



Road to Afghanistan The mission in Afghanistan in 2007 was the most important challenge for the Corps after achieving Full Operational Capability (FOC). The Corps passed the FOC test during the exercise COMPACT EAGLE 2005 and was officially certified in February 2006 as being fully capable of performing military tasks within Full Spectrum of Operations ranging from High Intensity War-Fighting to Peace Support Operations. Passing the FOC test was mandatory for MNC NE to be deployed to Afghanistan in January 2007. What is important to state, MNC NE was the first Corps of lower readiness sent to the Afghan mission, thus setting a sort of example for future NATO missions. A long process of preparations preceded the deployment, including collective exercises such as FAT EAGLE conducted at Baltic Barracks in Szczecin (September 2006), an exercise that took place at the Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger, Norway (October 2006) or the exercise Unified Endeavour at Fort Bragg, USA (November 2006). Apart from collective training, the officers and non-commissioned officers were involved in individual and national training activities. All this was meant to prepare the soldiers in the best possible way to fulfil the mission tasks.

The Corps' first mission tasks

NATO assumed command and control of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in August 2003. The ISAF operation is based on a United Nations (UN) mandate and is carried out in accordance with the current and future UN resolutions. Its aim is to assist the Government of Afghanistan in ensuring security and expanding its influence throughout the country. This would allow the reconstruction of Afghanistan and establishment of democratic structures.

The deployment of the MNC NE staff assigned to ISAF X/1 lasted quite some time, beginning in late autumn 2006 and ending in January 2007. Apart from two officers who were to serve in the Regional Air Operations Coordination Centre (RAOCC) in Mazar-e-Sharif, the remaining 160 officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) were deployed to Kabul-based Headquarters ISAF. The official handover of duties took place on 4th February 2007, and the MNC NE officers and NCOs subsequently served for six months under the command of the US

Commander of ISAF, General Dan McNeill. The MNC NE staff filled the posts in a new model of a composite headquarters consisting of personnel from NATO Standing Headquarters and of individuals provided by NATO nations and other countries contributing to the mission. In fact, members of MNC NE were spread over almost all branches within Headquarters ISAF where they had numerous opportunities to prove their excellent level of preparedness and their dedication to work. In his function as Deputy Chief of Staff Operations, MNC NE's Deputy Commander - at that time, Major General Jan Brun Andersen - had been appointed to the highest post in ISAF of all the MNC NE personnel. The NATO Meritorious Service Medal that has been awarded to the German Lieutenant Colonel Lutz Rademacher for his exceptional service in Afghanistan on behalf of NATO Secretary General Mr Jaap de Hoop Scheffer is another proof of the staff's excellent performance in Afghanistan.

The accomplishment of the ISAF X/1 mission set another goal for the Corps – to benefit as much as possible from experiences gained in the theatre in order to enrich the mission preparation process for another mission as well as to provide guidance for other headquarters or units deployed to Afghanistan or to any other mission in the future.

