



Interview with Major General Agner Rokos (DNK A), a director of the Joint Force Training Centre in Bydgoszcz, Poland, conducted on the occasion of his visit at the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast.

Anna Gałyga: Sir, what actually is the Joint Force Training Centre?

MajGen Rokos: Joint Force Training Centre is a NATO Training Centre. Our mission is to train tactical level headquarters, for instance headquarters like this. Basically we have two missions. The first one is to help train the headquarters for the NATO Response Force and our emphasis is on training what we call a component headquarters for the Land Forces, the Navy and the Air Force. The second thing we do is training the staffs for current operations, like the ISAF operation in Afghanistan, for which we train the headquarters to be deployed to Kandahar. In

addition to these two major training areas, we also train OMLT Teams (Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams), which are attached to the Afghan Army units with the aim of training and advising them. So we train the trainers, so to speak.

- How big is the Centre?

We are approximately 90 personnel. And I hope we will grow because the training tasks are growing, too.

- Is it a multinational environment?

Yes, we have 16 nations; there are all NATO members.

- When was the Joint Force Training Centre created?

It was decided upon the creation of the Centre in 2003 and it was activated in 2004. Since then we have been located in Bydgoszcz in temporary facilities. A new training centre is currently being built and we are moving there this year.

- When did the Centre start training people?

In 2004 the Centre started from scratch, slowly the personnel began to be assigned. In the following year 2005 the first training event was conducted. Now we have a number of events a year, we have gone abroad to do the training in parallel with establishing and building our new facility.

- Who specifically is trained at JFTC?

Our priority is to train the staffs that are deploying to operations so right now our major training audience is the staff going to Kandahar, Afghanistan. It is personnel coming mostly from the United Kingdom, Canada and the Netherlands but also from the United States, Denmark and other countries.

- What kind of training is it?

We give them Mission Specific Training that is related to tasks they will have to perform in Afghanistan, including some knowledge about Afghanistan – about people and culture. Then we exercise this knowledge and procedures so that training participants will be able to utilize them when they are deployed. At the same time, it is multinational staff so it is also team building. Therefore, when they leave us they are ready to deploy.

- Are there any other areas of training?

For now Afghanistan is the major area but we had also done trainings and courses for Iraqi key personnel. For example at the end of 2006 Iraqi officers participated in a course and an exercise planning procedures in Poland.

- How many people do you approximately train?

It is difficult to say but when we do the training before the deployment to Kandahar, it is approximately between 200 and 300 staff members.

- Does the Centre cooperate with other training centres?

Yes, we do. We cooperate with the Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger, Norway. There are two NATO Training Centres – one in Stavanger and one in Bydgoszcz so we are sister organisations, we compliment each other in the training we deliver. In Stavanger their major task is to support and train the NATO Response Force. We also play a role in this area but obviously everything is closely coordinated with Stavanger.

We work a lot with National Training Centres, too, especially when we have to go abroad to do our training and normally we borrow facilities from them.

- How about the NATO School in Oberammergau?

We also cooperate with them. But they have different mission because they are doing education for individuals and we are doing collective training and exercises for staffs.

- How do you see the future of JFTC?

We will definitely evolve. The first step will be getting our own training facility this year and it will be supported by CAX – computer assisted exercise system, which is a modeling and simulation tool that will enhance the training.

The future steps are obviously related to training tasks and requirements that are ever increasing and becoming more complex so the challenge is the volume of work and its complexity. There are two dimensions of this complexity – for example the mission in Afghanistan has a lot of players; it is not only a military mission, we have to interface with a lot of civilians – the authorities of the country, Non-Governmental Organisations, International Organisations, humanitarian and private organisations and others. We need to replicate this whole environment for our training. The other element of this complexity lies in the conduct of operations; we have to be able to counter improvise explosive devices for example. What I mean is that there is a whole of technological and procedural side of this training that is also very complex. This is something that is being developed and introduced to our training, too.