

The Engine Room of the JWC

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Exercises and warfare development have always been the bread and butter of the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC); they are the main output the Centre's world revolves around. However, behind every successful exercise, there are hours upon hours of work and detailed coordination for different events, more specifically, letters to be answered, reports to be written, information to be disseminated, internal studies to be carried out, and directives and standing operating procedures to be signed. All this is the world of the Management, Tasking and Coordination (MTC) Branch. Our branch is always staffed, all year round, keeping the house humming — and ensuring that everything at the JWC is performed smoothly and efficiently.

As our branch name suggests, we handle tasks, which mainly come from Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (HQ SACT), sent to its three satellites in Europe: the JWC, the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC) and the Joint Force Training Centre (JFTC).

BELOW

Left: Lieutenant Colonel Jon Gromstad, the author

Right: Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps' staff arriving to the JWC for Exercise TRIDENT JAGUAR 2015





ABOVE

Left: Lieutenant Colonel Oguzhan Cuhaci, Resources, Analysis and Planning Branch, at a Director of Management meeting.

Right: Senior Petty Officer Natasha Skramstad, Command Group Administrator

We start the day with quite a high number of email notifications that we have to turn into “Taskers” and distribute to staff. At the same time, we also monitor the tasks sent to other headquarters’ locations. We do this in order to stay informed, and, to a certain extent, it also makes it possible for the branch to foresee how this will impact the JWC’s present and future workload. We then pass on the information we pick up to the relevant staff within the JWC.

All external taskers sent to the JWC are delegated to relevant in-house staff using an internal tasking tool. The tool works across divisions, making it easier to collaborate. In addition, it is a great way for managing timelines, providing a repository for spreadsheets, presentations and other task-related documents. The same tool is also used for managing incoming correspondence and for staff to pass on work to each other through our branch. This means we have to be present and alert for continuous coordination and task solving at all times. All the delegation involved in our job also means that our branch needs to know who is focused on which task at the JWC.

The Campaign Plan

The Commander JWC’s monthly update takes shape through a series of meetings. These are initiated by the Resources, Analysis and Planning (RAP) team. This team is made up of branch heads, exercise leads and other stakeholders, who meet to discuss progress and risks. The output from this meeting is then further refined through the Programme Review Board (PRB), consisting of division heads and programme directors. The content then goes through the Resource Management Board (RMB) led by the JWC Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff.

The outcome of these meetings, in addition to inputs from staff, is then collated by the MTC Branch and incorporated into the Commander’s monthly update. The MTC Branch, together with the RAP team, also updates the ACT



ABOVE

Left: Wing Commander John Rees, Resources, Analysis and Planning Branch Head, at the first JWC Senior Mentor Seminar

Right: Lieutenant Colonel Michael Kraus, Management, Tasking and Coordination Branch Head

annual and biannual reports with the relevant information. Furthermore, the JWC is part of ACT's campaign plan, which has overarching command objectives that can be broken down into directorate objectives. All these objectives support Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation's (HQ SACT) Vision. As an example, our exercises are part of the objectives within their Joint Force Development (JFD) — HQ SACT's very own "engine room" of warfare development. The MTC Branch and the RAP team ensure that the campaign plan is populated, updated and reported according to milestones and timelines.

The Oracle at the JWC

Although we are a small branch, we do our best to be present when and where we are needed, and to contribute with our knowledge and insights to projects across our divisions and branches. I like to imagine we are the spider at the centre of the web, or the crew in the engine room. In other words, our branch helps ensure that staff are kept occupied; that everyone reports back and meets the timelines. If staff have a question to which they cannot find the answer, they always stop by the MTC Branch, or "the oracle at the JWC", as we call it, knowing that we most probably have the information they need, and if not, we will point them in the right direction. ✦

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Lieutenant Colonel Jon Gromstad is a senior staff officer, and has been assigned to the JWC since 2019. He has more than 10 years experience from other NATO positions and assignments.