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**Trident Juncture,
2015 and 2018**



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The Role of Exercises in Shaping Deterrence in Depth: The Case of Trident Juncture

Trident Juncture 2018 will be a major NATO exercise. As the head of the Transformation Command in NATO, General Mercier, put it last year:

“NATO needs to hold exercises on a large scale.

“Only this way are we able to test all the levels in the alliance: From the troops on the ground and all the way up to a strategic level, NATO needs realistic training, where we can combine operations in the air, at sea and on land. In Norway we get everything, this is one of the best places to train in Europe.”

It will be the largest exercise hosted in Norway for a very long time.

The first Trident Juncture exercise took place in Portugal, Spain and Italy from 3 October to 6 November 2015.

Around 36,000 soldiers and other personnel from over 30 nations took part in the exercise.

The next Trident Juncture will be held in central Norway in 2018 and is expected to be of the same size. Norway has a long tradition of hosting major allied and multinational military exercises.

Among them is Cold Response. Trident Juncture 2018 will consist of a live exercise in October and November and a Command Post Exercise in November 2018.

But seen from a Nordic perspective, the exercise is coming at a time when Norway is modernizing its defense force, working ever more closely with the other Nordics, including cross-border training with Sweden and Finland, and re-invigorating its total defense approach.

Indeed, with the return of conscription in Sweden, with the continued commitment to a national mobilized armed forces in Finland and to a re-emphasis on the total defense concept, the Nordics are leading the way within Europe on a wider societal commitment to defense.

With the importance of crisis management in the region, an ability to work effectively with allied forces operating on NATO territory supported by a total defense approach within Norway is part of the effort to calibrate force capabilities appropriate to deal with regional crises.

As Norway reworks its air basing structure, and modernizes its air force, army and navy, along with changes in the broader North Atlantic, working deterrence in depth is underway as well.

For example, the UK will add a new F-35-enabled carrier able to operate in the region as a mobile base able to work with other F-35s in the region to shape a wider combat grid to support moves on the strategic and tactical chessboard necessary to deal with regional crises.

But to shape such capabilities will require an effective exercise regime, one in which Norway works to support allied forces appropriate to meeting effectively specific regional crisis situations.

It is not just about being reassured by importing allied capability, more generally; it is about integrating Norwegian with appropriate allied forces to meet specific crisis management challenges and military threats in the region.

During my visit to Norway during April 2018, I had a chance to discuss Trident Juncture with several Norwegian defense and military officials.

And at the end of the visit had a chance to focus specifically on the exercise and its interconnection with the Norwegian Total Defense Concept with Col Lars Lervik at the Norwegian Ministry of Defence who is working the preparation for the Trident Juncture 2018 exercise.

According to Col Lars Lervik: “A key focus of the exercise from the NATO side is exercising our ability to conduct high intensity operations in a multi-national environment.

“What we’re looking at here is confronting an opponent who has the whole arsenal available.

“We need to be able to function not only as individuals and individual nations, but actually function together.

“This is a key focus of the exercise.”

Trident Juncture 2018 is also a command post exercise as well and given that Norway is reworking its C2 capabilities as part of defense modernization, the exercise provides an opportunity to input multinational operational training as well into the transformation process.

Col Lars Lervik highlighted that “It is very important to ensure that we have the procedures in place necessary to operate an integrated force on Norwegian territory in a higher intensity operational environment.

“We are starting really to be serious about C2 again.

“We are working to shape an effective C2 template going forward.

“We need to make sure that all our structures are integratable with NATO.”

“It is not a coincidence that Norway volunteered to be the host for this exercise.

“We’ve been focused on getting NATO to focus back on collective defense for quite a while.”

The Norwegians are working at three levels with regard to C2.

The first is at the national level.

The second is at the NATO level.

The third is at the bilateral C2 level, namely working with the US, the UK, the Nordic non-NATO members as well as other NATO members, such as Germany.

There is a substantial maritime component within the exercise, which gets at the broader extended deterrence piece whereby the sea base becomes integrated into the defense of Norway and NATO forces operating on Norwegian territory as well.

Col Lars Lervik underscored that “Working with allied forces is also about the capability of Norway able to receive NATO and allied reinforcements.

“And that’s when a total defense concept comes into play for us to be able to fulfill our host nation support commitments.”

For Norway, the total defense concept is a focus on the ability of the civilian side of society to support military operations.

For example, the Norwegians do not have a specialized military medical service. The civilian side is mobilized to support both Norwegian and allied medical needs in times of conflict. This will be exercised during Trident Juncture 2018.

Col Lars Lervik emphasized that “We need to be able to support NATO allies when they come into Norway.

“I think we’re making real progress with regard to civil society’s ability to support the Norwegian and allied militaries.

“For example, when the US Marines arrive in Undredal, Norway (in the middle of Norway), it could be a civilian bus driver on a civilian bus who will transport them onward to their next location. They might pick up fuel from a local civilian Norwegian logistics company.

“It is about the resilience as well with regard to civilian society to support military operations.

“We need to understand and to enhance how the modern society is able to function in a time of crises and war.”

THIS IS NORWAY'S TOTAL DEFENCE

- In the event of a crisis or conflict, the Norwegian Armed Forces depend on support from the civil society. The Total Defence is Norway's total, collective military and civilian effort during crisis or war.
- The Norwegian Armed Forces are in charge of the military division of the Total Defence, while the Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB) is in charge of the civilian part.
- Should a conflict or crisis arise, a number of civilian professions and branches may be affected. These include: public healthcare, transport and logistics, agriculture, food industry, media, and construction.
- The Norwegian Total Defence will be tested and trained this autumn, during NATO's exercise Trident Juncture in Norway.

NATO Prepares for Trident Juncture 2018

Trident Juncture 2018 is a major NATO exercise and opportunity for Norway to work its total defense concept.

In a 2017 article published on the Norwegian Ministry of Defence website, NATO will be focusing on its core mission of collective defense in the upcoming Trident Juncture exercise.

“NATO needs to hold exercises on a large scale. Only this way are we able to test all the levels in the alliance: From the troops on the ground and all the way up to a strategic level”, says General Denis Mercier, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) in NATO.

The French General thinks Norway will be ideal for an exercise on this scale.

“NATO needs realistic training, where we can combine operations in the air, at sea and on land. In Norway we get everything, this is one of the best places to train in Europe”, says Mercier.

“The cold climate also brings extra challenges for the soldiers, that hones their skill.”

RENEWED FOCUS

For many years, NATO has been occupied with international conflicts, but recent developments have led to a renewed focus on the core of the alliance.

“Collective defence and training for this will be key. This is one of NATO’s core missions and we will spend more time on this in the future”, says general Denis Mercier.

The General underlines the importance in focusing on the core mission: NATO as a defensive organisation.

“Deterrence is key for NATO. With large-scale exercises we can demonstrate our capacity and uphold our credibility.”

<https://forsvaret.no/en/taking-nato-back-to-its-core-mission>

Preparing for Trident Juncture 2018

The Norwegians are hosting [Trident Juncture 2018](#) which is a major NATO exercise and at the same time training for the Norwegians to support the total defense concept which they are reinvigorating in the “new normal” European security situation.

A recent article on the [Norwegian Ministry of Defence website](#) highlighted one aspect of the preparation:

Cold Knowledge is Hot in NATO

NATO’s Trident Juncture exercise is getting ready for Norway this autumn. This has led to a record demand for military winter knowledge.

“This is my first time cross-country skiing. It’s very different, and I’ve been using muscles that I normally don’t use”, says First Lieutenant Norbert from the German Armoured Engineer Battalion 130.

Norbert is standing in a snowy forest outside the town of Elverum in eastern Norway. Along with 60 other officers from Germany and the US he is here for the Allied Winter Course hosted by the Norwegian School of Winter Warfare.

WINTER IS HERE

The foreign soldiers have had a brutal first encounter with the seemingly neverending Norwegian winter. Yesterday, the temperature was -27°C (-17°F). Today, however, it is almost spring, the temperature has reached a whooping -11°C ($+12^{\circ}\text{F}$).

“It doesn’t matter if it’s 20 or 10 degrees below. It’s just freezing anyway”, laughs Norbert, adding:

“Yesterday, I had icicles hanging from my beard. I had to take a picture and send it to my wife. And tomorrow we’re going ice bathing. I may be smiling now, but I won’t laugh tomorrow.”

ALL-TIME HIGH

Norbert is one of many thousand foreign soldiers who are coming to Norway this autumn, to participate in NATO’s exercise Trident Juncture.

To deal with the cold Norwegian autumn weather, the participants need “cold knowledge”.

Until recently, cold knowledge was a niche thing – but not anymore.

The Norwegian School of Winter Warfare usually holds one annual winter course with 30–40 participants. This winter, however, the school has held four courses, each with 60 participants.

“We could probably have held ten courses, the interest is very high. We are positively surprised by the interest, especially from countries like the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the US”, says Major Knut Hummelvoll, chief for the school’s Winter Section.

He thinks the renewed interest is partly due to NATO’s shift from large operations in Afghanistan and the Middle East, to activity in its core areas in Europe and North America.

“I think this shift has brought more focus on winter training and cold knowledge. NATO has standing forces in Poland and the Baltics, and these are also very cold areas. The Alliance needs winter knowledge”, he adds.

HARD ROUTINES

Each winter course lasts four hectic weeks. During this time, the participants learn how to ski, how to dress for the cold, and how to establish a camp out in the field.

“They also learn terrain assessment and tactics for military operations in the winter”, says Hummelvoll.

The course is concluded with twelve field days where the participants get to practice their new knowledge.

“We practice so-called hard routines, like waking up in the tent in the morning and putting on your cold, wet clothes from yesterday. It’s brutal, but that’s what works”

SPOTS OF SURPRISE

Norbert, the German First Lieutenant, has had several surprises during the weeks.

I never knew that white spots in the skin is a sign of frostbite. That was new to me”, says Norbert. He looks forward to pass on the winter knowledge to his fellow soldiers in Germany.

“We look forward to coming to Norway for Trident Juncture. As an engineering battalion in Europe, we are used to operating on large, wide plains. Norway has many steep, narrow valleys and fjords, which will give us another type of training.

We also get to meet soldiers from other countries and see how they operate.

MOTIVATED

Some metres away from Norbert, two other German officers are building a wall of snow around their tent. Like their fellow countryman, neither Master Sergeant Alexander nor First Lieutenant Arne has any massive experience with snow or skiing.

“We have just tried cross-country skiing for the first time. It was quite challenging, especially with the sleigh and a 30 kilo (66 lbs) backpack”, says Alexander, platoon leader in the Rotenburg Jaeger Battalion 91.

He too believes that a lot of winter knowledge has disappeared from the Alliance after many years of focus outside NATO’s core areas.

“I think the shift from Afghanistan back to NATO’S core areas has brought more focus on winter training and cold knowledge.”

“A lot of practical know-how is lost and we need to learn this again. Therefore, we look forward to the exercise in Norway, and we are very motivated”, he says.

His colleague Arne agrees. He works at the German Armed Forces’ Medical Supply Centre in Kiel.

“For us to function and operate all over NATO, we need to know each other and the different landscapes. Attending this course is an opportunity few soldiers get, so we are quite proud to be here”, says Arne.

Article published by Norwegian Ministry of Defence

<https://forsvaret.no/en/newsroom/news-stories/cold-knowledge-is-hot-in-nato>

NATO’s Allied Transformation Command and Preparing for Trident Juncture 2018

06/09/2018

By Murielle Delaporte

Recent interviews conducted in Norfolk, Virginia, and in particular with Supreme Allied Transformation Commander (SACT) General Denis Mercier, focused on how NATO is addressing its transformation.

In the wake of February's NATO Defense ministers' two-day meeting in Brussels and the reform of the command structure, the ACT is working a number of the practical aspects of transformation.

This effort can be characterized as shaping NATO's version of the 3 C rule.

"3 C's rules" exist in various fields and in every language.

In English, one can find a 3 C's rule in marketing (Company, Customers, Competitors), credit (Character, Capacity, Capital), negotiation (Confrontation, Cooperation, Collaboration), web design (Content, Code, Conception), even relationships (Communication, Cooperation, Compromise) and life (Choices, Chances, Changes), just to name a few.

Last March, in the midst of the public revival of NATO's burden sharing debate triggered by the arrival of President Trump in the White House and prior to the May 2017 Brussels Summit, the Alliance's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg defined NATO's own 3C's rule: **Cash, Capabilities, Commitment.**

As SACT General Mercier explains:

"The 3 C's rule is important and has been reaffirmed: the 2% GDP goal is one of the objectives each NATO nation must aim at, but within these 2 %, 20 % must be spent on new capabilities, while making sure they are compliant with NATO's standards of interoperability and ready to be deployed under the Alliance's umbrella if need be. (...)

Besides the GDP percentage allocated to military resources, which has been a long-lasting goal in the past four years, what is changing in the midst of the adaptation process the Alliance is going through is what I refer to as a "persistent federated approach", i.e. the establishment of a much more persistent bond between the command structure on the one hand, the force structure on the other.

One should indeed stress that NATO's philosophy is based on a federated approach: NATO is not just a command structure commonly funded by the member states, but it is also the capabilities the latter provide to be able to fight as one. (...)

The goal is not to establish a catalogue listing all available capabilities, but to best construct a force able to address today's and tomorrow's threats." [1]

Easier said than done, when the specificities, histories, sensitivities of twenty-nine nations – Montenegro being the latest nation to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization last June – have to be aligned into one single political guidance, which will then be translated into military capabilities.

There was one issued in 2011, then another one in 2015, and the two NATO strategic Commands – ACT (as the leader in this process) and ACO (Mons-based Allied Command Operations) – are currently working on the strategic military considerations to support the next one planned for 2019 in the aftermath of the next July Summit planned in Brussels.

The continued adaptation of the Alliance to the new threat environment, as well as the reassertion of missions aimed at projecting stability – such as the reinforcement of the post-war Iraqi training, which has been announced at the Defense ministers' meeting in February- are among the sure guidelines to be pursued and proposed.

Developing a Common Understanding Picture

But what does it take to have 29 nations agree to a common strategic goal?

That is exactly what ACT's task is all about.

It starts with the definition of a common understanding picture, as, of course, each country's threat assessment not only depends on its geography, history and politics, but also relies on its strategic culture and the existence of a structured capability development process that vary widely among nations.

“Not all nations base their program laws on a formal defense review process or publish a defense white paper and we can help those who wish to assess and match their priorities according to their political and strategic national ambitions” explains Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Ascencio, who is part of a ten person staff at SPP (Strategic Plan and Policy) directorate in ACT.[2]

SPP is ACT's brain and brainstorm on a regular basis via thematic workshops gathering a network of about 2,000 military and civilian experts from armed forces, but also academia, industries and medias.

The result comes under the form of three milestone documents:

The first is the Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA), which identifies the trends affecting the future over the long-term (the latest one published last October projects the Alliance towards 2035, as it represents the time necessary to complete a full programmatic cycle from the decision to launch R&D till its Full Operational Capacity).

The second is the Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO), which, along with ACO, narrows down the threats down to military scenario and implications for the Alliance: the next one is being reviewed and should be published soon.

These two preparatory reports then feed the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP), conducted by the NATO HQ in Brussels and both strategic commands and aimed at advising nations in future program development to meet the Alliance's level of ambition.

“One of the advantage of NATO “, underlines SACT, “is to be able to give an unfettered military advice that nations are of course free to follow or not.

Some of them have niche capabilities (such as Estonia which cyber expertise is remarkable) and we are able to orient them, so they can synchronize their future investments to complement other nations.

We just happened to do that with Luxemburg, which satellite communications' capabilities are to become part of the complex puzzle of forces NATO assembles into a ready to deploy force.

“The NDPP is there to orient national defence plans, and encourage countries to join forces in clusters of abilities such as smart defence initiatives or the Framework Nation Concept (FNC) developed by Germany a few years ago, enabling the building of large forces thanks to years of joint training between Germany and the nations willing to participate. “

At a time of a renewal of the ongoing debate about the NATO-EU relationship, it is not a bad idea to recall that these kinds of nations' arrangements – such as the FNC – can and are already be used for other organizations than NATO, including the EU.

It is also useful to highlight the fact that NATO's NDPP actually helped the EU to develop its own capability-building processes, tools and *scenarii*, while NATO's centers of excellence can be also used by NATO and the EU.

According to General Mercier: *"Each organization has its own deliverables, but we make sure our priorities are well coordinated. We have indeed been working very closely with the European Defense Agency over the past two years."*

For Lieutenant-Colonel Ascencio, the beauty of having a tool like SPP is to project one's thinking in another nation's mindset.

"You cannot understand America for instance, if you have not studied Gettysburg and General Sherman."

The effort to create and share a common vision and a global picture of the threat and geopolitical environment has lead ACT to become paradoxically *"a place that the United States considers the voice of Europe and that Europe considers the voice of the United States."*

In other words, ACT is where open and constant discussion can lead to common understandings and shaping a basis upon which to proceed with regard to more technical tasks.

For example, the recently issued SFA expresses a common perception of Russian activities for the first time since the end of the Cold war. To do so, now is in fact no small achievement considering the current propensity of nation states to look more inward or to emphasize there differences for domestic political consumption.

Developing a Common Situational Awareness

Only twelve nations were NATO's founding members when the organization was created in 1949.

Today that number more than doubled and exercises can sometimes gather up to fifty countries.

In order to go from a common understanding picture to a common operational one, it is necessary to develop a common situational awareness and the key word here is "interoperability ."

Without the ability for the people, the process and the technology to work and talk together, there would not be an alliance and that is the strength – while at times the weakness – of such a unique organization, making it America's remaining *"number-one alliance"*^[3]as General Mattis, US Defense Secretary, recently referred to and despite last year's presidential rhetoric.

"[Interoperability] is a rather young word created in the 1950's, which did not become popular until the 1990's.

The reason is because we technically associate that word with technology and as we increasingly worked with computers, we found out that they were not working together ", explains the man in charge of developing interoperability within NATO, Johan Goossens, head of the branch of technology and human factors at ACT^[4].

"So how do we do it?

"How do we have the military of twenty-nine different nations do that same handshake?

"First we look at what need to be interoperable, then how to make it so.

We develop specifications and standards.

We work with industries and test equipment in their infancy to see if they can operate together.

We mostly focus on information systems as opposed to platforms.“

With the coming of “next gen“ equipment the distinction between systems and platforms however tends to be blurred and the challenge is to keep up with the progress realized among allies across the board to be able to keep doing that hand shake.

Such a paradigm shift worries General Mercier, who was Chief of the French Air Force before becoming SACT: *“as a pilot I am indeed concerned when I see today’s exercises.*

In my Tiger Meet community[5], we used to share an enormous amount and that is what made us strong.

Today, with the new systems, aviators fly together, but with less and less awareness of what their wingmen are able to do. Debrief comes, and pilots share what they did, but not why and how they did it.

This is a potential catastrophe in terms of interoperability, as it is a matter of mutual trust. If we are not able to solve it within NATO, it will never work...

So NATO has a lot of work to do!“

There are however at least three good reasons to remain optimistic – no matter how vast the challenge seems today to make 4th and 5th generation air assets work together seamlessly – and be able to maintain a common situational awareness in all areas as best as possible:

First of all, this kind of technological revolution is not a first within the alliance.

If each nation is of course doing its own research and defends its own industrial interests, the role of ACT is precisely to coordinate and orient, so that too much technological unpredictability does not “*break compatibility*,” notes Johan Goossens.

He has witnessed similar breakthroughs over the many years he worked at NATO, whether in jet fuel technology or when cyber first emerged or even in processes and culture changes.

“With the end of the Cold war, the maritime situational awareness changed and brought with it a fundamental cultural change, as the growth of pirate attacks in several parts of the world led NATO operators to track not only grey, but also white shipping.

This was a major departure from a traditionally military-oriented perspective and it took a bit of time for nations to adapt...“

Secondly, technology differences among twenty-nine nations is a fact of life, which NATO has been accommodating for nearly seventy years through joint operations, but overall through a robust exercise programs.

If the number of participating countries has been fluctuating over the years, depending on budgets, but mostly on the intensity of the perceived threat, three types of exercises have alternatively been conducted on a yearly basis among

allies: “Live Exercise (LIVEX), Command Post Exercise (CPX)/Computer Assisted Exercise (CAX), or an Exercise Study[6].

Preparing for Trident Juncture 2018

Mr Goossens’ branch at ACT is the one organizing CWIX[7], which takes place every year in Poland and is a preparation to the next Livex, such as Trident Juncture 2018, which is to take place this fall in Norway.

Symptomatic of how palatable the threat is today, these exercises have been gathering the largest number of participants – including from the “Top 6” or Non-NATO Nations such as Finland or Sweden – ever since the height of the Cold war.

Bridging technology is already there for most of the challenges NATO needs to meet and exercises like Trident Juncture 2018 provide a significant opportunity to address this key issue in an operational exercise setting with significant force engagement.

The exercises provide a forcing function opportunity to find ways to enhance the capabilities of the force working together in a force on force exercise.

If we go back to the “4th/5thGen “ debate, the recent Red Flag 18-1 exercise, which took place and ended February 16th at Nellis AFB demonstrated the ability to upgrade tactical link 16 programs in order to make data sharing possible among all generations, the F-22 being a case in point.

In fact, for NATO planners, the problem is today’s exponential speed of technological development, mostly coming from the commercial sector as opposed to the military one, the way it was just two decades ago – and how to cope with such a trend by creating the appropriate framework for everyone.

Large-scale exercises like Trident Juncture 2018 provide an opportunity to work the challenges and move towards common solutions.

Footnotes:

[1] Interview conducted at ACT, Norfolk, January 2018z

[2] Interview, ibid

[3] “[Just] to look around that room and see 29 nations all working together ... you have to remember the fundamental strength of that alliance,” said General Mattis, as quoted in: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1444956/mattis-heartened-by-nato-nations-increased-defense-budgets/>

[4] Interview, ibid

[5] Here is the origin of the NATO Tiger Meet according to its official website: “Following the wishes of M.Pierre Messner, the then French defense minister, the USAFE (United States Air Force Europe) 79th TFS (Tactical Fighter Squadron) took the initiative and on 19 July 1961 they invited No.74 Squadron Royal Air Force and EC 1/12 Squadron of the French Armée de l’air to Woodbridge in England. And so the Association of Tiger Squadrons was established to improve relationships between individual squadrons within NATO. Each of these squadrons had a Tigers’ head in their squadron crest.” (<https://www.natotigers.org/origin-and-goals>)

[6] See: <https://www.ac.nato.int/page805182>

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An Overview on Trident Juncture 2015

06/09/2018

By Murielle Delaporte

In this edition of defense.info, we are taking a look at the Trident Juncture exercises, with one in 2015 in the Southern Flank and a coming one in the Northern Flank of NATO.

We are taking an overview of their exercises and how NATO is dealing with the Strategic Shift.

In an article first published on October 20, 2015, Murielle Delaporte provided an overview on the exercise from the perspective of her work with the NATO Allied Transformation Command.

October 20, 2015

As he embarked the Allied Command Transformation's "fast train." as he describes it, barely two weeks ago, General Denis Mercier just got back from attending his first North Alliance Council's military committee (NAC) meeting as Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT).

And he is getting ready for the upcoming NATO Industry forum which, this year, will take place in Portugal.

In the meantime, he is currently attending the launching in Europe^[1] of the live part (LIVEX) of a major ongoing NATO exercise, called Trident Juncture 2015 (TJ15).

TJ15: What's New

This exercise, the largest since 2002 Strong resolve, should not be read as a reaction to Russia's recent behavior, since it has been in the making for the past two years, but as a demonstration of the Alliance's readiness.

"Trident Juncture 2015 is to show NATO's deterrence posture and its ability to adapt to any development or threat reflecting the Wales Summit's objectives", General Mercier explained a few days ago at a roundtable in Washington, D.C.

Meant to assess the Alliance's capacities, readiness, speed and interoperability, TJ15 is to be considered a testbed for the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) and the recently implemented Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VHRJTF).

But for General Mercier, it is *"much more than a training exercise."*

TJ15 addresses three major goals:

First, the exercise focuses on a key flagship activity for NATO's Connecting Forces Initiative (CFI) launched in the wake of the 2012 Chicago Summit.

TJ15 will bring together 17 national exercises:

“This is the key change compared to the 2002 exercise which I was part of,” stressed the General.

‘Many national exercises are going to be held under the same scenario, which makes it very interesting and realistic, since the same crisis can affect both sides of the Atlantic.

Trident Juncture brings a strong value added to them.

Second, the task of preparing to connect these exercises and a large number of forces and capacities has just ended and was done via a Command Post Exercise.

This CPX lasted from October 3rd through October 16th and involved Allied Joint Force Command Headquarters Brunssum and several other headquarters.

A certification process of these headquarters, as well as of the Visegrad European Battle Group[2], is to be completed during this period.

For General Mercier, *“the connection and the coordination which took place between Canada and the European countries participating in the exercise worked even better than expected and is something we can build on for the future.”*

Third, TJ15 has to be considered as a *“laboratory for NATO’s new ideas and new concepts,”* says SACT.

For the very first time, industries will be involved in the course of the exercise as observers, in order to better comprehend the battlefield requirements expressed by the armed forces.

As many as 35 firms will be monitoring the exercise and such participation will be addressed at the previously-mentioned Industry Forum.

The Challenges

One of the key challenges for NATO exercise schedulers based in Norfolk, Virginia, is to integrate real world events into the flow of exercises and inject lessons learned as they come along.

“NATO’s process actually allows that pretty easily, not only in terms of process, but also because the planning structures – in this case the Joint Warfare Center based in Stavanger, Norway – are well rounded, while the baseline generic scenario called SOROTAN is flexible enough,” notes General Mercier.

“We shall assess if we need new scenarios in the aftermath of the exercise, but, as you know, it takes time and money to create new scenarios,” he says.

Compared to 2002, the scope of warfare types to integrate and the new kinds of threats and elements of surprise to insert and inject in scenarios have increased exponentially.

A crisis response scenario (not Article V), TJ15 will therefore mix the old and the new, conventional and non-conventional threats, i.e. hybrid warfare, high intensity warfare with armored vehicles, BMD threat, cyber threat, access denial to SLOC (Sea Lanes of Communication), etc.

The location of the exercise is the Southern Flank (Spain, Italy and Portugal) with a “360 degree” aperture to the threat, said General Mercier.

The next LIVEX will take place in 2018 in the North.

“How do we build a deterrence posture strong enough to face all current threats – State and non-State – and anticipate emerging ones ?” is therefore the second key challenge identified by SACT.

One of the answers comes along with the CFI, as having some 36 000 personnel, 4 brigade-size units, 140 aircrafts and 60 ships from 30 different countries able to operate together and communicate together is already a success in itself.

TJ15 will test that ability inherited from the Afghan years with ACCS enabling all coalition national communication system to work together.

“The lessons from Afghanistan gave birth to what we refer to as the Federated Mission Network, which aims at allowing us to enhance our interoperability today between national and NATO systems,” stressed the Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation.

The mere existence of a “Trident Juncture 2015” and the increasing number of national military exercises involved are a deterrent on their own, as they show NATO’s determination to get ready and stand for collective defense and security against any threat wherever it is coming from.

TJ15 is furthermore not the only NATO exercise: *“about 1,000 exercises were organized this year under NATO’s umbrella, while 170 national exercises were integrated”*, SACT pointed out.

Besides communication, the mere organization of an exercise of that scope and designation of specific Air, Sea and Land ranges require a lot of preparation.

Indeed, one of the first lessons learned so far is that getting the appropriate agreements to do cross-borders LIVEX takes time, as it would in a real-life crisis.

“Reality is in the details”, SACT noted, *“and we need to keep investing in LIVEX to work these out.”*

The main concern in the mid to long-term, for General Mercier, is however to watch out that *“the right balance between pre-positioned and deployed forces is constantly preserved.”*

We need to enhance our flexibility in order to show that we are able to rapidly adapt to any contingency”.

For NATO to keep a credible posture of readiness, the new SACT concludes therefore that two ingredients are crucial:

First, we need to demonstrate these capabilities (via LIVEX); and secondly, we need to integrate industries so they better understand our requirements, and so that, when a crisis occurs, we can quickly tap into technological research centers to find part of the solutions.”

If Strong Resolve 2002 was solely about training a combat joint task force, Trident Juncture 2015 thus encompasses a much wider scope.

Anticipating the best way to apply innovation to warfare concepts in order to cope with increasingly high tech risks and threats is indeed part of ACT's main missions.

[1] The Opening Ceremony took place today in Italy (See >>> http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_123995.htm).

[2] The Visegrad countries are the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (see for instance >>> <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/visegrad-countries-may-turn-eu-battlegroup-into-permanent-v4-rapid-reaction-force>)

Trident Juncture 2015: The Spanish Role

In an article published on October 24, 2015, we looked at the role the Spanish as a key host to the Trident Juncture 2015 exercise

2015-10-24

The Spanish are key participants in the Southern tier focus of the large scale NATO exercise Trident Juncture 2015.

The Spanish joined NATO in the 1980s which was a major historical shift and one which contributed to the ending of the Cold War.

Members of the *Second Line of Defense* team were involved in the Spanish discussions at that time as well.

It is often forgotten that political military dynamics can be even more important than strictly military operations in deterrence with a competitor like Russia.

Not only have the Spanish participated with their Eurofighters in Baltic air defense, but their engagement in Mediterranean defense activities such as the TJ exercise has been significant as well.

Nearly 8,000 military personnel (nearly 3,000 from the Navy and Marine Corps) are involved from Spain and involve many assets, including the LHD Juan Carlos I and its helos and harriers, its Aegis frigates, submarines and other assets.

NATO as It Prepared for Trident Juncture 2015

In an article we published on March 2, 2015 in preparation for the Trident Juncture exercise in 2015, we underscored NATO preparations.

March 2, 2015

Trident Juncture 2015 will be a major exercise for NATO forces, essentially leveraging their amphibious capabilities as part of a combined arms exercise.

As an article published March 2, 2015 in The Diplomat (Madrid), the role of the exercise and of Spain within that exercise was highlighted.

Our country and Portugal will be the hosts of some manoeuvres that will also have Italy's aerial support and could gather 20,000 soldiers together.

The crisis in Ukraine is relaunching the fight between blocs that prevailed in Europe after the Second World War.

On one hand, Russia is increasing its hopes to be on a level with the URSS.

On the other hand, the NATO sees the Russian resurgence with concern.

After the last summit of Cardiff (Wales), the allies have approved a calendar of joint manoeuvres to stay in shape, standing out Trident Juncture among them.

This exercise will be celebrated in autumn 2015 in waters of the Strait of Gibraltar with Spain and Portugal as hosts and Italy's aerial support.

It will be led by the Transformation Command and it will be an exercise of "high intensity and high visibility" that will allow the allies materializing the initiative of the so called Connected Forces into specific actions, whose objective is for the NATO troops to stay prepared to react in the case of crisis after the end of the operations in Afghanistan at the end of the year.

The exercise will put the abilities of the Nato Response Force (NRF) into practice facing 2016, when Spain will be responsible for the land component command. Besides, it could serve as the trial base for the new force of fast intervention described in the summit of Wales as Trident Juncture of the NATO, a force made up of 5,000 soldiers able to deploy in 48 hours to deal with situations of crisis in the East and the South of the Alliance.

Trident Juncture will be settled in a scene adapted to the new threats, such as cyber defence, incorporating the lessons learned in two decades of operations in Afghanistan, Kosovo and other places. The land command will be joined by aerial, sea and especial forces, as well as by intelligence, surveillance and recognition elements.

In all, more than 20,000 allied soldiers could participate, a number that can still vary depending on the contributions made by the countries, according to the Ministry of Defence. In any case, this will be the biggest exercise carried out by the NATO since the end of the Cold War.

The exercise is part of what NATO refers to as the Connected Forces Initiative.

According to an RFP released to industry for participation in the exercise, the CFI is characterized as follows:

CFI is a major part of Allied efforts to achieve NATO Forces 20201. It is an Alliance-wide programme providing a philosophy, focus and means through which to enhance and sustain NATO's military preparedness and operational ability. On the one hand, CFI is seen as a series of interlinked activities involving education and training, including exercises; the NATO Response Force (NRF); and technology. On the other hand, it looks to inject the fundamental requirements of "communicate, practise and validate' throughout the Alliance.

CFI provides for Allies an alternative to the operational focus of the last decade. Coherent education and training is the bedrock for the development of individuals and teams so they have the cognitive ability to understand complex situations, people and cultures, and are comfortable with ambiguity and risk. Relevant and forward-looking NATO doctrine and common procedures will enhance interoperability.

CFI seeks to connect Allied forces to enhance and sustain interoperability; to connect NATO with others to facilitate interagency actions on operations in the modern environment within a comprehensive approach²; and to connect with Partners to enable cooperative security in accordance with the Alliance's Strategic Concept. The combination of NATO Command Structure (NCS – personnel and units on fulltime service with NATO) and NATO Force Structure (NFS – multinational units on part time service with NATO) headquarters and units will provide a framework for the deployment and incorporation of modern, targeted technology to support operations and training.

RFI-ACT-SACT-14-13

The pathway to Trident Juncture 2015 can be seen in the NATO graphic at the beginning of this article.

In short, Exercise Trident Juncture 2015 will take place from 28 September to 06 November 2015 in multiple locations across the Alliance including Italy, Portugal and Spain. Over 25,000 troops are expected to participate in the exercise.

The purpose of TRJE15 is to train and test the NRF, a high readiness and technologically advanced force comprising of land, air, maritime and special forces units capable of being deployed quickly on operations wherever needed.

The exercise represents the final step in the certification process for the command and control elements of the NRF for 2016. The exercise will also allow Allies and partners the occasion to train, deploy and exercise in a complex and distributed environment.

Hey Putin, NATO Can Adapt: Trident Juncture 2015

By Sydney J. Freedberg, Jr.

WASHINGTON: 35,000 NATO and partner-nation troops. 140 aircraft. 60 naval vessels. 30 nations. But who are they fighting?

When planning began two years ago for NATO's largest wargames since 2002, the imaginary adversary wasn't Russia. Officially, it still isn't. But since the seizure of Crimea, the alliance's chief of "transformation" told reporters today, planners have added new challenges to the standard scenario that sound awfully relevant to the Russian threat, from ballistic missile defense to rapid deployment to hybrid war.

If the original message of the Trident Juncture 2015 exercises was "NATO can still go big," the message of the modified Trident Juncture might be, "Hey, NATO can adapt."

"We had to adapt the scenario [to] integrate all the main challenges we are facing now," French Air Force Gen. Denis Mercier, Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation, said in a roundtable with reporters here this morning. Compared to 13 years ago, the world is changing at a faster past, he said: "The threats and surprises have accelerated, so we have to be sure that we are flexible enough to integrate in our exercises these new concepts and to speed up the processes of developing new ideas."

In contrast to the last large exercise in 2002, Mercier said, Trident Juncture puts much more emphasis on testing out new ideas, in addition to training troops.

Trident Juncture started with a scenario called SOROTAN, which simulates a response to an “out of area” crisis — that is, one in which NATO members’ territory is not directly at risk. (So like Ukraine, but unlike the Baltics.) But planners kept adding elements. After last year’s alliance summit in Wales created a new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, for instance, rapid deployment of a “spearhead force” became part of the exercise, Gen. Mercier said.

The simulated adversary also evolved into what’s called a hybrid threat, Mercier said: a nation-state not only deploying regular forces — including tanks and anti-aircraft missiles — to menace its neighbors, but also employing guerrilla fighters as proxies. That sounds a lot like Ukraine but Russia is hardly the only nation to take such an approach: Iran is another prime example.

The adversary even poses a cyber and electronic warfare threat, hacking and jamming NATO systems — to a limited extent. “It probably won’t go until the moment where we have to shut down,” Mercier said. “We’ll have events and see how the players can react to... disruptions of some of the networks. I don’t think that we’ll go to the point where the full network will be absolutely disrupted.”

That’s not actually an unreasonable restraint, given how hard it is to get multi-national, multi-military networks to work at all. NATO developed a fairly smoothly functioning system in Afghanistan, but only after years of dedicated effort.

“The lessons-learned from Afghanistan showed us that, from the very beginning, if you want to have this full interoperability, you have to be build what we call a federated mission network...that will enable all the national communications to be able work together,” Mercier said. A big part of Trident Juncture is simply showing that NATO can make this function.

The first phase of Trident Juncture, in fact, is played entirely over networks between headquarters — a “command post exercise” — without troops on the ground at all. The live portion of the exercise only begins next week, but it’s crucial, the general emphasized.

“You can imagine, when you have a computer-assisted exercise, that you deploy your forces wherever,” Mercier said. When you actually have to move real troops over real terrain — and often across real international borders — you run into a lot of messy logistical and even legal issues that you really want to figure out beforethere’s a crisis, he said. “The reality is in the details.”

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