

A time to look back ... and forward!

by Emmanuel Jacob - 12/7/2007

In general the end of the year is a moment to look back on the past twelve months and make an evaluation of the things that we did or didn't do, the things that were a success or not and above all which new objectives we have to set ourselves for the coming year.

With some pride I believe that we can say that for EUROMIL 2007 was a positive and even a successful year. During the past twelve months EUROMIL had several important meetings on the highest international level with as well political as military leaders to make them aware of the situation of the European soldiers. Amongst others we should mention the talks that we had with the Chairman of the EUMC, the Director General of the EUMS, the Minister of Defence of Portugal, the Secretary of State of Defence Policy of Romania and last but not least with the Secretary General of NATO followed by a presentation before the Euro Atlantic Partnership Council on ambassadors level. Besides these important meetings EUROMIL had also on a regular basis contacts with MP's, MEP's and military leaders all over Europe to promote the social interest of soldiers.

Beside these contacts we may not forget the collaboration with the Council of Europe in the meetings of the 'Group on Human Rights of Members of the Armed Forces'. This working group, that has been set up by the Steering Group for Human Rights, is drafting a ministerial recommendation on the issue of 'Human Rights of Members of the Armed Forces' following the Parliamentary Assembly's recommendation 1742/2006. EUROMIL is convinced that such a recommendation is extremely important for the European soldiers and therefore puts a lot of efforts in the preparation and the discussion of these proposals.

2007 was a successful year and to use the words of NATO's Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer,: 'EUROMIL has been put on the map'. Unfortunately this success has not been reflected on all levels and in all countries where our member associations are active. It is a shame that our colleagues in Portugal and Spain are still dealing with major problems. It is unacceptable that they even have to deal with the consequences of a lacking implementation of fundamental rights and freedoms on their military career.

But it is not only Spain and Portugal that are in our list of examples that could do better. Also France, Italy, Greece and the UK have still important steps to take before their soldiers enjoy the same fundamental rights than any other citizen. EUROMIL and its 36 member associations from 24 European countries will not rest as long as there is still one European soldier that cannot enjoy his or her fundamental rights and freedoms. Governments and military leaders have to understand that the only thing that they can't stop with laws and regulations is the solidarity between soldiers! When they try to shut somebody's voice they will have to understand that many others will start to speak and cry for freedom. United we stand!

President