



inspiring voices

# *A Farewell to JWC and Norway*

by Brigadier General Roger H. Watkins

**A**S I REFLECT OVER the past two years here at the Joint Warfare Centre, I am struck by three significant perspectives: the extraordinary quality of personnel and output in this headquarters, the resiliency of such a diverse collection of military and civilian professionals, and how fortunate we are to be located in Norway. I'll explain in slightly more detail what I mean.

When I arrived at the headquarters in early July 2014, JWC was in the midst of one of the largest turnovers experienced to date, some 41 per cent of the staff had either changed or would change over the course of the summer, including the Chief Joint Exercise Division, the Director of Management, myself, and somewhat unexpectedly, the Commander. Furthermore, a decision had been taken to develop an implementation plan for the restructuring, or optimization of the headquarters' organization. Finally, the Programme of Work for the

2014-2015 "exercise year" (September through June) was scheduled to be the busiest in the history of JWC. Despite all of these seemingly enormous challenges, JWC delivered five major exercises, including hosting two different Training Audiences here in Stavanger in back-to-back fashion, with over 800 personnel during each rotation. The results were superb, and the feedback received indicated that the JWC was truly having a positive effect on the preparation of the NATO Response Force (NRF) readiness and certification process.

Simultaneously, a small team worked under tremendous time and resource constraints to develop the implementation plan for the new trial optimized headquarters structure. Included in this massive effort was a full two-day "war-game" of the JWC's trial organization against the 2016 Programme of Work to ensure the new structure could cope appropriately. Additionally, after receiving approval from the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), approval was sought

and received from the NATO Defence Manpower Committee to conduct the trial.

All the while the JWC was developing and planning what would become NATO's largest exercise since the Cold War, TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2015. The ability to accomplish all of this in just one calendar year was absolutely remarkable and I still look back in amazement at how this tremendous team came together to accomplish everything in such quality fashion!

Anytime an organization is made of a diverse group of individuals, the potential exists for tension, if not conflict, to manifest itself. The JWC currently encompasses personnel from 15 NATO Member Nations as well as one Partnership for Peace (PfP) Nation. Our staff has military personnel, NATO civilians and contractors—all who come together to deliver the extraordinary work I described above. How has this been accomplished?

I firmly believe that JWC's "One Team" culture has as much to do with our success as any other single factor. I still recall during





one of my immersion briefings when the lead of our organizational development planning team reminded us the famous quotation and said: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

The four core professional values that are the foundation of our "One Team" culture have indeed served JWC well. These values require people who are innovative and have a collaborative spirit that value the contributions of every single person, people who support fellow colleagues whenever and wherever they can, and people who respect and embrace our differences and people who hold themselves accountable and unselfishly serve during peacetime so that others may succeed in conflict. For these reasons I see an incredibly

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**Above (from left):** Brigadier General Watkins at the JWC's main entrance; Royal Norwegian Navy Captain Tor-Fredrik Johannessen, the Commanding Officer of HNoMS Harald Haarfagre and Brigadier General Watkins, signing the new Local Arrangement between HNoMS Harald Haarfagre and the JWC, 8 December 2015; during a promotion ceremony for a U.S. staff member and with his wife Leslie at the JWC 2015 Ball. Brigadier General Watkins with Major General Reinhard Wolski, JWC's senior officers and organizational culture facilitators. PHOTOS: JWC PAO

resilient and focused team here at the JWC that make the Commander and all of NATO extremely proud. In my view, JWC must continue to grow and nurture this important endeavour to ensure great success well into the future.

As I gaze out of the windows from the fifth floor here in the Command Group, I'm literally awestruck at the amazing beauty and majesty that Norway has to offer. The facility in which we are so fortunate to work every day is simply an amazing architectural and engineering marvel. It offers incredible workspace efficiency, modern communications and information systems, capacity to host Training Audience headquarters as well as our own Exercise Control team, and is capable of feeding over 1,200 personnel three meals per day.

Our very accommodating Host Nation also furnishes well trained and extremely motivated security forces and fire rescue professionals, as well as pleasant and efficient cleaning and maintenance staff. Combine this with all the real-life support in the form of lodging and transportation during exercise delivery and JWC-hosted conferences, it just makes for an incredibly motivating place to come to

work. I'm also extremely impressed that Norway has provided a flag officer, Voluntary National Contribution as a Special Advisor to the Commander. This extremely generous action allows the Commander JWC to accomplish many more activities and events and generates much goodwill towards NATO and the Centre.

Finally, just the sheer amount of incredible recreational activities, natural beauty to view and appreciate, and delicious local Norwegian cuisine make for an extremely rewarding and pleasurable place to spend an assignment abroad. Clearly, I will miss being a part of the JWC and living in Norway. Leslie and I will always reflect with extremely fond memories that the people and places we have been so fortunate to be a part of for the last two years. We extend our heart-felt appreciation and thanks to all of you and wish each of you much happiness and prosperity in the future. ✦

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