

Reconnaissance team conducted crisis response exercise - Joint Warfare Centre

Written by Inci Kucukaksoy, JWC PAO
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A 15-person Operational Liaison Reconnaissance Team (OLRT) led by NATO's Allied Force Command Heidelberg (HQ FC Heidelberg) conducted a crisis response exercise from 27 January to 1 February 2012 at the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) in order to prepare for the NATO Response Force (NRF) exercise STEADFAST JOIST 12 (SFJT 12), which will take place in May this year.

Under the command of Dutch Brigadier General Leo Beulen, the exercise aimed to help develop an effective Operational Plan (OPLAN) for the standing Joint Force HQ and conduct a detailed study of the mission and tasks NRF forces might undertake during SFJT 12 in the fictitious theatre of operations based on the Cerasia scenario.

The simulated OLRT deployment to JWC further highlights structural changes to the NRF concept. HQ JFC Lisbon has been leading the NRF since July 2011. In his "Commander's Vision 2012", Lieutenant General Philippe Stoltz, Commander of JFC Lisbon, states that his HQ will play a critical role in shaping NATO's future Deployability Concept, in close liaison with Joint Force Command Brunssum and Joint Force Command Naples. HQ JFC Lisbon, indeed, is tasked to develop NATO's new Deployed Joint HQ (DJHQ) model, an initiative which could become a benchmark in support of NATO's expeditionary operations in the future. The SFJT 12 will be a test-bed for the new DJHQ concept and its different steps and processes.

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Brigadier General Beulen said: “Currently, Allied Joint Force Command Lisbon (HQ JFC Lisbon) is busy preparing for the exercise in May and developing the exercise OPLAN. Based on the exercise scenario, they are holding an OLRT, represented by us, a reconnaissance team deployed to identify critical regional information, as well as local challenges and risks, in order to advise the decision-making process prior to force deployment. HQ JFC Lisbon needs this information and advice for their theatre awareness and for implementation in their OPLAN. That’s why we were sent to ‘Cerasia’, which is replicated by the JWC.”



The OLRT is a small team of specialists who deploy to a theatre of operations (unstable due to political failure or natural disaster), bilaterally or through NATO, under a usually complex mandate, in order to understand that environment, assess what is needed there and establish relationships to determine the success of a future operation or relief effort. In SFJT 12 the OLRT deployment takes place under the United Nations (UN) mandate.

In Stavanger, the JWC has set up an environment for the reconnaissance team so that they can collect data on everything “in theatre” and function as the “eyes and ears” of the Joint Force Commander before his deployment. A creation of the JWC Scenario Section, the exercise scenario, Cerasia, has been available to train the NRF since 2008. In order to train different skills for different missions, the JWC validates a wide range of role players within its Grey Cell exercise structure to include United Nations (UN) representatives as well as members of International and Non-Governmental Organizations (IOs/NGOs). The JWC will also be the venue of the SFJT 12 execution phase in May and will provide the Exercise Control (EXCON) structure.

The SFJT 12 will be directed by French Army Major General Jean Fred Berger, Commander JWC.

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HQ FC Heidelberg spokesperson US Army Lieutenant Colonel Randy Martin said: “The OLRT performs a very important mission. It is one of the first elements that would deploy to a contingency area. We formed as a team in Heidelberg and then came together in Stavanger with individual roles to do the necessary research on the semi-austere environment of the fictitious country of Tytan, which is replicated by the JWC, together with the role players and Subject Matter Experts here. Simply put, we are doing the Mission Analysis before we deploy back to Lisbon and pass the crucial information to them.”

JWC’s Officer of Primary Responsibility for this exercise, Royal Air Force WG CDR Mark Atrill said: “In the early stages of the exercise planning process, the OLRT phase of SFJT 12 presented us with several challenges, which I am pleased to say we have been able to turn into opportunities. Foremost amongst these challenges was the need to find an operating location for the OLRT and to conduct an early test of the new training facility at Jatta. The Norwegian military authorities kindly allowed us the use of Madla Recruit Training Centre to simulate the ‘austere’ environment in which an OLRT may find itself. And the physical dislocation of the training audience from EXCON (located here at Jatta) provided further realism to the exercising of the OLRT concept. There can be little doubt that these small but significant changes in the way in which we delivered this phase of SFJT 12 further improved the training experience for the OLRT”

During the After Action Review on 31 January, US Air Force Brigadier General Steven DePalmer, Chief of Staff JWC, thanked the reconnaissance team for their support to enhance the current NRF structures while underpinning potential challenges that may arise to deployability, sustainability (including Force Protection, Real Life Support, Computer and Information Systems), manning levels, logistics and other resources.

Brigadier General DePalmer said: “Your deployment to the JWC has added realism to the exercise. It has been a collaborative undertaking and I am impressed with everybody’s efforts to make this deployment a success. It is, again, a step forward for us and NATO.”