

Real Life Support: Event Management at the JWC

Up to three major NATO exercises per year, along with national exercises and other events, bring thousands of participants to the Joint Warfare Centre every year. The Real Life Support Branch facilitates essential services for them.

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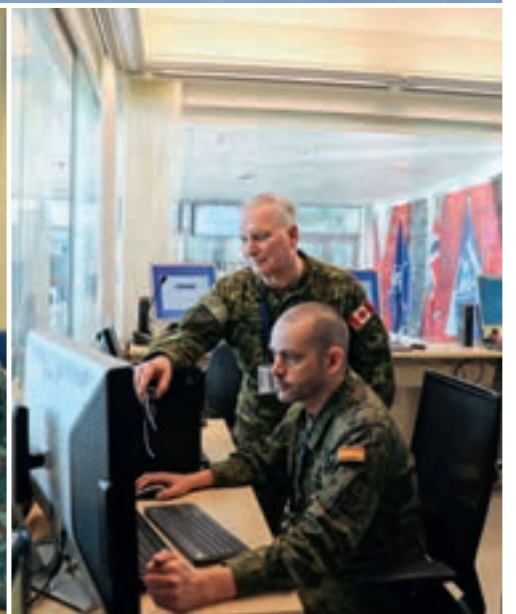
The main tasks of the Real Life Support (RLS) Branch are the planning, coordination and execution of the logistical support for all events hosted by the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC). On average, the JWC hosts 24 events annually with almost 4,000 external participants from all over the world. Events usually range from smaller meetings of 10 to 20 participants over a few days, up to one major exercise with around 1,250 external participants, running for 14 days.

In order to support the JWC's mission, the expertise of dedicated and professional RLS allows to efficiently welcome large numbers of participants from various NATO nations and ensure that all their basic needs are well catered for. The RLS team is the first contact the participants have with the JWC. It is widely known that first impressions matter, and they need to be carefully planned and delivered.

The RLS Branch coordinates a wide range of services provided in close collaboration with other JWC branches, the host nation, and the local commercial community. The support requirements are personalized for each event and group of participants through the event planning process. The branch makes the required arrangements and adapts the services in various areas including catering, accommodation, transportation, medical, in-processing, facility preparation, event helpdesk and database, security, cleaning services, religious service, social events, etc. As such, the RLS Branch is an integral part of all exercises and events at the JWC.

RIGHT, CLOCKWISE

(Top) In-processing on arrival to the JWC (1-3); RLS staff members; a meeting with the Branch Head, Lieutenant Colonel Thorsten Schnuer (centre)



The branch itself consists of a diverse team from seven nations. An appointed RLS planner and support assistant is nominated for each exercise. They are involved in the planning process of all events and exercises from the very beginning. The implementation of the support plan is coordinated with the respective stakeholders, both in and outside of the JWC. The same approach is also used for the planning and preparation of smaller and non-exercise related events. In the execution phase of an event, the RLS Branch is supported by additional personnel from the Security Section, the Supply Section, the CIS Branch, and, during larger events, by external augmentees. Thus, RLS is a common effort of the entire Support Directorate.

Preparation of Exercises and In-Processing

After completion of the planning process, the framework conditions of the logistical support are published in the event administrative instructions. Once published, each participant registers their attendance for their specific event via a web-based application and provides any additional important information for further support, such as arrival information, accommodation requirements, and departure dates. In addition, individual needs, such as special dietary requirements, can also be accommodated.

After registration, the RLS team creates a transportation plan, organizes pick-up from the airport, and arranges the hire of rental cars and buses as needed. Simultaneously, the RLS Facility Coordinator ensures that all the

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BELOW
The JWC auditorium
during Exercise TRIDENT
JUNCTURE 2018

RIGHT
Camp Madla



working rooms for the event are prepared and equipped in accordance with the detailed floor plan and specifications. The RLS team also lays out an accommodation plan for the military accommodation provided by the host nation. Finally, upon arrival, the participants are picked up and transferred to the JWC for in-processing. The in-processing of the participants consists of the following steps: in-processing briefing; security authorizations; settling payment; CIS activation. Only after a successful in-processing, can the exercise begin.

Supporting the JWC-led Exercises and Events

The main RLS areas of activity during the operational conduct of a NATO exercise are accommodation, transport, and catering services. In addition to the local hotels, the military accommodation provided by Norway is a popular option for our military and civilian guests, who are always made welcome. The Transportation Cell of the RLS is a very sought-after team, as it also coordinates last-minute requests such as medical transportation and redeployment transport to the airport.

Catering also contributes significantly to the exercises. The JWC operates two canteens, with a maximum serving capacity of 1,500 people within a timeslot of three hours. Together, they both offer excellent quality at a very reasonable price.

In addition to these central tasks, the RLS team is permanently on site to ensure a constant presence at the event helpdesk while also dealing with any issues that the guests may have. This ranges from support in case of illness to the provision of office equipment, to cleaning services and much more.

The RLS team's approach is to make every effort possible to relieve participants of all daily worries and allow them to focus on the essential purpose of their stay. Upon completing an event and dropping off the last participants at the airport, the RLS team clears up, takes a deep breath and starts the preparations for the next event.

Today and Tomorrow

Since the inception of the JWC, the RLS Branch has been a key component of the Support Directorate that allows the Commander to complete his mandate. Sustaining this professionalism in the future is an important incentive and challenge for the branch and its supporting elements. This will require maximum effort, especially with the increasing complexity of NATO exercises, the growing attendance, and the increasing number of non-exercise related events hosted at the JWC. ✦



Major Annie Viens was the Deputy Real Life Support Branch Head from November 2016 to 2021.

Turnkey Facilities

The JWC provides NATO a "ready-to-use" exercise facility so as to avoid:

- The one-time cost and effort of setting up temporary training locations all over Europe for each and every event
- Deploying the support personnel to locations and thus allocating a full team to set up, run and tear down CIS networks
- Expensive commercial accommodation
- Over-committing the scarce NATO deployable CIS resources, since the JWC always has a ready-to-use CIS infrastructure
- The significant host nation support required in a temporary facility

