

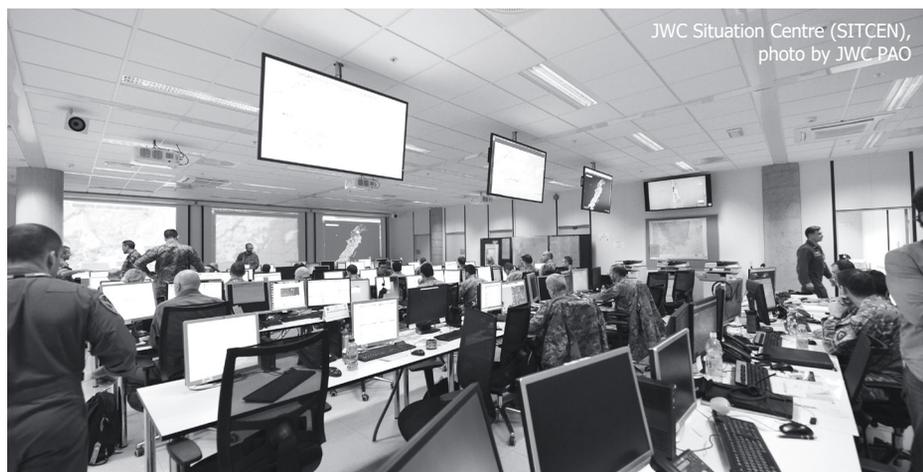


HICON

Higher Control: An integral part of all exercises

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JWC Situation Centre (SITCEN),
photo by JWC PAO

The Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) fills many core functions during exercises. Real Life Support is one of the building stones to enable any exercise physically to happen, as is Computer Information Systems. The Exercise Control (EXCON) organization, with its Situation Centre, is at the hub of the operations, ensuring that exercises run according to the pre-planned Main Events List/Main Incidents List (MEL/MIL), and that Opposing Forces (OPFOR) and Computer-Assisted Exercises (CAX) support the desired

outcomes. The scenario is important to explain the artificialities of any exercise, while White Cell role players and media simulation add realism, thus exposing Training Audiences to challenges at various levels of complexity. JWC Training Teams ensure that proper advice and guidance are provided to the NATO entities being trained. Yet another core function is Higher Control (HICON).

HICON is an integral part of EXCON and serves, of course, exactly the same purpose, which is to create an environment where Training Audiences can meet their Train-

ing Objectives and be certified as a NATO Response Force Headquarters or a Joint Task Force Headquarters. As experience was gained, it was realized that HICON needed to be established as an entity of its own. However, depending on the character of the exercise, SHAPE involvement may differ.

In a typical TRIDENT JAGUAR exercise, SHAPE and NATO HQ, including the latter's political parts, will be duplicated during the execution phase by the HICON team. During larger or more complex exercises, SHAPE and the NATO International Military Staff may be directly involved in the execution, but even more so during the planning phase where all the strategic documents are developed, including the Strategic Planning Directive for subordinate headquarters and the Concept of Operations/Operation Plan.

During all phases of planning and execution, and in all corresponding preparatory activities, HICON will by necessity be involved, duplicating and imitating political and strategic processes as required. A certain element of role play is also included, with members of HICON simulating whoever the Training Audience requires to speak to.

HICON is a powerful tool in the hands of the Exercise Director, Commander JWC. If an exercise needs to be steered in a certain direction to fit the scenario and the pre-planned activities, a political statement by NATO Secretary General or by an individual nation, sent through NATO Military Authorities (Military



Commodore Helseth,
photo by JWC PAO



Committee and SACEUR), may quickly influence the Training Audience in the right direction, and still be seen as a realistic limitation or opportunity. In addition to facilitating the political play, HICON also contributes to Strategic Communications (StratCom) messaging and legal aspects of the exercise or operation.

It will be evident that HICON staff need specific skills. In-depth knowledge of processes and procedures at both NATO HQ and SHAPE is required. The International Military Staff, which is working from NATO HQ, will normally deploy one or two of their staff in support of HICON, which for practical purposes will be set up at SHAPE. Coordination with EXCON is a daily, if not continuous process.

As NATO exercises evolve in complexity and ambition, encompassing Article 5 operations against a peer enemy, SHAPE involvement in such exercises is expected to grow, together with an increased interest from Brussels. The JWC HICON will, in this case, assume a coordination role, ensuring that all activities and decisions fit into the exercise design, and also that the interests of the Primary Training Audience are safeguarded.

HICON at the JWC is relatively new in the sense that it became formalized as late as



ABOVE: Lieutenant Colonel Michael Derksen, JWC Chief Scenarion Branch, supporting HICON. Photo by JWC PAO

in 2016. Up to then, it had been set up rather *ad hoc*. The JWC's Standing Operating Procedures and organization are now regulated, and a trained cadre of about seven to eight individuals with different but relevant experience has been formed. It is recognized that political aspects must be incorporated into every exer-

cise to create challenges for the Commander to be trained along with his political, legal and StratCom teams. The Commander will be tasked to provide personal updates by VTC in order to communicate with key military personnel (SACEUR or HICON role players), and there will always be someone around for him to discuss particular aspects of the operation with. He will also need to communicate with SHAPE on SACEUR's critical information requirements, thus practicing in as realistic a setting as possible. HICON is the tool that makes all this happen, as quickly as the exercise demands. This role will increase in importance as NATO starts to plan for and execute the new TRIDENT JUPITER Series of Exercises.

The JWC has a well-trained, experienced organization, which is optimized to deliver NATO's CAX-based exercises at the joint and operational levels. With higher NATO ambitions, the importance of this will grow. The Centre will meet this challenge with dedication and with the clear ambition to deliver what NATO demands. As someone with considerable experience of NATO and NATO exercises recently said: "Being in Stavanger is now more rewarding than ever!" I know that most of us would agree to that statement. ✦



JWC EXCON members with Major General Andrzej Reudowicz, Commander JWC, at Joint Force Command Brunssum. Photo by JFC Brunssum PAO

