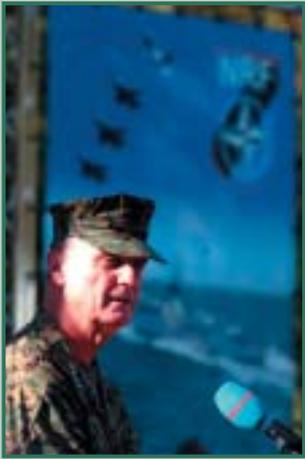


NATO Response Force

by Ltc R. CRISTONI, Chief PI

"It marks an important recognition on the part of the Alliance that the international security environment has changed dramatically."



Gen J L Jones SACEUR presents the NRF

One of the most important decisions the leaders of NATO's 19 nations have taken in recent years is the formation of the rapid reaction NATO Response Force. Its development has become a centerpiece and an engine of change for the Alliance as it transforms and positions itself to meet the threats to security and stability in the 21st Century.

For the first time in its history, the Alliance will have a joint/combined air, land, sea and special operations force under a single commander, maintained as a standing rotational force. But it is also an important vehicle of transformation - a force for change. It is intended to address one of the Alliance's main military problems; NATO has lots of soldiers (1,4 mil) but relatively few of them are actually trained, ready and equipped to be deployed (50,000) beyond their own national borders. It represents an unambiguous commitment of the Alliance's intent to stay militarily relevant in a global context.

Origins and Deadlines

The US proposal to launch the force was approved at a landmark NATO summit in Prague in November 2002. The summit agreed that the NRF would reach its Initial Operational Capability (IOC) as soon as possible but not later than October 2004, and its Full Operational Capability (FOC) not later than October 2006. Based on these directives, Defence Ministers last June tasked the NATO Military Authorities (NMAs) to establish the NRF. Thanks to a very intense and expeditious engagement of Allied nations the NMAs worked towards the



activation of a first "prototype" NRF that was inaugurated at AFNORTH Hqs on 15 October 2003. In the meantime, the force's potential on the ground was tested at a meeting in Colorado Springs, where NATO Defence Ministers and their senior military and civilian advisors were presented with a complex scenario, set in 2007 somewhere in the Red Sea, which drew out the implications of transformation and examined how the NATO Response Force might operate in a fictional crisis.

"NATO'S NEW RESPONSE FORCE WILL ENSURE THAT NATO CAN CONTRIBUTE EFFECTIVELY TO THE MOST DEMANDING MILITARY OPERATIONS" (Lord Robertson Secretary General NATO)

State of the art

NRF is the real focus within NATO, during 2003 many exercises have been played aimed at improving NRF procedures and knowledge. In September Ex Northern Light '03, conducted by Regional Hqs East Atlantic, demonstrated some of the maritime and amphibious capabilities that can be deployed as part of NRF; a good opportunity for NRDC-IT to work with UK MARFOR as they will be respectively Land Component Command and Maritime Component Command for NRF 3. In October Striking Fleet Atlantic Headquarters played Exercise Joint Vision 03, where the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) training exercise focused

on functional and integration skills in a NATO Reaction Force (NRF) environment. Finally Allied Reponse '03 provided the first live exercise aimed at illustrating selected aspects and capabilities of NRF 1 and 2. The first two NRF rotations are purposefully designed to be smaller and somewhat limited in scope. It is a force capable of executing a range of missions such as



NATO Response Force



Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO), Support for Counter-Terrorism, and Consequence Management Operations.

Way Ahead

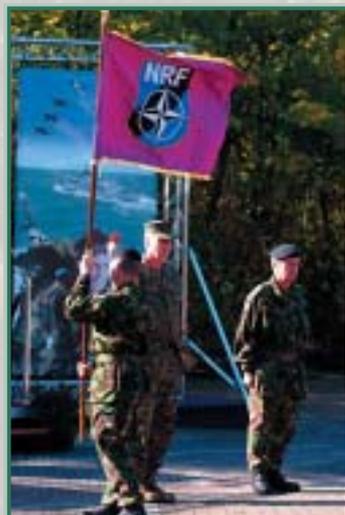
NRDC-IT 2004 training calendar will be all committed to NRF, starting with Ex Eagle Landing in March designed to validate the NRF Land Component Command capability, Ex Allied Action '04 dedicated to validate both the CJTF and NRF in May and Ex Destiny Glory '04 in October. From a national perspective Italy will be heavily committed by providing both LCC, represented by NRDC-IT, and a brigade size force of about 4000 men strength comprises of Combat Service (CS) and Combat Service Support (CSS) assets. The national certification process for the Brigade is going to be completed by mid December

Some Concerns:

predelegated authority, resources.

Media continue to point out that while the NRF must be able to deploy to a crisis area within five days, political procedures in some Alliance member nations may delay that deployment. NATO spokespeople concede that much remains to be determined about how the new NRF will work - including the process for deciding whether and when to deploy the task force. One stumbling block is that some NATO members currently have requirements for parliamentary approval before sending troops into action. This process must be streamlined if any force involving these nations is to have a "rapid reaction" to a crisis.

Firstly, the Joint Force Commander and his Component Commanders must be vested with the authority and



autonomy through the Transfer of Authority process to prepare, train, and maintain the readiness of their subordinate forces, as they will have a crucial role in developing the standards for preparing

and training the NRF and for sustaining its long-term readiness. Secondly, the absence of some key resources must be addressed. Shortages remain in several areas of which Strategic Lift to move the force, and Deployable CIS and Life Support systems to sustain the force are just some examples.



Positive effects

The NRF is designed to be a robust, high readiness, fully trained and certified force that is prepared to tackle the full spectrum of missions, including force. When NATO decides to employ it, the NRF will be ready to deploy in five days and will be able to sustain itself for 30 days. The NRF will be comprised of national force contributions, which will rotate through periods of training and certification as a joint force, followed by an operational "stand by" phase of six months after which other units will take their place.

This constant rotation will mean that troops from many countries

will have to meet the stringent standards set for the new force. Over time this will create a much larger pool of units, all with significantly enhanced mobility and equipment. Once these units receive these upgrades, they are rotated through the highest NRF readiness window and then spread their experience and institutional knowledge back to their national forces and ultimately into an Alliance-wide military culture of modernity. The previous problems of incompatibility between the communication and logistical systems of NATO member military forces will be alleviated, and the technological gap between US Forces and other NATO members will be narrowed.

"MY TOP PRIORITY IS THE NRF... AND THIS WILL BE THE DRIVING FACTOR FOR CONDUCTING NATO EXERCISES"
(Gen J L Jones USMC SACEUR)

