

## This Corps has a Bright Future ahead (Video)

Written by AG

Friday, 28 May 2010 14:03

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**Commander Multinational Corps Northeast Lieutenant General Rainer Korff talks about how he settled in at Baltic Barracks and what his vision of the Multinational Corps Northeast is.**

***Anna Galyga: Sir, it has been almost half a year since you started your tour of duty at Multinational Corps Northeast; have you settled in and found your way both in your personal and professional life in Szczecin?***

Lieutenant General Rainer Korff: We had some problems to cope with at the very beginning. Me and my family had to move to Szczecin with all our furniture in the winter time when there were lots of snow. And not everything worked properly in our house. But we feel quite integrated now; we know everything about the living conditions over here. My son is happy to be attending the Szczecin International School and he has very good grades. We did not expect that because he had to shift from the German into the international system from one day to another. He also had to learn to use the English language all the time and I think that was also quite difficult for him. To sum it up, I think the Korff family has finished the integration phase and that gives me the stability of working here as the Commander of Multinational Corps Northeast.

At the same time I need to stress that the framework of being the Commander at the moment

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is not the real one since nearly 70 % of our personnel have gone on the ISAF mission to Afghanistan. The structure of the Garrison Headquarters is also not how the normal structure of Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast looks. It is not a typical battle rhythm for this Headquarters. But it is very good to be here now. I have learnt how things run, what the communication lines are and who is responsible for what. And I think it is the right time now for me to go to Afghanistan and visit my personnel. That will be the last integration step for me.

### ***How do you see your role during this special time of Garrison Headquarters and how do you think it might change as soon as MNC NE servicemen come back from Afghanistan?***

My role at the Garrison Headquarters with rather minor issues to decide is not really the role for a three-star commanding officer, but that will change when the deployers are back. I have just decided to step back into our peace establishment structure very early with branch chiefs coming back to their role. I am sure we will be able to meet all challenges of the future; there is a lot of knowledge and experience here and also the new Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff are very experienced to bring in their knowledge.

The decision to form the Garrison Headquarters with round about 65 personnel who stayed in Baltic Barracks was a very good idea with excellent results. The structure proved to be efficient and it was very clear who had responsibility for what. One of the big successes of the Garrison Headquarters was the preparation and execution of the Corps Committee Meeting in April 2010 with the insight into the nearest future of the Corps. We were able to perform that with reduced personnel.

### ***On several occasions you have stressed that the Family Care Centre is the centre of gravity for the Garrison Headquarters, why is that?***

The roots for that intent are based on my experience. I remember very well from my time as Brigade Commander when I had to pass three contingents during 4 years that a mission will only be successful for the deployers when things are stable at home. Additionally, I have learnt in Szczecin that there is a difference between being a spouse in your home country and abroad, and I do not mean Poland specifically, but the principle in general. It might be a real challenge for spouses to deal with daily routines in a foreign country with a foreign language, other rules or laws. It is good to have confidence in an institution like the Family Care Centre, the families can call in case of emergency knowing there is personnel available to solve a problem and at least to show how the problem can be solved. That is why my main effort has been the Family Care Centre and I take part in any event organised by them.

### ***Are there any other priorities for Garrison Headquarters except the Family Care Centre?***

Of course, we have to use the time available in order to save the time later on and work on issues already discussed during the Corps Committee Meeting. These are issues that will influence the Corps' future, like vision papers, the Corps' structure or some other minor points e.g. the new beret. My idea is to have a five-year plan and try to achieve all our goals. That is the nutshell of my idea. It is also my intention to start the training and exercise cycle again as soon as possible.

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### ***Sir, you are talking much about the future, how do you as the Commander see the Corps' future?***

I am absolutely sure that that the Corps is fixed within the NATO Force Structure and more changes will rather appear within the NATO Command Structure. Looking at all NATO missions, you can see that the corps level or equivalent is always needed. For instance, the IJC in Kabul is a typical command and control level for corps even though it is organised with the four-star headquarters in the neighborhood.

Multinational Corps Northeast has important tasks to complete; one of them being the integration of new NATO members. If you take a look at the map, especially in the east or southeast directions, there are countries which might want to participate. It is my strong wish to have a few more flags fluttering in the wind in Baltic Barracks. I think we should also take advantage of our location. I am fully aware that it is very important to have a NATO headquarters in the east. That is not only important for Poland, but for NATO. I think the MNC NE should be the centre of interest for all NATO and non-NATO countries in the region. What exercises are those countries conducting, what possibilities the Corps has to train units outside Poland, whether we can invite other countries, also non-NATO or neutral, to join us for some time at least, whether it is possible to cooperate more closely with the NATO Training Centre in Bydgoszcz – these are the ideas running through my head. We should be very open in giving others the chance to join us and take part in our exercises.

Talking about the Headquarters' Peace Establishment structure, I think the number of personnel and the size of this Corps will be stable. I do not expect to get more staff and that is also the recommendation I have received from the Framework Nations – to make the structure more modern with the same amount of personnel and money available. And I think that is possible to achieve.

In order to fulfil the Corps' missions, we need to handle the flow of information in the best way: who can provide which piece of information, in which Division, in what time and how. We should make use of our lessons learnt from missions. For example, General McChrystal's new strategy in Afghanistan to practice more partnering requires a lot of information. That information flood has to be organised in the headquarters and the IJC has the personnel of 1000 people and most of them are very busy to work on managing this information, i.e. gathering and assessing it.

### ***Sir, the Headquarters has a rather untypical structure without separate G7 and G9 Divisions. Is that going to change?***

I would rather prefer a more vertical than horizontal view on our structure. The structure from G1 to G9 is horizontal, whereas the information flow I stress so much is conducted vertically – up and down. We need the structure that provides us the possibility to look into all directions in the staff. Even though we can be set up in a cross, like in a typical G-structure, I think you can exchange and provide better information from a circle. It is better to talk in a round table; it is very quick and more detailed. My idea is that this Corps should be able to exchange information effectively and speed up the decision making process from an order down to a

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frago given to the division.

### ***To sum up our conversation, does Multinational Corps Northeast have a bright future?***

Definitely yes. I am absolutely sure about that. This Corps has a clear mission, also a political one. And do not forget the fact that we are one of the most experienced in ISAF missions in the NATO Force Structure. We have already received a lot of requests concerning booking our Subject Matter Experts for many exercises and training in order to share their knowledge and expertise.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWPKb6T8eQ0>