

Steadfast Juncture 12 OLRT at JWC - Joint Warfare Centre

Written by Inci Kucukaksoy, JWC PAO
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A 19-person Operational Liaison Reconnaissance Team (OLRT) led by NATO's Joint Force Command Naples (JFC Naples) conducted a Crisis Response Exercise from 19 to 27 June at the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) in order to prepare for the NATO Response Force (NRF) exercise STEADFAST JUNCTURE 2012 (SFJE 12), which will take place in November this year.

The British Royal Navy Captain David Heley, OLRT Team Leader, said: "I am immensely proud of what the OLRT has achieved during a relatively short period with the Training Team, here, in the JWC. The OLRT is a new concept for JFC Naples and, coupled with the new SKOLKAN Training Scenario, this has presented both the JFC Naples and JWC teams with numerous challenges. Clearly, not all of these have been resolved in the limited time available, but I am hugely encouraged by progress to date. As ever, the professional approach of all players, as well as flexibility and a genuine will to succeed, has paid dividends. We are now off first base."

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. They function as the "eyes and ears" of the Joint Force Commander before his deployment.

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During the simulated OLRT deployment for SFJE 12, the reconnaissance team developed the Operational Plan (OPLAN), which detailed the missions and tasks NRF forces might undertake in the fictitious theatre of operations based on the SKOLKAN scenario. The JWC also validated a wide range of role players within its White Cell exercise structure to include representatives from Estonian Defence Forces and the Government as well as International Organizations.

JWC's Officer of Primary Responsibility for this exercise, Danish Lieutenant Colonel Bo Andersen said: "At the Welcome Brief, the JWC Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Steven DePalmer, emphasized that the OLRT deployment to JWC should be viewed as Learning Opportunity for the team from JFC Naples and that it was not a test. The OLRT certainly took the opportunity in a very constructive and open way. I was delighted to witness the steep learning curve and to see the good results of the preparatory effort of the JWC team. When you see a training event unfold the way it did, you as a trainer get a 'warm fuzzy feeling.' It was good. Of course, there are still many challenges to be addressed, but as Capt Heley says, 'we are off first base.' Now we know exactly where to focus the next training effort for the OLRT."

Lieutenant Colonel Andersen added: "I was very much looking forward to seeing the new SKOLKAN Scenario 'in action' for the first time. I am pleased to say that, I think, it certainly passed the test. As it turns out, it is more complex and challenging than the Training Audience had anticipated. And finally: We had the opportunity to work with Estonian Officers who represented the Estonian Ministry of Interior and Defence. It was a good and solid experience, which we will repeat during the exercise in November."

SFJE 12 is an Allied Command Operations (ACO) exercise for a NATO-led Non Article 5 Crisis Response Operation that aims to train NRF 2013 forces, and certify JFC Naples as a deployed HQ in commanding and controlling a multi-national force tailored to a NATO Smaller Joint Operation.

The exercise will be directed by French Army Major General Jean Fred Berger, Commander Joint Warfare Centre.