

COALITION

Issue 72

***Belgian Contribution
to Operations in
CENTCOM AOR***





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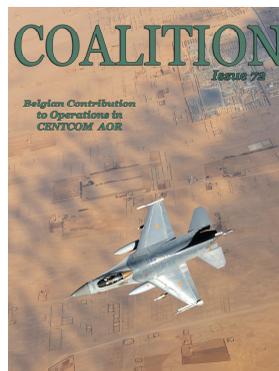
Cover Pages

Front Cover

A Belgian Air Force Jet flying over Afghanistan

Back Cover

Antipersonal and Anti tank mines Clearing Team busy in the task





We are pleased to get back to you, in this new issue of the Coalition Magazine. We apologize for the delay in the issuance of this current issue of the magazine which is due to difficulties encountered by the magazine staff.

Dear readers,

In this issue we highlight the continued support from the coalition to the operation in the AOR. The Coalition Forces believe that the strategic objective of the mission in Afghanistan should continue to be the same: help the people of Afghanistan until they are capable of assuming their own security.

They also know that until that happens; the support of the international community is necessary, not just for the development of a situation of stability and freedom in Afghanistan, but for the security of the world.

Dear readers,

You will find different articles and topics about the operations and activities in the Area of Responsibility. One of these is the contribution of Belgium to operation in CENTCOM AOR, another contribution is from Italy; Strategic Projection of the CH-47 of Aviazione Esercito Italiano. We also bring you a French contribution about the Piracy in Mission Aboard the Corvette "EV1 ACOUBET". We also highlight Amman Message which goal is to clarify to the modern world the true nature of Islam and the nature of true Islam. The Bulgarian Forces change Command in Kabul will be the last topic for this issue of your magazine.

The topics and articles published in this magazine reflect the achievements and successes achieved by the troops in the AOR. We look forward to keeping our readers informed and satisfied and this of course comes from the support we receive from you. We are open to suggestions that you send.

With best regards.

Lt Col. Mamdoh Al-Ameri
Jordan Armed Forces
Director, Coalition Public affairs

Servicemen from the Bulgarian military contingent made a donation for the local inhabitants of the village of Dekh Haya

Servicemen from the Bulgarian military contingent which is part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), have made a donation for the local inhabitants of the village of Dekh Haya.

The village is situated in the Deh Sabz District (meaning "green valley") in the Province of Kabul. The Bulgarian servicemen gave a water tank, vacuum flasks, blankets and sets of winter and summer clothes for the village children to the school for boys and youths Sayed Zewaruddin Khan, which educates nearly 2,000 students.

The donation was presented by National Commanders Colonel Veselin Tsekovski and Colonel Atanas Gerdzhikov during a meeting with elder Gulam Gaus, representative of the Deh Sabz District, the school Headmaster Sayed Mahbub Shah and other village elders.

Servicemen from the Bulgarian contingent also took part in the meeting. Among the issues discussed during the talks were issues pertaining to the security of the population in the Deh Sabz District.

It was pointed out that such initiatives contribute to the development of good relationships between the local population and the Bulgarian servicemen.



Contributions of Belgium to Operations in CENTCOM AOR

*Story and Photos Courtesy of
the Belgium Defense Directorate of Communications*

Afghanistan – Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz and Mazar-e-Sharif

Belgian servicemen are deployed in Afghanistan within the framework of the NATO-led ISAF operation (International Security and Assistance Force). ISAF supports the Afghan government in its fight against the Taliban and contributes to supporting the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces as well as to sustainable stability in the area. In this way, the coalition troops want to make sure Afghanistan can be changed into an autonomous country in the near future. Belgian servicemen play an important part in this respect. They are indeed deployed to three theatres of operations i.e. Kabul, Kandahar and Kunduz.

Air Support

Since September 2008, Belgian F-16's have operated from the Kandahar airport, which has the heaviest traffic in the world and only one runway. About hundred servicemen



are in charge of all aspects related to operation Guardian Falcon, in support of the ISAF ground troops. The pilots' missions range from Close Air support (CAS) and reconnaissance to surveillance (convoy protection and armed overwatch). Moreover two pilots are permanently ready to take off for an intervention within 30

minutes (Ground Alert Close Air Support, GCAS), if necessary. A Force protection flight also protects the Belgian camp and the aircraft in Kandahar.

Vital Entry Point Protection

The largest Belgian detachment operates on Kabul airport. BELU-ISAF secures KAIA (Kabul International Airport) and monitors the internal security perimeter. The airport is the country's vital entry point. Therefore the airport's security is of paramount importance for the country's development and reconstruction. The Belgian detachment consists of a Force Protection company and of a general logistic support detachment. It is integrated into an international battalion staff in which the Belgians occupy key positions. The detachment includes about 300 Belgian and nine Luxembourg servicemen coming from several units.

Mentoring and Aid to the Population

Still within ISAF, the Belgians work in close cooperation with their NATO partners in the north of Afghanistan. They want to make sure that the Afghan National Army (ANA) can as quickly as possible operate in an autonomous way. Three Belgian detachments are present in Kunduz: OMLT Kandak, OMLT Brigade and PRT. The Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) Kandak (which means battalion in Afghan) and the OMLT Brigade are in charge of mentoring the Afghan National Army. Since late June, the OMLT Kandak has intensively participated in the Afghan soldiers' training. About sixty Belgian servicemen do not carry out operations themselves but they train and supervise, guide and give advice to the Afghan battalion when planning and executing its missions.



In short, they make their expertise and know-how available to the Kandak.

Belgian colleagues of the OMLT Brigade supervise the ANA 2/209 Brigade Staff. In addition to their tasks in the garrison, the Belgians are in charge of training and supervising their Afghan colleagues to make them ready for an operational deployment.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is placed under German command. With sixty Belgian servicemen it represents the hub for the contacts with the local population. The servicemen contribute to creating a safe environment, coordinate construction projects and provide support in various domains like explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), aircraft handling and CIMIC (civil-military cooperation).

Moreover a few Belgian servicemen work in the German ISAF Regional Command North headquarters in Mazar-e-Sharif and at several echelons controlling the Afghan battalion. In this way, Belgian Defence keeps an overall view of the circumstances under which our troops are operating.

Lieve Deduytschaever Atalanta

At the beginning of October the frigate Louise-Marie set course for the Horn of Africa for its second participation in Atalanta, the European mission in the fight against piracy off the Somali coast. During the voyage to the area of operations the crew

carried out exercises to improve its capabilities and its expertise. Then the mission could really start...

Heading For Atalanta

After having left the port of Zeebrugge the crew starts security exercises. Drills allow to establish teams that take action in case of damage, abandon ship or fire. These are followed by training that is directly connected with the operation: boarding scenarios, simulations of arresting pirates and searching suspect vessels by the boarding teams, emergency landings by the helicopter or precision firing exercises in order to test the communication and reaction speed of the operators. Upon arrival in the area of operations frigate captain Carl Gillis, commander of the Louise-Marie, states: "I am very pleased with the way in which we have prepared this mission. The crew is enthusiastic and motivated."

The Mission Begins

On 20 October the Louise-Marie enters the area of operations and is placed under the operational control of the commander of the European Naval Force Atalanta, the French Rear Admiral Philippe Coindreau. First mission: patrolling in the Red Sea at the strait of Bab-El-Mandeb, a strategic area where in the past pirates hid between the numerous local fishermen. The missions happen in quick succession: patrols in the assigned transit corridors, reconnaissance flights with the Alouette III, protection of merchant vessels, boarding or pursuit of suspect vessels, etc. "Our mission is twofold," frigate captain Gillis explains. "On the one hand, we escort ships of the World Food Programme delivering food assistance to the famine-stricken populations of Somalia and Sudan. On the other hand, we carry out proactive patrols in the Somali basin in order to intercept pirates before they attack merchant vessels."

On 29 November, while escorting a merchant vessel, the Louise-



Marie intercepted a suspect skiff off the Kenyan coast. During this intervention seven alleged pirates were arrested. The crew continues its mission until 20 January 2011, when the ship will set course for its country of origin. It is expected in Zeebrugge on 7 February.

Catherine Gérard

Lebanon: One Country, Several Missions

Since 2006 Belgium has been participating in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Within the framework of this peacekeeping mission 13 BELUFIL detachments (Belgian-Luxembourg Force in Lebanon) have succeeded one another.

Through the years the mission and the composition of the Belgian detachments have changed. Since 10 October the Belgians have even moved from camp Scorpion in Tibnin to the French camp in At-Tiri, a few kilometres away. Mine clearance has always been and still is the main task of our contingent. In the beginning one of the objectives was to clear the cultivated fields of mines so that the agricultural work could return to normal. For a long time, the Belgian

Belgians regularly work and live at the UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura for specific missions. At the moment, two military policemen and two members of the Naval Component Command (NCC) are present at the Headquarters. The current main detachment, BELUFIL 13, is made up of a staff of 22 servicemen, a mine-clearing team of 35 men and 42 persons for the Joint Support Detachment (JSD).

In order to ensure a proper functioning of the Belgian cantonment as well as the operational capability of the teams, the JSD consists of units from various origins. Personnel of logistic battalions are responsible for provisioning and maintenance. The means of communication are managed by servicemen of the Communication and Information Systems. The detachment is completed by members of various medical units. BELUFIL 13 owes its strength to its servicemen from various backgrounds who master their job and are motivated by this peacekeeping mission.



construction engineers have actively participated in the construction and amelioration of the UNIFIL camps as well as in CIMIC projects (civil-military cooperation) in the region. Finally, the Belgian Defence also deployed a military field hospital until March 2009.

Today, the main mission of the Belgians consists of clearing part of the blue line of mines. The blue line is a strip of about a hundred kilometres on the border between Lebanon and Israel. During various conflicts a considerable number of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines have been planted in this area. At present, the United Nations want to clearly demarcate both territories by means of concrete boundary markers. To this end, they need to be able to reach the blue points (where the border will be marked) safely.

The Belgian combat engineers thus clear these fields of mines and see to their own security on the way to and from the work sites. There is no special team anymore for Force Protection. The camp in At-Tiri is being watched over by French servicemen.

Currently 103 Belgian servicemen are deployed in Lebanon. Some

Success On Land And Sea

Our servicemen are very popular with the Lebanese people especially because of the friendly relations that the members of the Information Operation Group have established. We have certainly convinced our peers in UNIFIL coming from about thirty countries of our professionalism and our efficiency.

We have been convincing both on land and sea. In 2008 and 2009 the Navy participated in the Marine Task Force (MTF) of UNIFIL.

During both these operations Belgian frigates have taken on surveillance missions off the Lebanese coast in order to prevent the unauthorised entry of arms by sea. For three months, a Belgian even commanded this international fleet.

Based on its experience Defence could again be taken into consideration for another mission within the framework of the UNIFIL MTF.

Originally UNIFIL was established by the UN Security Council in 1978 to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from South Lebanon, to restore international peace and security, and to assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area. Following the crisis of July-August 2006 the Council decided that in addition to its original mandate, UNIFIL would monitor the cessation of hostilities, accompany and support the Lebanese armed forces as they deploy throughout the South, extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons.



STRATEGIC PROJECTION OF THE CH-47 OF AVES (Aviazione Esercito Italiano)

The new NATO strategic concepts, the development of the operational scenarios, the typology of the missions and the extreme weather and environmental conditions where they are called to operate, especially in Afghanistan, entail an increased employment of combat and transport helicopters. Here is how AVES has answered to the "Expeditionary" concept required by NATO.

Extract Rivista Esercito Italiano

For a military instrument to possess expeditionary capabilities means to be able to re-deploy itself in very far operation zones and be fed through a turnover system for what regards men, vehicles and materials, so that its operational capabilities remain always unchanged.

With the end of the bipolar confrontation, the threats that the partners of the Alliance have had to confront have not occurred inside the geographic borders of NATO but outside it, mainly in the form of operations of power projection aimed at Peace Keeping and Peace Enforcing.

The military interventions like those conducted in Iraq (1991), Somalia (1992-1994), Bosnia and Kosovo have been carried out by deploying first the highly mobile light forces, subsequently projecting also armoured units and self propelled artillery, as in operation "Desert Shield" or in the intervention in the Balkans. Besides the quality gap, one should



During the last years, AVES (Aviazione dell'Esercito - Army Avia-

also consider the time that elapses between the deployment of the light forces and the arrival of the heavy forces, which can be quantified in about one month. Since the strategic concept of "Rapid Effect", i.e. preventive and rapid effect, has by now become well established within the Alliance, lighter and readily redeployable forces have become necessary.

The "Expeditionary" concept has contributed to speed up the creation of the Medium Forces (well represented by the "Medium" Brigades in the present organization of the Italian Army). These forces' manoeuvre elements are equipped with wheeled armoured units and self-propelled or hauled artillery, capable of operating as peacekeepers, but also against organized conventional forces.

During the last years, AVES (Aviazione dell'Esercito - Army Avia-

tion) has had to support flight units in very sensitive O.T, both from the military-operational and the weather-environmental view point.

In particular, the Afghan O.T. has proved especially difficult to manage for different reasons: first of all, the ruggedness of the territory and the scattering of the units on the ground called for a large employment of helicopters; secondly, the elevated altitude of the bases and the high temperatures of the summer period have caused big problems to the aircraft deployed there.

The CH47 stands out among the aircraft employed by the Coalition in Afghanistan. AVES has deployed in Afghanistan a Task Force consisting of six helicopters A-129 and four CH-47s with the relevant support, among which a 1st and 2nd technical-level maintenance team.

Among the tasks entrusted to the men of the teams of the 2nd technical level, there is also the packaging for its transport by air in case of turnover. In fact, the C-47s have been airlifted to the O.T. with "Antonov" An-124 airplanes, which can stow up to three machines at



the same time. The most important parts of this operation of strategic projection are the disassembly and reassembly phases of some sensitive components of the helicopters.

Such operations are entirely carried out by military personnel in service with the "Scorpione" 4th Support regiment, a unit that usually takes care of the maintenance of the C-47s of the 1st "Antares" AVES Regiment".

The effort that AVES has had to confront in order to solve the problems of the helicopters' strategic projection, has not concerned only the transport of the aircraft, but also the adaptation of the self-protection devices and the logistic chain.

The self-protection has been implemented through the installation of flares, in order to face up to the threat of MANPADS, and of ballistic slates to protect the crew and the vital parts from the fire of light weapons.

Despite the American skill in handling means and materials to be sent by air, the CH-47 was not conceived to be embarked inside transport planes with a simple field-preparation.

At present, despite the An-124 dimensions, to embark a CH-47 one

must disassemble its particularly fragile parts, such as the rotor blades and the pylons where the transmission gears are lodged.

The aircraft packaging operations in Italy are carried out at the Fiumicino airport, where the rotor blades of the helicopters flown in from Viterbo, are taken apart by using cranes and, lastly, the pylons are disassembled.

These components are non structured so that they can be easily taken apart. Besides, some parts of the electric and hydraulic circuits have not been designed to remain unconnected for a long time – as the entire transport operation requires- and therefore they must packaged with methods especially studied for this necessity.

Once embarked and flown to Afghanistan, the CH-47 must be re-assembled. For this reason, at the Kabul airport there is a team ready to receive them, unpack and deliver them to the Task Force that works in the O.T.. After this operation, the teams see to the packaging of the helicopters to be sent home.

The packaging procedure, and the related dispatch by air, is made also for the A-129, although, due to their reduced dimensions, the operation is less demanding from the logistic viewpoint. In fact, the A-120 can be carried also by the C-130J of the Italian Air Force.

The strategic projection of the helicopters and the relevant technical supports enable AVES to operate and maintain two helicopter lines, ensuring a high efficiency rate also in a difficult O.T. like the Afghan one, and corresponds to the Expeditionary concept required by NATO.

Andrea Lopreiato
Captain,
Italy Army Aviation Command

PIRACY : IN MISSION ABOARD THE CORVETTE “EV1 JACOBET”

Courtesy of French Coalition

Since December 8th, 2008, the European Union has led a military operation that aims to contribute to the dissuasion, the prevention and the repression of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia (area covering the South of the Red Sea, the gulf of Aden and a part of the Indian Ocean). This operation, called “Atalanta” gathers about ten participating countries among which France that permanently deploys a frigate and punctually, a maritime patrol aircraft (ATL2) based in Djibouti.

On December 31st, 2010, the corvette EV1 Jacoubet was patrolling along the Somalian coast, in a sector known to shelter numerous camps where from pirate attack groups originate.

These camps constitute reach back bases for pirates operating off-shore. Built as logistic platforms, these installations allow them to resupply with fuel, weapons and all resources needed for actions in open sea.

Patrolling along the coasts of Somalia enables the French corvette to observe the activity of pirates, dissuade them to go at the sea by showing a military presence determined to act and to intervene on the suspect boats.

In addition, intercepting local fishermen allow to better understand the normal activities of the inhabitants of the region and especially to collect precious information about pirates.

January 16th, 2011 : as it was ending its escort of MV Alpha Kiramira, a vessel WFP, the French corvette received the order to join the chemical tanker MV Motivator. The ship, with a crew of 18 Philippine sailors, had remained seven months in captivity, in the hands of Somalian pirates and had just been freed.

As soon as it reached the tanker (photo), the crew of the EV1 Jacoubet took care of the ship and its crew which was comforted by the presence of the military ship by its side. The doctor of the EV1 Jacoubet examined all the crew members. The French corvette completed its mission by supplying first need commodities to the tanker left without water or food by the pirates.



The Tennis Working Group

There are many types of opportunities for members of the Coalition to meet and exchange ideas. One of the most unusual has been the Tennis Working Group.

Over the last 4 years this group of avid tennis playing partners has changed with the comings and goings of coalition members



as their tours have ended. It has been a truly international group of countries representing almost every continent .

We have had players from *Australia, Canada, Czeck Republic , France , Georgia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Netherlands, Nepal, Kazakstan, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Tajikstan, Thailand, Pakistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.*

Twenty two countries have participated at some time on the courts sharing laughter, competition, technique and much good will. We have had two tournaments at Cheval sponsored by the *South Tampa Chamber Military Affairs Committee.*

As for the tangible results towards Coalition efforts I am sure there are many long term connections made and many contacts

that have been useful in their representing their countries interests.

For myself my non-profit work in Nepal was greatly helped by my tennis partners from that country, Lt. Col. Bharat Gurung, Lt Col. Prem Pun and Lt Col. BIneya Rana have all facilitated my work through their family and friends that has enabled me to begin working in two provinces feeding children in the schools there.

I know exercise and play are important parts of staying physically healthy, but you learn the measure of a man by how they play and that is important in developing relationships in our workng lives too.

Rob Rowen, Unofficial Senior National Representative from South Tampa and St. Peters



Coalition Members on the Tennis court at the Camden Bayside

DRAGON BOAT RACE

On Saturday 30 April 2011, the ‘Coalition Freedom Fighters’ Race Team took part in the 8th annual Tampa Bay International Dragon Boat Races along with 75 Teams at Garrison Channel at the Marriott Waterside Hotel Marina and Cotanchobee Fort Brooke Park . It was a beautiful day in Tampa, with the opening ceremonies starting at 0830 Hours. The Coalition Team took part in three races over the course of the event, winning the second and third, which led to an overall victory in their Division.

The 22-strong ‘Freedom Fighters’ Team was made up of a fantastic cross section of real team players from *Spain, Denmark, Poland, Germany, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the USA*. It was also great to see family members there too as well as a healthy mixture of civilian and military US staff.

There was a mixed level of ‘paddling’ experience in the team, but it was clear from the first race that the team spirit and sense of fun was going to lead to success. Coming only a day after the UK’s Royal Wedding, it seemed fitting for the Team’s designated ‘drummer’ – Captain Hettie Briscoe of the British Army – to call for extra paddling effort “For the Queen!”



The Team was particularly grateful to Mr Stephen Yozaites of the Coalition Coordination Center (CCC) for his excellent organization and overall leadership of the Team’s participation.

The Team’s efforts in this event very much characterized the camaraderie, team cohesion and shared sense of purpose that abounds in the Headquarters at CENTCOM.

New friendships were made taking part in this sporting event and these relationships will undoubtedly lead to improved mutual understanding and increased successes in facing the challenges ahead.



A MESSAGE OF PEACE IN A TIME OF WAR (AMMAN MESSAGE)

By: Major Riyad Alzubi

JORDAN Liaison Officer U.S. CENTCOM

Though clouds gather, we must search for silver linings. They are always present and apparent to the optimist and the wisdom-seeker, as surely as springtime buds emerging from winter's cold bareness.

In a troubled world where there exist more chances for military confrontations and reproduction of terrorism: individual; group; and state, and where there recur such justifications as extremism, and clash-of-civilizations. In these times we need a voice of peace which help us to stop fighting and killing each others.

Amman Message that was issued on 9th November 2004 should be described as "good news not only for Muslims, for whom it provides a basis for unity and a solution to infighting, but also for non-Muslims.

The message assures balanced Islamic solutions for essential issues focusing on human rights, women's rights, freedom of religion, legitimate jihad, good citizenship of Muslims in non-Muslim countries, and democratic government.

It also exposes the illegitimate opinions of radical fundamentalists and terrorists from the point of view of true Islam. The Amman Message may be the spark that helps to forge a consensus on many other pressing issues throughout the Muslim world.

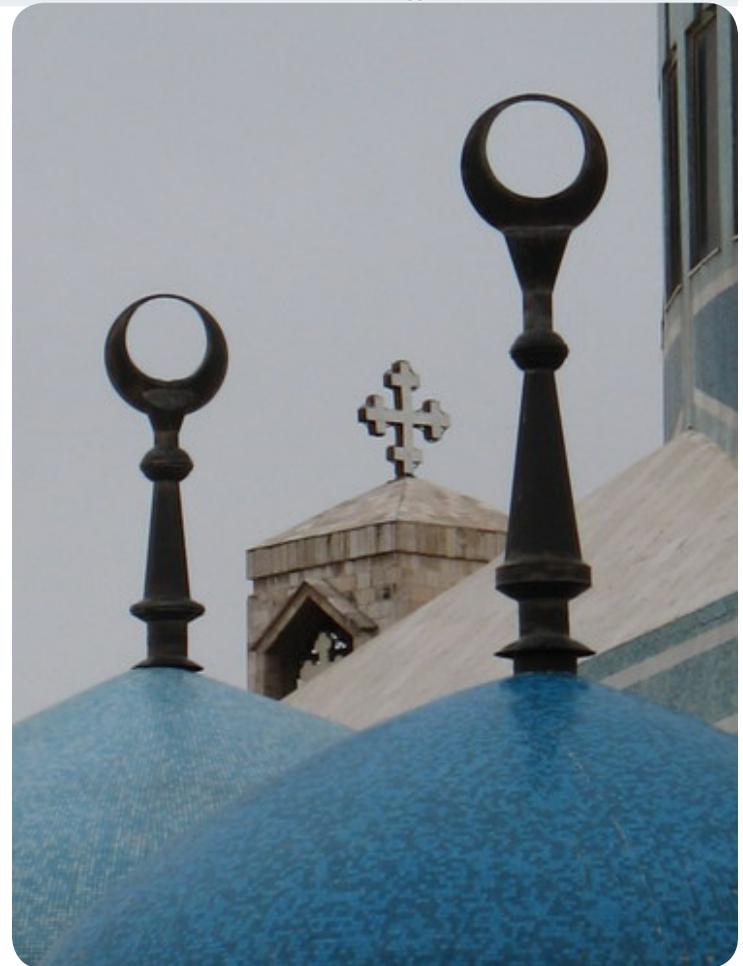
After more than six years of this declaration we still speak frankly to the Islamic nation, at this difficult juncture in its history, regarding the perils that beset it. We are aware of the challenges confronting the nation, threatening its identity, assailing its tenets (kalima), and working to distort its religion and harm what is sacred to the Islam.

Today, the magnanimous message of Islam faces a vicious attack from those who through distortion and fabrication try to portray Islam as an enemy to them. Islam is also under attack from those who claim affiliation with Islam and commit irresponsible acts in its name.

The Message reflects the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's endeavors to present the true picture of Islam, and to stop the vicious and defamatory. Jordan has the task of presenting and defending Islam out of the inherited spiritual and historical responsibility, which the Hashemites bear due to their lineage which is traced back to the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him).

Islamic principles provide common ground among different faiths and peoples. The origin of divine religions is one, and Muslims believe in all messengers of God; denying the message of any of them is a deviation from Islam.

This furnishes a wide platform upon which peoples of different



*Mosque and Church are together at the Heart of
AMMAN-Jordanian Capital*

faiths can meet together, with respect for others' ideas and faiths, and act in common in the service of human society:

"The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in God and his angels and His scriptures and his messengers - We make no distinction between any of His messengers - and they say:

We hear, and we obey. (Grant us) Thy forgiveness, our Lord. Unto thee is the journeying" (Al Baqara: 285). Islam rejects extremism, radicalism and fanaticism—just as all noble, heavenly religions reject them—considering them as recalcitrant ways and forms of injustice.



*Mosque and Church are together at the Heart of AMMAN-
Jordanian Capital*

God's call for coexistence and piety.

[We are called] to work toward renewing our civilization, based upon the guidance of religion, and following upon established practical intellectual policies.

The primary components of these policies comprise developing methods for preparing scholars, with the goal of ensuring that they realize the spirit of Islam and its methodology for structuring human life, as well as providing them with knowledge of contemporary culture, so that they are able to interact with their communities on the basis of awareness and insight: Say, 'This is my way. I, and those who follow me, call for God with insight.' (12:108).

Taking advantage of the communication revolution to refute the doubts that the enemies of Islam are arousing, in a sound, intellectual manner, without weakness or agitation, and with a style that attracts the reader, the listener and the viewer; consolidating the educational structure for individual Muslims, who are confident in their knowledge and abilities, working to form the integral identity that protects against corrupting forces; interest in scientific research and working with the modern sciences upon the basis of the Islamic perspective that distinguishes between creation, life and the human being; benefiting from modern achievements in the fields of science and technology; adopting an Islamic approach for realizing the comprehensive development that is founded upon [maintaining] the delicate balance between the spiritual, economic and social dimensions [of life], providing for human rights and basic liberties, ensuring life, dignity and security, and guaranteeing basic needs; administering the affairs of society in accordance with the principles of justice and consultation; and benefiting from the goods and mechanisms for adopting democracy that human society has presented.

Hope lies in the scholars of our Islamic nations, that through the reality of Islam and its values they will enlighten the intellects of our youth—the ornament of our present age and the promise of our future.

The scholars shield our youth from the danger of sliding down the paths of ignorance, corruption, closed-minded and subordination. It is our scholars who illuminate the paths of tolerance, moderation, and goodness, and prevent them from falling into the abysses of extremism and fanaticism that destroys the spirit and body.

We look to our scholars to lead us in partaking of our role and verifying our priorities, that they maybe exemplars in religion, character, conduct, and discerning enlightened speech, presenting to the nation their noble religion that brings ease [in all matters] and its practical laws in which lie the awakening and joy of the nation.

Among the individuals of the nation and throughout the regions of the world, they disseminate good, peace and benevolence, through subtle knowledge, and insightful wisdom .

Furthermore, it is not a trait that characterizes a particular nation; it is a deviation that has been experienced by all nations, races, and religions. They are not particular to one people; truly they are a phenomenon that every people, every race and every religion has known. We denounce and condemn extremism, radicalism and fanaticism today, just as our forefathers tirelessly denounced and opposed them throughout Islamic history.

They are the ones who affirmed, as do we, the firm and unshakeable understanding that Islam is a religion of noble character traits in both its ends and means; a religion that strives for the good of the people, their happiness in this life and the next; and a religion that can only be defended in ways that are ethical; and the ends do not justify the means in this religion.

At the same time, we decry the campaign of brazen distortion that portrays Islam as a religion that encourages violence and institutionalizes terrorism.

We call upon the international community to work earnestly to implement inter-national laws and honor the international mandates and resolutions issued by the United Nations, ensuring that all parties accept them and that they be enacted without double standards, to guarantee the return of rights to their rightful holders and the end of oppression.

Achieving this will be a significant contribution to uprooting the causes of violence, fanaticism and extremism. The way of this great religion that we are honored to belong to calls us to affiliate with and participate in modern society, and to contribute to its elevation and progress, helping one another with every faculty [to achieve] good and to comprehend, desiring justice for all peoples, while faithfully proclaiming the truth [of our religion], and sincerely expressing the soundness of our faith and beliefs—all of which are founded upon

BULGARIAN FORCES CHANGE COMMAND IN KABUL

COL. GERDZHIKOV, ATANAS SNR AND NCC 20TH BULCON

CAMP PHOENIX, Afghanistan. A change of command ceremony was held for the incoming 20th Bulgarian contingent of Bulgarian Armed Forces Feb. 15 at Camp Phoenix as they transferred authority with the 19th Bulgarian contingent in Kabul, Afghanistan. More than 200 Soldiers from a Ground Defense Area Company assumed the role of providing security and force protection for several different bases throughout the Kabul Base Cluster (KBC) in the capital city. "Our days here were full of a number of challenges and much of them have made us a du-

orable contingent and gave us a change to be a part of the contribution to security and the stability of the Afghan people," said Col. Tsekovski, outgoing 19th Bulgarian contingent commander. "Our mission here gives us a chance to be a part of building good relationships and good cooperation with our multinational partners. Soldiers of the 20th contingent will fulfill their task with the same responsibility and professionalism and we wish you good health and success while performing your task."

"Today, it is time to express my gratitude to everybody from the





19th contingent and their outstanding job done during their six month mission here," added incoming 20th Bulgarian contingent commander, **Col. Gerdzhikov**. *"I would like to assure all of you that I and all my Soldiers will do our best to continue our good cooperation and friendship with all partners and continue to work for Afghanistan to come a better place to live."* Bulgaria continues to be a leading NATO force contributor to the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan providing more than 600 troops to support the war. "To the 209 members of the 19th Bulgarian contingent, I'd like to thank each of you for your great service and contributions to the multinational forces efforts here in Afghanistan. I am proud to have you as a coalition partner here on Camp Phoenix," said Brig. Gen. Theodore Johnson, KBC commander. *"We truly are one team."*

Bulgarian Military Medics Help Deliver Afghan Baby

The medical team from the Military Medical Academy (MMA) working in the local military hospital of the Afghan National Army (ANA) in Kandahar, delivered their first Afghan baby at the weekend. The father is an officer of the local army. The baby boy, who weighed 2.750 kg and was 48 cm long, was named Atal. The delivery team was headed by Maj. Dr. Milena Stoyanova, obstetrician, and the midwife Nadezhda Novoselska.

The MMA medical specialists team, led by Capt. Dr. Dimiter Cholakov, left for Kandahar in December. The team comprises a military surgeon, an anaesthesiologist intensivist, obstetrician, dentist and three nurses.

This is the first MMA team to be sent to the local hospital in Kandahar, which will train Afghan military doctors and will treat mostly Afghan military personnel and members of their families.

