



**21<sup>st</sup> THEATER SUSTAINMENT COMMAND  
RELIGIOUS SUPPORT TEAM**



**AFTER ACTION REVIEW: Participation in International Military Apostolate (AMI) Conference, 09-14 SEP 12**

**ATTENDEES IN THE AAR: None (only written comments)**

**WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN:** EUCOM was to send a representative to participate in AMI's annual conference, held this year vicinity Antwerp, Belgium.

**WHAT HAPPENED:** As EUCOM had no priest chaplain to send, I was elected to represent EUCOM at the event after coordination between CH (COL) Beauchamp and CH (LTC) Gauthier.

- While EUCOM Chaplain Staff remained available to help me, direct coordination with AMI was authorized. The General Secretary, Ms. Nelleke Swinkels, was instrumental in all coordinations.
- Due to a funding issue, 21TSC was asked and was able to pay the TDY. Transportation to and from training site was by SATO arranged train; AMI picked me up at the train station and provided all other transportation for the week.
- AMI is an organization that energizes the Catholic lay apostolate in numerous countries to be leaven in the militaries that they serve. There is much chaplain (Catholic clergy) participation, but the organization is lay led, and by very high-ranking members of militaries, i.e. generals, sergeants major, and SES level people. AMI's vision statement is: "The Christian soldier in the service of just peace: to live authentically according to the Word of God and to spread the gospel." The theme of this year's conference was, "Commemoration: Powerful past, powerful present, challenging future."
- AMI currently has 17 countries that send delegates to different AMI events. This year 49 participants attended from 12 countries: Austria, Belgium, Gambia, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Kenya, Netherlands, Nigeria, Philippines, Slovakia, and the United

States. The senior representative from the United States was Deputy Chief of Chaplains CH (BG) Pat Dolan, ARNG.

**SUSTAIN:**

- Coordination for the conference was easy and smooth, partly because of this year's conference being in Belgium. (By way of comparison, last year's conference was in Manila.)
- The conference itself was extremely well organized and professional. The presentations on the conference's theme were very high quality and pertinent to the announced topic.
- CH (BG) Dolan was tasked to facilitate a summary statement from the English language working group at the end of ten lectures. I assisted him with the final product.
- The schedule allowed sufficient time and meals and breaks to meet chaplains et al of various nations.
- The week's activities also included excellent opportunities for professional development and cultural awareness:
  - Sunday Mass at Antwerp's Cathedral, celebrated by the Military Bishop of Belgium
  - Mass and a meeting at Belgium's federal Military Academy.
  - A meeting with Antwerp's mayor and familiarization with Belgium's parliament building
  - Mass at the historic church Carolus Boromeus with the Archbishop of Antwerp

**IMPROVE:**

- Internal coordinations: CH (BG) Dolan and I were unaware of each other's attendance until two days before the conference. We found out only after I asked a question to clarify about which uniforms would be needed and AMI linked the two of us by e-mail.
- Strategic Communications (STRATCOM): No one suggested to me before going nor did I think to ask until I had arrived at the conference if there were any STRATCOM themes that I should have kept in mind. Considering the high rank of many participants, awareness of STRATCOM would have been appropriate. CH (BG) Dolan's participation certainly mitigated my own lack of situational awareness in this area.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Continue participation.

- AMI is interested in the United States' participation in their program. It allows AMI to further fulfill its role and be an instrument of coordinated efforts for the benefits which a vibrant Christianity brings to any nation.
- Our interests in participating are several:
  - It is an important opportunity for us to learn about and assist other countries in their development. For example:
    - The Gambia's chaplaincy is now only two years old.
    - Hungary's chaplaincy was only re-established in 1994 after shaking loose from communist control.
  - For any chaplains participating, it is an unparalleled opportunity for professional development by exposure to and interaction with other nations' chaplaincies.
  - It becomes another channel for us to share important STRATCOM.
- The lingering question now being addressed by CH (BG) Dolan is which, if any, Catholic lay group in the military could serve as an ongoing agency to regularly coordinate with and participate in AMI's mission. The Military Council of Catholic Women (MCCW) seems to be the best choice since it is officially recognized by the Army Chaplaincy and the United States' Archdiocese for the Military Services (AMS). The Knights of Columbus (KofC) is another possibility, but it does not have the same official standing in the Army's eyes as does MCCW.

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