

Keeping On Track with the JWC Quality Assurance Branch

The Quality Assurance team has a major role to play in developing the Centre's core business: training NATO on operational- and strategic-level exercises and warfare development, while ensuring superior performance, accountability and durability.

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Maintaining the high quality of exercises that come to life at the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) is central to the mandate of the Quality Assurance (QA) Branch. We are a small team that contributes to the overall exercise process from inception through to the final analysis of the training audience's performance. Each exercise brings with it unique challenges in breadth and depth, such as how to organize exercise control (EXCON) while adapting to different training audience approaches and increasing ambition.

One benefit of the JWC's rapid-fire output has been the opportunity to observe trends and patterns over a succession of exercises, each with distinctions and commonalities. Since 2020, we faced the global COVID-19 pandemic during our busiest months. Nevertheless, we managed to adapt to the situation and conducted the exercises with some highly effective adjustments. The pandemic actually gave us the opportunity to review if we are "doing the right things" as well as "doing things right".

Our Training Analysts

Our training event development (TED) analysts engage closely with the JWC's exercise planners, the headquarters of the officer conducting the exercise (OCE), and the training audiences to develop training objectives for the exercises based on both Supreme Allied Commander Europe's (SACEUR) Annual Guidance, and the articulated exercise objectives.

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During the exercise execution phase, TED analysts work directly with the JWC Transformation Delivery Division's Advisory Team of subject matter experts. Together they closely examine the training audience's achievement of the objectives, as well as how it conducts operations. This is then documented and compiled by the OCE in the Stage 4 publications in the form of the first impression reports and the final exercise report. Thus, the TED analysts enjoy an unrivalled view of the exercise planning, possess a detailed understanding of the high-level requirements of the exercise, actively engage in the entire planning and product delivery processes and play a central role in assessing and analysing the training audience's achievement of the training objectives. Considering the stages involved and the tasks they carry out, the TED analysts are indeed some of the most situationally aware actors in the overall exercise process.

Lessons Learned

The lessons learned purview covers the JWC's performance and practices when producing exercises, and indeed, any corporate business. The core team of two lessons learned staff officers and one lessons learned analyst makes observations and analyses of lessons developed during exercise planning, and, in particular, during Phases II and III, in order to optimize practices and minimize recurring problems or frictions, be they sourced in-house, or caused by external agencies. Lessons are staffed internally or externally, depending on the nature of the problem and how it should be solved.

The lessons learned team is an innovative team that strives to improve the JWC's business processes and NATO's lessons learned process. Recently, the team worked closely with the Information Management/Command,

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Left: Quality Assurance staff during exercises STEADFAST JUPITER-JACKAL 2020 (Navy Commander Trond Gleditsch, former TED analyst) and STEADFAST JACKAL 2021 (Lieutenant Colonel Yavuz Satir, Quality Assurance Branch Head)

BELOW

Left: Amul Waraich, TED analyst at the vision workshop

Centre: Andrew Eden, the author

Right: Robert Scheider, TED analyst, during Exercise STEADFAST JACKAL 2021 in Italy





Control, Computer and Communications (IIM/C4) Branch to develop the JWC Observation Reporting Tool (JORT) in order to leverage the experience of exercise participants. Additionally, in the COVID-19 era, the lessons learned team collected the observations regarding the effects of the pandemic on the JWC and NATO using an array of methods such as interviews, online surveys, and observation collection forms to provide essential lessons to the entire NATO community.

Quality Assurance in the Future

As NATO's near-term exercises become more complex in breadth and depth, it is clear that the demands on the JWC as a whole will increase even more. Maintaining high-quality exercises requires a focus on just that: quality. NATO quality standards address three broad areas: leadership and management, education and training, and the contribution to NATO. The Quality Assurance Branch continues to focus on these areas in order to provide the most efficient, effective, and highest-quality service possible.

Finally, the Quality Assurance Branch continues to explore new ways to standardize the JWC's outputs to achieve a leaner organization. Our analysts are dedicated to developing means to achieve more flexible change of roles during exercises as and when required. ✦

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Andrew Eden is a NATO International Civilian employed at the JWC since 2014. He has worked in NATO's lessons learned domain for 17 years.