



German, US and other national officers currently taking up command posts in the ISAF mission have benefited from an innovative training conducted by NATO's centres in Bydgoszcz and Stavanger, enabled by support from the NATO Communications and Information (NCI) Agency.

For the second time, two major training events were linked into one massive networked effort - Unified Endeavour, which prepares US officers going into the ISAF Joint Command in Kabul, Regional Commands East and Southwest, and the training event for German officers who will serve in the Regional Command North.

While this added complexity and significantly increased the technical challenges of the event, the approach had a major benefit – the incoming commanders, who are already in the training phase interact with the same people they will be working with on the ground in Afghanistan, using the same scenarios, tools and applications. Prior to this new approach, each Nation trained separately and training staff played roles of other command levels.

*“For my troops it is important that we experience as realistic environment as possible, both in terms of the data, systems and application used, but also in terms of our interactions with the other command levels,”* said Major General Joerg Vollmer, commanding general of Germany's Special Operations Division, and the next commander of the Regional Command North.

The German part of the event was held at the NATO Joint Force Training Centre in Bydgoszcz. General Pavel Macko, Commander of the JFTC, explained how innovation is part of the Centre's strategy and how it is dependent on technical support.

*“Our aim is to maximize the value of the training for Nations and as such our growth is enabled or constrained by flexibility, speed of the technology support provided by the Agency, ”* said General Macko, “

*For example one of the challenges in this event was to replicate the exact data that is on the ground in Afghanistan, and we were successful. Despite the complexity, personally I believe that these linked, distributed training events will be a key element of NATO's Connected Forces initiative – they increase the value of the event for the Nations, while driving the cost down.*

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*“We probably hold the NATO's record terms of setting up exercise environments. In three to four days, we can set up a full, customized training environment for some 500 people ”,* says Wojciech Czerwinski, Commander of the NCI Agency Squadron in Bydgoszcz, “

*What this means for our customer, the JFTC, is that they can tailor the events to meet Nations' requirements and maximize the value of the training event for the Nation.*

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During the combined training event, eight locations in the United States and Europe were linked in order to allow thousands of officers to interact on joint scenarios, on the same applications and systems that they will be using once they arrive in Afghanistan.

*“For us this was the last stage of the training, the final mission rehearsal and we worked like we would on the ground with joint vignettes with the ISAF Joint Command, ”* said General Vollmer.

### **Comprehensive Agency Support**

The NCI Agency’s supported the event on two levels – first, the NCI Agency teams in Bydgoszcz and Stavanger helped to establish the training environments, a complex task involving creation of thousands of user accounts, preparing data and applications in a very short time. In the case of the Stavanger squadron, this was done in Grafenwoehr, Germany, where the IJC portion of the training took place.

Second, Agency experts that helped to develop specialized NATO command and control software currently used in ISAF deployed to assist with the training effort. The fact that the NCI Agency software experts participate in the training has one additional benefit for NATO; the feedback gathered during the training is then passed on to the software development department so that the next generation of applications can be improved.

*“One of the key aims of Agency reform and the establishment of our Agency was to maximize the value to NATO, ”* said NCI General Manager Koen Gijbers, *“We are proud of our contribution to Connected Forces, and the fact that various streams of support can now be offered in a one-stop shop approach*

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*Written by Michal Olejarnik, NCI Agency Communication Manager*