



Photograph by Darrin Zammit Lupi

THE AIR COMPONENT

The Air Squadron forms part of 2 Regiment and is based at Malta International Airport. It has a total complement of around 90 personnel. Aircraft maintenance and repair is handled at the base itself by the squadron's technicians and engineers.

The squadron has two BN-2B Islander twin-engined fixed wing aircraft (above) for medium range patrol, five Bulldog single-engined aircraft and a flight of helicopters consisting of five sa316B Alouette 3s (top right), two AB 47 G2s and two Nardi Hughes 500s, the last being in care and preservation.



Photograph by I.M. Consiglio



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Photograph by Fincantieri Spa

THE MARITIME COMPONENT

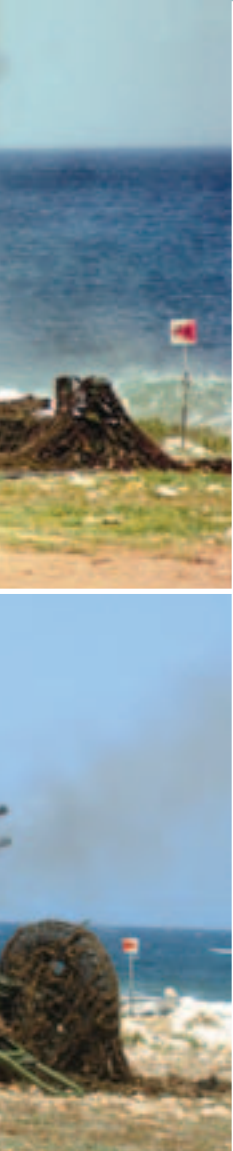
The AFM's Maritime Squadron, which forms part of 2 Regiment is based at Hay Wharf, Pietà, and is composed of some 220 personnel, including the Rapid Deployment Team.

The squadron operates a brand new 'Diciotti' Class offshore patrol boat (above), two new 'Protector' Class patrol boats, four inshore patrol boats of the 'Swift' and 'Bremse' classes as well as two 'Vittoria' Class rescue launches (top right). The Diciotti class vessel, at 54 metres, is the largest boat ever operated by the squadron. It was adapted by Fincantieri for the AFM's requirements and includes a helicopter deck.

The squadron's facilities include a repair yard with ancillary logistical branches.

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Any soldier in any country of the world whether operating on land, at sea or in the air requires the right tools. The Armed Forces of Malta are no exception.



Photograph by Chris Sant Fournier

AFM's equipment

CAPT. STEFAN CAMILLERI

THE LAND COMPONENT

On land, 1 Regiment is the designated home of the Maltese Infantry with C (Special Duties) Company being at the cutting edge of this unit. The kit used by the Maltese foot soldier has changed drastically in recent years. The fiat for change was given to C Company prior to its successful participation in the multi-national Partnership for Peace exercise in 1996. Following Malta's pledge towards the EU's Military Headline Goal in 2000, procurement received another boost.

The Maltese Infantry soldier is equipped with the latest British Army issue Personal Load Bearing Equipment including both the webbing and bergen as well as the woodland pattern battle dress uniform, Avon S10 respirator and Kevlar ballistic helmet. Protective ballistic vests and night vision goggles are carried when required.

Infantry soldiers have a number of weapons at their disposal including the Kalashnikov AK-47 and AKM rifles, the Heckler and Koch MP 5 sub-machine guns, the Beretta 92 FS pistols, the PKM machine gun, as well as the General Purpose Machine Gun L7A1. Sniper teams are equipped with the Accuracy International sniper

rifle while the anti-tank troops embedded within the infantry platoons carry the RPG-7 rocket launcher.

Eight-man sections are deployed either on Landrovers or Iveco VM-90 trucks. The AFM also operates a number of Bedford trucks which, despite their age, still give excellent service. Suffice to say that these trucks were driven in convoys all the way to Kosovo and back three times in 2001 and not one of them broke down!

The Explosives Ordnance Disposal Unit is equipped with two remote controlled Explosive Ordnance Disposal Vehicles – robots used to disable a bomb from a safe distance. The first was bought in 1989 and a second, much more sophisticated one, was bought last year.

The Air Defence Battery forms part of 2nd Regiment and operates Bofors 40L/70 anti-aircraft guns (top centre) and four barrelled ZSU-4 heavy machine guns (middle centre). The Bofors guns can be operated either manually or electrically and they can be laid on their targets either visually or through radar. The 14.5mm machine guns can only be operated manually but they provide a high rate of fire. ●