operation Litani. The campaign of about 25,000 Israeli soldiers for the eviction of about 5,000 Palestinian guerrillas turned into conquering almost the entire south of Lebanon. The weak and divided government in Beirut was left with nothing except to turn to the UN, so that on the morning of 15 March it sent a strong protest against the Israeli invasion to UN headquarters in New York stating that Lebanon had nothing to do with the PLO and with their actions against Israel and therefore it could not be the victim of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. On 19 March 1978, the UN Security Council adopted resolutions 425 and 426 demanding from Israel for an immediate cessation of military activities and withdrawal from the territory of Lebanon. Already on 23 March the same year, just two days after the ceasefire, the first members of the UNIFIL (United Nation Interim Force In Lebanon) Mission was established. The Mission headquarters was established in the place Nagura where it still stands today. It should be noted that those were mainly military observers, equipped with light infantry weapons. According to the aforementioned Resolutions 425 and 426 of the UN Security Council, UNIFIL was to:
- Confirm the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon;
- Restore peace and security in the region;
- Help the Lebanese government restore its authority in South Lebanon. Although the Israeli troops retreated behind the international border, still, in the Gaza strip of about 4-12 km (Lebanese territory) the power was surrendered to the orthodox militia SLO, known as the Army of Southern Lebanon. Hence, the Lebanese authorities could not take control of that part of their country, the UNIFIL could not completely fulfill its mandate and simply patrolled in South Lebanon dealing mainly with humanitarian activities for the locals (mostly Shia and Christians), while retaining its neutrality. In the beginning in 1982, as part of Operation Peace for Galilee, the Israeli army re-occupied Southern Lebanon. At that time, the government of Lebanon did not even try to discuss the Israeli military venture; it only sent two additional objections to the UN. In trying to discuss the issue of expulsion of the Palestinians from the state, the government disintegrated, which only strengthened the internal clashes between Sunnis and Druze on one, and the Christians on the other side. Since that was only a military occupation and not an annexation of South Lebanon, the UNIFIL international mission continued.

From 1982 to 2000, Hezbollah was established, which drove the Palestinian guerrillas away from the area and instead of them, Hezbollah began to carry out terrorist attacks against the Israeli army and Israeli targets in general, so as to liberate South Lebanon. After years of guerrilla war with the Hezbollah, in order to take away the basic motive of the Shia for fighting Israel, to reduce its costs and to put an end to the series of incidents and victims, in April 2000, Israel informed the UN that by the end of summer it will withdraw its forces from South Lebanon. This brought about a certain movement in the mission in early 2000 when UNIFIL defined the “Blue Line” which extends into the Gaza Strip of the disputed internationally recognized border between Lebanon and Israel. The “Blue Line” Borderline is questionable in many places even today, including a particularly important area, the so called Sheeba Farms on the tri-juncture between Lebanon, Syria and Israel. While Israel considered Sheeba Farms as part of Israel, apart from Syria, in the 1967 war Hezbollah claimed that it was part of Lebanon. Two months after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in June 2000, the UN adopted Resolution 1310 which the Lebanese authorities are invited to deploy part of their army in Southern Lebanon as soon as possible. After the battalions of armies of India and Fiji occupied the observation points along the “Blue Line” in August 2000, Lebanon failed to fulfill its obligation under the UN Resolution 1310. Since the authorities in Beirut delayed the occupation of the liberated areas, this actually created an area without an internationally recognized government. Hezbollah as the representative of the Shia population began to run that area. Perhaps that lawlessness suited the Lebanese government, because in that way it could reject the need for the entire country to deal with a specific military political element in the society that certainly suited Hezbollah. Not even Resolution 1337 of 2001 which the UN introduced as an attempt to affect Lebanon in terms of the criminal law influenced the behavior of the Lebanese government. The UN even reduced the size of UNIFIL from 5,800 to 4,500 members who stayed to observe the so-called “nomans’ land.” By the summer of 2004, UNIFIL was reduced to only about 2,000 soldiers from 7 countries and 50 military observers in the composition of UNTSO (United Nations Supervision Organizational) in Syria which assisted the members of UNIFIL. Reducing the size of UNIFIL and the policy of the weak central government in Beirut to ignore the Shia Hezbollah, resulted in serious incidents along the border line. The situation escalated in June 2006 when Hezbollah attacked an Israeli patrol, killing eight IDF soldiers, and capturing two soldiers. Israel responded to this incident with a month-long war, mostly using their aviation and attacking targets across Lebanon. After a month-long conflict, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1701 - the foundation of the armistice established on 14 August 2006. By mid-September 2006, the new UNIFIL was agreed and created, after which it initiated the deployment of its forces. Today, the size of the new UNIFIL is about 13,000 members of the already present small units from China, India and Ghana accompanied by many Western countries. In addition to the 13,000 “blue helmets” there are around 10,000 LAV-soldiers today. Resolution 1701 also assigns a naval component IMTF (Interim Maritime Task Force), which includes Germany, the Netherlands, Greece and Turkey, which conducts its observation tasks off the coast of Lebanon and its territorial waters, on about 50 nautical miles west off the Lebanese coast. Although many, especially the UN and the Lebanese people will expect that the new UNIFIL will establish and maintain the desired peace for many years, still, there are many militant elements and organizations that do not agree with spreading the idea of today’s UNIFIL, that the West through the UNIFIL has occupied part of the Arab country. Because of this understanding and this ideology, many terrorist organizations carry out terrorist attacks on UNIFIL patrols and bases. In one such attack with a car bomb (about 70 kg of explosives), on 24 June 2007, 6 soldiers from the Spanish contingent were killed in the western sector. Several such similar terrorist attacks have been conducted on patrols, convoys and individual UNIFIL vehicles to date, however, fortunately, no casualties and only material damage were caused to UNIFIL. In January 2008, during one such attack on a UNIFIL vehicle two Irish officers were injured. Despite such hostile activities, UNIFIL remains steadfast in its efforts to preserve the long desired peace in this part of the world. S.M.
The establishment of the contemporary values, peace, prosperity, are undoubtedly the imperative of each developed and mature democratic state whose goal does not deviate from the path of growth and development on a global scale. In this respect, the Republic of Macedonia, as the 181st member state of the world's largest organization, the United Nations, continually supports the efforts for transmitting these benefits of the new century all over the world.

By respecting the UN Charter as a fundamental framework of the international relations, the Republic of Macedonia actively participates in the global peacekeeping missions of the organization, specifically in the UN peacekeeping operation in Lebanon, UNIFIL. Namely, the participation of the Republic of Macedonia in UNIFIL began in May 2007, when a member of the Army of Republic of Macedonia, Lt Col Simeon Mitrev, as the first representative of the Republic of Macedonia in the UNIFIL mission, became part of the mission as a staff officer - watchkeeper.

We asked Lt Col Mitrev which was the main benefit from the participation of the Republic of Macedonia in international peacekeeping missions. “Deploying Macedonian peacekeepers to missions in many international organizations brings double profit - Macedonia gets experienced officers, ready to cope with the risks of the new era, while at the same time the ARM proves that its army has trained and professional staff, who are not lagging behind the developed Western countries. For me personally, the experience itself is of particular importance, because I was a staff officer there. As to the benefits of the mission, I have to point out that many people from distant countries heard about Macedonia for the first time. I find it of particular importance that our army continues its participation in such missions.”

When it comes to the major responsibilities and duties during the one-year rotation, the Lieutenant Colonel explained: “I was working 12 hour shifts, from eight o’clock in the morning until eight o’clock at night. After which I would be free that evening, the next day was the same, then from eight o’clock in the evening until morning. I had two main phones on the workplace, because the entire base was divided into two sectors with two brigades - East, where Spain was the lead nation, and West, where Italy was the lead nation. In fact, the base had a total of 31 country representatives. The information about everything that was going on came through the watchkeepers. Not only notices, executive decisions needed to be made based on the information – where to deploy which unit, whether or not to send a patrol etc. At the same time, my task was to prepare a report, make a presentation and present it to the force commander.”

Even in missions the main goal of which was to improve the lives of the native population and leverage the benefits of the democratic processes, there are dangers. “All UNIFIL contingents make their own national day shows. During the National Day of Spain we were in the East sector and upon our return, behind our jeep, in less than five minutes, there was an explosion of a car bomb, with 70 or more pounds of explosives, which totally destroyed one Spanish carrier, killing six peacekeepers,” recalls Lt Col Mitrev.

Nevertheless, the opportunity to be part of a complex operation which carries a noble goal in itself is sufficient reason and occasion for the peacekeepers from the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, with all their professionalism, knowledge and commitment of the profession to continuously be active participants in peacekeeping missions.

Ivan Petruševski