

Exercise EAGLE FOCUS The ISAF Team Prepares

by Col John Rouse

This Autumn, as a part of the build up to ISAF 9/1 deployment in January 2009, HQ NRDC-ITA ran a series of three one week exercises in order to prepare the 150 deploying personnel for their ISAF appointments. The series, known as EAGLE FOCUS, was based on the HQ's previous experiences of preparing for ISAF VIII, and was designed to progressively train individuals to understand the Afghanistan context, and to begin to work together in preparation for taking their part in the ISAF Headquarters. In brief, details of the three exercises were as follows.

Exercise EAGLE FOCUS 1 (01-05 September).

With a small team deployed to HQ NRDC-ITA, the staff from the NATO School from Oberammergau coordinated and delivered an excellent series of lectures designed to give background and context to the situation in Afghanistan, and specifically for ISAF. Lecturers were drawn from across NATO to give what turned out to be a most informative and thought provoking course. The ground was indeed prepared for what was to come.

Exercise EAGLE FOCUS 2 (22-26 September).

The CDD Branch of HQ NRDC-ITA was selected, because of its expertise and renowned ability to assist G7 with complex issues, to plan and execute the second in exercise series. This exercise was designed to introduce staff to ISAF operating procedures and, through a series

of case studies, get staff, working in staff functional groups, to solve simple though typical problems that face the ISAF HQ on a daily basis. This otherwise mundane activity was brought to life by a superbly designed exercise by LTC Ciccirella, and some well coordinated case studies written by LTC Di Marzio.

Exercise EAGLE FOCUS 3 (10-14 November).

CDD had made such a success of the second exercise that it was asked to run the third and final in the series. Building on the previous two exercises the third exercise was designed to train staff together as multi functional groups, using the medium of typical and current ISAF issues, so called 'vignettes'.

There is no doubt that the exercise was a great success and a fitting culmination to the series.

Of course, the EAGLE FOCUS series is not the only ISAF training that staff have undertaken in preparation for deployment. A whole range of individual military and specific-to-appointment training has also been planned. Additionally, most staff will deploy to mission rehearsal training in the Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger, Norway, in December. During this period they will meet up with other NATO staff who will also deploy to ISAF. But the EAGLE FOCUS series has undoubtedly been the backbone of this HQ's ISAF preparation, and is a good model for ISAF preparation that other HQs may wish to employ. Staff who attend the series are certainly well prepared to meet the challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead.

