

Back from Stavanger: Ready for the mission!

Written by AG

Friday, 11 December 2009 20:43



Along with the accomplishment of the Mission Rehearsal Training at the Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger, Norway, on 11 December 2009, the personnel of Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) successfully closed the preparation process for the mission in Afghanistan, starting February next year.

Learning to crawl and walk

From 30th November to 11 December 2009, a hundred servicemen of the Multinational Corps Northeast trained at the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) in Stavanger, Norway. The whole Mission Rehearsal Training was divided into several stages in order to offer the best development possible in accordance with the motto "crawl, walk and run".

First, there were lectures and briefings combined with discussions, which allowed for basic understanding of the mission concept as well as the current situation in Afghanistan. Subsequently, the training audience focused on tasks and duties their future jobs would require. It was the "crawling" phase.

Having familiarized with responsibilities, they began putting the theory into practice while solving tasks, so-called vignettes, during the Battle Staff Training. They were selected incidents "injected" to the training audience that checked if all procedures were applied correctly. Everybody learnt to "walk" this way. As a matter of fact, it was just a preparation for the last phase of the training, which was supposed to be the most intensive. And it was, indeed.

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Time for running phase

The Mission Rehearsal Exercise started on 5 December. The script of incidents driven directly from the Afghan reality filled up everybody's minds for a couple of days. The training team made sure the training tempo reflected the real course of action in the theatre. More than two hundred exercise participants, including a hundred MNC NE personnel, worked as if they were in Afghanistan. The replicated reality included not only the scenario but also other actors present in the theatre, such as regional commands, higher headquarters, Afghan authorities or non-governmental and international organisations. Their roles were played by JWC staff or experts, often coming directly from Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, more than fifty out of altogether a hundred so-called subject matter experts and mentors left Afghanistan for a while to enhance the training in Stavanger. Among them there were even representatives of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police.

During five days of the Mission Rehearsal Exercise its participants learnt to "run" being exposed to a high number of real events and incidents, requiring the involvement of everybody in their respective fields of expertise. The topics covered during the exercise referred to e.g. operational planning, force protection, Improvised Explosive Device ambushes or strikes, crashed or missing aircraft or personnel recovery. Obviously, the place where all pieces of information met was Combined Joint Operations Centre, just like in Afghanistan.

It is important to add that it was the first training conducted by the Joint Warfare Centre aiming at preparing personnel for both at the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Headquarters and ISAF Joint Command. Even though the majority of the MNC NE personnel will serve at the latter one, it was of utmost importance to train mutual relations between both commands.

The Mission Rehearsal Exercise was not about certificates or evaluation. It was about making people confident so that when they actually deploy to Afghanistan, they will know what their tasks really are. And it seems that this objective has been achieved. Lieutenant Colonel Carsten Mørkenborg, Danish Army, admitted that the overall training was very good. *"The training team used real incidents; we got the right sort of pressure in terms of the number of incidents, their content and complexity"*

, he explained. Another exercise participant Major Marcel Janiga, Slovak Army, drew attention to another valuable aspect of the training:

"A lot of information coming directly from subject matter experts was the most important from my point of view"

Way ahead

As soon as the training in Stavanger is over, the MNC NE staff will keep their high level of preparedness for the mission and develop within respective field of expertise. It will also be a very important time for the families, who will have their own "domestic" mission to complete while fathers of the families are on duty in Afghanistan.

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