PRESS RELEASE

Issued on behalf of FUGRO N.V. and the authors of
'Odysseus Unbound: The Search for Homer's Ithaca'

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FUGRO teams up with Odysseus Unbound project and Greece's IGME in the search for Homer's Ithaca

- **Global geoscientific leader brings industry-scale resources to the quest**
- **Airborne, land and marine techniques to diagnose suspected hidden channel**
- **Latest geophysical and survey techniques to tackle earliest classical conundrum**
- **Greece's national geological institute IGME to be a key project partner**
- **Ionian Islands to benefit from research into groundwater and earthquakes**
- **Edinburgh PhD candidate to be sponsored jointly with Britain's NERC**
- **Unique collaboration between industry, academia and government**

London, The Hague and Athens, March 21 2007. A major research partnership was announced today between FUGRO (provider of geotechnical, survey and geoscience services), the authors of *Odysseus Unbound: The Search for Homer's Ithaca* (Robert Bittlestone, Professor James Diggle and Professor John Underhill) and IGME (Greece's geological institute).

The location of the island of Ithaca that is described in Homer's *Odyssey* has been an enigma for nearly 3,000 years, but the radical new solution proposed by the authors in late 2005 is looking increasingly plausible as preliminary scientific findings appear to support the hypothesis. FUGRO's sponsorship will now bring industry-scale geophysical techniques to the project, enabling the team to conduct a 'full body scan' of the 6-kilometre long isthmus on the Greek island of Kefallinia that is believed to contain a buried ancient marine connection.

FUGRO (*www.fugro.com*) is a world leader in the offshore, onshore and airborne collection and interpretation of data about the earth's surface and the soil and rocks beneath. The company provides advice primarily to the oil and gas, mining and construction industries. Headquartered in the Netherlands outside The Hague, FUGRO employs about 10,000 staff in over 50 countries. Annual results for 2006 announced on March 9 2007 showed net profit after tax of €141 million on sales revenues that grew by 23.6% to €1,434 million. FUGRO is listed on the Euronext exchange in Amsterdam and included in the Amsterdam Midkap-Index.

ODYSSEUS UNBOUND (*www.odysseus-unbound.org*) is a project launched by Metapraxis chairman Robert Bittlestone, Cambridge classics Professor James Diggle and Edinburgh geology Professor John Underhill in 2005. Its aim is to test the proposition that the island of Ithaca described as the homeland of Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey* is a real place, but that it is not located as previously thought on the island now called Ithaki. Instead the authors propose that Homer's Ithaca was the westernmost peninsula of the island of Kefallinia (Paliki). They believe that Paliki was formerly separated from the rest of Kefallinia by a narrow marine connection ("Strabo's Channel") that has now been infilled and turned into a land-locked isthmus by catastrophic rockfall and landslides triggered by earthquakes.

IGME (*www.igme.gr*) is the Athens-based Greek Geological Institute founded in 1976, and by legislation it is the Greek State's technical adviser in geoscientific matters. Its fundamental aim is the geological study of the country and the exploration and evaluation of mineral raw materials (except hydrocarbons) and groundwater resources. Professor John Underhill has been working closely with IGME and with the authority of their geological research permits since he completed his own PhD on the Ionian Islands tectonic area in 1985. Geology and geophysics undergraduate students from Edinburgh University conduct research on the island of Kefallinia each year and experts from IGME have also performed joint marine surveys with Professor Underhill and his team.

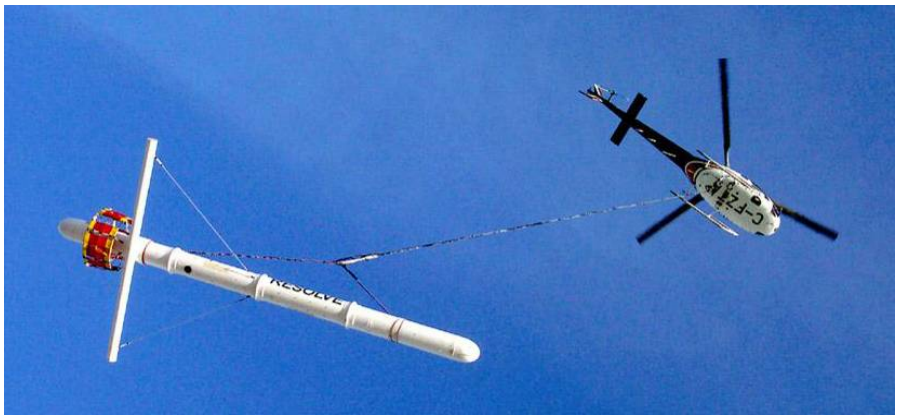

Figure 1: FUGRO's helicopter-based electromagnetic survey
This technology penetrates the terrain below and identifies the geological strata

For this special project FUGRO intends to map the subsurface of the target area and in collaboration with the partners, to reconstruct how it may have looked 3,000 years ago. The main objective of the geophysical tests will be to obtain an **accurate 3-dimensional image of the subsurface**, and this in turn will necessitate an understanding of the processes that shaped the landscape prior to that period. The company anticipates using a variety of techniques including drilling and drill-hole diagnostics in order to determine the physical characteristics of the soil, rock and sediment. Precise measurements of the existing topography can be acquired using the latest mapping technology. Geophysical and survey techniques which are normally carried out from the air, land or water for oil or mineral exploration will be used to investigate the structure and composition of the sub-surface. Detailed stratigraphic, tectonic, sea level and fossil expertise will then be brought to bear on the collected data to build a model of the regional topography and how it has changed over time.

Figure 2: Drilling a 122 metre (400 foot) test borehole in October 2006
No solid limestone bedrock was encountered between the surface and sea level

An important benefit of the research partnership is FUGRO's willingness to sponsor a **full-time geology PhD student** on the project, a position which has now been awarded to a candidate, Ms. Kirsten Hunter, at the University of Edinburgh under the NERC CASE scheme (the Natural Environment Research Council's Co-operative Awards in Science & Engineering, http://www.nerc.ac.uk/using/schemes/case.asp). The sponsorship will enable a continuing programme of research to be supported instead of the periodic site visits and tests which have hitherto taken place.

As well as research into the expected route of Strabo's Channel, the project team will benefit from FUGRO's expertise in **groundwater assessment**. It is well established that Bronze Age habitation depended critically on the availability of fresh water supplies and so an important part of the project will be to establish the location of both the current and ancient water courses on the isthmus and peninsula. It is hoped that this work may also be of practical benefit to the islanders of Kefallinia and their own need for reliable local fresh water supplies.

Earthquakes are believed to have triggered the infilling of Strabo's Channel and also the uplifting of the whole island, so a critical part of the research will be to establish the historic 'dates and rates' of such events. This work offers the possibility of improving our current level of understanding of the regularity, intensity and impact of earthquakes in the Ionian Islands over the last few thousand years. The results of this research will be communicated to the Greek authorities at local, regional and national level to enable them to take this into account as a part of their existing natural hazards awareness and damage limitation initiatives.

Archaeological research is not at present anticipated until the existence of Strabo's Channel has been scientifically established or disproved. However both FUGRO and the Odysseus Unbound team look forward to the opportunity of the project focus moving into this important area in future years in conjunction with the Greek authorities if the results of the geological tests are supportive.

Speaking on behalf of the Odysseus Unbound team, Professor John Underhill said:

> *"I warmly welcome FUGRO's involvement. It is wonderful news that such a world-renowned geophysical company has responded so positively to the geoscientific challenge established by our research results to date and has now committed itself to the project. FUGRO's multidisciplinary approach will form an integral part of our future studies in an unique international partnership of business, academia and government agencies. Their state-of-the-art technologies and in-house expertise will enable us to perform the most thorough and rigorous test of the "Strabo's Channel" proposal. Whatever the eventual outcome, our new collaboration with FUGRO and the continuing close support of Greece's IGME geological institute are expected to provide significant geoscientific results and important new insights into the evolution of this remarkable landscape over the past 10,000 years."*

FUGRO Chief Executive Klaas Wester said:

> *"The technical challenge presented by the project calls for a broad range of investigative solutions. This is an opportunity for FUGRO to showcase many of the specialised geophysical, geotechnical and survey services that we offer, while at the same time benefiting the local community and supporting research into our areas of expertise. We are very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute our capabilities to this extraordinary project."*

IGME President Professor Charalambos Tsoutrelis said:

> *"The Institute of Geology and Mineral Exploration has facilitated Professor John Underhill's researches in the Ionian Islands since 1982. Our recent work with him in investigating and elucidating the Holocene geomorphology of western Kefallinia has considerably contributed to the knowledge of this region.*

We are pleased to hear that FUGRO, an internationally known geoscience company, will now join the project. Its resources and experience in the latest scientific techniques for analysing the landscape are welcomed in order to accelerate the pace of work of this project. IGME will support the field and laboratory work of Professor Underhill and FUGRO in order to widen our knowledge of the geology of this region. This will assist in a better understanding of ground earthquake behaviour and water supplies for the potential benefit of the Kefallinian islanders."

***** ENDS *****

Notes to editors

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the oldest texts in Western literature. They describe the Trojan War and the return of Odysseus (the hero of Troy who devised the trick of the wooden horse) from the battle to his palace on Ithaca, an island somewhere to the west of Greece. The stories had a massive influence on philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Socrates and they shaped the intellectual and cultural development of Greece throughout the classical era. This in turn has been the cornerstone of western culture, and for that reason Homer is regarded as the earliest and foremost architect of western civilisation.

Despite Homer's immense influence, for centuries it was thought that the *Iliad* was a work of fiction and that Troy as Homer described it had never existed. Then in the 1870s Heinrich Schliemann conducted excavations in north-western Turkey which led to the discovery of the city and buried beneath it, the gold of Troy. However, the site of the island of Ithaca in the *Odyssey* has been an enigma for over 2,500 years.

Odysseus Unbound project

Odysseus Unbound: The Search for Homer's Ithaca
Publication date: October 6 2005. 618 pages, 340 colour illustrations
Authors: Robert Bittlestone, with James Diggle and John Underhill
Cambridge University Press ISBN: 0521853575

Information about the book and the research is available at the project website:
http://www.odysseus-unbound.org

A recent Channel 4 news film about the authors' January 2007 announcement is available at:
http://www.odysseus-unbound.org/news.html

Further photographs and print-quality graphics

The project website provides a passworded Press Resources area containing high-resolution versions of the photographs in this document as well as author photographs and other press resources. Accredited journalists are invited to contact Anne Stephenson for access details.

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