



The Commander of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) Lieutenant General Rainer Korff summarizes the year 2010 and talks about the upcoming future of the Corps.

Anna Galyga: Sir, it has been several months since the Corps finished its mission in Afghanistan and the Headquarters has returned to its peacetime structure; where is the Multinational Corps Northeast headed now?

Lieutenant General Rainer Korff: At the moment, the Corps is in-between two missions. We took part in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission this year and the whole focus has been put on training for the upcoming mission that we will execute in 2014. Now the question is how to develop the Training and Exercise Calendar in the best way in order to prepare ourselves, especially the newcomers, for that mission. We have passed the ISAF mission very successfully, but we have changed a lot of personnel and the newcomers will have to learn our Standing Operating Procedures and Instructions as well as the Szafran Command Control and Information System. We have to concentrate on training not only stabilization operations, but also Article 5 Operations. Our main exercise will be Crystal Eagle 2012, but in that exercise we will be the trainer for others. That is why I was looking for the possibility to be trained or integrated as a training audience in exercises conducted in close cooperation with the Polish side, such as the Dragoon and Anaconda exercises.

How would you summarize the year 2010?

It was a really successful year. Concerning the ISAF mission, there was a lot of praise and remarks expressed by the ISAF leadership that our soldiers did a very good job and had been well prepared. On the one hand, it is a pity that most of them will finish their tour of duty at the Headquarters, but on the other hand, it will be a good opportunity to share these experiences with national units. And I am sure we will include concentrated Lessons Identified and Lessons Learned in our Standing Operating Procedures and Instructions, and into our concepts how to run this Headquarters in missions and that is very good.

I would also like to emphasize that the families living in Szczecin had been supporting the ISAF mission, too, for more than six months in the best way possible. They did a great job and that was for me as the Corps' Commander very good to see.

The rest of the year was about reintegration within branches and divisions, and integration of the new personnel. And do not forget when we were sending a lot of Subject Matter Experts nearly all over the world for training and exercises to teach others preparing for the ISAF mission. That is also a very important factor and that will be continued in 2011 as well.

During the last Corps Committee Meeting in November 2010, the Commander's Vision 2015 gained approval. How will this document shape the future of Multinational Corps Northeast?

The Commander's Vision 2015 is, in my understanding, a very good document describing what we want to achieve in the future. That vision is based on what is going on within the security and military policy of NATO and what the interests of the Framework Nations are. The Framework Nations appreciated the fact that our guideline is going to be the integration of other nations into this Corps. We want to make this Corps more flexible, more useful for the nations. Our mission is widespread in the sense that we have to be able to fight under Article 5 conditions, we have to work on disaster relief operations and be successful in peace support operations, what we have proved this year. The vision covers all these areas, but the main focus is placed on changing the Corps in the way that we will introduce a new structure and we will be much integration-oriented because one of our tasks is to be an open door for new NATO members. We offer the possibility to join us and learn about NATO procedures and NATO staff work. And I am sure that the number of Participating States will increase within a time frame of the next 5 years.

Cohesion, Training, Experience and Integration

Written by AG

Tuesday, 21 December 2010 23:20

Our ideas are limited to the year 2015 though, but I think it is very realistic to achieve all the objectives. Obviously, we have to observe the changes within the Command Structure and how they will influence tasks of the Forces Structure, that is the corps level. That is why I call this document a living paper that can be adapted or changed whenever needed.

Sir, what will the Corps be like in 2015?

I think we will have a new structure, a higher number of Participating States and we will be much mission-oriented, too. This Corps is very much focused on the development in NATO and all requirements for military missions. We have to cover all of that with our abilities and training. But I think we have been quite successful. In 2015, I would expect an even closer cooperation among the Corps' nations, especially within the Framework Nations community. We will probably also cooperate more intensively with the other sister corps bringing the NATO family closer together. All in all, this is the kind of development I foresee for this Corps during the next 5 years.

What do you think, Sir, will be the greatest challenges for this Corps in the upcoming year?

I think cohesion, training, exchange of experiences and integration of newcomers sums it up appropriately. I would describe the next year as an advanced integration and learning process for all of us.

The greatest challenge will be to create a unit with great cohesion and common understanding of everything that we are doing. That means we have to start at the very beginning of the upcoming year with a very intensive individual training and continue with team building processes we have already started.

We have just decided to use the Little Eagle 1 exercise and Battle Staff Training to experiment on how useful the cross functional concept we had experienced at ISAF Joint Command is for our Headquarters and, if possible, to work on that concept during Article 5 related exercises. We want to find out if this concept is in line with our system, also a deployed concept involving the Command Support Brigade. We will also face challenges related to the improved version of the Szafran Command, Control and Information System. And again, the newcomers will have to fit in and integrate into all those processes.

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But in 2012 the situation will change because we will have to present what we have learned and train others.

People often make resolutions at the end of the year; will you, Sir as the Corps' Commander, make some resolutions for the Corps?

I think there is no need for that. Everybody should simply understand what my intentions are. Each member of this Corps has, besides his regular job, the important mission of being an ambassador for the Multinational Corps Northeast. For that reason, we should integrate into the Polish daily life and wear uniform outside the Baltic Barracks showing the Corps' presence in Szczecin, our host city.

Another thing is that we are living here under multinational conditions and have to fulfill a specific code of conduct – that is part of our team spirit, which is very important to all of us. And the third thing is that I want the soldiers to be trained in the best way possible: to learn to use Szafran effectively, be familiar with all Standing Operating Instructions and Procedures and be fully integrated within the Lessons Identified/Lessons Learned process. I think all members of this Corps have to do their job even better than under national conditions and that is what I do expect from them. At the same time, I am certain that I as the Corps Commander and all the staff members share the same vision of what this Corps should be like.