

Challenge of countering Improvised Explosive Devices

Written by AG

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More than 70% of soldiers' casualties in Afghanistan are related to so-called Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). Exchange of information and close cooperation seem to be the only way to effectively prepare for countering such threats. Joint Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) Workshop, which took place from 27 to 30 April 2009 in Baltic Barracks, was the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE) contribution in this area of operation.

Multi-purpose workshop

The aim of this workshop was to share information and reach a common NATO understanding of subjects related to counter IED, which, in consequence would lead to establishing a Counter IED expertise within our Headquarters, explained Lieutenant Colonel Miroslav Sefranik, Chief of the Engineer, Force Protection and NBC (Nuclear, Biological and Chemical) Branch (ENGR/FP/NBC) of G3 Division that organised this undertaking. The workshop was also a chance for the HQ to discuss this complex issue on NATO level and join the "NATO Counter IED Brotherhood". Additionally, some briefings of the workshop were used as Mission Preparation Lessons (MPL) in order to enhance the mission preparation process of HQ personnel for the next deployment to Afghanistan in 2010.

Apart from selected Headquarters' personnel, several guests from the outside took part in the workshop, for example, representatives from the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, Joint Support Command Bundeswehr, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) or a civilian company cooperating with NATO – Explora Security LTD, Architects and Engineers.

Much on agenda

The whole workshop assumed a form of briefings and syndicate work leaving a lot of space for constructive debates. Guests from the outside brought in a lot of valuable experiences that allowed for discussing the issue from different perspectives, including a civilian one. "It was a necessity to invite people from other headquarters, commands and civilian companies dealing with Counter IED. They are the real experts", emphasized Lieutenant Colonel Miroslav Sefranik. "With all this external experience we have received, there is a chance to avoid some mistakes in the future", he added.

As a matter of fact, all military personnel of the Headquarters could take advantage of these valuable experiences since several presentations constituted part of the mission preparation

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lessons. The HQ staff listened, for example, about Counter IED in Iraq from the United Nations perspective, the role of air assets or the influence of detonations and IED on people and buildings.

In syndicates

After presenting detailed background concerning Counter IED, syndicate work started. In general, there were two main subject areas that were discussed. First of all, it was developing so-called "Food for thought paper", a document created prior to the workshop, which set not only concepts for this particular workshop, but also ideas for future development leading to establishing Counter IED structure within the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast.

The second topic touched upon the creation of a generic matrix or a plan for the mission time that would specify steps carried out by the Headquarters in relation to counter IED. It included stages such as preparation, deployment, operation and redeployment.

Ready for more

All in all, Lieutenant Colonel Sefranik assessed the whole workshop as "totally helpful". "We have received a lot of relevant information that will help us to proceed", he explained. Personnel of his branch have gathered necessary inputs, especially from the outside guests, that would enhance the development of Counter IED policy, concept and other documents within the Headquarters. Although tangible, written results of the workshop will only be visible in the future, new experiences and deeper knowledge on Counter IED have already been acquired.