

Little Eagle “szafranized”

Written by AG

Friday, 29 May 2009 13:06



Little Eagle dominated the Corps' life for five days. From 25 to 29 May 2009, the majority of the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast personnel, together with soldiers from the Command Support Brigade, were involved in the exercise, which has been the biggest training undertaking for this year.

Double-aimed and two-step exercise

The overall aim of the exercise was twofold. First of all, it was about training the Command Support Brigade (CSB), a unit assigned to the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE). Secondly, the Headquarters personnel could fully use the Command, Control and Information System Szafran within an operational environment for the first time. It is important to add that the whole exercise was conducted in accordance with the new Field Headquarters structure, approved last year.

There were two main phases in which the exercise was run – from 25 to 26 May, when the main effort focused on the Command Support Brigade in Stargard Szczeciński, and from 27 to 29 May, when the actions concentrated in Baltic Barracks in Szczecin. About 540 exercise participants altogether took part in the exercise, including personnel from HQ MNC NE and

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some augmentees as well as soldiers from the Headquarters of the Command Support Brigade and its three subordinated Battalions – German 610th Signal Battalion and Polish 100th Signal Battalion and 104th Support Battalion. Moreover, for the first time some personnel of the Polish 9th Recce Battalion took part in the exercise and reinforced the Joint Intelligence Centre.

The scenario of Little Eagle was "borrowed" from the one, which was used during Crystal Eagle exercise last year. "That means we use the scenario which is very close to the ISAF real world environment. We have the same incidents as you can unfortunately find in Afghanistan – indirect fire, Improvised Explosive Devices attacks, mass casualties and so on", said Colonel Klaus Finck, an outgoing Chief of G3 Division and Deputy Chief of Staff Operations in the first phase of the exercise. In fact, the function he performed during Little Eagle is directly related to the new Field Headquarters concept, according to which responsibilities at Deputy Chief of Staff's level are divided into operations and support areas. Therefore, all operation related functions, such as Intelligence, Effects family, CIMIC, planners etc. are coordinated by Deputy Chief of Staff Operations, whereas Logistics, Medical Service and Information Management by Deputy Chief of Staff Support. "My task in this exercise is to coordinate the different efforts in the different function areas and to make comprehensive staff work afterwards", explained Colonel Finck. For example, he gives the planners an idea on how the Commander's guidance should be translated into different courses of action for an operation.

Focus on CSB

Command Support Brigade is obliged to support the Headquarters in any way possible during exercises, operations and missions. It includes the necessity to establish, operate and maintain command posts on different levels as well as managing real life support (transport, accommodation, messing, security, etc.). In order to train such capabilities, the first phase of Little Eagle mainly focused on the Command Support Brigade. In Stargard Szczeciński, they had to physically set up there their command post and other supporting installations as well as they were to establish a deployable command element, so-called a tactical command post, which was moved to Szczecin afterwards. It was the starting point of the second part of the exercise.

Apart from training how to set and run a command post properly, the personnel of the Command Support Brigade practiced producing staff orders and developing staff procedures as they also followed the pace of the scenario to a certain extent.

As a matter of fact, prior to Little Eagle, the Command Support Brigade conducted an additional exercise Concert Grand to enhance the capabilities of the Headquarters CSB and three subordinated battalions – German 610th Signal Battalion and Polish 100th Signal Battalion and 104th Support Battalion.

Focus on HQ

Apart from training CSB, the exercise provided an opportunity to train Headquarters personnel within the Field Headquarters mode in selected areas. This was considered the main effort during the second phase of the exercise, when CSB moved a tactical command post to

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Szczecin. As Colonel Klaus Finck explained, one of the aims of the whole exercise was to provide an operational environment to train the Corps' Command, Control and Information System Szafran, which was officially approved in December 2007 as capable of providing adequate communication with other commands and headquarters within the NATO family. However, due to the testing and implementation phases of this complex and elaborated system, the exercise Little Eagle was the first occasion when the system could actually be fully used by soldiers within an operational environment. Consequently, extensive use of it contributed to necessary adaptation of the Corps Standing Operating Procedures, or in other words their "szafranization".

During the exercise, the soldiers had to "translate" data from the operational environment into the staff work, based on Szafran. Things presented on the map had to be displayed electronically. "It means you have to change your mind, you just take the mouse and handle it – the next position of a unit is just one mouse click away", summarized Colonel Finck. He also assessed Szafran positively: "My first impression is that this system can really help us to produce a common operational picture. It facilitates the staff work by enabling individual desk officers to contribute properly and very fast to the production of for example orders". "It is easy to handle once people are trained", he added.

Apart from training in an extensive use of Szafran, preparing for the mission was also among the goals for the exercise. "In Little Eagle we focus on our Field Headquarters structure, which is different from the ISAF structure, but what we do have in common is the scenario and the procedures, so there are some benefits for people in the Headquarters who will be deployed to Afghanistan", concluded Colonel Finck.

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