

Message from the Prime Minister, Dr Lawrence Gonzi



It is a privilege, and indeed a pleasure, to have the opportunity to register recognition of the important roles performed by the Armed Forces of Malta and the professional manner in which they have carried out their extremely wide spectrum of duties over the past 35 years, in the service of the government and people of Malta.

I feel that one must recall and pay tribute to the statesmanship and foresight of the then Prime Minister of Malta, Dr Gorg Borg Olivier, who strove so hard in the late 1960s, to ensure that the newly-fledged nation would have a small but effective Regular Force. It is of note that, except for a short two year period, the Armed Forces have been retained within the Prime Minister's portfolio since establishment.

The Armed Forces of Malta successfully progressed through many transitions during the last 35 years which proved beyond doubt the renowned versatility of the Maltese soldier. The military expertise,

ethos and traditions, garnered over the previous 170 years as a Maltese Corps in the British Army, proved an invaluable inheritance.

The future beckons; the AFM's record of past services bodes well in the face of the many challenges of the future. As a typical example, the Government of Malta has yet again called on the resources of the Force to carry the additional role of administering the heavy influx of third country nationals arriving irregularly by sea, an essential and delicate task for an armed force. However, I am confident that the task will be carried out efficiently and in the best traditions of the Force.

I would like to also take the opportunity to personally thank every member of the Force for his or her continued commitment to service to the country. A special word of thanks is reserved for all service families who help to provide the vital practical and moral support without which no venture can be successful.



Message from Parliamentary Secretary, Dr Tony Abela

During the past 18 months or so as Parliamentary Secretary in charge of defence matters within the Office of the Prime Minister, I have become aware of the sterling work carried out by the Armed Forces of Malta in the many spheres of their operation.

I have had the honour of inspecting and visiting the different places of work and operations used by the Forces and have had the opportunity to work closely with the Defence Directorate at OPM, with Brigadier Carmel Vassallo, who heads the Armed Forces as well as his immediate staff. No opportunity has been lost to personally meet with the members of the Armed Forces whom I consider to be one big family.

I have realised that the members of our Armed Forces do feel a sense of continual commitment to their post and setup.

Though our forces consist of a combined land, air and sea force, they are well prepared to meet all eventualities and the 1,600 or so personnel not only live up to expectations but also meet all challenges with vigour and efficiency. Our commitments in defence are both in the local camp, as well as in the international sphere.

The government is committed to the continued development of our forces and it is in the light of this commitment that it has just issued a call for Officer Cadets, as well as new Gunner recruits.

Having a small but elite force is no easy task but the combined efforts of all those involved have gone a long way in attaining this standard.

This magazine endeavours to show what the Forces do and what is required of them. I am satisfied that, within our limitations, the Armed Forces of Malta have done well in the past and continue to perform well today. This performance augurs very well for the future.



Message from the Commander, Brigadier Carmel Vassallo

When the idea of issuing a magazine to mark the AFM's 35th anniversary came up, it instantly struck me that as a member of this institution, I have already celebrated 32 such anniversaries. Over the years, our small armed force has gone through a number of mutations which were dictated by the needs of the country and which demonstrated the capacity of the Force to adapt according to national requirements.

Versatility is, to my mind, a major attribute of our country's modest military instrument, and recent developments bear ample proof of my statement. We have been working very hard to improve the Force's capabilities on land and at sea. The manning and specialisation of our light infantry and combat support elements, the plans currently in hand for the Operations Centre and the commissioning of new patrol boats, including an offshore patrol vessel, are clear examples of the huge efforts being undertaken in this direction, efforts which have been financially supported by Italy and the USA. Meanwhile, we have been striving to grapple with the influx of irregular migration, a problem which had never been experienced before on such a large and constant scale and which is proving to be an enormous burden on the AFM in many ways.

As I look back, it gives me satisfaction to affirm that the AFM has always been on the go with one sole objective in mind, that of securing and protecting the country's security interests in the best possible way.

I would like to pay tribute to all previous commanders who, through fair and foul, steered the Force steadfastly. My thoughts also go to all those members of the AFM who served faithfully and those who are still serving, and particularly those who paid the ultimate sacrifice while performing their duties to the nation.

I augur that in the years ahead, the Armed Forces of Malta will continue to evolve and its members continue to specialise according to the country's requirements in order that they may always render an efficient and effective service to the Maltese nation.