

French Maj. Gen. Jean Fred Berger at the Unified Endeavor exercises in Germany in March 2012.



JOINT MULTINATIONAL TRAINING COMMAND

**F**rench Army Maj. Gen. Jean Fred Berger was appointed commander of NATO's Joint Warfare Centre in 2011, where he has helped knit together a multinational staff of more than 70. The Stavanger, Norway-based JWC is dedicated to training and war gaming. As such it took the lead in developing a training scenario aimed at the Horn of Africa called "Cerasia" and followed that up with a simulated exercise dubbed "Skolkan" that replicates a high intensity conflict in and around the Baltic Sea.

Trained at France's famed Saint Cyr military academy, Berger spent many years as chief engineer at Eurocorps, the rapid deployment force based in Strasbourg that can serve under both EU and NATO command. In that role he served with multinational peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Kosovo. These days, Berger focuses mainly on the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan.

The JWC prides itself on providing much of the training for staff officers bound for Afghanistan. Berger estimates that 60 percent of them have passed through Stavanger or its subsidiaries. "Priority one is Afghanistan," he said of his work. "It is first in line."

During joint training exercises in March 2012 in Grafenwoehr, Germany, Berger established a command post during the mission readiness exercise at Grafenwoehr. It was the first time the JWC and the JMTC had integrated training so thoroughly, and it represented for Berger a triumph of international military integration.

"We are not blind to the complexities of being together but what we want to do in the exercise is

overcome them," the general said as a multinational staff of Italian, French, German officers created a hive of activity in his office. A Norwegian flag, indicative of the JWC's Nordic headquarters, hung in the background.

Berger recalled the days of the Cold War, when Grafenwoehr would host 200,000 troops on maneuvers to defend against the potential Soviet threat. Today, high quality intensive training, much of it occurring at computer terminals, substitutes for those massive troop movements. While the JWC handles "strategic" training, its NATO partner in Poland, the Joint Force Training Centre, handles training more at the tactical level.

The link-up of Norway and Poland highlights for Berger the successful assimilation of NATO members that once belonged to the Warsaw Pact. "It has been achieved," Berger said of the Alliance's Eastern European integration. "I don't see any difference between an officer from Latvia, Croatia or Hungary. They are all absolutely at the same level of knowledge."

Troop training is no longer strictly a military affair. Just as militaries have carved out responsibilities in civilian reconstruction and peace keeping, training exercises have incorporated roles for national ambassadors, the United Nations, the European Union and aid agencies. Even during maneuvers in the field, it's not unusual to see nonmilitary advisors offering guidance.

"We replicate the picture of the international environment and the reality that the soldiers are not alone on the ground," Berger said. "The use of force is only one factor."

## NATO'S Man in the North

## A RAINBOW OF PATCHES AND UNIFORMS REPRESENTING MORE THAN 8,000 MULTINATIONAL TROOPS THROGGED BARRACKS, FIELDS AND CLASSROOMS

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Sitting among rows of computer terminals with a multinational class that included Bulgarian airmen, Jakubczak learned the most effective ways to load and unload NATO's giant C-17 and smaller C-130 transport planes. "It's always better to learn from those who have more experience. In Poland we don't have these planes to train on," said Jakubczak, who noted that it was his first stay on an American military base. "Coming here is well worth it. All experience is a plus."

The textbook-based curriculum wasn't easy. By midweek, Jakubczak noticed that as many as five students had dropped out of his class, which was taught in English. Classroom instruction for multinationals is a growth industry at Grafenwoehr. More than 2,200 international soldiers, sailors and airmen took deskbound courses there in 2011, up from 362 in 2009.

While the ISAF headquarters staff polished its skills in Grafenwoehr, combat troops massed 45 minutes away at the Hohenfels-based Joint Multinational Readiness Center. JMRC is one of three U.S. Army Combat Training Centers, the other two being the National Training Center (California) and the Joint Readiness Training Center (Louisiana). JMRC observer/controller-trainer teams provide analysis and feedback and teach, coach and mentor rotational units.

Of the 5,800 troops conducting mostly counterinsurgency maneuvers in March 2012, nearly 700 formed a multinational contingent consisting of Albanians, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Czechs, Serbs and Slovenes. They were training in support of the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) and Romanian Special Operations Forces, both deploying to Afghanistan.

The "mission readiness exercise," spread out over Hohenfels' nine replicas of Afghan villages and staffed mostly with Germans playing the part of locals, is meant to acclimate troops to the reality on the ground in Central Asia. Though Serbia isn't a member of NATO, it lent troops to the exercise. They portrayed Afghan police and soldiers and accompanied American troops as they patrolled the German countryside. No live ammunition was used during this phase. Casualties were scored using guns equipped with lasers. Marching alongside an American squad, Serb infantry Capt. Goran Roganović was set upon by a hostile "mullah" in one of the villages. The troops' counterinsurgency training clicked into place, and the situation was defused with some calming words. "It was a great realistic experience for me," Roganović said. "It was so realistic I was impressed."

Though no deployments to Afghanistan are planned, the Serbian unit also used the occasion to learn counterinsurgency tactics from the Americans and Romanians: How to deal with suicide bombers, booby traps and improvised

explosive devices. In another successful pre-mission exercise at Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels in early 2012, Georgian soldiers trained with the U.S. Marines they would ultimately serve alongside in Afghanistan. The Georgian and Serbian examples highlight NATO's determination to build partnerships with non-NATO nations. "Their experience in Iraq and Afghanistan was very useful for us," Roganović said of his U.S. and Romanian counterparts. "We will try to transfer our knowledge to other personnel in our unit back home."

Staffers at the JMTC noted that multinational troops aren't just supporting their American partners but providing expertise central to the mission. They cited the Hungarian and Belgian helicopter pilots flying for the ISAF, the Bulgarian medical staff helping the sick and wounded, the Turkish reconstruction teams rebuilding northern Afghanistan, and the Italian and French gendarmes training the country's paramilitary forces. "There are certain skills the Afghans need that we Americans can't supply," JMRC media advisor Mark Van Treuren said.

The Bulgarian presence was heavy across the JMTC training grounds. Not only did they role-play as Afghan soldiers during patrols with Americans from the 173rd ABCT, they brushed up on small arms skills on the firing range and took part in Humvee simulations in which soldiers climbed into mock-ups of the military truck while surrounded by projections of an Afghan landscape that shifted along with the steering of the Humvee driver. At certain points in the war games, computerized insurgents took shots at the Humvee occupants.

Smilianov, the Bulgarian sergeant major, considered the Humvee exercise good practice for the real thing. Not only did it provide basic preparation for negotiating Afghan terrain, but it saved on fuel and vehicular wear and tear. JMTC trainer Daniel Feazelle, who watched Smilianov's team turn its Humvee swivel gun on enemy insurgents, singled them out for praise. "The Bulgarians are awesome," Feazelle said. "They take it seriously. It's not a computer game to them."

After nearly four weeks spent in the hills and valleys of northern Bavaria, Smilianov, his captain Stoyan Seneliev and hundreds of other comrades were loading up trucks for the 36-hour return trip to their base in Karlovo. It was a radical change from the days when some of these soldiers joined the Army. At that time, Bulgaria, freshly emancipated from the Soviet bloc, was geared not to cooperating with Americans but combating them.

Seneliev wasn't sure if his unit would put the recent training to use in Afghanistan. Some of his men had been there already. Some had not. "We won't know until we're called," Seneliev said as soldiers in the background rolled up battlefield maps and stowed gear. "But we're prepared." □