

Ex Northern Light 03

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A step forward NRF development



Exercise Northern Light 03 was a joint and combined NATO task force CPX and livex in a Crises Response Operation (CRO) conducted in the Irish Sea and West Coast of Scotland with the involvement of 50 ships, 800 marines and minor helicopter assets, coming from 17 countries and two PFP nations (Sweden and Ukraine).

The scenario/setting required the execution of an amphibious operation in order to create the enabling conditions for a follow on force to accomplish a NATO mission under a UN mandate.

HQ NRDC-IT participated with the following force packages:

- Early Entry Force: 34 pax, 9 vehicles, 9 trailers, involved in the livex and CPX phases with real m u l t i m o d a l deployment and the support of CATAF (ship, helicopter, Landing Craft Units-LCU);
- Corps MAIN CP (response cell only): 89 pax, deployed in Northwood (UK, Eastlant HQ);
- Liaison teams : 10 pax, deployed with C o m p o n e n t Commanders;
- Augmentees: 12 pax

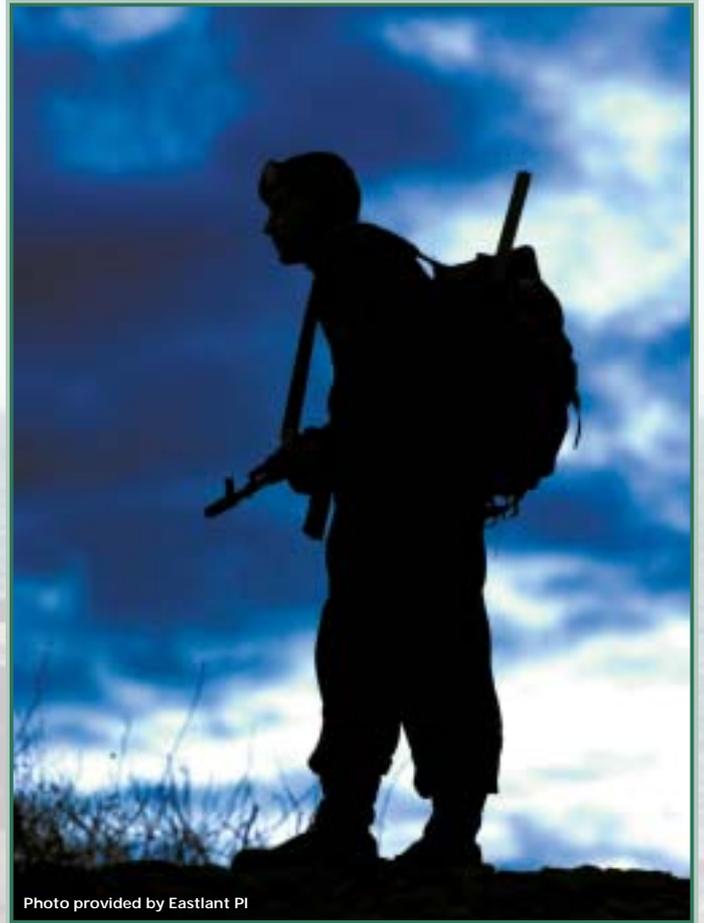


Photo provided by Eastlant PI

Ukrainian soldier during Ex Northern Light 03

(Distaff and JFC);

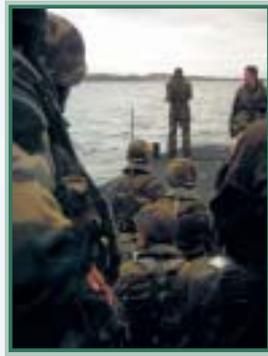
- MAIN CIS package: 23 pax and 4 vehicles deployed in Northwood.

The exercise training objectives were:

- (1) Exercise Early Entry team Command Control activities during livex (based on NRF type scenario);
- (2) To test strategic CIS assets (SATCOM);
- (3) To train/test multimodal Early Entry strategic deployment;
- (4) Exercise the NRDC IT Staff as a Land Component Command HQ (response Cell only);
- (5) Enhance the Corps' planning group in the operational planning process at the JFC Component Commands;
- (6) To expand the knowledge the knowledge of maritime and amphibious procedures;
- (7) To interface with liaison teams and coordination



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with JFC Component Commanders;
(8) To review/refine the EE composition and the internal TTP (Tactics Technic and Procedures).

This is the first time that NRDC IT has been so fully involved in principally a maritime and amphibious exercise on such large scale, working closely with the other services and with personnel from many different nations. The Early Entry Headquarters, embarked on

THIS EXERCISE AS A STEP FORWARD IN THE BUILD UP OF A JOINT MENTALITY TO THE CREATION OF THE NRF

HrMs ROTTERDAM Royal Nederland, carried out joint manoeuvres with an Amphibious Task Group along the North West Coast of Scotland, and on 21 September 03 for the very first time deployed its vehicles and personnel from ROTTERDAM onto the beach at Luce Bay by Landing Craft Unit (LCU) and helicopters in a tactical setting. "We did a rehearsal of loading and landing operations with the Amphibious Task Group along the North West coast of Scotland some days before and when we arrived here we knew exactly what to do" an Italian soldier of the 1st Signal regiment said. The small but highly deployable Command post once landed, reached West Freugh airport setting up its facilities and satellite communications and started

liaising with the multinational amphibious component, Ukrainian and French marines, which had landed the day before. The landing was conducted in two different phases, one by air using helicopters and the other by sea using a mobile dock called mexefloate where all the vehicles were placed.

NRDC-IT Commander, Lt General Fabrizio Castagnetti, saw this exercise as a step forward in the build up of a joint mentality to the creation of the NRF. Especially for his staff that will play the role of Land Component Command for NATO Response Force 3 (Three) in July 2004 through December 2004.

EXERCISE DEPLOYMENT

All the NRDC IT package forces involved in the exercise have been deployed according to the planned calendar. Before the exercise startex all the assets arrived successfully on UK soil and respective ships as scheduled. For the EE HQ, this phase also included

the embarkation of vehicles and personnel onboard HRMS ROTTERDAM by 06 Sep 03, and subsequently sailing to GLASGOW in readiness for the Pre-Sailing Conference at FASLANE on 12 Sep 03.

MAIN CP was located in Northwood base which is the home of Commander in Chief Eastern Atlantic, one of NATO'S three major Commanders. Northwood is also the Headquarters of



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Commander in Chief Fleet, the Chief of Joint Operations and his Permanent Joint Headquarters, Flag Officer Submarines and the Air Commodore Maritime No 3 Group RAF. The staff was accommodated at RAF base in Uxbridge where, at the end of the exercise, we had the chance to visit the RAF museum and bunker where the Battle of Britain was directed during WWII.

EXECUTION

Main Exercise Period Overview: Following the Pre-Sailing Conference in FASLANE, the EE HQ departed GLASGOW with the Amphibious Task Group (Amph TG) at the same time that Main HQ arrived in the UK to set up at NORTHWOOD. From 15 Sep 03, the Amph TG conducted deployment exercises in the vicinity of LOCH EWE. During this period, EE HQ conducted Combat Effectiveness/Force Integration Training (CET/FIT) as well as some planning activities with the Amph CC staff. Both activities proved to be of considerable training benefit. The CET/FIT programme gave the EE team great experience for any future amphibious operations, identifying in particular the

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need to prepare our vehicles for amphibious landings. The planning activities also exposed the staff to the Operational Planning process of other components to which the LCC was able to contribute positively on a number of occasions.

All the relevant aspect of a real operations were represented and the Media was one of the most important. A Simulated Press team was able to produce articles, interview, news broadcast and news agencies that replicated the pressure of Media on the operations. A daily Press conference was held at JFC Command which was attended mainly by JFC representatives, but also the LCC Commander and COS had the chance to be interviewed by the GNN mobile video team of the Warrior Preparation Center based in Ramstein and directed by Pete Dubois.

CIS ASPECTS.

The Exercise Northern Light 03 was an excellent opportunity to check the NRDC-IT Satellite Communications systems and the CIS interoperability with other NATO HQs.

The 1st Signal Regt linked through EUTELSAT the Permanent HQ (PHQ) in "Ugo Mara" Barracks, the Main CJFLCC CP in Northwood (UK) and the EE CP both when on board HRM Rotterdam and in West Freugh Air Base (UK), providing the whole range of services: voice (phone and fax) and data (MTSWAN, SIACCON and Video Teleconferencing -VTC-). As a back-up, an INMARSAT link was established between the EE and the MAIN CPs, providing only voice.

The exercise proved that the CIS capability of the EE CP in case of emergency deployments is not sufficient to satisfy the HQ NRDC-IT requirements. There is an urgent operational need to increase the EE CIS package capabilities in order to provide a more robust and redundant communications capability and services between the EE and the PHQ.



NRDC-IT EE CP reach the beach and starts disembarking



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Through integration with the JFC and the other Component Commands taking part in the Exercise, CINCEASTLANT CMC (CIS Management Cell) was able to provide the following CIS services: NSWAN (CRONOS) connectivity, voice, VTC and NATO UNCLASS (Internet).

The CJFLCC Main CP was fully integrated in the overall Exercise CIS architecture, however the difficult problem of interoperability between the two WANS used in the Main CP still remained (the NSWAN and the MTSWAN). So far, this is a common problem to all deployed NATO HQs and a satisfactory solution, able to sort out both the security and technical aspects, is still pending.

Another hot issue was the link between the CCATF and the EE CP during the deployment to West Freugh Air Base. In fact, the only communications between both Commanders were through the CJFLCC Main CP, which caused a delay in the delivery of the information and, therefore, a decrease in the effectiveness of the C2 structure. For future operations/exercises, where the NRDC-IT is to operate with other CCs, it is extremely important to coordinate and ensure from the very beginning the immediate inclusion of NSWAN connectivity to the EE CP.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS/WAY AHEAD

This was NRDC-Italy's first exposure to live joint operations on exercise and has come at an opportune time for our NRF preparation. The staff working in Northwood had a great benefit working closely with a mainly maritime Hqs exchanging and sharing procedure for a better understanding of army and navy requirements and time constraints.

The LIVEX experience of the Early Entry CP and the presence of an amphibious HQ, in the shape of the UKMARFOR LNO at LCC PHQ, have increased personnel experience in terms of procedures in an area in which NRDC-IT may very well have to become involved as an NRF initial entry force. From the beginning the Dutch Navy was of great assistance to the Early Entry team, helping in solving all problems that arose and the crew



NRDC-IT EE CP personnel on board mexefloat

of HRMS ROTTERDAM gave the CP an excellent hospitality and all the assets necessary to update the PHQ on the current situation.



Staff attending a meeting in Main CP

EECP: Early Entry Comand Post
CJFLCC: Combined Joint Force Land Component Comand
CCATF: Component Comand Amphibious Task Force
JFC: Joint Force Command

