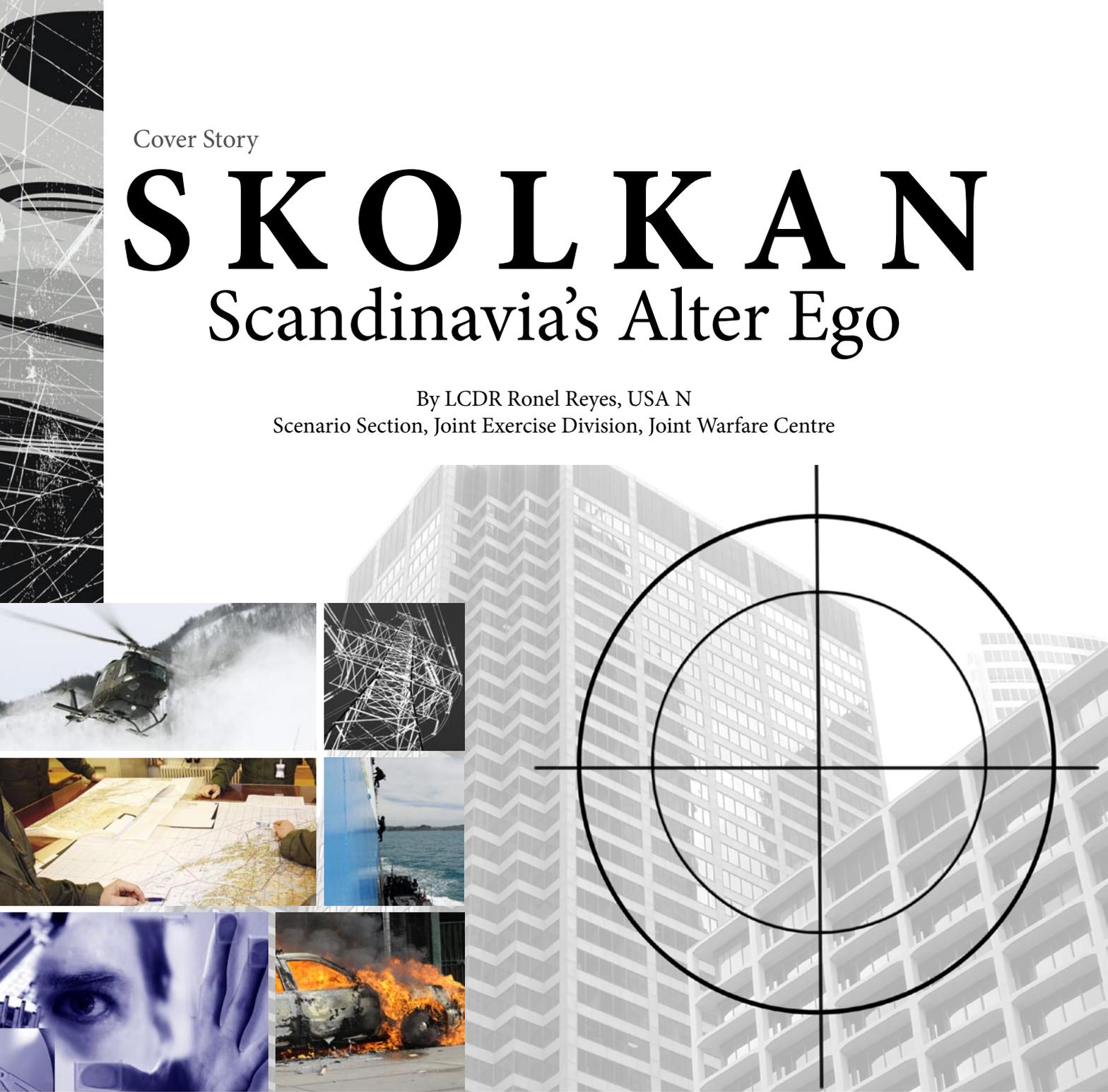


Cover Story

SKOLKAN

Scandinavia's Alter Ego

By LCDR Ronel Reyes, USA N
Scenario Section, Joint Exercise Division, Joint Warfare Centre



Has your Saab or Nokia phone ever frustrated you? Are you tired of New Zealand's All Blacks beating up on your favorite rugby team? Have you ever thought to yourself, "Sweden, Finland, New Zealand... I am not going to take it anymore!" Well, starting in 2012, you and the rest of NATO will have an opportunity to show them who is boss... sort of.

A change in scenery

Skolkan is NATO's new exercise setting being developed by the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC). This new setting transforms our Partner Nations of Sweden and Finland into various countries of instability and/or concern. In addition, "North Island New Zealand" is added as a new country, off the coast of Norway, to add to the level of complexity in the maritime domain. Scandinavia is now transformed into a potential crisis area for NATO.

Since 2008, the Cerasia setting has successfully been the backdrop for training NATO forces. With the geographic setting based in the Horn of Africa, Cerasia has provided the perfect venue to focus NATO Response Force (NRF) out-of-area deployments in support of Crisis Response Operations (CRO), Peace Support Operations (PSO), humanitarian assistance, terrorism, and piracy missions. Despite its success and practical applicability, new threats, re-defined missions, lessons learned, and expanded capabilities demand NATO training to evolve and progress.

With that mindset, a new setting and

scenario was needed to replace Cerasia, which could provide training across the full spectrum of current and future operations. In 2009, the decision was made and the Skolkan region (Scandinavia) was chosen as the best candidate for the new setting.

Lessons learned from *OPERATION UNIFIED PROTECTOR (OUP)* in Libya only reinforced the need for a new setting to train NATO commands to a wider set of mission areas. Skolkan broadens NATO's ability in how strategic, operational, and tactical commands are trained. Not only would exercises using Skolkan be able to support the same mission areas as previously used in Cerasia, it expands support to other missions such as Article V operations, protection of critical infrastructure, cyber defence, missile defence, and energy infrastructure security. In addition, Skolkan provides an opportunity to demonstrate "Visible Assurance" and its commitment to respond to threats against NATO Nations.

The task of creating Skolkan was given to the JWC in January 2010. Our mission is to deliver NATO's newest setting and sce-

nario that ensures the continued readiness of the NATO Command Structure (NCS) and NATO Force Structure (NFS).

Creating a fictitious world

So, who is responsible for creating Skolkan? A qualified team of six uniformed officers and 14 civilian contractors make up the JWC's Scenario Section. The task of creating six countries from scratch relies upon the collective talent and creativity of this group. Each member of the Section has a specified role that encompasses different areas of responsibility such as geography, intelligence, and logistics. From the development of maps, railway timetables and biographies of influential individuals, to encyclopaedic books that describe each country in areas such as politics, military, economy, and society – the Scenario Section creates it all.

Twenty-seven months. That will be the

Below: JWC's key players at Scenario Section bring protection of NATO territory to focus with Skolkan.



Photo by Ina Kucukaksoy





amount of time it takes to create the world of Skolkan when we kick off and execute *STEADFAST JUNCTURE 12 (SFJE12)* in November 2012. The time and energy spent during these 27 months hopefully creates the most realistic environment for the Training Audience (TA) to operate in during the exercise. The scope of this project and level of detail required to create such a realistic environment is a testament to the dedication and commitment to training provided not only by the members of the Scenario Section, but the JWC as a whole.

Setting vs Scenario

What we are creating in the Scenario Section is both the setting and scenario for an exercise. These are two terms that are often confused and used incorrectly. In an effort to help clarify the difference, think of an exercise as a play on a stage. The setting is the stage itself: the props, the backdrop, etc. It puts our actors (the TA) in context. The scenario could be thought of as the plot of the play. It is the “why” the actors are on the stage. The last piece of the play is the Main Events List/Main Incidents List (MEL/MIL)

Definitions:

Setting: A geographic and strategic situation designed to provide all the conditions required to support the achievement of high level exercise aims and objectives. The setting, which can be real world, fictionalised or synthetic, is the framework on which the scenario can be developed.

Scenario: The background story that describes the historical, political, military, economic, humanitarian and legal events and circumstances that have led to the current exercise crisis or conflict.

or the script. The MEL/MIL defines what the actors will be doing during the play/exercise. It is a very simplistic way of looking at it, but hopefully this helps to explain and clarify the terms.

The School of Skolkan: The Setting History 101

The term Skolkan is a reference to the former Skolkan Empire that once ruled the High North. Its history can be traced as far back as the late 14th and early 15th centuries. The former Empire that centred round Torrike, reached its pinnacle in the mid 19th century, also comprised of what are now the countries of Arnland, Framland, Bothnia, Otso, and Lindsey as well as having overlordship of Norway.

The first nation to declare its independence was Lindsey in the late 18th century. Norway and Framland were next to declare independence in 1905. The remaining countries followed suit over the next 10 years to officially end the reign of the Skolkan Empire.

The transition to new found independence was not as smooth as they all might have hoped. Over the past decades, internal strife, political jockeying and two World Wars all contributed to who the Skolkan nations have grown to be today. Each nation has made strides to globally establish itself and be recognised as contributors in the political and economic arena. However, elements of corruption, organised crime, paranoia, and expansionist ambitions also describe the nations of Skolkan.

Geography 101

The overall requirement for creating Skolkan was to develop six new countries that occupy the High North region of Europe. Three of the countries would represent potential aggressor states to act as the “adversaries” in the exercise scenario. A fourth country would be a non-member nation that is “friendly” to NATO, while another country would represent a failing state. To round out the countries, a sixth nation was developed as a buffer between the exercise



Photo by Inci Kucukaksoy



area and Russia, a NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) Nation. The difficulty in this is that there is only so much territory in Europe to work with. So, Sweden and Finland had graciously agreed to let their countries be divided into five of those nations. To create the final country, North Island New Zealand was brought up from the Southern Hemisphere and transplanted approximately 50 nm off the coast of Norway.

The countries of Skolkan

The following is a brief description of the countries Bothnia, Torrike, Lindsey, Arnland, Framland, and Otso.

Bothnia: Bothnia is one of the potential aggressors in the setting. Located between Otso and the Baltic Sea, it dominates the Gulfs of Finland and Bothnia. As a nation it is an unreformed, old fashioned People's Republic, with an appearance of democratic representation. It is a country with significant military capabilities and the political will to consider the use of force to further its aims.

Torrike: Torrike is the second potential aggressor in Skolkan. It represents the heartland of the former Skolkan Empire and has dreams of resurrecting it. Sandwiched between Norway, Framland, and Arnland, it is ideally situated for a range of crises within the setting. Torrike is a highly authoritarian democracy. It has grown to be extremely successful in Europe economically and has developed a highly efficient defence sector.

Lindsey: The last potential aggressor is Lindsey, an outsider in Skolkan, both geographically and psychologically. Situated off the coast of Norway, Lindsey is a nation state whose motivation and actions or reactions are not easily predictable. Although she presents herself as an active democracy with a number of established political parties, the reality is a single party has dominated the state for last 50 years. Over time, the country has grown to be a somewhat paranoid society. There is a strong feeling that the rest of the world conspires to cheat

Lindsey of its rightful place in the world and in particular deny it access to the wealth associated with the natural resources their location entitles them to.

Arnland: Located in a strategically significant chokepoint, it is both the gateway to and from mainland Europe and the Baltic. Arnland is a highly dysfunctional nation that suffers from serious levels of corruption. Nominally, a democracy, the winning party in any election has such significant levers and powers as to be able to govern in a highly dictatorial fashion.

Arnland's role in Skolkan is twofold; firstly, it meets the requirement to have a regional failing state that provides both the opportunity for a future Humanitarian Assistance and CRO, and at the same time contributes to overall regional instability. Secondly, it also provides the main base of *Novus Ordo Mundi* (NOM), the terrorist organisation that will be active throughout the region for the setting.

Framland: Framland is a pro-western, democratic, constitutional monarchy that occupies much of the Western seaboard of the Baltic Sea. Formerly a semi-independent Duchy in the Skolkan Empire, it has been independent since 1905. It has a long border with Torrike and a short border with Bothnia. Typically, Framland maintains a neutral position in the global arena, it is broadly pro-NATO and pro-EU. However, in the interests of maintaining good relations with its neighbours, it is not a member of either.

Framland's role in Skolkan is to add complexity and provide a NATO-friendly country in the region that can be used to either influence its neighbours through negotiation, or provide a degree of logistic support to NATO or potentially even operating bases.

Otso: Otso is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. The easternmost country within the Skolkan setting, it sits between Russia and Bothnia. Its broad political outlook is that of neutrality

and it has built an enviable reputation as an arbitrator and interlocutor in international disputes. Neither especially wealthy nor particularly poor, it is a strong supporter of the UN and it has been a major contributor to UN military missions since the 1960s.

A common scenario

Skolkan provides a setting that enables harmonisation between various types of exercises. The design and development of Skolkan was set out with the aim of supporting NATO's strategic concept of creating a common setting for large three-level Command Post Exercises as well as small single component exercises and Key Leader Training Events. In essence, it becomes NATO's common scenario.

Skolkan also provides a suitable venue for NATO HQ Crisis Management Exercises (CMX) and Allied Command Operations (ACO) nuclear exercises. In theory, the results and decisions from the strategic planning of CMX could then be further used during the major joint exercises such as the *STEADFAST* series thereby providing some continuity of training effort.

Impact to JWC

Providing training at the operational level for the Joint Force Commands (JFCs) and their Component Commands remains the JWC's focus.

In the overall scheme of things, the use of Skolkan causes no significant difference to the process and conduct of a *STEADFAST* exercise from the JWC point of view. The scenario and its supporting documentation are still developed, MEL/MIL scripting still takes place, and the Exercise Control (EXCON) is still based in Stavanger, Norway. What does change, however, is the look and feel of each of those elements.

As already discussed, compared to Cerasia, Skolkan has shifted the intent of training from Humanitarian Assistance at strategic distances, to a perceived threat and potential conflict in NATO's backyard. Probably the least obvious, but rather important distinction between the two deployment scenarios is location. Due to its



“Skolkan broadens NATO’s ability in how strategic, operational and tactical commands are trained. It also provides a suitable venue for NATO HQ Crisis Management Exercises and ACO nuclear exercises.”

geography, a fictitious operation in Cerasia gave a bit of leeway to the Scenario Section writers with regards to Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs), Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), UNSCRs, etc.

A deployment within the Skolkan setting, however, has a greater likelihood of occurring within the NATO territory, places where SOFAs and MOUs already exist. The use of real world documentation within an exercise environment will be an adjustment and consideration for both TA and scenario writers.

MEL/MIL will have to become more robust and possibly more dynamic. Our current exercises encompass roughly 900 or so injects over an eight day period. And that’s just for a Humanitarian Assistance operation. To support a scenario on the verge or in the middle of a conflict, will potentially require a more complex storyline of events, much more scripting of injects, and an openness to fluidity in order to react to the TAs actions.

Cerasia enabled NATO to fully exercise the Comprehensive Approach (CA) process. Interaction and coordination with local entities, International Organisations (IOs), and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) was critical for a successful operation in Cerasia. During the planning and execution phases of a *STEADFAST* exercise, JWC has been able to provide role players as part of EXCON to act on behalf of these organisations and interact with the TA. Not to say that CA disappears during an Article V or potential Article V scenario; it doesn’t. The CA and the planning considerations associated with it will still have to

be taken into account by the TA. The difference being, the organisations represented by the actors may not be the same. Replicating Host Nation Support becomes a much more significant consideration when exercising a deployment into a NATO country vice the middle of the desert in Africa.

Train as You Fight

Over the last three years the Cerasia setting has served NATO well, training various levels of the organisation in the dynamics of out-of-area operations in east Africa. Specifically through the *STEADFAST* series of exercises, it has been the perfect venue for the NRF to exercise deployments in support of Humanitarian Assistance, counterinsurgency (COIN), and anti-piracy operations.

With the introduction of Skolkan, the future of exercises in NATO will have a look it hasn’t had in previous years. The analysis and planning associated with the protection of NATO territory becomes the focal point. This is not to take away from the value of Cerasia and all the training it has provided. In all actuality, there is probably a higher likelihood future deployments of NATO forces will be in support of Humanitarian Assistance operations. However, as exemplified by *OPERATION UNIFIED PROTECTOR*, NATO still requires training opportunities to prepare its military forces for potential armed conflict.

In a world that we have seen drastically change within the last 24 months, NATO must be prepared to deploy its forces in any potential crisis. Skolkan is a move in the right direction and now NATO can once again *TRAIN* as it would *FIGHT*. ✦



The NATO Response Force

The NATO Response Force (NRF) provides a mechanism to generate a high readiness and technologically advanced force package made up of land, air, sea and special force components that can be deployed quickly on operations wherever needed. The force package is capable of performing tasks across a wide spectrum of operations. Tasks could include providing an immediate response capability for conducting collective defence of Alliance members in the event of an Article V operation, acting as the initial force deployment as a precursor to deployment of a much larger force, whether that be for Article V or for any other operation, such as assisting civilian agencies manage the consequences of natural disasters. In addition to the NRF mechanism providing the Alliance with a crisis management instrument, the NRF also serves as an engine for transformation of military capabilities through the cycle of building multinational force packages on a rotational basis, which then exercise together in order to integrate the operational and tactical levels of command and control and the joint forces. Key facts regarding the NRF are as follows:

- There are no limits to the numbers, which nations can contribute.
- The very high readiness element, the Immediate Response Force (IRF), consists of approximately 14,000 personnel.
- The remaining forces are held in a Response Forces Pool (RFP), the scale of which will depend upon what nations are willing to make available, dependent upon operational commitments at the time.

As the standards have to be very high, participation in the NRF is preceded by a six-month NATO exercise programme in order to integrate and standardise the various national contingents. Generally, nations carry out a pre-training period in preparation for the NATO exercises between 6-18 months. Once the overall preparation period of as much as 24-months has been accomplished, from 2012, the force will be held on stand-by to deploy on operations for 12-months as opposed to the current 6-months. (www.aco.nato.int)

