



HEADQUARTERS  
MULTINATIONAL  
CORPS NORTHEAST  
BAL TIC BARRACKS / SZCZECIN / POLAND

# BALTIC AMBER

M A G A Z I N E



***NATO'S ENHANCED FORWARD  
PRESENCE ESTONIA  
PREPARED TO DETER AND DEFEND***

**MARITIME-LAND INTEGRATION  
IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION**

**ALLIED FORCE INTEGRATION: THE APPROACH OF THE LATVIAN MECHANIZED INFANTRY BRIGADE**

Photo by Sgt. Timothy Hamlin / 2d Cavalry Regiment / US ARMY / via DVIDS

READY TODAY - PREPARED FOR TOMORROW - ADAPTING FOR THE FUTURE





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**COMMANDER'S FOREWORD**  
/ page 5

**COMMAND SENIOR ENLISTED LEADERS'S FOREWORD**  
/ page 7

**ALIGNING THE EFFORT  
INTERVIEW WITH GEN JÖRG VOLLMER**  
/ page 8

**MULTINATIONAL DIVISION  
NORTH EAST IN ELBLAG  
A YEAR OF GROWTH**  
/ page 10

**HQ MULTINATIONAL DIVISION NORTH  
MOVES TOWARDS FULL OPERATIONAL  
CAPABILITY**  
/ page 12

**SUPPORT YOU CANNOT DO WITHOUT**  
/ page 14

**ALLIED FORCE INTEGRATION  
THE APPROACH OF THE LATVIAN  
MECHANIZED INFANTRY BRIGADE**  
/ page 16

**MARITIME-LAND INTEGRATION  
IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION**  
/ page 18

**NATO'S ENHANCED FORWARD  
PRESENCE ESTONIA  
PREPARED TO DETER AND DEFEND**  
/ page 22

**LIFE IN EFP BATTLE GROUP LITHUANIA  
BARRACKS**  
/ page 28

**IRON SPEAR 2020**  
/ page 30

**BATTLE GROUP POLAND WORKS  
TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN THE  
ALLIANCE**  
/ page 34

**INFRASTRUCTURE RECCE PROJECT IN  
ESTONIA**  
/ page 38

**A MAN OF MANY FACETS  
INTERVIEW WITH LTC KÁROLY SZÁVAI**  
/ page 42

**NATO FORCE INTEGRATION  
UNIT LITHUANIA  
EVOLVING AND ADAPTING**  
/ page 46

**5 YEARS OF NATO FORCE  
INTEGRATION UNIT LATVIA  
THE COMMANDER'S PERSPECTIVE**  
/ page 48

**MULTIDIMENSIONAL EXPERTISE EFFORT  
OF NATO FORCE INTEGRATION UNIT  
POLAND**  
/ page 50

**RECERTIFICATION OF NATO FORCE  
INTEGRATION UNIT SLOVAKIA**  
/ page 52

## The Baltic Amber MAGAZINE

The Baltic Amber is the authorized magazine of Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE) which shall be a fruitful source of information on Corps-related issues for members of the Headquarters, assigned formations as well as international visitors and other individuals.

The name "Baltic Amber" is derived from the fossil resin amber that can be found on the beaches of the Baltic Sea. It is well known in Poland, the host country of HQ MNC NE.

Opinions expressed in the Baltic Amber are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect official HQ MNC NE or NATO policy.



IMPRINT / NOV 2020 – FEB 2021

PAPERS FOR THIS ISSUE WERE WRITTEN IN NOV AND DEC 2020

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Commander Multinational Corps Northeast



It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the new edition of “Baltic Amber” magazine. This issue came to fruition through the hard work and perseverance of those who have been involved. The COVID-19 pandemic has rocked nearly every facet of our life. Editing a volume for publication is an accomplishment in normal years; in the circumstances of 2020, it was an incredible feat. COVID-19 has forced “Baltic Amber” to adapt in many ways, requiring new ways of communication between authors and editors. I cannot thank them enough.

What I am particularly proud of is that these challenges served as a motivation to conceive innovative ideas and concepts. As you will notice, this issue contains sixteen papers, far exceeding our previous year’s contributions. The works by numerous authors from across Multinational Corps Northeast focus on cooperation between our subordinate units. And there is no better way to underline the important fact that the Corps does not only mean the Headquarters. Today it stands for much more – the Headquarters and its forces on the ground.

This “Baltic Amber” encompasses a variety of topics, analyses and arguments for you to engage with. I have to give special thanks to our friends from the Allied Maritime Command and the Latvian Mechanized Infantry Brigade, who both offered their substantial input and knowledge. I strongly encourage all of our Allies and Partners to do the same. “Baltic Amber” is a forum for you to generate and disseminate understanding of the security environment in the north-east of NATO. Let us make this our common journal!

So please, read the articles that catch your eye or the issue in its totality. This is a space of discussion and exchange.





**CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER (CAN A)**  
**MICHAEL HAMILTON**

Command Senior Enlisted Leader  
Multinational Corps Northeast

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Happy New Year to all and welcome to those who have recently rotated into the Baltic Sea Region land domain. While the past twelve months have brought unforeseen challenges, our mission of deterrence and, if needed, defence has not changed and has not suffered. These ongoing successes are a testament to the professionalism that marks Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) as the Regional Land Component Command.

At all levels, units and formations adapted to, mitigated and overcame the significant impediments posed by the pandemic. The four enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Battle Groups integrated into the national home defence force brigades continue to rise to the challenge with outstanding drive and under expert leadership, demonstrating NATO's resolve to stand together and deter unwarranted and unwanted aggression. Fundamental to supporting national-level efforts, our NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) have shown the indispensable nature of the effects they can bring to any conflict or crisis. Last but not least, Multinational Divisions North East and North reinforce strong command and control of their specific Areas of Operations (AOOs), all while juggling flexible staffing levels and maintaining effective communications up and down the chain.

Integration of so many different capabilities, skill sets and backgrounds into a single cohesive unit requires efforts from all members, regardless of rank or trade. We at the Corps HQ see the positive results of these efforts daily and realize that our mission would be impossible to accomplish without them. The recognition of outstanding professionalism through honours and awards is one method of acknowledging those in the MNC NE AOO who have demonstrated exceptional commitment,

enthusiasm and meritorious service. As part of the ongoing adaptation of MNC NE, the honours and awards system of the Command has been broadened to now include the entirety of our AOO. The awards have been expanded to specifically recognize, with the concurrence and support of local chains of command, those whose actions have positively impacted the mission and development of the Corps. For leaders and supervisors at all levels, should you determine that your followers or peers deserve recognition for exceptional performance, I encourage you to take full advantage of all the mechanisms available, to include not only MNC NE honours and awards but national and internal systems as well.

As leaders we must always be cognizant and informed regarding the health of our forces. This includes all aspects of well-being, both physical and mental. It is no secret that the previous twelve months, during which we had to deal with isolation, stress/risk of infection, concerns of our families and the like, have been difficult for some. Ensure all your soldiers are aware and informed of where to seek mental health assistance when needed. Conduct regular checks by getting out from behind the computer and safely engage with your people through dialogue and feedback.

Realistically, we all have several months of continued vigilance and COVID-related hygiene measures to follow and enforce before we begin to envision our transition to an environment where COVID is not as prevalent. Leadership is crucial to ensure we don't lose focus and maintain the measures in place to prevent large-scale infection and a negative impact on the operational effect.

Stay safe and healthy!



MARTA KARPIŃSKA

# ALIGNING THE EFFORT

## INTERVIEW WITH

### GEN JÖRG VOLLMER

Like everywhere else, in military there is nothing more important than being able to communicate effectively while working towards a common goal. This is when a leader's vision is espoused by team members, so that they perform to their greatest potential. For that reason alone, the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) Commander's Conference occupies a prominent place amongst other recurring events in the Headquarters' calendar. "This conference serves as an effective tool to share our detailed expertise of the region," is how GEN Jörg Vollmer – the meeting's guest speaker – summarized its fourth iteration, which took place on 8-9 December 2020.

During the two-day online symposium, commanders from across MNC NE explored ways in which they could further strengthen the links between troops in the Baltic. To serve the broadest objectives of regional security, the conference also included numerous officials representing the Corps' framework nations and higher headquarters. On this very occasion, the Commander Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum (JFCBS), who attended the meeting virtually, talked with us about his current and upcoming plans. He also expanded on the role of MNC NE in bracing the structure of European security.

***Sir, from your point of view, what is the main value of the Multinational Corps Northeast Commander's Conference? How can Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum benefit from it?***

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for the dedication of the MNC NE staff. On top of that, I sincerely appreciate the hard work of MNC NE together with all sub-units down to the enhanced Forward Presence Battle Groups. In 2020, we faced an unprecedented pandemic, but despite its consequences we can all be very proud of the results that have been achieved. I am truly impressed by the professionalism that all personnel within JFCBS's area of responsibility have maintained, which has led us to remain operational



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under these challenging conditions. In all circumstances, the MNC NE Commander's Conference is a great enterprise and provides a unique platform to demonstrate our common commitment. This conference offers a broad overview on the most relevant developments across the Baltic Sea region.



GEN JÖRG VOLLMER ADDRESSING JOURNALISTS DURING EX BRILLIANT JUMP 2020



GEN JÖRG VOLLMER AND LGEN SŁAWOMIR WOJCIECHOWSKI,  
COM MNC NE DURING EX BRILLIANT JUMP 2020 IN PABRADE, LITHUANIA

It is crucial that we meet with all of the respective commanders on a regular basis around the same table – be it physically or online. The conference serves as an effective tool to further develop and share our detailed knowledge and expertise of the region. It is a great opportunity to better align our common efforts to achieve our objectives.

***What are your key principles when it comes to cooperation with Multinational Corps Northeast as Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum's subordinate unit?***

As a High-Readiness Force Land Headquarters, HQ MNC NE is widening its scope of responsibility to a full 360 degrees in deterrence and defence within the Baltic region. HQ MNC NE acts both as a Regional Land Component Command and as a warfighting corps. It is on permanent standby to take the lead in combat operations across the north-eastern flank of NATO. Multinational Corps Northeast is able to offer a huge contribution in order to plan and operate for collective defence purposes under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The proven ability to command and control, the key role in training and exercises as well as taking the lead in regional knowledge development shows the true value of Multinational Corps Northeast as a headquarters that is focused on a specific and defined area. A headquarters serving these goals is a crucial necessity and a vital cornerstone for the defence of NATO's north-eastern flank. It is a practical illustration of how to ensure security across the Baltic Sea region. In a nutshell: HQ MNC NE is our key unit in the Baltic Sea region in the continuum from vigilance through crisis to war. It is NATO's true custodian for regional security.

***As far as the Baltic region is concerned, what are the most important objectives to be achieved during your time in command of Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum?***

NATO has enhanced its presence in north-eastern Europe by deploying four multinational battle groups to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland on a rotational basis. These battlegroups are led by the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States respectively. They are tailored, multinational and combat-ready, demonstrating the resolve of the transatlantic Alliance. Their presence sends clear and strong signals. It is assuring the leadership and populations in the north-eastern part of Europe and underlines that an attack on one Ally will be considered as an attack on all Alliance member states.

During the most recent BRILLIANT JUMP, NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force has proven its ability to react immediately during the deployment phase and to be ready for employment throughout the region. I witnessed personally how Polish, Spanish, Czech and Lithuanian soldiers were able to accomplish their goals, even under the restricted COVID circumstances. I will encourage all members of our NATO family to continue to pave the way for enhancing our deterrence and defence. Preventing conflicts and preserving peace on our eastern flank remains a collective effort and requires effective collaboration. Our efforts and presence are highly appreciated by the citizens of the Baltic Sea region, as I have noticed throughout all my visits.



LTC RYAN DONALD

# MULTINATIONAL DIVISION NORTH EAST IN ELBLAĞ A YEAR OF GROWTH

## Building cohesion

Headquarters Multinational Division North East started 2020 on a high note following the celebration of the command's first anniversary. On 29 January, a new chapter in the security of NATO's eastern flank was opened when the Lithuanian IRON WOLF Brigade and the Polish 15th Mechanized Brigade became affiliated with the command following the signing of an Act of Affiliation in Vilnius, Lithuania.

While Multinational Division North East had a relationship with these brigades since 2017, this Act of Affiliation assigned the brigades to the command in order to train and act together to ensure the security of the Suwałki Gap. "Just as the Fulda Gap could be defended during the Cold War, the Suwałki Gap can and will be defended, too," Lithuanian Army Colonel Darius Vaičikauskas, the Headquarters' Chief of Staff asserted in an interview he gave to the Lithuanian public broadcaster LRT in 2020.

While the brigades technically remain under the command and control of their respective host nations, Multinational Division North East has worked to increase cooperation and further interoperability between itself and the brigades. And this is exactly what the command has done; working to not only build the cooperation between the brigades but also their ability to work together seamlessly in a combat environment. This has proven successful and strengthened the relationship and integration between NATO's enhanced Forward Presence Battle Groups in Lithuania and Poland with their respective Host Nation Defence Forces.



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## Exercises in full swing

This can be seen in three major training events that were conducted in 2020. BULL RUN-12 in June, DZIK-20 in October and exercise IRON WOLF in November. During the last, the command assumed its role as divisional headquarters for the brigade and its subordinate units. The main objective was to train and assess the ability to plan and complete defensive actions as well as to ensure interoperability in joint operations. In this defensive training exercise, the IRON WOLF Brigade was able to train together with NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and IRON WOLF's subordinate eFP Battle Group Lithuania.

In October, the Polish 15th Mechanized Brigade successfully completed its Combat Readiness Evaluation. Soldiers from the Division Headquarters as well as eFP Battle Group Poland participated in the certification exercise. Together they operated as one unit – just as they would in a crisis situation – deepening the cooperation between all three elements.



US ARMY SOLDIERS ASSIGNED TO ARCHER BATTERY, FIELD ARTILLERY SQN 2ND CAV RGT, DURING EX PUMA 2 WITH EFP BG POLAND

Another significant exercise showcasing the growth of the Division and its units was BULL RUN-12, a regularly occurring exercise aimed at validating eFP Battle Group Poland's ability to move units over a long distance in order to conduct defensive operations as well as at increasing interoperability of the participating troops while demonstrating the solidarity amongst NATO Allies. The Battle Group trained alongside their higher headquarters, the 15th Mechanized Brigade and units from the Polish Army's 16th Pomeranian Mechanized Division, Poland's 1st Territorial Defence Brigade. They were supported by Polish MI-24, W-3 helicopters and F-16 aircrafts. In total, almost 2,000 soldiers and over 5,000 vehicles took part.

This exercise demonstrated the strength of the Alliance and the ability of not only the Division but also Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) to ensure security along NATO's eastern flank. "One of our greatest strengths as NATO Regional Land Component Command is our constant readiness. BULL RUN-12 has proved that our forces are well-integrated, interoperable and ready at all times," said LGEN Sławomir Wojciechowski, Commander MNC NE, during his visit to BULL RUN-12 in June.

### **Accomplishments and plans**

Today, Multinational Division North East coordinates activities of the Lithuanian IRON WOLF and Polish 15th Mechanized Brigade as well as their subordinate enhanced Forward Presence Battle Groups. These tasks consist of the management of training and increasing situational awareness in the region. Moreover, the Headquarters is to be ready to carry out collective defence operations in accordance with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

As the Division celebrated its second anniversary on 6 December 2020, it was a chance to look back and reflect on the past year. 2020 has been one of growth for the command, with the Division striving to operate at a continually higher state of preparedness and readiness. The end goal is that every unit in our Division – from NATO's enhanced Forward Presence Battle Groups to the host nation brigades – can act together in an effective and organized manner.



MAJ THOMAS JERICHOW

# HQ MULTINATIONAL DIVISION NORTH MOVES TOWARDS FULL OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY

NATO presence and visibility in the Baltic region has increased when Headquarters Multinational Division North (HQ MND N) was activated as an integral part of the NATO Force Structure. This, in turns, means the Headquarters has begun to further cooperation and communication with its higher command – Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE) – and other NATO entities in the Baltic region and will continue to do so throughout 2021.

As work towards Full Operational Capability (FOC) continues, the new Headquarters will become NATO's most north-eastern division-level command. Initially, it will focus on its assigned brigades from across the Baltic area and the Danish Command Support Battalion, but during a crisis or a conflict other formations may be additionally subordinated to it. With staff coming from many countries, HQ MND N is a truly multinational headquarters within the NATO family. Currently, it has more than 70 staff in Latvia and Denmark.

## **A dual-location headquarters**

The move towards full operational capability is a huge task, not only because of the necessity to establish new structures, procedures and communications. It is also a move from the Headquarters' initial locations in Karup (Denmark) and Ādaži (Latvia) to its permanent premises in Ādaži and Slagelse (Denmark) during peacetime. This will anchor HQ MND N to a greater degree in the Baltic



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Division North  
Country of origin: Denmark

region and enable it to keep a focus on cooperation, integration and processes as new staff constantly join the Headquarters.

“Integrating our new members as they come in from many countries is a top priority. New personnel brings in many different experiences and perspectives. The Headquarters must greet them all and be prepared to integrate everyone into our multinational family,” says Brigadier General Lennie Fredskov, the Chief of Staff of MND N.

The General joined the Headquarters in 2019, and he is convinced that 2021 will be a busy year.

“I expect that 2021 will see Headquarters Multinational Division North establish itself as a visible and important NATO asset in the Baltic region, and many of our tasks are already being executed,” the Chief of Staff explains.



DANISH INFANTRY SOLDIERS TRAINING IN ESTONIA

### **A multi-role headquarters**

HQ MND N will be the most north-eastern headquarters at division level within Multinational Corps Northeast. Its overall task will be to enhance Allied presence and deterrence in order to further peace and stability in the region. In peacetime, the Headquarters will play an important role in building the capability of its own staff and the brigades in Estonia and Latvia as well as training brigades from Denmark and Lithuania. Forming part of Multinational Corps Northeast, the Division will be also prepared to conduct defensive operations. Thus, it is working its way up towards a high state of readiness.

### **The way ahead**

There will be very little rest for the Division personnel in 2021. The key task is to build the Headquarters' capability to command forces in a contested environment and integrate into Multinational Corps Northeast, while at the same time executing a wide variety of other

peacetime activities. In 2021, Multinational Division North will be both conducting division-led exercises and activities and participating in MNC NE's exercises.

Although 2020 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, HQ MND N has managed to renovate its building in Ādaži, increase its staff, run several internal training and study periods and increase periodic cooperation with its higher command. The Division also conducted exercises with brigades from Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The same brigades are expected to participate when MND N conducts a major exercise this spring.

Building on the experiences from 2020, Multinational Division North continues to move forward towards the ultimate NATO test – the Combat Readiness Evaluation (CREVAL) in late 2022. The CREVAL will be the opportunity for Multinational Division North to prove its ability to act as a warfighting division headquarters.



MARTA KARPIŃSKA

# SUPPORT YOU CANNOT DO WITHOUT

## Variety of tasks

If you focus exclusively on the tasks performed by Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE), it is easy to forget that the whole mechanism would not move an inch without the soldiers of the Corps' Command Support Brigade (CSB). Remaining mostly behind the scenes, they not only help the Corps' daily functioning but also provide essential support in case of deployment.

To illustrate why the CSB work is indispensable, it is enough to mention that the roughly 400 staff members of HQ MNC NE rely on four times as many personnel constituting the Brigade. They facilitate everything from communication and information systems through logistics, transportation, messing management and medical support to building up a wholly equipped and connected Main Command Post. Their support covers a range of fundamentals to keep day-to-day business running as well as to ensure the Corps' operational capabilities outside the garrison, both on exercises and on missions.

## Polish-German cooperation

"The Command Support Brigade is not a typical unit to be found in armed forces. We are dedicated purely to Multinational Corps Northeast. Consequently, we have no tasks other than supporting the Corps and its field elements," says Brigade Commander Colonel Jacek Rolak of the Polish Army.

The Brigade headquartered in Stargard, about 30 kilometres east of Szczecin, is composed of four battalions and complemented by the Polish National Support Unit. While the latter element performs its daily duties on the spot at the Baltic Barracks, the battalions are stationed both in Poland (Walcz and Bielkowo) and in Germany (Prenzlau). This makes the Command Support Brigade the only organization within the Polish Armed Forces that combines the skills and military knowledge of the two neighbouring nations.



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Rank: Civilian

Unit: HQ Multinational Corps Northeast

Country of origin: Poland



SOLDIER OF POL 102ND FORCE PROTECTION BN SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



SOLDIERS OF DEU 610TH SIGNAL BN SETTING UP A MAIN COMMAND POST DURING EX GRIFFIN LIGHTNING 2019

### **The first to arrive – the last to leave**

Although they keep themselves out of the spotlight, the work they deliver is measurable and easily translated into numbers. When deployed, the Brigade soldiers are the first to arrive and the last to leave. Anytime the Headquarters' staff exercise outside the barracks, there is a turnkey Main Command Post prepared. It is on the CSB personnel to put a camp into operation and set up workplaces with necessary infrastructure. The same goes for providing security for exercises and those involved, both in personal and operational terms. Each day, the Brigade's team performs 24-hour guard duty. Some soldiers are assigned to patrolling the training area; some are tasked to stand watch at an entrance control point. They are ready to intervene if any potential danger threatened from within or outside.

### **Ready to serve**

While carrying out a variety of activities, the CSB soldiers remain involved in the community. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, they have been supporting healthcare centres and public authorities in a number of ways, e.g. by providing teams to collect swabs for tests, supporting healthcare personnel of emergency departments and emergency medical teams, allocating soldiers and military equipment to crisis response teams.

"We have to prepare to combat the 'invisible enemy'. I have been trying to make my soldiers view this new situation as a challenge which would boost their morale and skills," says LTC Rafał Jędro, Commander of the 102nd Force Protection Battalion, which forms part of the Brigade, "There are no obstacles, just challenges we need to face."



PVT ROBERTS SKRAUČS

# ALLIED FORCE INTEGRATION THE APPROACH OF THE LATVIAN MECHANIZED INFANTRY BRIGADE

## Train as you fight

“This isn’t just about the necessary certification for combat readiness – in the event of a conflict, the multinational battle group must be a fully integrated part of our brigade. To make an attack costly for the enemy, mutual understanding amongst our units is key,” emphasizes the commander of the Latvian Mechanized Infantry Brigade, Colonel Sandris Gaugers.

On 19 June 2017, the first rotation of enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group soldiers from Albania, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Spain were welcomed at Camp Ādaži. Three years later, the Canadian-led Battle Group has only grown stronger, now also including elements from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Montenegro and Iceland, with the latter contributing to strategic communications. One of the main events for each Battle Group’s rotation is the annual exercise SILVER ARROW, which from 2014 until 2017 already was conducted as an international exercise for land forces but now also includes the NATO Combat Readiness Evaluation (CREVAL) for the Battle Group.



Name: Roberts Skraučas

Rank: Private

Unit: Ministry of Defence  
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Latvian National Guard

Country of origin: Latvia

For the past three years, the exercise has been split into two phases. The first phase involves the Mechanized Infantry Brigade operating in civilian territories, conducting operations which are directly linked to the National Defence Plan. This part of the exercise is critical to improving the mobility of the Brigade as well as to demonstrating to the public – and anyone else watching – the capabilities that the Mechanized Infantry Brigade possesses. The second phase takes place in the Ādaži training area; this is where shooting with live ammunition and the CREVAL takes place. Working in the training area allows the Brigade to use all their heavy tracked vehicles and equipment.





BATTLE TANKS FROM THE EFP BATTLE GROUP LATVIA DURING EX SILVER ARROW 2020

## SILVER ARROW 2020

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, SILVER ARROW 2020 was one of the largest ever, welcoming partners from Estonia, a detail of UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from the US, and Polish soldiers participating as that year's adversaries. It is also noteworthy that the exercise provided an opportunity for the national guardsmen of the Mechanized Infantry Brigade's 3rd Battalion as well as for the Brigade's reserve soldiers – a chance to train together with the regular duty soldiers in the Brigade.

With regard to the integration of Allied units, each of the Baltic states has its own approach for its Battle Group. Here in Latvia, upon arrival of the Battle Group's new rotation in Camp Ādaži, the first two months are allocated for internal integration and the rehearsal of procedures so that units from all contributing nations understand the internal operations and how they must be conducted. After this initial period, SILVER ARROW takes place. During the first phase of this exercise, the emphasis is placed on the Battle Group's integration within the Mechanized Infantry Brigade — operations outside of the well-known training area are conducted to confirm that the Battle Group and the Mechanized Infantry Brigade are able to operate effectively together. In the course of the subsequent second phase, the certification is carried out by the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre, which also plays a role in the exercise control team who manage the pace and flow of the exercise.

### Flexibility is crucial

Over the past three years, we have resolved many of the problems we initially faced with the fundamentals. Previously, each nation worked with their own Standard

Operating Procedures (SOPs), but that is no longer the case as the Battle Group has developed and codified its own internal SOP. As a result, the incoming units can familiarize themselves with these SOPs before arriving in Latvia. Furthermore, the company and platoon commanders who were bound to start their tour of duty in Latvia in January 2021 took part in SILVER ARROW 2020 and, by participating in the CREVAL process, had the opportunity to tailor their pre-deployment training to match the mission requirements.

“Before the pandemic, Canada regularly gathered commanders and key personnel from all contributing nations for leaders training. Following that, they came to Latvia for a month to watch and participate in the certification process, so that when they arrived for their rotation they were already familiar with everything that was going on. We have made the system for the transition of forces this effective in order that we don't have to go back to square one for each new rotation. Each rotation, we are building on what has been done so far, and for that our Canadian colleagues really deserve praise,” stresses COL Gaugers.

This system has made it possible to integrate troops from new countries into the Battle Group more easily. But as COL Gaugers explains, it will be put to the test in 2021 by bringing in a Slovak artillery unit which will replace the contingent of infantry combat vehicles; and that is a completely different ball game. “We always live knowing that we are being watched by the guys from the other side of the fence. We're not flinching, so let's make it interesting for them to watch,” summarizes COL Gaugers.



LTC J LEE SMART

# MARITIME-LAND INTEGRATION IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION



USS MOUNT WHITNEY, A C2 SHIP, LEADS SHIPS OF SNMG1 IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION DURING EX BALTOPS 2019

All photographs delivered by MARCOM



CANADIAN SOLDIERS FROM NATO'S EFP BATTLE GROUP LATVIA MEET UP WITH CANADIAN SAILORS FROM SNMG1 ALONGSIDE AT RIGA

### Towards a common goal

In 2017, NATO established its 'enhanced Forward Presence' (eFP) consisting of four multinational armoured Battle Groups, three of which were deployed to bolster the defensive capabilities of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania whose militaries consist primarily of infantry and reserve forces. The fourth, US-led multinational Battle Group was deployed to Poland. These four Battle Groups exercising near the eastern borders now provide to the Baltic states' populations visible and persistent evidence of NATO's enduring commitment to unified collective defence against any potential use of force against their sovereignty. Less evident, but close-by over the horizon, is NATO's Standing Naval Force (SNF): multinational fleets of destroyers, frigates, corvettes and minehunting/minesweeping vessels which regularly patrol the Baltic Sea. These Standing NATO Maritime Groups (SNMG) and Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Groups (SNMCMG) are controlled and directed by NATO's Allied Command Operations (ACO) Maritime Command headquarters, or HQ MARCOM, from the Maritime Operational Control Centre (MOCC) in Northwood, UK. A relatively new entity, MARCOM declared full operational capability on 22 May 2015 and provides ongoing command for the fleets in NATO's deployed Standing Naval Force and ongoing NATO maritime security operations, spanning from the Arctic in the High North, down and across the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea and into the Indian Ocean.



Name: J Lee Smart  
 Rank: Lieutenant Colonel  
 Unit: HQ MARCOM  
 Country of origin:  
 The United Kingdom

### What is MARCOM?

With over 400 staff, MARCOM is the smallest of NATO's three single-service commands. It provides planning, direction and coordination of NATO's substantial maritime assets, including aircraft carriers, fighting ships, submarines and maritime patrol aircraft, as well as of NATO's significant amphibious force capabilities. In addition to its direct command of the SNF and any NATO Response Force, MARCOM is the principal advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and NATO on all maritime issues. It maintains situational awareness in the maritime environment, collates the Recognized Maritime Picture (RMP) and feeds this into the NATO Common Operational Picture (NCOP). MARCOM's NATO Shipping Centre also provides close liaison, advice, support and coordination with international and commercial maritime agencies and shipping organizations across the world, further enhancing maritime safety in the global commons and ensuring NATO's



appropriate understanding of ongoing commercial shipping traffic and issues. This maritime situational awareness, which is global in nature, contributes to information superiority, supports NATO decision-making and is a critical enabler to trigger effective allied military action in response to any specific or potential threats to the Alliance or to international shipping lanes.

### Maritime-Land Integration activities

The Standing Naval Force in the Baltic Sea region includes SNMG1 and SNMCMG1 which regularly visit the principal ports along the Baltic coast, taking time out from their security patrols and minehunting tasks which include considerable efforts to clear the littoral waters from historical ordnance – unexploded mines



SNMCMG1 IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION CONDUCTING HISTORIC ORDNANCE DISPOSAL TASKS





SNMCMG1 IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION CONDUCTING HISTORIC ORDINANCE DISPOSAL TASKS

and munitions left over from the Second World War. Constantly on standby and permanently certified ready for operations, the SNF (normally six ships from various nations in each group) provides NATO's immediate maritime response to any emerging crisis and provides the maritime component of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force. The SNF also participates in major joint NATO and national military exercises such as the US BALTOPS and the recent Exercise DYNAMIC GUARDIAN. It is in these port visits that the SNF meets and coordinates with NATO Force Integration Units and with eFP Battle Groups to conduct joint Maritime-Land Integration (MLI) activities.

The MLI elements involve a number of maritime capabilities provided by these NATO naval forces to support the eFP Battle Groups deployed in support of the Baltic states' Host Nation Defence Forces (HNDF). In coordination with Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE), MARCOM is now increasing their interactions and exercises with these land elements to further practise and enhance NATO's ability to defend against any potential aggression, promote peace and assure sovereignty. These significant maritime capabilities could span the spectrum from special forces deployed by submarine or aircraft, amphibious assault, carrier strike aircraft conducting air policing or ground attack missions (potentially including the new F-35 stealth fighters from the UK's new Queen Elizabeth carriers and US supercarriers), strategic precision-guided weapons (submarine, aircraft and ship-launched Tomahawk and SCALP missiles with a range of up to 1500 km), Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD, e.g. NATO warships carrying the MBDA ASTER 30 or Raytheon AEGIS SM-3/6 missiles can engage hostile missile and aircraft targets some 100-200 km inland), Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS, previously known as naval gunfire support), to the more mundane but equally important logistics (sea

lines of control, maritime transport and logistics supply, MedEvac). Many of these more dramatic activities are rehearsed in the larger joint NATO exercises. In the main, however, ongoing coordination involves increasing familiarity between the SNF and their eFP BG/HNDF counterparts by providing exchange briefings during the port visits and conducting communications exercises to ensure the soldiers will be able to call on these capabilities when they might be required. Additional activities include training seminars on NSFS and IAMD to train and certify the army forward observation officers and ground-based air defence units in being capable of calling joint fires inland from ships off-shore.

#### **Increasing interaction**

In conjunction with MARCOM, HQ MNC NE has established a new naval support request process that encourages and enhances these MLI activities. With both the troops in the eFP Battle Groups and the ships in the SNF rotating every six months, it is intended that in the future every passage of SNF elements into the Baltic Sea region could involve a port visit, exchange briefings and communications exercises in each of the four Baltic states (including Poland) as well as a centralized NSFS seminar and a live-fire shore bombardment exercise. This is ensured by conducting monthly coordination meetings as well as biannual training and exercise coordination conferences with all interested headquarters. This increasing interaction and mutual understanding of processes and capabilities will ensure that NATO forces in the Baltic states, including the staffs in the headquarters of NATO Multinational Corps Northeast and Multinational Divisions North-East and North as well as the national HNDF brigade headquarters, are confident and capable of bringing to bear all of the military power that NATO's navies can bring to the fight in support of land forces defending the borders of these states.



BJORN MALMQUIST

# **NATO'S ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE ESTONIA PREPARED TO DETER AND DEFEND**





It has been a busy few months since the UK's 5 RIFLES Battle Group arrived in Tapa, Estonia, and achieved a smooth transition replacing the outgoing 1st Fusiliers Battle Group. "Given our role, which is to contribute to the collective defence of Estonia, our first and primary task was of course to begin the process of integration with the 1st Brigade of the Estonian Defence Forces as well as with the Danish Vidar Company which arrived here earlier this year and forms the other part of the NATO Battle Group here in Estonia," says LTC Jim Hadfield, Commander of the 5 RIFLES Battle Group.

This task began almost immediately after the formal handover from the 1st Fusiliers Battle Group in Tapa on 18 September 2020 and culminated in Exercise Furious Axe in Latvia towards the end of October. "Furious Axe really was the final exam for us – the ultimate test of our integration into the Estonian 1st Brigade – and I am proud to say that we passed that test with flying colours," says LTC Hadfield.

5 RIFLES are the first UK military unit to return to Estonia, having served on the first rotation in 2017 following



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NATO's establishment of the enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. About 20 per cent of the 5 RIFLES personnel are returnees to Estonia, including many officers within the unit. In addition to 5 RIFLES, the UK contingent contains personnel from 1 Royal Horse Artillery, the Queen's Royal Hussars, the Royal Logistic Corps and many others.

#### **Interoperability – the human connection**

Building a cohesive force out of military units from different nations is of course a daunting and complicated task. The ultimate goal is interoperability: the integration of procedures, communications, and







READINESS EXERCISE IN ESTONIA

command and control under pressure. “Both the 5 RIFLES and the Danish Vidar Company have served in Estonia before, which has given us a certain advantage when it comes to the integration process,” says LTC Hadfield. “Interoperability is of course multifaceted, but ultimately it is about the human connection. Close to a quarter of my troops are here for the second time; they have been seeing familiar faces among the Estonian troops and vice versa. Thus, we were in a good place from the start and our relationship has only grown stronger during the weeks we have been training together.”

Exercise Furious Axe was all about defensive operations and tactical manoeuvres of the 5 RIFLES, Vidar Company and the Estonian Forces against an opposing force played by the Canadian-led eFP Battle Group based in Latvia. “This was a great challenge that really tested all our abilities to operate in conjunction with each other. We had the Estonian Scouts live-firing in support of our manoeuvres, we conducted forward and rear passages of lines (moving units through the line of another unit) without hiccups, which requires a lot of

close coordination and deconfliction. We can certainly say that, together, we proved our credibility and battle-worthiness, but perhaps the most important takeaway is that we built up mutual trust and a level of comfort among the UK, Danish and Estonian troops,” says LTC Hadfield. “Thus we are able to have frank and honest discussions about how we do our work, give constructive feedback and criticism, so we are in a good place when it comes to real cohesiveness and integration.”

The Vidar Company, the Danish rotation in the NATO eFP Battle Group Estonia, arrived in July 2020. “Since then, the Danish troops have been focusing on integration with the UK and Estonian forces,” says LTC Thomas Fogh, the Commander of the Danish contingent and Deputy Commander of eFP Battle Group Estonia. “With the UK contingent, we first went through this process with the 1st Fusiliers Battle Group and then again with the 5 RIFLES Battle Group, but the whole time we also exercised a lot with the Estonian Scouts Battalion in Tapa and learned a lot from them,” says LTC Fogh. “We started off with combined staff exercises, which involve the commanders of the units, then moved on to the



All photographs delivered by eFP ESTONIA



EFP BATTLE GROUP ESTONIA PARTICIPATING IN EX IRON SPEAR 2020



READINESS EXERCISE IN ESTONIA



real integration, acquiring knowledge of each other's hardware and doing manoeuvres at the central training area near Tapa."

After that came Exercise Furious Axe, during which LTC Fogh spent more than a week with his troops bivouacking in the forest at the Adazi training area. "This was a great exercise that served the purpose of testing our cohesiveness and integration. During the first week, we focused on pure manoeuvre tactics with the Scouts Battalion, defending our positions against the opposing force. The week after, we did live-fire exercises, demonstrating the interoperability of the various units within our ranks, and I can safely assert that we are now a fully integrated force in terms of human relations, procedures and technical aspects."

"Furious Axe also gave us a really good opportunity to exercise our operations against a well-organized and disciplined opposing force led by LTC Trevor Norton, the Commander of eFP Battle Group Latvia," says LTC Hadfield. "I was very impressed by their tactical deployments and manoeuvres during the exercise and I have a ton of respect for him and his multinational force down there. They have certainly overcome the inevitable operational challenge of having contingents from more nations than we do. Their force is very credible and thus forms an integral part of what we are always trying to achieve: to send a clear message of NATO's credible defence and deterrence in the Baltic states."

#### **Opportunity to train in different circumstances**

Constant training and readiness are the hallmarks of capable forces, and the units comprising the eFP in Estonia are no exception. But their deployment in Tapa as well as the proximity to the Central Training Area near the base provides them the chance to train in an environment that the troops are not familiar with.

"Whilst the UK provides great training facilities, our presence here in Tapa gives us additional opportunities to test our abilities in a very different environment," says LTC Hadfield. "Here we can arrange exercises on short notice - it's no exaggeration when I say that my officers can contact their counterparts in the Estonian 1st Brigade and by the end of the day our units can be out in the woods doing combined manoeuvres or other exercises. I am also looking forward to the winter season here, hoping we'll have a really cold period which will allow us many more opportunities and additional tests in moving our Challenger tanks and other armoured vehicles on frozen ground and in the snow around the training area."





“Access to training areas in neighbouring countries also provides added opportunities,” says COL Paul Clayton, the Operational Commander of the UK’s contribution to eFP. COL Clayton has overall responsibility for all force elements, including the eFP Battle Group in Estonia as well as a Squadron of Light Cavalry which is based in Poland and integrated with the United States’ eFP Battle Group stationed there. “We certainly appreciate the training facilities we have in Estonia, but from various perspectives it is also important to be able to use training areas in Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland,” says COL Paul Clayton. “The training facilities in Latvia are larger, which allows us to conduct a higher level of manoeuvres and live-firing exercises. The other advantage of coming there is that it allows us to work very closely with the other eFP Battle Groups in the Baltic states, such as here in Latvia where the Canadians and others are involved. That means we can share good ideas and practices as well as promote the powerful message of NATO cohesion.”

### **A profound duty**

For officers such as LTCs Hadfield and Fogh, their current deployment in Estonia is certainly not their first. Having

joined the Army in 2003, LTC Hadfield was deployed on operations in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan, and LTC Fogh, who joined the Danish Army as a conscript in 1992, has served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia. But for both of them, their current deployment as commanders in eFP Estonia has a special meaning. “On the surface, this deployment may look like any other; the daily tasks and exercises keep us busy and engaged. But here, we have been given a set of orders to defend another nation’s homeland. That is a profound duty and the gravity of it is certainly not lost on me and my soldiers and officers,” says LTC Hadfield.

“25 years ago, as a young sergeant, I was integrated into the Danish defence plan and this was of course a great moment for me,” says LTC Fogh. “Now I and my fellow Danish soldiers and officers in Tapa have become an integral part of the collective defence of Estonia. This is a great honour, which also carries a great responsibility that we are very conscious of. All our efforts are aimed towards this task: to provide credible deterrence to any aggression, to be prepared to defend, and to reassure every Estonian that we will fulfil our duties.”



READINESS EXERCISE IN ESTONIA



SVEINN HELGASON

# LIFE IN EFP BATTLE GROUP LITHUANIA BARRACKS

“My name is Manuel, I am 30 years old, and I have been in the French Armed Forces for two years. I joined the enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group in Lithuania on 26 September 2020, and I became a father on the first day after my arrival.” Manuel’s story reveals the simple fact that our troops consist of individuals – fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters. So let us go from a collective to a single-person perspective.

## **The Battle Group**

The enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup Lithuania is based in Rukla, near the city of Kaunas, and consists of the eight Allied nations which presently contribute to the 8th rotation. While Germany is the framework nation, troop contributions also come from Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway and Luxembourg. Around 1,200 soldiers work and live together in this international “village”, performing their professional duties but also sharing their hopes and dreams. Military barracks are like a world of their own. That is why the soldiers are engaged in different social activities in order to maintain high morale, demonstrate unity and be ready for training and exercises. How does it look in practice?

## **Viking Games – logistics – bonding and food**

The Battlegroup’s Viking Games showcased prowess of the soldiers during an intense competition. The event was organized by the Norwegian Company, and it took place at the beginning of July 2020. Eight teams competed in new and old Viking challenges, for instance throwing axes and logs or towing trucks. Obviously, the feeling of comradeship was the most important trophy of the day, but at the same time the Viking games served as a reminder of the value of time-honoured traditions.



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Unity is important when you have eight different nations contributing to a mission. The Bonding Day of the eFP Battlegroup strengthened multinational friendships by bringing the soldiers together to do sports. The aim was to socialize, relax and re-energize after an intense training period. And during a sunny September afternoon in Rukla, the Logistics Games presented six different challenges for the six participating teams. Our soldiers proved themselves while pulling trucks, flipping tyres and constructing an improvised road with iron plates. The Battlegroup’s multinational Combat Service Support Company did a good job in organizing this event.

But let us not forget food as the force binding people together. This old truth certainly applies to the troops in the Rukla barracks. Norwegian waffles, Dutch pancakes, Czech goulash, German schnitzel and multiple other national dishes are prepared and cooked – both on a regular basis and on special occasions. Gathering together for a meal serves the important purpose of strengthening friendships and ties within the Battlegroup. This is also a good way to exchange cultural experience or celebrating the national days of our contributing nations.



COMPETITION ON THE BONDING DAY

### **Multinational exercises and competition**

The defensive field training exercise EAGER LEOPARD conducted at Pabrade range in late September and early October showcased Allied interoperability, especially since it was participated by a US tank company from 2nd Battalion 69th Regiment, 2nd Brigade. In November, the multinational field exercise IRON WOLF 2020 was held at the same location. It demonstrated the capabilities, readiness and interoperability of the Battlegroup, which – this time – trained with the Lithuanian Mechanized Infantry Brigade “IRON WOLF” and several other NATO Allies. Command post exercises and continuous leadership training have bolstered the cohesion of the Battlegroup and strengthened tactics, techniques and procedures across all military activities.

Additionally, the Battlegroup soldiers participated in many more multinational exercises. One example is the armoured infantry live-firing competition IRON SPEAR, which was hosted by the eFP Battlegroup Latvia at Camp Ādaži last October. It was an amazing opportunity to experience comradeship and to work with the sister battlegroups from across the Baltic States and Poland.

### **The human touch in a battle group**

As much as military duties are important, our soldiers are in the first place real people, and taking care of their psychological wellbeing is crucial to promote unity and a sense of purpose in a multinational team of eight nations. So what is the secret of the “human touch” in Battlegroup Lithuania?

What it comes down to are shared values which overcome any potential barriers of language and culture. When you are working with your colleagues for one common goal, the “human touch” is a strong and positive driving force. It is closely reflected in the stories told by individuals from different countries who serve together in Lithuania. They often emphasize how much they cherish the multinational experience of working with people of so many nationalities from across the Alliance. This way they sharpen their skill set in multiple areas, and it will pay off in future missions – both at home and abroad.

When you look at soldiers deployed in Lithuania, it is plain to see they like new challenges, solving problems and simply getting things done. Each of these men and women brings in something substantial and makes our Battlegroup a team.

### **Proud father serving his country**

Finally, let us come back to Manuel, the French soldier whose first child, a son, was born on the first day after he had joined the eFP mission in Lithuania. He says he could call his wife to experience this wonderful moment with her thanks to his detachment leader. Manuel’s wife is also in the military, and she understands why he wanted to fulfil his duty and go to Lithuania. As for himself, Manuel is happy to have been given the opportunity to serve abroad for the very first time and making progress in his career. “I should be home in mid-December, and I cannot wait to see my son Louis,” the proud father says as he turns around to continue the mission.



MAJ MATTHEW BENTLEY  
EFP BATTLE GROUP LATVIA, CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

# IRON SPEAR 2020





## Unstoppable firepower

There were at least a hundred spectators crammed together on the crumbling concrete platform, which, despite its appearance, was still somehow as sturdy as ever. The relentless October rain had soaked them to the bone, and the cold fall wind made their teeth chatter so loudly it would have been deafening if it weren't for the bright yellow ear defenders they all wore. As they steadied themselves against the cold and jostled back and forth to get a better view, soldiers from twelve different NATO nations were a few hundred meters away, preparing to put on the largest firepower demonstration in NATO so far. Despite the terrible weather, these soldiers would not be dissuaded from their task of demonstrating their readiness to deter and if necessary defend against foreign aggression in the Baltic region. They are some of the finest and most resilient soldiers NATO has to offer, and over the previous days they had been competing in IRON SPEAR, an international armoured gunnery competition hosted twice a year by the enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group (eFP BG) in Latvia. The firepower demonstration that was about to begin was the second firepower demonstration of the day and would be the culminating moment of IRON SPEAR.

Four days earlier, these same soldiers received a briefing on the conduct of IRON SPEAR and began to devise a strategy on how to optimize their performance in order to win the competition. However, well before that briefing, the organizers of IRON SPEAR had been hard at work devising their own plans on how to safely bring together forty-four armoured fighting vehicle (AFV) crews and their support staff from across the Baltic States during a global pandemic. In consultation with the appropriate Latvian authorities a plan was eventually devised that would ensure the safety of all those involved.

The final plan included a number of precise restrictions that would need to be adhered to by all visiting participants. In particular, all participants travelling from outside of Latvia were required to submit a COVID-19 symptom free certificate to the Latvian authorities prior to entering Latvia. Participants then travelled directly to their campsite in the Camp Ādaži Training Area without stopping. Upon arrival, all visiting participants were required to undergo a COVID-19 test and remain in isolation until the results were confirmed. Finally, throughout the competition, visiting participants were not permitted to have any close contact with soldiers or personnel outside of their respective organizations. These restrictions, although inconvenient, were necessary to ensure the safety of all involved. More importantly, these restrictions allowed the other eFPs to participate in IRON SPEAR, something that was not possible only seven months earlier during the last iteration of IRON SPEAR. This is yet another demonstration of NATO's readiness and ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. With a plan in place to minimize the COVID-19 risks, the IRON SPEAR planners set their sights on figuring out a way to design a competition for the forty-four vehicle crews that would be participating.

## Stronger each year

Since it began in 2018, IRON SPEAR has grown in size and complexity with every iteration, and this iteration was no exception. With forty-four AFVs, including twenty-two infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), and twenty-two main battle tanks (MBTs) competing, this would be the largest IRON SPEAR to date. To accommodate this number of vehicles, the competition was, for the first time in its history, split in two. The MBTs would compete on a range specifically designed to challenge the unique skills required of a main battle tank crew, whereas the IFVs would compete on a range that was designed to







WINNING TEAM FROM NORWAY

push their crews to their limit. In short, unlike with previous iterations of IRON SPEAR, this iteration would have two winners. The top MBT crew would win the coveted IRON SPEAR trophy, and the top IFV crew would become the first winners of the IRON CUP.

With appropriate plans in place, the stage was now set, and on the morning of 12 October 2020 the first Polish PT-91 main battle tank and the first Canadian LAV 6.0 infantry fighting vehicle blasted through the ranges. In an exceptional display of firepower, mobility and accuracy these vehicles would set the tone for the remainder of the competition. Rising to the challenge, each successive vehicle crew pushed through the ranges, employing slightly different tactics based on the capabilities of their respective vehicles. The diversity of capabilities on display was not just impressive, it was reassuring.

#### **Sense of camaraderie**

When not involved in shooting, the participants busied themselves by learning whatever they could from one another. They did this by observing the ways in which the other crews attacked the range and by visiting the other crews and their vehicles in between shoots at the vehicle display area. These vehicle displays were set up between the shooting events and provided an excellent





opportunity for the participants to learn more about the diversity of capabilities employed by NATO within the Baltics. This learning process is a big part of improving interoperability and cohesion across the eFPs.

After two days of shooting and vehicle displays, the competition was complete and the top crews had been identified. This year proved to be the year for Norway, who won both the IRON SPEAR trophy for top MBT crew and the IRON CUP for the top IFV crew. However, close behind the Norwegian contingent were the Spanish MBT crew and the Netherlands IFV crew, who finished in second place. With the competition over, all that remained were the daytime and nighttime firepower demonstrations.

At 13:00 sharp on 14 October, the day-time firepower demonstration began when two Italian Eurofighter Jets screamed over the heads of the spectators in an impressive show of force. This was immediately followed by the United States Blackhawk helicopters and then the opening up of the Canadian M-777 artillery. As the artillery rounds landed in the target area, the eFP BG Latvia Commanding Officer, LTC Trevor Norton, better known as BEAST, gave the order for all armoured vehicles to

open fire. What followed was an extraordinary display of NATO firepower and capability!

With the daytime firepower demonstration complete, the crews began preparations for the nighttime firepower demonstration. As darkness began to fall over the range, so too did the rain and the cold. This however did not deter spectators from coming out to witness the power of NATO. As the spectators began to steady themselves against the cold and the rain, a loud boom was heard in the distance, followed shortly by another closer boom and a subsequent flash of light. The artillery illumination rounds had arrived, marking the beginning of the demonstration. As the illumination rounds floated over the range, they combined with the explosions from the barrels of the AFVs to light up the darkness, revealing the flags of Canada, Italy, Spain, Slovakia, Poland, Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Germany, France and Latvia flying proudly on the antennas of the AFVs. The effect of the explosions emanating from the barrels of so many AFVs and the multitude of flags flying proudly created a perfect visual representation of NATO firepower and unity. What an excellent way to mark the end of an excellent event.



SSGT ELIZABETH O. BRYSON

# BATTLE GROUP POLAND WORKS TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN THE ALLIANCE

NATO's enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group Poland (eFP BG POL) includes contingents from four nations: Croatia, Romania, the United Kingdom, and the United States. All of whom operate in concert with Poland's own 15th Mechanized Brigade (MIB), headquartered in Giżycko, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship. The contingents collectively fortify and strengthen NATO's ability to deter and defend against any potential threat in the region. eFP BG POL's continued presence is testimony that our defence is ironclad. Together, we are indeed stronger.

## Background

Currently, the United States Army's 2nd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment Cougars are the framework unit for the Battle Group. Cougar Squadron is equipped with the Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle, an advanced and fast-moving wheeled vehicle, which gives the Battle Group the ability to rapidly move soldiers throughout the theatre as well as manoeuvre them around the battlefield providing an impenetrable environment.

eFP BG POL manoeuvres extensive indirect fire capabilities, which include the Croatian Army's Multiple Launch Rocket System Battery. The Seamounts utilize self-propelled multiple launch rocket systems that rapidly fire 122 mm rockets up to 20 kilometres.

For more precise targeting, eFP BG POL has a battery of M777 howitzers from 2nd Cavalry's Bulldog Battery, which can engage targets with lethal pin-point accuracy. Finally, the Romanian Army's Blue Scorpions provide air defence capabilities to the Battle Group using their Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns.

Cassino Troop, from the United Kingdom's Light Dragoons, serves as the Battle Group's primary scout and reconnaissance unit. Cassino Troop's Jackal vehicles are specifically designed for deep reconnaissance, rapid assault, and fire support missions. They allow scouts to move quickly and stealthily ahead of the Battle Group to gather information and communicate back to the commander for rapid decision-making.



## 2020 training highlights

According to LTC Jeffery Higgins, the Commander NATO eFP BG POL, key training goals for 2020 were to sustain and build upon the strength of the Alliance as well as to enhance interoperability through readiness training exercises, all while ensuring synchronization with the Polish 15th MIB. eFP Battle Group Poland enhances collective readiness by executing a rigorous training schedule, to include live-fire exercises, combined cold-weather training and complex lake crossings. All of which foster our ability to function together as an interoperable, combat-ready force.

Units from multiple nations maintain individual and unit readiness capitalizing on seasons as training opportunities, such as executing cold-weather physical fitness training and daily maintenance of vehicles and equipment. Additional training focuses on soldier and troop proficiency, basic fundamental skills and weapons qualification. These training events are of the utmost importance, as soldiers must display firing abilities involving squad, platoon, or troop manoeuvres.

The culmination was the all-encompassing exercise TUMAK 20 in November 2020, which combined over 1,200 multinational troops participating, along with 15th MIB, to strengthen the Battle Group's manoeuvre, fires and reconnaissance capabilities as well as to test and prove readiness and interoperability at all levels. The summation of TUMAK 20 was that all elements are able to rapidly deploy troops throughout the Area of Operations. During the MERCURY RISING and BULL RUN 14 components of the exercise, eFP BG POL showcased its ability to rapidly perform an alert, marshalling and deployment of lethal multinational combat forces throughout the region.

Joint operational readiness was then validated during a dynamic force-on-force display, MONKEY STRIKE, led



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by the Polish command. The 15th MIB demonstrated their ability to deploy forces by land, water and air in a multi-faceted water-crossing event. Using amphibious vehicles, boats, and barges to deliver troops, vehicles and equipment to forward positions while under simulated attack from the air and ground. Tanks and helicopters also delivered soldiers to the battlefield where they moved to encounter the enemy head-on.

According to LTC Higgins, due to joint efforts of the multinational staff at headquarters working in conjunction with the 15th MIB during exercises such as TUMAK 20, eFP BG POL was able to refine planning doctrine and practice as well as to validate the long-distance command and control systems with partners and Allies; all while successfully demonstrating the Battle Group's ability to fight along with the Polish brigade. LTC Higgins added that all of this was executed while eFP BG POL did its best to preserve readiness and maintain the health and welfare of the troops and surrounding community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Challenges and lessons learned

LTC Higgins said that one of the greatest challenges faced by leaders in 2020 was to keep the Battle Group healthy. Some of the measures to keep the virus at bay included social distancing, wearing facial masks, strict hygiene requirements, and limited interaction with the outside population. "While much of the world





U.S. ARMY SOLDIER FROM GHOST TROOP, 2ND SQUADRON 2ND CAVALRY REGIMENT, ADJUSTS THE PRECISION AIM OF A STRYKER PRIOR TO A LIVE FIRE EXERCISE, 11 NOV, 2020, AT BEMOWO PISKIE TRAINING AREA, POLAND



U.S. ARMY SOLDIERS FROM EAGLE TROOP, 2ND SQUADRON 2ND CAVALRY REGIMENT DURING A TRAINING EXERCISE, 11 NOV, 2020, AT BEMOWO PISKIE TRAINING AREA, POLAND

has been battling COVID,” LTC Higgins stated, “we have managed to maintain a bubble and preserve our ability to train in the excellent facilities provided by the Polish Military.” Another challenge which eFP BG POL faced was dealing with the local terrain. LTC Higgins said one of the most significant lessons learned – and one of their greatest successes – was learning how to fight in the Polish countryside. Mobility in the region is known to be restricted due to the dense forests and extensive water obstacles. “Having the opportunity to train where you may have to fight one day is vital to our readiness,” said LTC Higgins.

Other challenges seen in eFP BG POL are not much different than what you would find in any multinational group, according to LTC Higgins. “While there are doctrinal and cultural nuances surrounding nearly all of the various countries’ approaches to various military tasks,” LTC Higgins stated, “a powerful culture of respect in the group creates an environment where leaders are open to new ways of operating and are constantly learning from each other.”

**Cooperation and outreach**

eFP BG POL worked diligently to integrate troops into the Polish host nation in order to further strengthen cooperation, build trust and create lasting bonds that transcend military tasks. However, many community outreach events were downsized due to the ongoing pandemic.

Some notable humanitarian projects we were able to execute included a bottle-cap drive in August with a local police station in Biała Piska, the recycling proceeds of which were donated to charity (BPTA participants continue to collect bottle caps as part of this ongoing endeavour). Soldiers also participated in Veterans’ Run, a humanitarian initiative to collect funds for a Children’s Hospice in Olsztyn.

**Trust**

According to LTC Higgins, the most crucial element in creating a cohesive, well-functioning and lethal combat force here is the trust that has been established between Allied and partnered nations. The enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group continues to strengthen and build upon this trust through shared hardship and experience. “Every time we execute a successful mission, we build this trust,” LTC Higgins stated.

From squad competitions through multiple joint training exercises, including TUMAK 20, to the ability to work, eat and sleep in close proximity to each other, LTC Higgins said the team continues to be stronger. “During our downtime, we share our cultures and build friendships,” he explained. “We have celebrated holidays, birthdays, social gatherings, and promotions together. This Christmas we will share the hardship of being away from family, but the challenge and shared sacrifice will create strong bonds of trust.”

Together, we are indeed stronger.

All photographs delivered by eFP BG POLAND



AN AMPHIBIOUS VEHICLE LOADED WITH POLISH TROOPS FROM THE 15TH MECH BDE CROSSES A LAKE DURING EX TUMAK 20, 25 NOV, 2020



MAJ SEAN BRINKEMA

# INFRASTRUCTURE RECCE PROJECT IN ESTONIA

## Compatible with the needs of NATO

Activated on 1 September 2015, NATO Force Integration Unit Estonia (NFIU EST) is part of NATO's permanent forward presence and is responsible for enhancing Alliance responsiveness by facilitating the rapid deployment of NATO and allied forces. This is primarily achieved by supporting NATO and the Estonian Defence Forces in the planning and enablement of Reception Staging Onward Movement (RSOM) and sustainment operations for NATO forces.

Leveraging the expertise and dedication of not only its Estonian staff but also its multinational contingent that includes members from Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States, NFIU Estonia provides subject-matter expertise in logistics, air and surface transportation, communications, cyber defence, strategic communications and public affairs, counter-intelligence, inter-governmental department liaison, civil-military Integration (cultural, economic, environmental), legal affairs, medical support and security.

In order to meet an increasing Allied interest in conducting site surveys for exercises in Estonia and obtain a broad understanding of mobility-enhancing infrastructure, the NFIU Infrastructure Recce Project (NIR) was established in July 2020. The NIR's main intent is to develop an expansive unclassified inventory of documented reconnaissance sites that allow troop-contributing nations to review the characteristics and the potential of sites prior to committing resources to site surveys. Furthermore, the NIR serves to establish a registry of points of contact and provide access and local authority information for each site. The NIR also provides NATO and the NFIU with public-relations opportunities, allowing NFIU members to conduct site surveys while engaging the local population



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Rank: Major  
Unit: NFIU Estonia  
Country of origin: Canada

throughout the entire country. Finally, the NIR enhances the NFIU and stakeholder effectiveness by creating and expanding in-depth knowledge of the Estonian landscape and its people among NFIU members.

## Cooperative effort

Led by NFIU EST J4 Movement and Transportation Operations, the project was conceptualized to be as collaborative as possible. To this effect, a survey among NFIU stakeholders was conducted and followed by a series of engagements to identify sites of interest. Estonian stakeholders included the Ministry of Defence, the Estonian Defence Forces, the Estonian Defence League, the Host Nation Support Coordination Cell, the National Movement Coordination Cell and the Support Command. The United States Armed Forces were represented by the Office of Defence Cooperation and 16 Sustainment Brigade. The enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) interests were represented by members of the eFP Command and, finally, NFIU EST internal stakeholders included the Host Nation Support Advisor, J2 and J3.

Stakeholder interests ranged from mobility-capability-enhancement opportunities, intelligence interest in abandoned Soviet Union infrastructure and installations, current mobility-capability updates, updates related to ports of disembarkation, surveys of main supply routes to the viability of drop zones, landing



All photographs delivered by NFIU ESTONIA



FIGURE 1

zones and storage areas. In total, 97 sites were identified by stakeholders. Site locations were compiled and catalogued in the Estonian geo-mapping system (Figure 1).

**How does it work?**

NFIU EST produces and updates two key documents: the Comprehensive Preparation of the Operational Environment (CPOE) and the Operational Logistic Aide Memoire (OLAM). The CPOE is a classified, largely intelligence-related product that provides in-depth knowledge of the Estonian area of operation (AOO).

The OLAM is a series of largely unclassified documents, segmented into three chapters: host-nation-support institutions and mechanisms, EST infrastructure, and EST RSOM and logistics. The NIR will constitute the fourth chapter of the OLAM: NFIU infrastructure reconnaissance.

In order to rationalize the large amount of aggregated data and to avoid security classification issues, the NIR is segmented into cluster chapters, rather than AOOs or other operational prioritization schemes. As depicted in Figure 2, the clusters, hence chapter four sections,

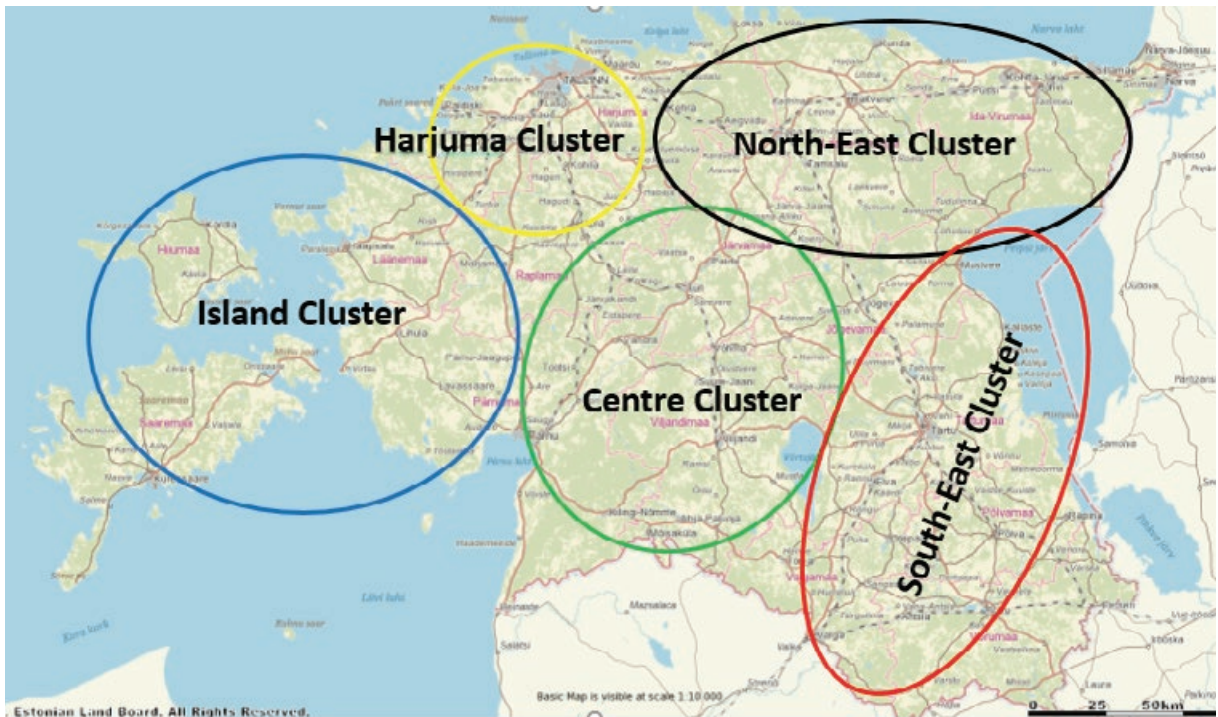


FIGURE 2



include: Island Cluster, Harjuma Cluster, North-East Cluster, South-East Cluster and Centre Cluster.

Clusters were further classified according to the component the site would be most appropriate to serve. The component subclassifications include: Air, Sea, Land and Unspecified. Therefore, the site coding is categorized as follows:

- 1st letter = CLUSTER (I – Island, H – Harjuma, N – North-East, S – South-East, C – Centre)
- 2nd Letter = COMPONENT (A – Air, S – Sea, L – Land, U – Unspecified)
- Numbers = Cluster Serial Position
- Name of Site

For example, NA01 RUTJA Airfield is North-East Cluster, Air Component, Cluster Serial 01, RUTJA.

To build consensus among stakeholders, they were asked to submit their reconnaissance report formats. The various formats were analysed for similarities in order to produce a reconnaissance report format generic enough for any stakeholder to convert it to their own standards. **Figure 3** uses the NA01 RUTJA example:

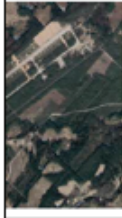

NIR coordinating instructions and invitations are published on Wednesdays for Mondays’ coordination meetings. Invitations and coordination are open to all stakeholders and anyone interested in the project.

Although the UK’s Royal 22nd Engineering Regiment has assisted the NIR with engineering assessments of rivers and bridges for a limited number of sites, NFIU EST is not staffed with engineering capabilities, leaving the NIR assessment limited to open-source geographic data and first-hand impressions. The addition of an engineering capability would be of great benefit to the project that is, after all, available to all Allied partners.

**NA04 RUTJA RECCE REPORT**

Preparatory Information


Location Name:	RUTJA Airfield <small>(site surveyed 18.07.2020)</small>
Grid / Coordinates:	Swedish AMSL 128 91 41 m Coordinates 59°32'12"N 22°19'42"E
Civil Address:	N/A
Site POC/Owner:	EDL POC +372 717195497 DOOM: Major Andrus Remelin +372 59191838
Local Authorities:	Police: Konstantin Lepik (Police): Business phone: +372 59644251
ESF POC:	None
Initial consideration for use:	F-16s, F-15s, F-22s, F-35s, Fuel Storage, Equipment and Vehicle Staging

Total land area: AREA SIZE (2.5x) 4 km, ca 200 hectare, abandoned, concrete

possible after repairing and runway.  
closed because of woods and forest

# Pictures taken:	Yes, available on NFIU server:
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Access Road and Gate

FIGURE 3



AIRCRAFT BUNKER, RUTJA



AMMO BUNKER, RUTJA



RADAR STATION, RUTJA



MAJ GYULA HARNÓCZ

# A MAN OF MANY FACETS

## INTERVIEW WITH LTC KÁROLY SZÁVAI

A true veteran of NATO Force Integration Unit Hungary (NFIU HUN), promoted to Lieutenant Colonel last year, serving under his second commander in four years. Head of one of the most important NFIU HUN branches. A father of three, who is also a big fan of the NFL, always watches the Superbowl live and supports the Seattle Seahawks. Meet LTC Károly Szávai.



Name: Gyula Harnócz

Rank: Major

Unit: NFIU Hungary

Country of origin: Hungary

***You are among the few remaining personnel who joined NATO Force Integration Unit Hungary in the very first rotation when it was established back in 2016. How do you remember that time?***

For 13 years, I had been working in the same garrison in Hódmezővásárhely in multiple positions — starting as an infantry platoon leader and finishing as the head of a battalion training section. In 2014, I was temporarily positioned at the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF) Joint Force Command, Land Forces Operations and Training Division, as a J3/7 staff officer. I was a “weekend father” at that time. Therefore, in 2015 my family and I started a new chapter in our lives, and we all moved to Székesfehérvár. After a fruitful period at HDFC J3/7, the Division Head — Colonel László Garas, the assigned commander of the soon-to-be established NATO Force Integration Unit – offered me a position at the NFIU’s J3 branch. I would have been crazy if I had not seized the opportunity. I easily adapted to an international environment and found myself facing new challenges.

***What were the most difficult ones, and how did you manage to deal with them during the first months?***

I think the hardest was building up a new unit from scratch, mainly with people who you had never worked with or not even met before. We had little to go on, and an entire new system had to be established and set in motion within a limited time frame. In some cases, NFIUs of the “first wave” were able to provide us with practical advice, but, since every Host Nation is different, in other cases we were left to our own devices, using our own creativity. In April 2016, we started working in a temporary location, with only twelve staff on site in January, but the gradual build-up of the unit and the arrival of our international colleagues in July resulted in a situation where we could finally start working for one goal as a real team. This goal was to reach full operational capability by 1 June 2017. Of course, working in an international environment, where different military cultures and individual personalities meet one another, is always a challenge. In this regard, NFIU HUN truly is like a salad bowl. We have a broad representation of NATO member states — from Bulgaria to the United States. On the one hand, we are a small organization that constitutes a large family. People here not only work together for a common purpose but at the same time establish and maintain strong long-lasting personal relations and friendships.

All photographs delivered by NFIU Hungary



***People rotate and change all the time, but you have been serving here since the very beginning. What has changed at NFIU HUN since 2016?***

This is definitely true — we faced many changes in the first couple of years, but, as the former Commander said, we were a “carefully selected” team. Although many from the first shift have already rotated out, newcomers accommodate themselves seamlessly, and the “old” team provides full support to their in-processing. Thus, these rotations do not hamper the continuity of our mission. Luckily, a few members of the very first rotation are still serving here, and their experience makes the transition of incoming members easier. NFIU HUN has been one of the best-staffed units and has matured well over the past four years. I like to think that we have succeeded and set an example in Hungary. All of the initial difficulties are now way behind us, and I can honestly say that our NFIU has a very solid workforce that knows where they are heading. We have managed to gain recognition not only from different NATO entities, but also from the Hungarian Defence Forces and

the civilian side, too. This is the result of our hard work, enthusiasm and dedication.

***Are there any developments you are specifically looking forward to?***

In Hungary, there is a new actor on the security stage — Multinational Division Centre. This new headquarters is a game changer in the central European region, specifically with regard to deterrence and defence. In a few months, it will reach initial operational capability, and we will enter a new phase and link closely with them to further an inclusive cooperation when it comes to the common security goals in central Europe. In this light, affiliation of the new division with Multinational Corps Northeast remains essential in order to establish an overarching command which can provide structured command and control capabilities and coordinate “old and new” entities in an evolving security scenario. Regarding the cooperation with actors outside the military sphere, I think we will have to further intensify our relations with the local civilian community.





***After working as a staff officer for operations, you are now the head of your own branch and were promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. How much did the promotion change your daily routine and tasks? Can you just sit back and relax while others do the job?***

Not really. But that is just who I am (*laughs*). I cannot just sit idly for longer periods of time. But seriously, my position is unique within our NFIU as I am managing four different areas of expertise altogether. You can imagine this can be quite demanding at times. My staff consists of very capable professionals who are experts in their own fields. To integrate their experience in a coordinated and effective manner is my first priority as their branch head. Besides my routine tasks, I put a strong emphasis on maintaining a personal and professional relationship with a number of colleagues inside and outside the NATO chain of command. A lot of things require harmonization, including exercises, preparation of different staff orders, reports, participation in multiple events organized by the Host Nation and, of course, the continuous development of our internal staff procedures. It is my personal responsibility that our outgoing products are of high quality and relevance.

***We all face new challenges, like COVID-19, which has changed the world and is still affecting our daily lives. From an operational perspective, what was the impact on the activities of NFIU HUN?***

It is true that COVID-19 is a beast that has significant impacts on our lives on different levels. NATO, however, is flexible, willing and — most importantly — capable enough to deal with COVID-19 effectively. NFIU HUN has also adjusted its battle rhythm to the new situation, in sync with other NATO entities. We have established working shifts and been able to maintain our operational capability even during the low manning period, and we did the same by establishing a reserve team system back in November 2020.

***How about activities that were postponed?***

We have never stopped working together with all of the involved Allies and partners to find optimal solutions in order to make sure our training and exercise events can be re-organized and conducted as soon as the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. From our own perspective, the first priority is the exercise PRECISE RECEPTION 2020, our evaluation exercise. Besides this definitive test, we are also concentrating on additional tasks, for instance keeping our staff at a high level of

preparedness despite the cancellation of some of our internal monthly staff trainings. Instead, we executed a complex two-week staff training using internal and external briefers, while taking all necessary medical, hygienic and protective measures. This was the best way to fulfil our training requirements and to sustain the operational capability of NFIU HUN. Meanwhile, we have already started developing our newly assigned evaluation exercise PRECISE RECEPTION 2021 in close cooperation with the Hungarian Defence Forces' J7 Directorate. Execution is planned for May 2021. This re-evaluation will be the next milestone in the life of our unit, and all members will do their best to make it successful.

***We have talked about the past and the present of NFIU HUN, but how do you see the future of this organization? What would you like it to be in, say, five years from now?***

Basically, I still see NFIU HUN as the vital link between the Host Nation, NATO and other military entities. We fulfil this mission with our relatively small but very robust staff every day. I also hope that in the coming years we will be able to increase knowledge about NFIU HUN even more, especially amongst different stakeholders and key leaders. It is worth every effort as the NFIU is indispensable when it comes to coordination between military and civilian organizations.

***A bit of challenge there, wouldn't you say?***

Well, one might think of it as a massive task to complete. However, as I am a father of three, what could be more important than making sure they will grow up in a secure world? Families thrive in stability and security, and we work to achieve this at home. Since I am lucky enough to be a father and a soldier at the same time, I can accomplish even more with what I do at NFIU HUN, and I do not see this as a challenge but as a possibility to guarantee their safety and to build a better world.

***What do you do when you try to relax? Can you leave your work behind at least for a little bit from time to time?***

To be honest — and even though I have been wearing the uniform for 27 years — it is sometimes hard to put your military life aside when you are going home, but I am trying to do my best. All my kids are doing sports, mostly volleyball. We like not only doing but also watching sports together. I am a big fan of the NFL team Seattle Seahawks, I also support the Ferrari team in Formula 1. Since we live in a family house, we often work together in our garden and play with our dog if the weather allows us to do so. Concerning new challenges, I completed the NATO Run 10K challenge last year for the very first time in my life.





LTC DUARTE CIGRE

# NATO FORCE INTEGRATION UNIT LITHUANIA EVOLVING AND ADAPTING

## 'Nephews' in the family

In 2015, six NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs), pronounced 'nephews', were established in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. This followed a decision taken at the previous year's NATO Summit in Wales in recognition of the security challenges that the Alliance once again faced on its eastern and southern flanks. Therefore, on 1 September 2015, NATO activated these NFIUs as part of its Readiness Action Plan, and, two days later, NFIU Lithuania had the great honour to be inaugurated by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė.

Since our foundation, our main mission has been focused on facilitating the rapid deployment of Allied forces to Lithuania, supporting collective defence planning and assisting in training and exercise coordination. At the same time, we also act as the main link between the Host Nation and its Defence Forces with all Allied forces, whether as part of NATO or other defence arrangements.

With no template to work from, establishing the NFIU was, unsurprisingly, wrought with many challenges; nevertheless, through close and coordinated cooperation with the Lithuanian Defence Staff, we were able to overcome these initial hurdles. The challenges ranged from physically establishing the NFIU alongside our Lithuanian colleagues within the Defence Staff Headquarters to building and strengthening key relations across the Lithuanian Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence and the already well-established diplomatic community.

## Major priorities

Following exercises conducted by Allied forces in Lithuania in 2016, coupled with the establishment of



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Unit: NFIU Lithuania  
Country of origin: Portugal

the enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup in 2017, the NFIU recognized a need to improve the way NATO forces were supported. One of the key observations was a need for greater coordination with civil organizations within Lithuania, not only with governmental entities, but also with businesses and the broader civilian population.

As part of this initiative, the NFIU developed a comprehensive strategic communications plan to help better promote the purpose of NATO and why forces from



COMMUNITY VISIT DURING THE  
NATO DAY IN VARENA, MAY 2019

All photographs delivered by NFIU Lithuania



NFIU LITHUANIA TEAM IN 2019

other Allied nations were stationed in Lithuania. This activity was aimed not only at key leaders within Lithuania but at the population as a whole and includes an ongoing community outreach programme in which NFIU personnel conducts visits to different Lithuanian municipalities to directly engage with local communities. This engagement not only involves informing those communities about the work of NATO but also allows NFIU personnel to get a better understanding of their views and opinions; to date, we have so far visited 32 of the 60 municipalities in Lithuania. Also, in addition to our community outreach programme, the NFIU has participated in several national initiatives, for instance the Food Bank, 'For a Safe Lithuania' and, among others, high school youth projects.

This development has allowed the NFIU to establish and cement strong relations with a variety of key organizations from all over the country across a range of different capabilities and skills that will help ease the deployment of Allied forces to Lithuania should the need arise. This network has expanded well beyond the military and now includes the Lithuanian intelligence services, the highly important and influential diplomatic community, government organizations, such as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and local municipalities, key business leaders and many NGOs.

Whilst we have worked hard to deliver strategic messaging it is not our only focus. Another of our priorities has been working with our Lithuanian partners to ensure plans that support the rapid deployment of

NATO's Very-High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) to Lithuania are always up to date. A significant amount of effort is required to ensure that these plans remain aligned to the composition of the VJTF, as each year different NATO nations and organizations fulfil this critical role. This requires continuous evaluation of capabilities that include, for instance logistical networks, transportation routes, national infrastructure, operations, communications, strategic communications, training, human resources and finances.

### **Steady on course**

Although we are a small unit, made up of representatives from fourteen NATO nations, we are nevertheless a visible and permanent representation of NATO, underlining the Alliance's commitment to ensuring the sovereign integrity of Lithuania through enhancing security in order to deter and, if necessary, defeat any aggression. Moreover, the contribution of the NFIU mission over the last five years has significantly enhanced NATO's ability to deploy forces to Lithuania.

Looking to the future, the only certainty is uncertainty; therefore, the NFIU will continue to evolve and adapt to ensure that whatever is needed for NATO to help the Republic of Lithuania to continue to secure its independence and the sovereignty of its people is identified and implemented. We have enjoyed the last five years and look forward to working with Lithuania for the next five years in this hugely important endeavour.



# 5 YEARS OF NATO FORCE INTEGRATION UNIT LATVIA

## THE COMMANDER'S PERSPECTIVE

*Article by the Press Office of the Latvian National Armed Forces, previously published in Latvian on the news portal "Sargs.lv"*

### Prepared at all times

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On 14 October 2020, NATO Force Integration Unit Latvia (NFIU LVA) celebrated its fifth anniversary. From the start, its core task has been to facilitate, if needed, the coordinated deployment of the NATO Response Force (NRF) to Latvia. "Fortunately, there has never been a real need to do this, which means that NATO's deterrence posture and our daily work at the NFIU have been effective," says the Commander of NFIU LVA, Colonel Jānis Gailis. "Yet, our multinational entity — made up of officers, non-commissioned officers and civilian employees representing 12 nations — performs many other tasks," adds the Colonel, who has been in command of NFIU LVA since June 2017.

In peacetime, the NFIU team focus on the existing procedures, which have to be revised and rehearsed at all times, as certain deficiencies can only be identified and eliminated in practice.

"Being a soldier means preparing for the worst and being ready to defend your country in every situation," emphasizes the NFIU Commander. "Our unit spends its days planning and preparing for activation whenever called upon. Naturally, we do not operate in isolation. We closely collaborate with the Latvian Ministry of Defence and other governmental partners, the Joint Headquarters (JHQ) of the Latvian National Armed Forces (LVA NAF), Multinational Division North (MNDN) located in Ādaži and a number of NATO entities across the Alliance."

### Hand in hand with partners

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A task of no less importance is to support the Canadian-led enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup Latvia (eFP BG LVA). "It is great to see how the nations contributing to eFP operate, how well the battlegroup is incorporated in the Latvian Mechanized Infantry Brigade and how they bolster their combat capabilities," Colonel Gailis points out. "In this case, we can rest assured that the battlegroup is a well-integrated element of the Latvian Armed Forces and the current deterrence is effective," says the Commander.

NFIU LVA supports a great many international military exercises. For instance, they cooperate with the U.S. soldiers deployed in Latvia with several "Black Hawk" helicopters and stationed in the Latvian Air Force base in Lielvārde as part of the US operation Atlantic Resolve. It is on the NFIU to inform the incoming Allied forces about the current situation in the country — currently especially with regard to COVID-19 restrictions.

### Strength of multinationality

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Daily life at NFIU LVA is mostly about communication and staying connected. Colonel Gailis starts every day with a coordination meeting with his staff. During these meetings, the branches receive tasks and exchange ideas on how to achieve their objectives most efficiently. A typical week includes several meetings at the JHQ and daily coordination work with Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE), the NFIU's superior command, and MNDN.



INAUGURATION OF NFIU LATVIA, 16 NOV 2015

Colonel Gailis is an experienced Latvian officer, who previously commanded the National Guard's 4th Brigade in Kurzeme. He began his military service in 1991 and participated in both the Kosovo and Afghanistan missions.

"Being a commander that runs a multinational unit and being a member of an international operation are not the same things," the Colonel reveals. "Even though this is my fourth year in command of NFIU LVA, I still find it an interesting challenge. In my time here, I have gained a better understanding of nuances when it comes to different military cultures; therefore, my own professional experience has broadened. I have also realized that regardless of our nationality we are

all soldiers and, most importantly, humans. Our strong professional relationships are the best tool for achieving a common goal. And the goal should always come first," says Colonel Gailis.

The Commander believes that multinationality strengthens the unit. Therefore, NFIU LVA has developed their own ways to enhance cultural wealth and diversity, for instance by celebrating the Latvian Midsummer and other holidays together. Additionally, the team engages in a great many community activities. The annual Big Clean-Up or Lielā talka, when people tidy up areas across Latvia, is one of many examples.

#### Latvia's commitment to NATO

As a Latvian, Colonel Gailis is happy to see his country contribute to the Allied deterrence. "Even though Latvia is a small country, it is visible in fulfilling its role in NATO," says the Colonel. Within the Latvian Armed Forces, there are two units certified for the NATO Response Force (NRF) – the National Guard's 36th Combat Support Battalion and the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Platoon of the National Guard's 54th Combat Support Battalion. Although they are National Guard units, their core is made up of regular soldiers who regularly train at home and abroad and complete specialized certification training before joining the NRF.

"These units are highly capable. Latvian soldiers are professional and strongly motivated to showcase their preparedness to fulfil NRF tasks together with other Allied soldiers," the NFIU Commander concludes.



COLONEL JĀNIS GAILIS, COMMANDER OF NFIU LVA



CPT ALEKSANDRA MORZYCKA

# MULTIDIMENSIONAL EXPERTISE EFFORT OF NATO FORCE INTEGRATION UNIT POLAND



MAIN GATE TO THE REJEWSKI BARRACKS  
FROM THE LEFT: COM NFIU POLAND, ACTING DIRECTOR NATO MILITARY POLICE COE, COM 3RD NATO SIGNAL BN

All photographs delivered by NFIU Poland



NFIU POLAND TEAM PARTICIPATING IN A SPORT COMPETITION DURING THE NATO DAY, BYDGOSZCZ, POLAND

### Answering the call of duty

The constantly changing and unprecedented security environment across the globe, especially in the eastern part of Europe on the Alliance's boundaries, triggered the acceleration of NATO's adaptation process. The fulfilment of decisions taken during the Wales Summit became one of the most urgent and prioritized requirements identified by several Allies situated on the eastern flank of NATO. Being the largest NATO member in the region, Poland understandably had to take the next step in strengthening the Alliance's resilience in response to the emerging security threats. Hence, the idea to establish NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) in Poland and the Baltic States was implemented by means of an enormous effort by the Host Nations, both in political and military terms.

Collective defence and deterrence against potential aggressive activities by any adversary are indeed of utmost relevance to all those involved in the policy launched by the Alliance. Therefore, such a small but specialized headquarters plays a vital role as an interface and a liaison element. Certainly, the primary mission of the NFIU, defined in the standing directives and agreements, is enabled through a strictly institutionalized cooperation with the Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum, Multinational Corps Northeast and with the entities of the Polish Armed Forces, for instance the General Staff, the General Command, etc. Before daily staff work could gain the recognition of top officials, a team of experts from Poland and troop-contributing nations had to organize effective and professional cooperation among the above-mentioned players.

### Compact and effective

In comparison to the headquarters of NATO's regular command and force structure, NFIU POL is a military unit



Name: Aleksandra Morzycka  
 Rank: Captain  
 Unit: NFIU Poland  
 Country of origin: Poland

whose personnel are rotated mostly on a three-year basis. The time available for team integration therefore seems relatively short and certainly requires a lot of individual commitment and dedication. In order to achieve the desired goals, professional preparedness and experience are expected from the servicemen and women who are about to join the NFIU. However, they also proactively engage in community life, predominantly through initiatives undertaken in the city of Bydgoszcz.

The respective commitments, such as getting involved in a blood donation or charities supporting those in need, as well as – on the other hand – participating in an international military community ball are all tangible examples of the NFIU personnel being part of their immediate environment. Only thanks to such an attitude can the impossible become possible.

All in all, the presence of NFIU POL has improved the timely exchange of information and has boosted coordination of transportation and movement of Allied troops across Poland. These achievements can only be attained when dedicated staff officers and non-commissioned officers from across all nations forming the NFIU demonstrate a lot of good will and a united approach to tasks and social projects.



MAJ TOMAS DANO

# RECERTIFICATION OF NATO FORCE INTEGRATION UNIT SLOVAKIA

## Beginnings

The first commander of NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia (NFIU SVK), Colonel Jozef Zekucia, used to say that in case of a threat and necessity to deploy Allied Armed Forces to defend Slovakia, the NFIU will act as an adapter or hub — one that connects the strength of coalition partners with the domestic network, for instance the structures of the Host Nation Armed Forces and the Ministries of Defence, Interior, Transport, Health and the like.

“The role of the NFIU is to ensure, in case of a threat, that Slovakia is able to receive Allied Armed Forces on its own territory, which will strengthen our capabilities in the defence of Slovakia. The presence of the NFIU in Slovakia confirms that – in case of a crisis – our Allies will come to help us defend our state. For Slovakia, NATO membership provides a level of security and stability that no other alternative can currently guarantee,” says the Colonel. “At the very beginning, in the fall of 2015, the organizational core of NFIU SVK consisted of four Slovak officers and one non-commissioned officer,” he continues. “Back then, our main task was to create the conditions for the admission of foreign staff, including the relevant material and technical support.” This meant selecting an appropriate building within the Vajnory Barracks premises and making necessary adjustments in accordance with the applicable NATO standards. The very first certification was completed in spring 2017. This marked the beginning of the three-year working cycle and led to the most recent confirmation of the NFIU’s capabilities.



Name: Tomas Dano  
Rank: Major  
Unit: NFIU Slovakia  
Country of origin: Slovakia

## Recertification

Recertification is a test of readiness and ability to ensure the fulfilment of the full range of basic tasks as defined in NATO guidelines. During 2020, very intensive training of our members took place. In addition to various refresher training courses, a series of internal exercises were conducted. They culminated in the recertification or re-evaluation of NFIU SVK at the end of October 2020. The preparation process began back in the autumn of 2019 in two phases.

Phase 1 included the establishment of the main internal processes, regulations, individual training and education, as well as the preparation of the QUALEX evaluation exercise itself.

Phase 2 included functional and procedural QUALEX staff training. Due to the full implementation of the measures of the Government of the Slovak Republic against COVID-19 in the spring of 2020, these exercises were rescheduled in order to fulfil their purpose. They focused on verifying the functional activities of the



COL PETER BRAUNER, COM NFIU SVK, AND COL (RET.) JOZEF ZEKUCIA, FORMER COM NFIU SVK



NFIU SVK RECERTIFICATION, 19 NOV 2020

dedicated forces and personnel to ensure the fulfilment of the basic tasks of the NFIU with regard to Reception, Staging and Onward Movement. QUALEX exercises were the main training tool for the recertification, especially during the final EVALEX'20 evaluation exercise which included evaluators from the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and military observers from Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE) in Szczecin.

#### NFIU evaluation week

On 26-30 October 2020, NFIU SVK began an assessment week, complying with the strict anti-pandemic measures set by the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Public Health Office. The evaluation period was divided into three phases.

On the first day, the Commander of NFIU SVK, Colonel Peter Brauner, officially welcomed the chief evaluator, Colonel Norbert Hrib, and his team members. He announced the full readiness of NFIU SVK for certification. During the first two days, the evaluation team from the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic focused on all functional areas of NFIU SVK in accordance with the "Multinational Corps Northeast NFIU Evaluation Concept", in which stringent criteria are outlined.

On 28-29 October, NFIU SVK performed an EVALEX staff exercise. The Slovak evaluation team checked the actual operational readiness of the two NFIU coordination teams. Their main task was to synchronize the



procedures related to the reception and retention of invited Allied troops on the Slovak territory.

On 30 October, the chairman of the evaluation team from the Slovak General Staff, Colonel Norbert Hríb, began the third phase of the NFIU back-briefing evaluation in the presence of the Commander of NFIU SVK and MNC NE military observers. “NFIU SVK has met all certification criteria and confirmed its full operational capability,” said Colonel Hríb. At the end of the evaluation week, the NFIU SVK evaluation report was signed. Based on that, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, General Daniel



NFIU SVK RECERTIFICATION CEREMONY, 19 NOV 2020



EVALEX STAFF EXERCISE



COL BRAUNER WITH DISTINGUISHED GUESTS DURING NFIU SVK RECERTIFICATION CEREMONY

Zmeko, confirmed the NFIU's readiness to perform the assigned tasks. The whole process culminated in the official line-up ceremony. The NFIU SVK Commander, Colonel Brauner, thanked all team members for their

active and professional approach in preparing and conducting the evaluation. “I am extremely pleased that our efforts were crowned with this success. We achieved excellent evaluation results in all audited areas,” said Colonel Brauner.

### Relations and communication

Having been recertified, NFIU SVK continues to strengthen the bonds with both the Allies and its Host Nation. “I am pleased with the deepening of cooperation with the General Staff of the Armed Forces and with the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic. The NATO Force Integration Unit has become an integral part of our military life. Our personnel regularly participate in the planning processes of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic,” indicates Colonel Brauner. “But the fulfilment of our tasks can also be measured by the intensity of our cooperation with non-governmental organizations in Slovakia. We are starting to communicate more intensively with them. We focus on developing relationships with the public in order to support NATO's strategic communication. Currently, we regularly witness various disinformation campaigns against NATO and its importance. It is therefore necessary to explain openly and transparently the tasks and mission of the Alliance and the benefits for the Slovak Republic of having a small Alliance headquarters on its territory,” he summarizes.

### Readiness and satisfaction

Since the establishment of the NFIU, not only in Slovakia, but also in the other seven NATO member states on the Alliance's eastern border, the scope of tasks performed has gradually increased. “We ensure the coordination of Allied activities across the eastern portion of NATO. It is a great opportunity for members of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic to gain experience in an international environment, in this case directly on our territory,” Colonel Brauner assesses. “Importantly, I am in intensive contact with the commanders of other NFIUs. We create a functional network, supporting the overall command and control system in NATO.” And, as he says, this is something to be proud of.



# Regional Land Component Command

## Multinational Corps Northeast Szczecin




**MULTINATIONAL CORPS  
NORTHEAST**  
LGEn SŁAWOMIR WOJCIECHOWSKI  
SZCZECIN, POL




**MULTINATIONAL  
DIVISION NORTH EAST**  
MGEn KRZYSZTOF MOTACKI  
ELBLĄG, POL




**MULTINATIONAL  
DIVISION NORTH**  
MGEn FLEMMING MATHIASEN  
ĀDAŽI, LVA




**POL 15. MECHANIZED  
BRIGADE**  
BGEn BOGDAN RYCERSKI  
GIŻYCKO, POL




**LTU MECHANIZED  
INFANTRY BRIGADE**  
COL MINDAUGAS PETKEVIČIUS  
RUKLA, LTU




**EST 1. INFANTRY  
BRIGADE**  
COL VAHUR KARIUS  
TAPA, EST




**LVA MECHANIZED  
INFANTRY BRIGADE**  
COL SANDRIS GAUGERS  
ĀDAŽI, LVA




**COMMAND  
SUPPORT BRIGADE**  
COL JACEK ROLAK  
STARGARD, POL




**eFP BATTLE GROUP  
POL**  
LTC JASON ADLER  
BEMOWO PISKIE, POL




**eFP BATTLE GROUP  
LTU**  
LTC SEBASTIAN HERBISCH  
RUKLA, LTU




**eFP BATTLE GROUP  
EST**  
LTC JIM HADFIELD  
TAPA, EST




**eFP BATTLE GROUP  
LVA**  
LTC ENNO KERCKHOFF  
ĀDAŽI, LVA




**NFIU  
POL**  
COL SŁAWOMIR WALENCZYKOWSKI  
BYDGOSZCZ, POL




**NFIU  
LTU**  
COL JACOB SOGARD LARSEN  
VILNIUS, LTU




**NFIU  
EST**  
COL MART VENULA  
TALLINN, EST




**NFIU  
LVA**  
COL JANIS GAILIS  
RIGA, LVA




**NFIU  
SVK**  
COL PETER BRAUNER  
BRATISLAVA, SVK




**NFIU  
HUN**  
COL ISTVAN TOPOR  
SZÉKESFEHÉVÁR, HUN





FREEDOM AND SECURITY  
 COLLECTIVE DEFENCE  
 CREDIBLE DETERRENCE  
 UNITY OF EFFORT  
 COHESION & INTEROPERABILITY  
 SUPPORT & PARTNERSHIP  
 MUTUAL TRUST & CONFIDENCE

NATO MEMBER STATES  
 BALTIC SEA REGION STATES  
 FRAMEWORK NATIONS

## 20 YEARS OF HISTORY IN THE REGION

## REGIONAL LAND COMPONENT COMMAND (RLCC)

### THREE STAGES OF TRANSFORMATION IN THE EVOLUTION OF HQ MNC NE:

- » Founded in 1999 by the three framework nations POLAND, GERMANY AND DENMARK and certified in 2005 as a Forces of Lower Readiness Headquarters, HQ MNC NE supported and enhanced the integration of the new member states into NATO.
- » Due to the increased threat to the north-eastern part of Europe and following the decision taken at the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014, HQ MNC NE reinforced NATO's presence in the Baltic Sea Region.
- » Certificated as a High Readiness Forces (Land) Headquarters RLCC in 2017, HQ MNC NE is tasked as REGIONAL LAND COMPONENT COMMAND in the Baltic Sea Region with a coherent mission and authority over subordinate formations.

- » Providing credible military deterrence across the Baltic region
- » Coordinating, synchronizing and conducting trainings and exercises in the area
- » Supporting affiliation of Home National Defence Forces
- » Providing Comprehensive Situational Awareness in the Land domain
- » Executing Command and Control over subordinate units (Multinational Division Northeast, Command Support Brigade, NATO Force Integration Units and enhanced Forward Presence Battle Groups)
- » Integrating Multinational Division North into the NATO Command and Control Structure
- » Acting as a Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM) headquarters for the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force Land and other designated Land Force Elements
- » Coordinating and synchronizing Information Activities across the Baltic region
- » Adapting to perform duties as NATO's Regional Land Component Command
- » Being ready and capable to react immediately on a very short notice
- » Continuing to ensure security and stability across the Baltic region



HEADQUARTERS  
 MULTINATIONAL  
 CORPS NORTHEAST  
BALTIC BARRACKS / SZCZECIN / POLAND



READY  
 CAPABLE  
 ADAPTIVE  
 RESOLUTE  
 RLCC