

Exercise "Eagle Thunder"

By LtC P. LAMACCHIA, SO2 G7 Standardization

Exercise "Eagle Thunder"



As known, the responsibility for the ISAF mission has been delegated, by SACEUR, to the Joint Force Commander Brunssum. This HQ gives all the directions and guidance for the deploying HQ ISAF. Therefore we were also given, in January, our Training Directive, which contains all the activities to be executed in order to achieve the certification as "Mission Ready".



The Joint Force Commander training concept consists of a series of blocks of activities, to be conducted progressively, aimed at achieving some operational standards. The culmination of such activities is the so called "Mission Rehearsal Training" (MRT). It is a kind of major exercise where five training blocks are executed under the supervision of the Joint Force Commander. It generally takes place a couple of months before the deployment and the location is the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) in Stavanger, Norway. The JWC is one of the NATO "centres of excellence", a facility equipped with all the assets necessary to provide a valuable training to such a complex structure as the HQ ISAF. Particularly what we did during the MRT, which we called Exercise Eagle Thunder just to remain in our Eagle series, was the completion of the Mission Specific Training (MST), the Functional Area Training (FAT), the Battle Staff Training (BST), the

Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRE) and the Key Leader Training (KLT). The MST was aimed to complete the familiarisation of our Staff and our augmentees with the Afghan environment; we had very high-level briefings and presentations given by Subject Matter Experts coming from every corner of the world including Afghanistan itself. The FAT purpose was to enhance at the maximum level the Branches cohesion allowing also the integration of the augmentees who met for the first time their mates. The BST, on the other hand, targeted the Staff as a whole aiming at the Branches interaction and interoperability. The KLT was a specific, very high level, training focussed on those who would play key roles in Afghanistan; it consisted of negotiation techniques, media handling and political presentations. Finally, the MRE was a complete rehearsal of the typical ISAF working environment where the Exercise Controllers, basically the Joint Force Command and Joint Warfare Centre members (supported by the Subject Matter Experts), challenged our HQ with a progression of "injects" (problems based on real situation occurred in

Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRE) and the Key Leader Training (KLT).

The MST was aimed to complete the familiarisation of our Staff and our augmentees with the Afghan environment; we had very high-level briefings and presentations given by Subject Matter Experts coming from every corner of the world including Afghanistan itself. The FAT purpose was to enhance at the maximum level the Branches cohesion allowing also the integration of the augmentees who met for the first



time their mates. The BST, on the other hand, targeted the Staff as a whole aiming at the Branches interaction and interoperability. The KLT was a specific, very high level, training focussed on those who would play key roles in Afghanistan; it consisted of negotiation techniques, media handling and political presentations. Finally, the MRE was a complete rehearsal of the typical ISAF working environment where the Exercise Controllers, basically the Joint Force Command and Joint Warfare Centre members (supported by the Subject Matter Experts), challenged our HQ with a progression of "injects" (problems based on real situation occurred in



Afghanistan). It produced the desired result, the Staff was totally absorbed by the situation and, for five days, all the people hardly realised to stay in the deep North of Europe rather than in the President Karzai's country. The twelve days exercise passed very quickly, all the participants didn't have a break in their Afghan full immersion, all the challenges were tackled very effectively

and, at the end, we achieved a public recognition of our efforts. Both JFC and JWC expressed their satisfaction



on the work HQ NRDC-IT had been able to produce; the Staff dealt with the exercise in a very professional way showing both competence and high-grade maturity.

It is to say, however, that such a result has been possible because of the huge amount of training we had in Solbiate before Exercise Eagle Thunder. As a matter of fact the Eagle Focus series and the Eagle Action allowed us to go to Stavanger with a solid background that made the big difference.

A mention is worth also for the real life arrangements. Our ac-

commodation was in a very comfortable barracks belonging to the Norwegian Navy, it was located in Madla, just ten minutes driving from Stavanger downtown.

On the only free day we had also the opportunity to breathe the magic atmosphere of the Norwegian Fjords; a boat trip was organised and we explored from the sea, which gives the best perspective, this very impressive area of the world.

Last, but not least, there was also room for some relax in the lovely (and lively) Stavanger downtown where we very often enjoyed the worldwide famous "Midnight Sun"...

It is therefore possible to say that Exercise Eagle Thunder has been a great success; it gave us the opportunity to enlarge our culture working with very high-professional colleagues and the possibility to visit a marvellous country; furthermore, and this is the most important aspect, it gave us the self confidence that is the necessary asset to cope with such a delicate operational tour as the ISAF one.

