

"Victorious fighters win first and then go to war..."

Written by AG

Wednesday, 02 April 2008 00:00



The Close Air Support (CAS) Seminar organised under the auspices of the Air Operations Co-ordination Centre started on 31st March 2008 at the Baltic Barracks. The academic part of the Seminar will last till the end of the week.

Seminar on Close Air Support

It was the idea of the Air Operations Co-ordination Centre (AOCC), an air unit collocated with the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast, to organise the Close Air Support (CAS) Seminar. The expression CAS refers to an Air Operation when own troops in contact receive weapon support from the air. Then aircrafts will employ their weapons while remaining in close contact with the troops. CAS has to be part of proper planning of a campaign, however, in some cases it might also become an emergency request.

Altogether, there are 71 people from nine nations including 53 external guests that participate in the CAS Seminar. The academic part scheduled for this week will be followed by the exercise codenamed "Tungsten Sword" that will take place in Nadarzyce training area next week.

"Closing the loop": planning, directing, executing

"We plan ahead and then go to war, and not the other way round" – Colonel Peter Hauser,

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Chief AOCC, explained the motto of the Seminar that states "*Victorious fighters win first and then go to war while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win*" (Sun Tzu).□

The exchange of experiences gathered in Afghanistan and the lack of information and training when it comes to Forward Air Controllers (FAC) were the main factors that encouraged the AOCC to organise the seminar, Colonel Hauser added. The controllers are the ones who direct air strikes requested from the units, in Afghanistan or elsewhere. Besides, for those participants from the Corps down to the brigade level who will also take part in the exercise Crystal Eagle, it is a kind of a jump-start into the exercise scenario.

Additionally, the Seminar provides extraordinary opportunities for FAC, pilots and planners because they not only get knowledge from different experts, but they can also talk to each other and exchange experiences. In the real life planners, controllers and pilots do not necessarily know each other.

More than a seminar

This free exchange of experiences is what makes this Seminar especially valuable. Colonel Hauser explained that even the academic part of the first week includes the so-called Map Exercise (MAPEX) – a generic exercise, during which the participants will be divided into syndicates and will actually plan a campaign after receiving a given task. As a matter of fact, the task will be based on the scenario of the exercise Crystal Eagle. It might be for example the mission to support the battalion or brigade to secure the advance in Auriga, a fictional country existing in that scenario. The participants will simply receive a map and they will practice CAS planning, requesting, tasking and execution.

If the campaign is planned in a proper way, it may be executed during the live flying exercise "Tungsten Sword" next week, when Forward Air Controllers will be directing real hot air strikes. Real bombs up to 500 kg will actually be dropped in an area with some objects simulating e.g. a column of tanks.