

“We can achieve more Training Objectives here than a LIVEX.”

Inci Kucukaksoy, JWC PAO



CDR Leonardo Rossi

ITALIAN NAVY CDR Leonardo Rossi from Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO) says that it was great to return to the JWC in order to support the execution of Exercise TRIDENT JAGUAR 2017 (TRJR17). “This is my third exercise here,” he says. “I worked with the Opposing Forces during TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2015. Then, I was the officer of primary responsibility nominated by the Maritime Component Command (MCC).”

During the first iteration of TRJR17, Rossi was the Deputy Commander of the simulated MCC, one of the Response Cells in the exercise, role playing the Battle Watch Captain of NATO’s Arnlund mission. The focus was constantly on strategic and operational level dilemmas across the full spectrum of Small Joint Operation (SJO) challenges, predominantly those of a non-kinetic nature, but also including the simulated tactical combat.

When asked about his main objectives, Rossi says: “We basically exercise RRC FR’s ability to lead as a JTF HQ of very complex joint operations. *Joint* is the key word here as it refers to multi-service. TRJR17 is a land-heavy exercise; nevertheless, maritime forces are also present to trigger the Training Audience (TA) in order for them to accomplish the requirements for a JTF HQ and help them to understand that in a joint warfare the maritime component command and the maritime reality need to be taken into consideration.”

At JWC alone, the exercise involved hundreds of work stations, without actual land, maritime and air capabilities of the Alliance, since TRJR17 is a Command Post Exercise (CPX) based on a fictitious training scenario. Maybe there are no real aircraft and real ships during TRJR17, Rossi says, but Skolkan is a “richly cinematic” training scenario and, together with the JWC’s realistic simulated news coverage, the warfare gets almost too real.

“Well, we don’t get a shot at live fire here (pun intended). But, we can fully exercise the combatant commanders and our battle staffs in joint processes and executing joint

operations for NATO, integrating all elements of a JTF HQ. To do so in a period of 10 days, and achieving more Training Objectives than a LIVEX highlight the importance of a CPX. In a LIVEX, we would have struggled under tactical constraints of a maritime warfare. Here, we have to consider the two levels at all times. No need to say that CPXs are also cost-effective.”

The JTF HQ concept was launched in 2012 with the key objective of improving NATO’s combat readiness and deployability and was developed further following the Wales Summit in 2014. Today, the enhanced NATO Response Force (NRF) structure includes a deployable JTF HQ, rotated between JFC Brunssum and JFC Naples, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), an Initial Follow-on Forces Group and the Response Forces Pool.

Rossi says that he is in fact at five days’ notice to move—in real life. “As the Maritime Response Cell we also benefit from this training. I work at the STRIKFORNATO Joint

Operations Centre in my daily job and I can be called on as NATO Maritime Forces’ Battle Watch Captain as and when required. This is because STRIKFORNATO is the Maritime Component Command for NRF 2017, and also, in its dual-hatted capacity, it is the JTF HQ Maritime Expeditionary Headquarters.”

Rossi explains that it is very important that the participating units learn from each other and develop their skills together. “The exercise has been a success thanks to the heavy-duty commitment of the EXCON. JWC provides a premier operational warfighting platform for the JTF Headquarters,” he concludes. ✦



The Maritime Response Cell at JWC