

TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2018 CPX

Enabling Training Audience Success

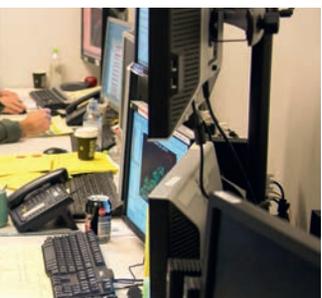


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Photos by JWC PAO



"The exercise setting reflected a wide variety of complex, modern conflict dimensions (e.g. civil military integration, asymmetric, hybrid, cyber warfare, anti-access/area denial) across the political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information (PMESII)-spectrum, challenging the Training Audiences with a broad choice of operational dilemmas."





LEFT: Lieutenant Colonel Holger Judt during an OPFOR situation update briefing. Photo by JWC PAO

As defined in the TRJE18 Exercise Specification (EXPEC) document, the OCCASUS setting supported the development of a Major Joint Article 5 Operation scenario focusing on Northern Europe/High North. This fictitious setting provided a training framework for exercise command arrangements, decision-making processes and operational procedures for joint and component functions within a given theatre. The setting also reflected a wide variety of complex, modern conflict dimensions (e.g. civil-military integration, asymmetric, hybrid, cyber warfare, anti-access/area denial) across the political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information (PMESII)-spectrum, challenging the Training Audiences with a broad choice of operational dilemmas.

TRJE18 was an Allied Command Transformation (ACT)-sponsored, two-level (operational and tactical) Live Exercise (LIVEX), and three-level (strategic, operational and tactical) CAX/CPX that trained, exercised, and evaluated Allied Joint Force Command Naples (JFC Naples) Command and Control (C2) of the enhanced NATO Response Force (eNRF) 2019.

This high-visibility exercise was also used as a means of demonstrating NATO's Visible Assurance, supported by strategic communications and eNRF capabilities to tailor, plan, prepare, deploy, and sustain forces. The level of ambition was to plan the response of the eNRF—including the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF)—to an Article 5 situation, using the NATO Crisis Management Process (NCMP) at the level of a Major Joint Operation (MJO), and in a collective defence context in Northern Europe.

Exercise design

The SACEUR's Annual Guidance for Exercises explains how the first decisions are made about what exercises to execute. This high-level document set the framework for what kind of exercise TRJE18 would be. The EXPEC document elaborated on the protagonist, which in TRJE18 was JFC Naples, what kind of warfare to be exercised, listing of Training Audiences, and differentiating between aims and objectives for the LIVEX part of the exercise and for the CPX, which was directed by the JWC.

JFC Naples is heading the NATO Response Force for 2019 (NRF19), and based on the training needs for this task, they developed seven Training Objectives covering skills and capabilities that were crucial for their task as an operational headquarters for NRF19. Thus, it was important that the JWC designed an exercise that trained JFC Naples and their supporting headquarters in both planning and execution, focusing on these seven Training Objectives. In other words, this is why focus was on planning and execution of an Article 5 operation, command and control in the battlespace, targeting, force protection, and sustainment. Also particular to TRJE18 were the many training opportunities involving cooperation with host nations and non-military organizations and operational dilemmas testing civil preparedness.

Buy-in from the Training Audience

Early Training Audience engagement in the scenario was key to the synchronization of the Training Audience plan and the CAX/CPX design. As early as in October 2017, TRJE18 Training Audiences participated in a scenario wargame that provided an essential barometer check against the new OCCASUS scenario. The wargame permitted the JWC Scenario team to make adjustments to account for gaps and ambiguity prior to the release of scheduled scenario products in the lead up to the Crisis

BELOW: Lieutenant Colonel Dave Canavan, the author and Chief MEL/MIL, at an exercise VTC during TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2018 CPX. Photo by JWC PAO



Understanding the battlespace

TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2018 Computer-Assisted Command Post Exercise (TRJE18 CAX/CPX) was conducted from 14-23 November 2018 and reflected the culmination of over two years of staff planning. The OCCASUS scenario used during the exercise provided a fictitious setting in which NATO confronted a near-peer adversary across a complex environment in the High North. The high-level of Training Audience planning and preparation throughout the entire exercise period remained consistently focused and relevant, and contributed to an equally strong performance during the execution phase of the CAX/CPX. Throughout the planning period, the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) TRJE18 Exercise Planning Team (EPT) was completely engaged and remained on task. This article acknowledges the collective efforts of the JWC EPT, while also highlighting the contributions of the JWC Scenario, Main Events List/Main Incidents List (MEL/MIL), and the Opposing Force (OPFOR), in particular, to the execution phase of the exercise.

The context of TRJE18 CAX/CPX

In order to fully understand the focus and efforts of the Training Audience, it is worth taking the time to first understand the geo-strategic situation presented in TRJE18.





JWC Training Team at JFC Naples with Major General Reudowicz, Commander JWC. Photo by JFC Naples PAO

Response Planning in February-March 2018. Equally important was the participation of the JFC Naples, Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans) in this wargame, more than a year before the actual execution. This reflected the strong commitment of the Training Audience.

Understanding the aims and objectives of the Training Audience

JWC's success in TRJE18 was not about winning tactical, operational or strategic fights, but rather about having created an environment in which the Training Audience could achieve their identified Training Objectives. Key to the process of developing a CPX design was to develop and maintain a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of JFC Naples.

For TRJE18, JWC's initial development of the CAX/CPX design was achieved through the Crisis Response Planning, with the actions of JFC Naples staff at SHAPE, Norwegian Joint Headquarters (through the JFC Naples Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team, or OLRT) and JFC Naples as well as observations by JWC MEL/MIL, OPFOR and Scenario dur-

ing the OLRT. In addition, the JWC Training Team mentored and coached the Training Audience throughout the planning phase, ensuring that their planning efforts were kept within the exercise framework. The resulting JFC Naples Operation Plan (OPLAN), codenamed as Joint Task Force Northern Defence OPLAN 51810, identified the Decisive Conditions (DCs) against which the JWC team could plan and script and provide key planning anchors.

Moreover, in order for the JWC to develop a quality CAX/CPX design it required an understanding of the JFC Naples and component command Operational Plans, as well as the priorities of NATO Host Nations and Partner Nations. Close coordination and constant dialogue between all stakeholders and JWC enabled the JWC Chief OPFOR to develop and synchronize the OPFOR plan to meet all Training Audiences' Training Objectives. The OPFOR plan tested JFC Naples' planning considerations and added relevance to the previously developed operational dilemmas. The OPFOR plan also contributed to testing staffing processes and the competition for resources within the Joint Force Command.

The devil is in the details: **moving beyond the OPLAN and initial Joint Coordination Order**

As a staff action, JFC Naples developed an initial Joint Coordination Order (JCO), which supported the first phase of their OPLAN. However, given the Article 5 requirements of TRJE18, it was essential that the JFC Naples operations staff also develop a follow-on JCO, which reflected the objectives for the execution of the CAX/CPX part of the exercise.

Consequently, the JFC Naples staff achieved component commands' participation during May to June 2018. The JWC Training Team, Scenario, OPFOR and MEL/MIL participation helped ensure continued scenario understanding of the Training Audience intent and that OPFOR plans were always synchronized. The drafted JCO was available for use during the TRJE18 MEL/MIL Scripting Workshop, providing scripters with tangible joint and component command tasks and actions for scripting.

The ability of the JFC Naples staff to deliver a coherent OPLAN permitted the JWC OPFOR and MEL/MIL to plan and script key





behind the scenes

A variety of EXCON and Response Cell personnel during TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2018 Command Post Exercise, including the role players and Host Nation representatives. The exercise brought together approximately 3,500 personnel from 31 Nations. Photos by JWC PAO



DCs during the CPX execution. On 4 September 2018, Admiral James Foggo, Commander JFC Naples, led a Rehearsal of Concept (ROC) Drill with component commands, resulting in some adjustments to the JCO. Most importantly, throughout the shaping of the JFC Naples OPLAN and JCO, the JWC CAX/CPX design remained aligned, focused on the provision of near-peer adversary threats while addressing the training requirements of all Training Audiences. This alignment was maintained through the continued collaboration with Training Audiences, Host Nations and Partner Nations, ensuring continued synchronization with OPFOR actions.

Battle Staff Training: a departure from the norm

Early in the exercise planning process of TRJE18, it was agreed that JFC Naples would schedule their Battle Staff Training (BST) immediately prior to the CPX, so that the critical

JFC Naples staff activities of the Joint Coordination Board¹ and Assessment Board² scheduled as part of the JFC Naples battle rhythm during the beginning of the CPX could also be rehearsed during the BST.

In order to build the content for these boards, the JFC Naples BST team, working in parallel at the JWC MEL/MIL Scripting Workshop developed the supporting material required to run these boards. This material was coordinated with the JWC TRJE18 staff and reflected the "Road to STARTEX" scenario as developed by the JWC TRJE18 scenario team. There was a significant risk that this BST content would corrupt the JWC-developed MEL/MIL script for the CPX execution phase. With this risk came the opportunity for the JFC Naples staff to develop the necessary content for their boards, which enabled their staff processes during the CPX. JFC Naples senior leaderships' continued engagement, however, mitigated this risk to a certain degree. Despite the inevitable bleed-over of BST content to

the CPX, the "G+87" and "G+88" Joint Coordination Board and Assessment Board were successful in providing JFC Naples staff and leadership with the process and content that enabled "Commander Joint Task Force Northern Defence" to make decisions, and focusing subsequent efforts on the task force and component command planning activities for the remainder of the CPX.

Execution phase: EXCON puts JFC Naples' plan to the test

The CPX was successfully conducted with minimal diversion and adjustments from its original design. While its clear design was a contributing factor to this success, it was equally important that the EXCON augments had a general understanding of the JFC Naples, component command, host nation and partner nation intentions and planned actions during the execution phase.

"The JWC CAX/CPX design remained focused on the provision of near-peer adversary threats while addressing the training requirements of all Training Audiences."



In support of this objective, the JWC produced an "exercise flow" video in a wargame format that walked the EXCON staff through the entire ten days that the CPX lasted, alternating between friendly force, partner nation and OPFOR actions. The video format further permitted EXCON staff to review desired aspects of the exercise flow as required throughout the CPX.

The exercise flow video was followed in the EXCON training by Joint Task Force, component command, host nation and partner nation presentations, reinforcing the understanding of the NATO and Partner Nation intended actions. The JWC efforts to develop a clear EXCON understanding of the environment and actions for the execution phase did not rest solely on the provision of planning briefings. The physical layout of EXCON at the JWC was also addressed to ensure a stronger level of coordination and synchronization in order to deliver the desired training effect.

As an example, TRJE18 was the first exercise in which NATO and OPFOR Air Response Cells were co-located. Recognizing the requirement to provide timely direction, guidance and synchronization in the air domain, the Blue and OPFOR Air Response Cells were co-located to improve coordination and communication between these two key EXCON organizations. Further supported by the new post of an "air boss", whose role was to deconflict and adjudicate between the two cells, the coordinated efforts enabled a coherent air picture to be presented to the Training Audiences. In turn, this permitted dynamic scripting to focus its efforts on the increased synchronization within EXCON while maintaining an environment in which the Training Audience could achieve their Training Objectives.

The daily EXCON battle rhythm also contributed to the synchronization; the daily EXCON force coordination meeting provided the opportunity for EXCON Response Cells to offer 48-hour forecasts of their component, national and OPFOR planned actions. While the 60 minutes assigned to each force coordination meeting was not designed to discuss each and every coordination requirement in detail, it succeeded in highlighting the ongoing and newly identified coordination requirements to be addressed outside the margins of the meeting. In addition to this coordination mechanism, the constant feedback from the JWC Train-



JWC-supported TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2018
After Action Review VTC Photo by JWC PAO

ing Teams to the Training Audiences, both at JTF and component command levels, was important for staying on track. It also confirmed workload and speed of MEL/MIL scripting and identified where focus and emphasis should be.

HQ SHAPE: All-In

One of the new opportunities presented by TRJE18 was the participation of SHAPE beyond the Initial Planning Phase, IIA. The continued participation of SHAPE through to and including the CAX/CPX execution provided an opportunity for the SHAPE staff to review their internal battle rhythm while also introducing the correct level of staff pressure on JFC Naples.

The participation of SHAPE in TRJE18 provided JWC with a deeper insight into the influence and role of SHAPE in future exercises. During TRJE18, the JWC succeeded in providing an environment in which JFC Naples and the component commands achieved their identified Training Objectives. The JWC was able to deliver the exercise due to a clear CPX design, which again created a better understanding of the Training Audiences' intended actions and synchronizing these with the JWC OPFOR plan. Additionally, the well-developed scenario and setting for TRJE18 made it possible for the JFC Naples staff to develop a comprehensive plan and synchronize component

command actions through a timely developed Joint Coordination Order. Both Training Audience and EXCON were thereby able to play out the execution of TRJE18, permitting EXCON to deliver a MEL/MIL script and OPFOR actions to a well-prepared and responsive Training Audience. The collective efforts of the Training Audience and EXCON have undoubtedly contributed to the success of Exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2018. ✦

ENDNOTES

- 1 Joint Coordination Board (JCB). The JCB is the JFC's principal meeting. Its aim is to assist the macro aspects of joint force activity and effects synchronization, specifically to issue commander's priority guidance across the components, and to resolve potential areas of conflict. The JCB usually meets once a day. It comprises as a minimum the JFC and component commands (in person, by video teleconference, or represented by their senior liaison officers), political adviser, legal adviser, chief JOC, the strategic communications advisor and other individuals as required.
- 2 Assessment Board (AB). The AB is the formal forum to seek commander's endorsement of the operations assessment provided. The AB should culminate in a recommendation to the Commander.