

JWC conducted its first ISAF MRE based on "split headquarters" structure - Joint Warfare Centre

Written by Inci Kucukaksoy, JWC PAO
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ISAF Headquarters and ISAF Joint Command Training Event, or "ISAF TE 09/02", took place at Joint Warfare Centre's Ulsnes Interim Training Facility from 30 November to 11 December 2009.

The exercise aimed at training and integrating staffs deploying to Afghanistan and providing them with a common understanding of Afghanistan as well as practicing their staff procedures prior to actually deploying into theatre. All staff were exposed to the composite nature of operations in Afghanistan and are challenged to better understand their upcoming ISAF mission.

This latest Joint Warfare Centre Training Event, which held the distinction of being the Centre's first ISAF Mission Rehearsal Training Event based on the split headquarters structure for the early 2010 rotations in Afghanistan, consisted of more than 200 participants coming from NATO's Multinational Corps Northeast, Land Component Command Heidelberg as well as multinational individual augmentees. In addition to the Exercise Control (EXCON) organization provided by the Joint Warfare Centre, the training event involved more than 100 Subject Matter Experts coming from JFC Brunssum, HQ ISAF, ISAF Joint Command, NATO Rapid Deployable Corps-Italy (NRDC-IT), United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) and the Joint Warfare Centre to ensure the success of the exercise.

The following excerpt from the Multinational Corps Northeast website at <http://www.mncne.pl> highlighted the successful execution of the ISAF training: *"The first days spent at Ulsnes were devoted mainly to Mission Specific Training and Functional Area Training. The opening remarks*

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were delivered by Commander Joint Warfare Centre, Lieutenant General Wolfgang Korte, the Officer Directing the Exercise, as well as by French Colonel Charles Sevin, Chief Training Team. For each serviceman taking part in the training, a video-conference with the ISAF Commander General Stanley McChrystal was definitely a highlight. In his short address, he expressed his great support for the new staff training for the upcoming mission. At the beginning of the training, all participants took part in a series of lectures combined with discussions, which allowed for enhancing general situation awareness in Afghanistan. The topics referred to e.g. an overview of the ISAF mission, tasks and challenges, the air operations, Afghan National Security Forces or the issue of Strategic Communication. Afterwards, the experts offered their valuable knowledge and, already in smaller groups, so-called Functional Area Training started. The experts not only briefed about their experiences within different areas of interest (in other words functional areas) but also conducted vivid discussions with the training audience. 'It was worth it, absolutely', summarized his training Major Adrian Sileanu, Romanian Army, who will be a staff officer for Logistic Operations in Afghanistan. 'We have had some interesting briefings so far and we actually managed not to duplicate this effort during our training in Szczecin so there were lots of new things. And we have just finished electronic working practicing today. That is also interesting because we will have some new systems in Afghanistan and we have to get accustomed to them', he explained. Major Bjärke Therkildsen from the Danish Army emphasized the fact that everything taught at the Joint Warfare Centre would be needed in Afghanistan."

"The Mission Rehearsal Exercise was not about certificates or evaluation. It was about making people confident so that when they actually deploy to Afghanistan, they will know what their tasks really are. And it seems that this objective has been achieved. Lieutenant Colonel Carsten Mørkenborg, Danish Army, admitted that the overall training was very good. 'The training team used real incidents; we got the right sort of pressure in terms of the number of incidents, their content and complexity', he explained. Another exercise participant Major Marcel Janiga, Slovak Army, drew attention to another valuable aspect of the training: 'A lot of information coming directly from subject matter experts was the most important from my point of view,' he said".

Each JWC Mission Rehearsal Training Event is updated to incorporate latest available staff practices and operational information. Joint Warfare Centre's latest training event at Ulsnes reflected the changes in ISAF command structure and it was modified to simultaneously train personnel who will man the two commands - the ISAF Headquarters and the ISAF Joint Command in 2010. This adjustment into "split headquarters" was a result of NATO's decision on 3 August 2009 to reorganize the ISAF command structure and its upper chain of command with a view to making it more effective for its demanding operational tasks. According to the decision, a new establishment, called "ISAF Joint Command", was formed which is responsible for executing the full spectrum of tactical operations throughout the country, on a day-to-day basis. ISAF Headquarters will continue to be the higher operational headquarters of NATO in Afghanistan.

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A major highlight of the Training Event was the first official visit of the French Air Force General Stephane Abrial, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), to the Joint Warfare Centre on 8 December 2009 where he met JWC leadership and staff. Accompanied by the US Marine Corps General James N. Mattis, Commander of US Joint Forces Command, General Abrial took a tour of Joint Warfare Centre's interim training facility in Ulsnes and observed the execution of the JWC-led ISAF pre-deployment training.