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Members of NATO Response Force,
Dogانبey, Turkey, 2003

A Deployable Joint Headquarters for the NATO Response Force

By MICHAEL L. MCGINNIS

At the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit held in Prague in November 2002, the central topic was how to deal with threats from international terrorism, hostile regimes, and rogue states. Recognizing the need for a military force capable of responding quickly to crises outside NATO's traditional area of operations, the nations voted unanimously to create a standing, deployable joint task force.

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In October 2003, the North Atlantic Council stood up the NATO Response Force (NRF), which will consist of 22,000 to 24,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and special operations personnel when fully operational in the fall of 2006. The NRF will provide a credible joint task force capable of deploying within 5 days of a North Atlantic Council decision to commit forces and conducting "stand-alone" operations for 30 days. NRF experimentation through certification in 2006 serves as a catalyst for transforming NATO into agile forces for new missions ranging from humanitarian relief to forced entry into a hostile environment.

This article focuses on two major aspects related to standing up a new headquarters for the NRF: transforming a traditional joint staff (J-staff) into a deployable, flexible organization capable of planning and assessing effects-based operations (EBO); and bridging the gap between EBO concepts and putting them into practice.

Command and Control

Command and control of the NRF will be accomplished through a small, deployable joint task force (DJTF) headquarters, commanded by a one- or two-star officer, and capable of planning and coordinating a relatively new application concept for conducting military operations called effects-based operations. Command will rotate yearly among three static parent headquarters: Joint Force Command (JFC) Brunssum, Netherlands; JFC Naples, Italy; and a new three-star Joint Headquarters near Lisbon, Portugal.

The DJTF headquarters (HQS) will serve as the joint force commander's forward command post. The headquarters must meet the same deployment and sustainment standards as the NRF forces and cover the core J-staff functions (J-1 through J-9) of the parent headquarters. A generic NRF command structure illustrates how the parent headquarters is supported by a three-star advisory staff representing each service component—land, sea, and air—and the liaison relationships between the three-star advisory staffs and two-star component commands. The forces are generated from the two-star land component command, maritime component command, and air component command.

Operation Stavanger

Preliminary work to establish a deployable joint headquarters at JFC Naples involved weeks of home station planning that produced a draft document of staff responsibilities and standing operating procedures. This phase culminated with Brigadier General Rick Lynch, USA, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, and his staff planning a 7-day deployment exercise to build the headquarters team and conduct vignette-driven, effects-based staff training.

Key assumptions and operational factors important to DJTF HQS design were obtained from NATO documents and guidance from NATO

leaders such as General James L. Jones, Jr., USMC, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and Admiral Gregory G. Johnson, USN, combatant commander, Joint Force Command Naples.

- The NRF was to demonstrate initial operational capability by October 2004 and reach full capacity by October 2006.

- The DJTF headquarters is limited to about 90 personnel assigned to JFC Naples. Operational capabilities include deploying within 5 days of a decision by the North Atlantic Council; conducting self-sustained, 24-hour operations for 30 days; and covering the J-1 through J-9 staff functions of the parent headquarters.

On February 1, 2004, over 90 military personnel from 11 nations assigned to Joint Force Command Headquarters Naples, designated as NATO's first deployable joint task force headquarters, departed from Naples to Stavanger, Norway, under the command of General Lynch. The location for the deployment exercise was NATO's new Joint Warfare Center (JWC) at Ulsnes, outside Stavanger. According to British Army Major General James Short, JWC Chief of Staff, the JFC Naples contingent was the first group to use the training facility, which was recently converted from a Norwegian naval station. Modernization will continue to network and digitize the center for NATO staff training. In addition to training headquarters personnel, the exercise was intended to build team cohesion among headquarters personnel and engage the JFC Naples staff responsible for providing reach-back.

Challenges to Standing Up

NATO is in the midst of shifting the focus of its forces from symmetric warfare against the former Warsaw Pact countries to deployable response to asymmetric threats across a much broader range of missions outside Alliance boundaries. Change is hard under any circumstances but especially in a joint, multinational environment for a variety of reasons:

Varying language skills. Although English is NATO's official language, many individuals assigned to multinational staffs have limited English skills. Language differences present serious communication barriers to transformation and operational effectiveness.

Disparity in military experience. Each nation in the Alliance has a unique leadership development program. In a multinational headquarters, rank alone is no guarantee that an individual assigned to a position has the requisite education and experience.

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National caveats. NATO operations require significant consensus building. All 26 member nations must be in general agreement on the scope of operations before the North Atlantic Council

will issue an activation order to take military action. Even after such an order is issued, nations may decline to conduct specific operations, invoking national caveats. Claiming these or other restrictions, individuals assigned to a multinational headquarters may forego exercises or deployments.

Intelligence sharing, computers, and information systems. Successful operations depend on shared intelligence, clear communications, and interoperability of computer and information systems across echelons and headquarters and with multinational, international, and private nongovernmental organizations. NATO has not yet resourced a full suite of interoperable communications, information systems, and support infrastructure for conducting such operations.

Deployability constraints. North Atlantic Council consent is required to plan contingency operations and to take preliminary actions such as coordinating logistics, lines of communications, sea- and airlift, and host nation support. Council restrictions will constrain rapid deployment of the DJTF headquarters.

Stovepiped headquarters. Ongoing operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq have exposed serious gaps with traditional J-staff processes for planning and conducting military operations against asymmetric threats. Pursuing a broader range of lethal and nonlethal effects will drive changes to military headquarters, especially at the joint operational level.

Time-driven planning process. The DJTF headquarters is required to deploy within 5 days of alert. Time horizons mandated for headquarters planning are: current operations, 0 to 72 hours; future operations, 3 to 10 days; and future plans, 11 to 30 days. Time-driven planning over a rolling horizon presents unique challenges that demand proficiency, speed, agility, and flexibility across all aspects of headquarters operations.

These challenges, mandated operational requirements, and past experience with headquarters design led General Lynch to break with a traditional stovepiped organization and adopt a flexible, modular, matrix architecture composed

of loosely coupled cells able to work collaboratively to produce joint, operational-level fragmentary orders (FRAGOs).

Applying Effects-Based Operations

After 15 years of dynamic changes to the global geographical-political-military landscape, a new set of threats to peace and stability has emerged in the form of asymmetric drug cartels, crime syndicates, and terrorist groups that are often either harbored or sponsored by rogue states. Asymmetric threats operate outside societal norms to destabilize, undermine, or compromise legitimate governments through terror, violence, brutality, and intimidation. In operating against these elements, military forces have relearned the lesson that an elusive, less sophisticated adversary can function effectively, even when outnumbered and overmatched, by circumventing and neutralizing the size and technological advantages of modern forces. Effects-based operations are one approach to countering asymmetric threats that takes a holistic system-of-systems view of the battlespace.

Effects-based operations is not a new theory of warfare; its principles have been practiced for centuries. In the era of modern warfare, however, EBO represents a new application concept that pursues a higher order of effects beyond the physical results achieved from applying military means to military objectives. It offers planners a way to anticipate, trace, and exploit both physical and psychological effects of military and nonmilitary actions on all systems that make up the battlespace. However, complex relationships among societal groups, key persons, systems, decisions, actions, and means make it difficult to predict effects and outcomes.

The driving premise behind EBO is to control or influence the state of the battlespace through actions that control or influence the systems, key individuals, and societal groups inside and outside the battlespace. Its actions are intended either to maintain the current state of a nation or its social systems, or to change their state. Desirable states typically reflect conditions such as stability and security while undesirable states are characterized by disorder and insecurity. Undesirable states generally result from deliberate actions by a nation, rogue state, or group to destabilize a nation or society, or from gross neglect, abuse of power, incompetence, poor governance, or a lack of stewardship by leaders. Effects-based operations seek either to restore the desirable state or, in event of a conflict, to dictate conditions such



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Turkish troops rappelling from helicopter, Exercise Allied Response 2003

as the tempo of operations, thereby denying adversary forces the means, will, and opportunity to carry out coordinated and effective actions.

A review of the literature yields a substantial body of research on the theory of effects-based operations. However, with the exception of effects-based joint targeting by the Air Force, there is little discussion of practical aspects of applying EBO or reorganizing a military headquarters for effects-based planning at the operational level. Insights into applying EBO within the DJTF headquarters came primarily from four sources:

- discussions with military strategists, analysts, and personnel who either were researching EBO or had recent experience in warfighting headquarters at the joint, operational level
- lessons learned from recent warfighting experiments such as Millennium Challenge '02 and NATO Multinational Exercise '04
- personal experience with headquarters design

- General Lynch's experiences operating against asymmetric threats at JFC Naples and as the Assistant Chief of Staff, Kosovo Force Main, Kosovo.

Given past professional experiences and fundamental principles of effects-based operations distilled from background research, the authors developed an iterative three-phase methodology for applying EBO within the deployable, joint, operational-level headquarters. Phase I decomposes the battlespace into a system-of-systems in a way that broadens the scope of how military planners see and understand it. Phase II lays out how to plan and apply EBO across the full spectrum of battlespace systems, using military and nonmilitary means to achieve higher order effects beyond those of military means alone. Phase III focuses on the assessment of effects-based actions to ensure that operations progress toward the desired endstate.



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NATO Response Force change of command, June 2004

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Maturing the DJTF Headquarters

Operation *Stavanger* was carried out in four phases: alert and predeployment preparation; deployment; battle staff training and after action review, including senior mentor feedback; and redeployment. Different aspects of headquarters functionality were evaluated during each phase.

Metrics for evaluating progress and success of the deployment are listed below.

Deployment assessment. Verifying that personnel assigned to the DJTF HQS have 12 months remaining at JFC Naples to be stabilized on the DJTF team; manifesting and processing headquarters personnel for deployment via military airlift from Naples to Stavanger with no discrepancies; and conducting movement of the team to JWC Ulsnes without incident.

DJTF HQS staff training assessment. Assessing English-speaking skills of assigned personnel; through exercise events, stimulating the staff to work at least four of seven NRF missions; putting

effects-based concepts into practice by conducting effects-based planning and assessment; measuring the time required to complete a crisis action cycle from crisis event to issuance of military orders; and publishing a draft DJTF HQS staff standing operating procedure by the end of the exercise.

Redeployment assessment. Redeploying the team from JWC Ulsnes without incident.

During the training phase, a series of three vignettes drove evolution of the headquarters design, forced maturation of staff processes, and exercised reach-back with JFC Naples. These vignettes also gave the headquarters opportunities to exercise interoperability, command and control, communications, and information systems. In response to each vignette, the DJTF HQS staff planned contingency operations and issued FRAGOs based on the commander's guidance while tracking the commander's critical information requirements, conducting crisis action responses, developing operational-level decisive points, and planning stability and support operations, counterterrorism operations, and demilitarization of local paramilitary groups.

Between vignettes, the cells refined routine and crisis action procedures, and the entire headquarters conducted after action reviews led jointly by Generals Lynch and Short. Feedback guided changes to headquarters design and helped refine standing operating procedures and information and workflow models. During the first few days of the exercise, the staff tended to work exclusively within assigned cells as they struggled through the vignettes. As the exercise progressed, the product-focused cell structure forced the staff to work outside their comfort zone of previous headquarters staff experience. By the final vignette, the staff was observed working collaboratively across cells to develop an integrated, synchronized plan for applying military and nonmilitary means to achieve the commander's intended effects. The organization evolved from a stovepiped headquarters to a matrix, information-centric structure of loosely coupled cells.

Overview of Headquarters Cells and Liaisons

The command group supports the commander, manages DJTF staff operations, and ensures that the intent and guidance from both the joint task force and DJTF headquarters commanders are clearly communicated and understood. Command group members include the chief of staff, information operations officer, political adviser, legal adviser, public information officer, and medical adviser.

USS *McInerney* departing Rendsburg, Germany, en route to joining NATO Response Force, February 15, 2005



U.S. Navy (Frank Behling)

The Combined Joint Operations Center (CJOC) serves as the central point of communications and information management while submitting and responding to requests for information. Other members include the psychological operations officer, civil and military cooperation officer, nuclear, biological, and chemical officer, and component command liaisons.

The Operations and Intelligence Cell combines J-3 operations and J-2 intelligence functions. It manages the battlespace by synchronizing all military and nonmilitary means, develops situational awareness, coordinates effects-based operations with JFC and component commands, and analyzes friendly and enemy capabilities, risks, and vulnerabilities.

The Effects Cell develops and analyzes effects-based plans and coordinates and assesses effects-based operations. Other responsibilities include identifying effects and subeffects, recommending metrics for measuring progress and success, and analyzing and recommending operational-level means (diplomatic, political, information, military, and economic) for achieving intended effects and the desired endstate.

The Sustainment Cell coordinates and schedules J-4 operations and host nation support. Other responsibilities include personnel (J-1), computer and technical support (J-6), resources and contracting (J-8), medical, terrain, and weather analysis, and determination of sustainment risks for movement control and protection of main supply routes and air- and seaports of debarkation.

The Crisis Action Team (CAT) and Joint Planning Team (JPT) give the headquarters a way to react rapidly to unanticipated crises that cause a breakdown in the DJTF headquarters normal battle rhythm. The ad hoc teams form when the CJOC transmits a net call to deal with a specific crisis. The CAT scopes out and bounds the problem, briefs the commander, and recommends whether all or part of the crisis should be handled by the DJTF headquarters and NRF or passed to the parent headquarters. Based on commander's guidance, the Crisis Action Team disbands and a Joint Planning Team works through the EBO process to bring the crisis to an acceptable end state. Once the JPT produces a FRAGO that lays out effects, metrics, and means, in the form of a course of action approved by the DJTF headquarters commander, the team stands down.

The Observation, Liaison, and Reconnaissance Team provides initial information gathering, situational awareness, and intelligence and

establishes liaison and conducts initial coordination of support with the host nation, nongovernmental organizations, and private volunteer organizations prior to arrival of the DJTF headquarters.

Component command liaisons communicate and coordinate orders, actions, and effects with their respective headquarters. Other key responsibilities include representing component force commanders and providing advice and expertise on standing operating procedures, tactics, and processes.

The small operational footprint of the forward deployed DJTF HQS simplifies force protection and life support requirements for the headquarters, but also limits capabilities and functionality to what is mission essential. Therefore, parent headquarters provide support via reach-back, including supplying paper and digital maps, providing operations analysis, preparing higher-level orders and plans, developing prioritized joint target lists, identifying infrastructure (power, roads, water, sewer), preparing country-specific studies and profiles of key leaders, and coordinating and communicating through high-level diplomatic, political, and military channels.

Accomplishments of the DJTF Team

The initial effort to stand up a deployable NATO headquarters during Operation *Stavanger* simultaneously transformed the headquarters into a flat, efficient team organized for 24/7 operations. Conventional staff processes for generating decisions and orders were reengineered around the flow of information, making it possible for the headquarters to prepare decision briefings quickly and efficiently and produce joint, operational-level orders. The combination of strong leadership by senior members of the DJTF team, an aggressive training agenda, and feedback from the JWC observers/trainers took headquarters proficiency beyond what was initially anticipated. The headquarters also bridged the gap between EBO theory and application. The deployment to Stavanger, Norway, also resulted in several NATO firsts:

- first major training exercise to be conducted at NATO's new Joint Warfare Center
- first deployable NATO headquarters to be stood up capable of deploying within 5 days of alert and conducting self-sustained 24-hour-a-day operations for 30 days
- first NATO headquarters to be reorganized from a traditional J-staff military headquarters into a cell-based organization for effects-based operations.

Perhaps the most important accomplishment of Operation *Stavanger*, however, was the high cohesion the DJTF achieved in the first 48 hours. On arriving at Stavanger, General Lynch immediately set the tone for the week by delaying the start of training so he could clearly communicate the goals of the exercise to all DJTF members and JWC observers/trainers. He also set aside time the first evening for the team to socialize. Training was again delayed the next morning for a group meeting where all 90 members of the DJTF team from 11 nations stood up in front of the group and, in English, introduced themselves and gave their military backgrounds. The introductions were the first time many had spoken before a large body, and they later said it made them feel more "connected." The socialization and introductions were the beginning of trust relationships. By the end of the week, the team had become a highly cohesive unit. The camaraderie and enthusiasm were never more evident than at the end of the flight back from Stavanger, when General Lynch stood at the bottom of the stairs and shook hands with everyone who deplaned. The enthusiastic, backslapping goodbyes on the tarmac demonstrated the collective spirit. And observations and lessons learned were plentiful.

Information bottlenecks not eliminated. Although the headquarters made only modest progress at reducing information queues and technology related bottlenecks, the flat, modular cell structure demonstrated superb agility throughout the exercise in responding to both routine and crisis actions.

Improved information flow. Restructuring the headquarters cell structure around the flow of information improved that flow, which improved decisionmaking. By the end of the exercise, decision cycle time from crisis to communication of orders was improved by over 25 percent, reducing the time from 12 to between 8 and 10 hours.

Transformation takes time. Maturing staff processes and liaisons with parent and component commands will require time and training. A significant breakthrough in efficiency will call for headquarters at all levels to fully integrate modern information, computer, and communications technologies and to adopt an enterprise approach to information and workflow processes.

Value-added products and services. As an intermediate headquarters, the DJTF HQS adds value by delivering timely, useful products and services to component commands. Examples include analysis that connects the dots by providing insights into,

and anticipation of, enemy intents, capabilities, and vulnerabilities; developing a complete and accurate effects-based picture of the battlespace; and producing orders that coordinate and synchronize the efficient, effective use of joint assets to accomplish effects-based operations.

Selecting the right people and stabilizing the team. Progress made during Operation *Stavanger* confirms that creating a deployable, multinational joint task force headquarters is an attainable goal. However, sustaining the headquarters will be a challenge. NATO nations must acknowledge that NRF missions place unique demands on the DJTF team and assign personnel to the headquarters with the knowledge, experience, and communication skills to:

- conduct effects-based operations
- conduct regular training to develop and maintain the expertise required of a combined, joint, operational-level headquarters
- synchronize assignments with operational requirements, stabilizing personnel for a full tour so that once trained, the team remains together throughout the operational phase.

Operation *Stavanger* helped transform the DJTF team into an adaptive, innovative learning organization. NATO must develop new strategies for educating and for developing and conducting the individual and collective staff training necessary to continue this mission.

Headquarters staff at all levels must become technically competent at using information technologies, data management mining techniques, computer simulation models, and communications technologies to support planning, analyzing, and assessing effects-based operations.

The DJTF headquarters is by no means fully trained at effects-based operations, nor is it yet able to plan the full range of EBO. Nevertheless, in the exercise the headquarters clearly established a baseline capability for EBO. The team will refine information and product flow as well as staff responsibilities and battle rhythm. Lessons learned from Operation *Stavanger* will be incorporated into future DJTF headquarters designs and will help Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, Virginia, to develop new NRF doctrine.

Dynamic Action '04 in March 2004 at JFC Naples focused on refining standing operating procedures, exercising reach-back with the parent headquarters, and maturing liaison with component commands. In April, the deployable joint task force headquarters conducted a no-notice



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deployment exercise to an undisclosed location to test deployment procedures and verify deployability of personnel assigned to the headquarters. *Allied Action '04* in late May and early June forward deployed the headquarters to Persona, Italy, to conduct a major exercise leading to initial operating capability in October. Building on progress made thus far will ensure that NATO fields a capable operational force for meeting its broader goals of fostering military cooperation among member nations and strengthening joint, international planning for the common defense of the Alliance.

JFQ