

## Crystal Eagle 13: expectations set, preparations carry on

Written by AG

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**Lieutenant General Rainer Korff, the Commander of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE), hosted commanders of all formations that will take part in next year's Crystal Eagle 13 as the Training Audience and supporting formations. The conference held at Baltic Barracks in Szczecin on 5-6 November 2012 brought a clear way ahead for subsequent preparations of the exercise.**

Crystal Eagle 13 shall be another opportunity for MNC NE to share expertise with units assigned by the Corps' nations in the framework of crisis response operations. The Afghanistan based scenario will also enable the Corps staff to move smoothly into its own mission preparation process and, later on, deployment to Afghanistan in 2014.

In order to enhance the preparations for the exercise, the MNC NE Commander General Korff invited commanders of all formations that will take part in next year's Crystal Eagle 13 as the Training Audience as well as supporting formations for a common session. Beyond the MNC NE Command Group and representatives of other Staff Divisions, in the conference participated: Major General Carsten Jacobson, the Commander of German 1st Armoured Division, Brigadier General Ernst Otto Berk, the Deputy Commander of German Airmobile Division, Brigadier General Cezary Podlasiński, the Commander of the Polish 10th Armoured

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Cavalry Brigade, Colonel Wojciech Kucharski, the Commander of Command Support Brigade, Colonel Christian Riener, the Commander of Austrian 4th Mechanized Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Craig Baumgartner, the Deputy Commander of the US 18th Engineer Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Dybowski, the Commander of ISTAR Element of Polish 9th Reconnaissance Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Franc Kalič, the Commander of Slovenian Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Battalion and Lieutenant Colonel Grzegorz Pardo, the Commander of NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion.

The MNC NE Commander's conference enabled the commanders of the divisions, brigades and battalions engaged in the exercise to share their visions, expectations, plans and concepts. *"I think that this conference was more than useful; the results were very fruitful and helpful for us in order to conduct the next steps,"*

said General Rainer Korff, the MNC NE Commander, pointing out that based on the expectations and training objectives identified by the formations' commanders, the exercise itself and the scenario along with the storylines and incidents will be prepared in the exact way as requested.

*"Command Support Brigade will ensure the proper way to run the exercise so that the Corps Commander and the other commanders will reach their own objectives properly,"* reassured Colonel Wojciech Kucharski, the Command Support Brigade Commander.

What expectations and aims do the various formations and their commanders have?

Major General Carsten Jacobson, the Commander of German 1st Armoured Division: *"The intent of the conference was to coordinate the aims that various staffs have for conducting the exercise. In the case of 1st German Armoured Division, the Division has just returned from deployment in Afghanistan, changed over staff and has to prepare for another mission engagement in Afghanistan in 2014. So for the Division it will be vital to start the process of pre-deployment training of exercising of divisional staff in the framework of the coming exercise Crystal Eagle to prepare for the future role in Afghanistan. Every exercise means progress and every time you have the chance to exercise personnel, in particular if you have a lot of new people that have to form a new team and work together, is a good opportunity."*

Brigadier General Ernst Otto Berk, the Deputy Commander of German Airmobile Division: *"The conference gave the opportunity to explain the changed role of my Division. Initially we intended to be part of the Training Audience but that is not possible any more for one simple reason: we are short of manpower because of the ongoing restructuring process of the Division. Nevertheless, our new role is to be in a supporting position for the MNC NE and the Commanding General. We have identified what needs to be done from our side in order to*

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*support the Corps to the greatest extent possible, which I promised. Participation in each exercise is training, of course, so we will use it to train our staff officers to work in a multinational environment.”*

Colonel Christian Riener, the Commander of Austrian 4th Mechanized Brigade: *“Austria is a neutral state and not a member of NATO. Nevertheless, Austria is participating and contributing to crisis response operations. Therefore, this exercise is a good opportunity and possibility to train interoperability and so it is for the first time that the Austrian Brigade Commander with the full staff will participate in such a NATO-led exercise. We are very thankful and proud to have this opportunity.”*

Brigadier General Cezary Podlasiński, the Commander of the Polish 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade: *“Last year we came back from Afghanistan where we were as the brigade with almost 1600 soldiers. At the moment, we are preparing for another mission in Afghanistan in the 14th rotation. Because about 30% of key personnel in my staff have changed, I think that for me the most important is to check the readiness of my staff.”*

Lieutenant Colonel Craig Baumgartner, the Deputy Commander of the US 18th Engineer Brigade: *“We recognize our role as a LOCON (Lower Control) so no formal training objectives in that role, however, we definitely recognize the training opportunity this exercise will have for us. Anytime we have an opportunity to coordinate, integrate, synchronize with the planning process across all partner nations, it is a great opportunity. The 18th Engineer Brigade also just redeployed from Afghanistan in June of this past year and we have a new team, too. We see Crystal Eagle 13 as a fantastic opportunity to bring that team closer within the brigade but also to interrelate with everybody else who is part of the exercise.”*

The Commander’s Conference was an excellent opportunity to set guidelines and the way ahead in the preparations of the Crystal Eagle 13 exercise. The next major step will be the Main Planning Conference planned for November which shall additionally clarify and hasten the process. As a matter of fact, there are only five months left until Crystal Eagle 13 will enter the scene.

*Photo by: SGT Maksymilian Halec, POL A*