

Team building and trust gaining

Written by Marcin Walczak
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Command Sergeant Major to the Supreme Allied Command Europe (SACEUR) Michael Bartelle, the highest ranking senior non-commissioned officer (NCO) within NATO, visited Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast on the occasion of conducted NCO training and seminar.

Major Marcin Walczak: You occupy the highest NCO position in the Alliance, what are you responsible for?

Command Sergeant Major Michael Bartelle: I report to the SACEUR on all matters that are pertaining to the enlisted force within NATO, dealing with the education and training of the non-commissioned officers, the development of the enlisted force and the current concerns associated with the families as well.

What is the idea behind creating an NCO Corps?

The idea is to have a structure within the forces, within, let's say, a middle management to where operational guidance is given from the higher officer reported to the non-commissioned officer so that the enlisted force can execute it either in garrison or in an operation.

How do you assess this kind of initiative?

It is going into a direction that is very positive and necessary because over the years each of our forces within all of our nations have reduced the number of personnel within their ranks so it is very important to have a non-commissioned officer within the organisation who assists the execution of operations.

What current challenges NCOs face in NATO?

The challenges are being educated on how operations are developed. With that understanding they can better execute the operation, we need to continue to train them in that aspect and educate them on how to be better leaders in the field.

How do you implement new ideas, solutions in the area of education and training of

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NCOs?

That is something ongoing for several years even prior to me coming into this position. We have developed programmes that are “exportable”, as the Joint Mobile Training Teams that have been here in this Headquarters, to ensure that there is a common educational structure so that we can build a multinational NCO corps, those personnel who are able to interoperate in an operation.

What steps the NCO training should take from your point of view?

From my point of view it should start from the time the individual enlists or is conscripted into the military, they are provided with an overview of how the NATO structure is, the history and then there is a sequential and progressive approach to educating each individual as they are promoted to upper ranks, whether within their national structure or within the NATO structure.

During the Classic NCO Course we could see a kind of group training with the use of nets. What is the reason to conduct such exercises?

It is a team building exercise. It may look as though they are having a great deal of fun, and in the end they are, but in this exercise they learn to work together as a team and build trust within each of them for each other and that is the true purpose of that particular exercise.