



CIOR President addresses Romanian reserve issues

Leading a team of 15 young and dynamic Canadian reserve officers, Captain (Navy) Carman McNary as President of the *Confédération Interalliée des Officiers de Réserve* (CIOR) or Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers, is responsible for leading the Canadian Presidency team (2006-2008) providing ongoing development and delivery of the CIOR's programs, products and work.

The CIOR's mid-winter meeting in Brussels in February provided Romanian Officers Association Brigadier General B.C. Savoiu (Retired) an opportunity to discuss reserve issues with the President.

BGen Savoiu: Captain McNary, could you explain the role of the CIOR and give me a sense of how the organization fits into the NATO military community?

Capt (N) McNary: The CIOR represent more than 1.3 million reserve officers from 34 participating NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) nations. Its primary role is to provide advice on reserve policy, training and operational issues to the chair of NATO's Military Committee, working together with the National Reserve Forces Committee which also works within the Military Committee structure. It also provides a forum for reserve officers from NATO, PfP and associate nations to exchange ideas, best practices and lessons learned.

To achieve this, the CIOR offers a range of unique opportunities – seminars, workshops and symposia for officers at all levels from junior to flag rank – enhancing officer professional development. These include a highly competitive military skills competition that tests the physical and mental limits of reserve officers, and a very successful Language Academy that delivers English and French second language training in a military context. I should note that Romania played an important leadership role in July 2006 by hosting the Language Academy at the Mountain Warfare Centre in Predeal.

Since the end of the Cold War, the CIOR has also promoted NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Initiative, Mediterranean Dialogue, and other opportunities for outreach. Following the leadership of former Secretary General Manfred Wörner, the CIOR began developing relations with Central and Eastern European nations looking to join NATO. In doing so, the CIOR hosts conferences and fosters contact amongst NATO and PfP reserve associations and ministries of defence (MOD), with a view to encouraging the formation of reserve associations and reserve forces. We are currently building on the successes achieved in this area by expanding the nations we are in contact with in a broad, but targeted way.

BGen Savoiu: On January 1, the Romanian Army became professional, meaning that many reserve officers, between 30 to 60 years of age, can no longer attend some training activities. In 2004, the Romanian Association of Reserve Officers was established to develop professional opportunities. Given your experience with various NATO reserve models, what role do you see as Romania's role?

Capt (N) McNary: Although I can't comment on specific national issues, I can tell you that many CIOR nations struggle with the structure and organization of their reserve forces. I believe that the

overall value of reserve forces is better understood now than perhaps has always been the case – in terms of reduced costs of maintaining available trained and experienced personnel, in terms of the interface between the military and civilian populations, and in terms of the civilian skills that reservists bring to their military duties, often at significant savings in direct costs as well. The old adage of “twice the citizen” has never been more true than it is today.

However, what many in at least some MOD’s do not realize is that in many ways, a reserve force is more difficult to structure and manage than a regular force. Most reservists work part time and therefore, a different approach is often required. With the proper organizational structure, funding, policy and employer support, however, these challenges can be addressed. The CIOR’s role, in part, is to help share what those proper structures and policies are – to share best practices and the lessons being learned in our member countries.

The challenges that you identify are certainly not unique to Romania. Many NATO members, including my country, continue to struggle with mobilizing reserve forces, both domestically and internationally, and most reservists rely heavily on their reserve associations to inform both their MOD and the private sector of the benefits and challenges of employing citizen soldiers.

BGen Savoiu: The Romanian government is preparing two laws concerning national security and defence. Do you think that these laws should specify the important role that an association of reserve officers plays in a professional army and the importance of mobilizing reserve officers for the new role that Romania has assumed with its membership in NATO?

Capt (N) McNary: This is a really a national issue and I therefore, I can only speak in terms of the experiences and challenges that face NATO reserve forces generally, at least beyond my previous comments regarding what I personally believe to be the value-added that nations gain from a properly structured reserve force. All NATO members who intend to have and to deploy reserve forces must have effective reserve mobilization policy or legislation. Without this, the deployment of reservists both nationally and internationally is difficult and the value of reserve forces is compromised.

In spending money and resources to recruit, train, and support reservists, countries expect their reserve forces to support deployments internationally and domestic operations such as disaster relief efforts within their own borders. Many NATO nations, including Canada, have struggled for many years to provide a balance allowing support for reservists to train and deploy in their military occupations, while also ensuring that employer support is provided through government policy and legislation.

Many employers recognize the benefits and importance of employing reservists, which is why the CIOR has established the theme of employer support for its 2008 summer congress and symposium in Istanbul. This event will provide an opportunity to discuss our experiences at the national level and freely exchange ideas. But it is very important for me to emphasize, that as each member country has different policies or legislation regarding employer support, solutions are usually nation specific.

BGen Savoiu: Capt (N) McNary, thank you for taking the time to speak with me about reserve issues. Romanian reservists face many of the same challenges as those of our NATO counterparts and we are working hard to ensure support for reservists who commit their time and expertise as citizen soldiers.