
STEADFAST COBALT 2014

🗨️ Capt Henry Kutscha (GER-A)

In 2015, HQ 1 (GE/NL) Corps will provide the LCC (Land Component Command) for NRF. The certifications for the individual components are carried out in 2014. The NATO certification of the CISBn is planned for exercise STEADFAST COBALT (Lithuania). Thus, 1 (GE/NL) Corps and also the CISBn are a so-called Primary Training Audience (PTA). PTA means that one provides the NRF forces for the following calendar year. In the same period, the CISBn had another major exercise, namely RELIABLE SWORD 14 (which served amongst other purposes the NATO certification of the (NL) 11 AirMob Bde land component which is also to be part of NRF 2015) for which all connections of a corps command post had to be ensured. For the CISBn, this meant splitting its forces according to the mission. →

The exercise STEADFAST COBALT 2014 (SFCT14) is a yearly executed Allied Command Operations (ACO) exercise in support of NATO CIS, which has, amongst others things, the purpose to certify the C4 ISR interoperability of the PTA. It is an NRF CIS interoperability, accreditation and standardisation exercise with a focus on equipment and validation of existing and tried Deployable Communications and Information Systems (DCIS) within the NATO Command Structure (NCS) and NATO Force Structure (NFS). The Officer Scheduling the Exercise (OSE) is SACEUR and the Officer Conducting the Exercise (OCE) is the NATO CIS Group (NCISG SHAPE). The purpose of the exercise is to try in advance – the year before becoming NRF - to assess and evaluate the degree of interoperability with NATO with regards to Deployable Communication und Information Systems in order to identify and eliminate possible gaps and to achieve interoperability for the NRF period. Apart from all this, system settings are prepared and tested to ensure an immediate operational readiness after taking over the NRF responsibility. Participating formations, which are not part of NRF the following year, are designated as Secondary Training Audience (STA).

The actual exercise took place between 12 – 22 May 2014 in KAUNAS (Lithuania) under the command of NCISG but based on the operational directives of COM NRF, in this case JFC Naples. In order to prepare the exercise properly, the preparations started already on 01 May 14 with the Build Up / Set Up – Phase on the spot in Kaunas. The objective was to test and optimise NATO DCIS and procedures with regard to NRF operations. Furthermore, it was intended that the NATO services with deployable communication assets are forwarded to the LCC corps command post of the NRF formation (active as well as PTA) and are operationally applicable.

The CISBn had the mission to deploy DCIS elements to Kaunas during the exercise SFCT 14, to establish and operate a Mission Secret (MS) Network and to be linked up to the NATO network by means of a new gateway (Interface Gateway Box - IGB) in order to be accredited for NRF 2015. Additionally, the participating administrators of the CISBn were to test, expand and deepen their knowledge and capabilities in the field of IGB.

Exercise Preparation

During the preparation and planning of the exercise the following conferences were held:

- Academics 15 -19 September in Mons (Belgium)

During this meeting, the basic knowledge for the preparation of the exercise was conveyed such as, for example, introduction of the SFCR series, Interoperability Assessment Process, Information Exchange Requirements, MC 593/1, Concepts & Standards, Security Accreditation, Functional Services Support &

Set-up or Network Connectivity / Network Architecture,

- Information Exchange Requirements (IER) 07-10 October 13 in Münster.

Arrangement of the information exchange relationship in the framework of NRF 2015 (IER). From this the required CIS services can be derived in order to support the necessary processes.

- Initial Planning Conference (IPC) 11-15 November 13 in Münster.

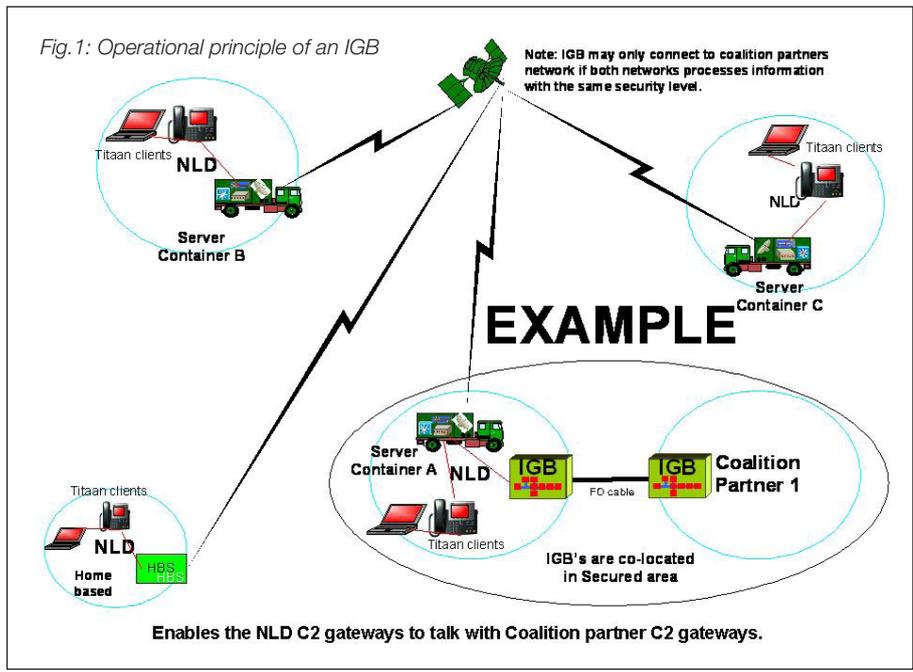
First discussion for determining basic data. In this framework, all areas – from Functional Services to Real-Life Support - were discussed.

- Main Planning Conference (MPC) 08-13 December 13 in Vilnius (Lithuania)

Main conference where everything that had previously been discussed and requested is finally agreed upon.



Fig.1: Operational principle of an IGB



- Technical Coordination Conference (TCC) 0 - 14 February 14 in Mons
It is the intention of the TCC to finalise the CIS architecture and the technical design for the exercise. It is a technical planning conference which is executed mainly at technical / administrator level. Other topics such as service requests, accreditations, crypto and functional services are dealt with here.
- Final Planning Conference (FPC) 23 - 28 March 14 in Cadiz (Spain)
It is the purpose of the FPC to perform a last check in all areas and to ensure that no open questions or disagreements remain.

In order to be prepared as best as possible for the exercise, elements of the CISBn participated in a preparatory exercise for SFCT14 – COBALT FLASH 14 (CF14) in Wesel. It is the home of the 1 NSB – a SignalBn of NATO. CF 14 was an exercise under command of 1 NSB with the purpose of configuring and testing the systems in advance of SFCT14.

It took place between 31 March and 11 April 14. The elements of the CISBn participated only in the first week. The IGB was connected to a NATO domain for the first time – there had been no experiences so far which could be used. The developers of the IGB were also on the spot to accompany the process. In summary, it can be said that the experiences gained and the conclusions were of great value for our administrators. It was recognised which settings had to be tweaked in order to start the certification exercise SFCT 14 with a clear conscience.

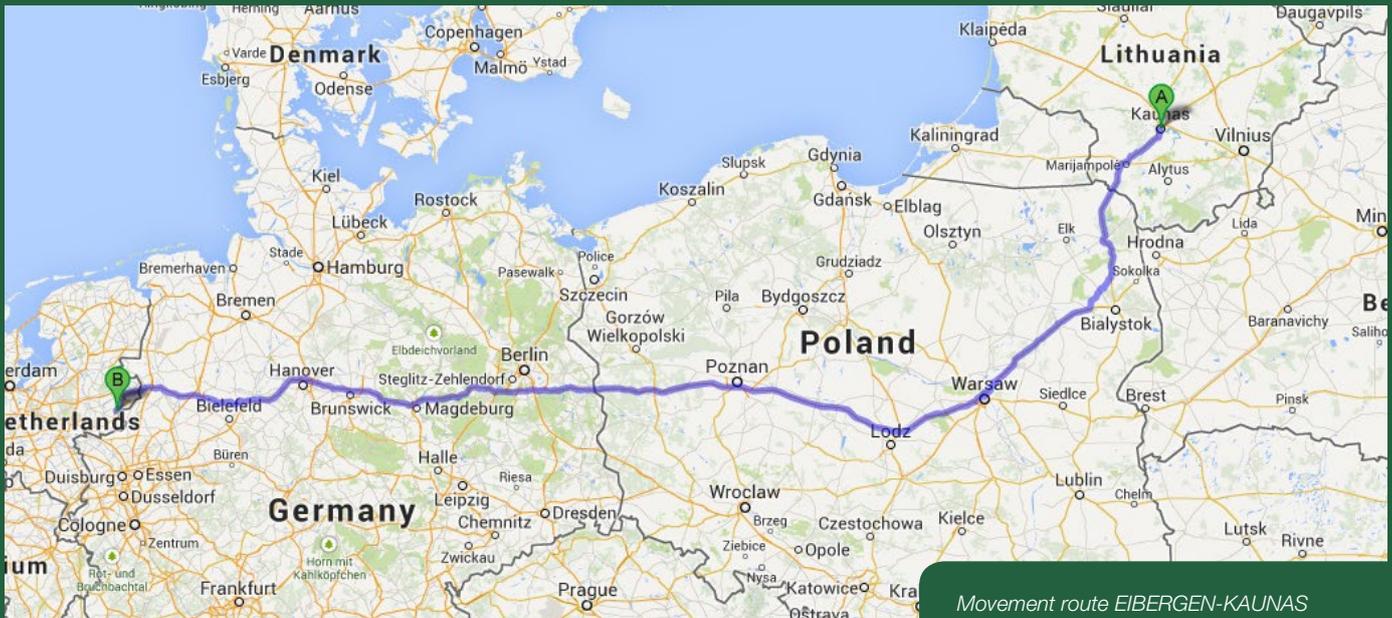
Scenario

The exercise SFCT 14 started with the movement to the exercise area. The distance between Eibergen and Kaunas is about 1500 km by land. Due to the large distance, several deployment options were chosen:

- on 28 April an advance party star- →

Some NATO services listed as examples:

- Functional Services (FS): Joint C2 (some examples: NCOP, JOCWATCH, TOPFAS), Land (LC2IS), Logistics (LOGFAS) not complete
- Core Services (IS), some examples: Task Management (Task Tracker), Portal Services (Sharepoint), Informal Messaging, (Exchange) not complete
- COMMS Services: Voice, VTC, HF
- Comprehensive Approach: Information exchange with civilian organisations, CIMIC (e.g. Portal solutions)



Movement route EIBERGEN-KAUNAS

ted with small vehicles over land from Eibergergen via Berlin - Warsaw - to Kaunas (about 1500 km). Arrival on 29 April 14, in the evening.

- On 30 April 14 the deployment of the teams from Eibergergen via Münster to Kiel started. In Kiel a car ferry was loaded and transferred to Klaipėda (Lithuania). From there about 200 km road march to Kaunas remained. Arrival of the elements was on 01 May 14 in the evening, also on 30 April 14 the deployment of the remaining personnel by plane from Dortmund to Vilnius (Lithuania) started – pickup and travel to Kaunas on the same day. So, on 01 May 14 the team was complete – the Build up - Phase could start.

Build Up / Set Up – Phase 01 – 09 May

The exercise location was a barracks of the Lithuanian army. The available space for the command posts to be set up was very limited, the participants came from all NATO states. Participants were amongst others JFC Naples, 1 (GE/NL) Corps (as NRF 2015 LCC), NCI Agency, FRA JFAC (NRF 2015 ACC, Rapid Reaction Corps France), Spain (ESP MARFOR as NRF 2015 MCC, NRDC ESP as future JTF HQ), Poland (POL SOF HQ as SOCC for NRF 2015), Germany (DEU CBRN as CBRN TF for NRF 2015), Denmark, Greece (NRDC GRC), Italy (NRDC ITA), United Kingdom (UK JFAC, HQ ARRC), DNK as future LOC and many others.

The main purpose of the build up and set up phase was to establish connections in the area of Layers 1 – 3. To this end, our 1GNC command post had to be set up and equipped fictitiously. Since such an exercise has no exercising users the command post consisted of just an administrator element which managed the systems – also known as MCCC.

Subsequently, 3 test rooms had to be prepared for the tests. There were test rooms for the areas Functional Services (FS),

Comms Services and Information Services (IS). In each test room all nations were represented with their participants in order to participate in the tests of the respective areas. The test rooms were accommodated in an adjacent building and had to be linked to our own command post. The distance was about 500 metres. To this end, the respective optical fibres as well as the respective Cat5 cables had to be installed inside the building. At the same time the servers of our own command post were configured and connected to the IGB. First internal tests were carried out.

Between 10 and 11 May, a pre-exercise was carried out. The purpose was to check if all prerequisites had been created in order to start with the tests on 12 May as planned. This was the case – after some minor errors had been detected and fixed.

Execution – Phase 12 – 23 May

During the execution phase the actual tests were carried out. These were divided into the 5 test areas IS, COMMS, FS, Comprehensive Approach and Cyber Defence. For each of these areas a so-called Test Director was appointed who was responsible for the direction of this area. All 5 areas were directed and controlled by the Interoperability Director (provided by NCI, NATO CIS Group – SHAPE).

For the actual tests a test catalogue was available. The tests were numerically listed and for each test there was an Initiator and a Target. Additionally, there was a test schedule which indicated at what time which test had to be carried out. For every test each unit had to provide a test coordinator, two data augmentees and several testers. It was the task of the test coordinator to be a link between the test director and the unit. The data augmentees had the task of entering the test results in an electronic collection

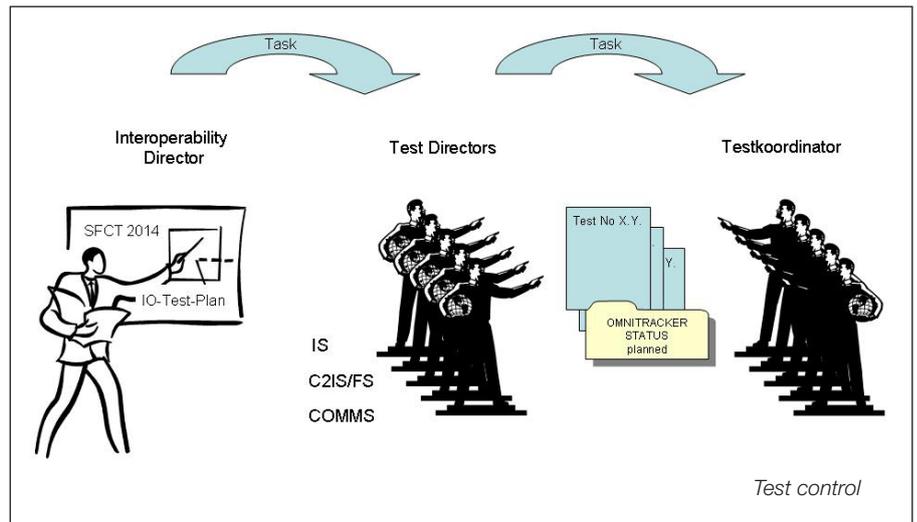
system (OMNITRACKER).

The testers were the working muscle – they were the persons at the equipment who carried out the practical tests.

The tests were coordinated on a daily basis between the interoperability director and the test director, and subsequently between the test director and the test coordinator in advance. In this framework, assistance could possibly be provided for the pending test, if required; also the results of the previous day were discussed. The test director was also the one who had to decide, if necessary, whether a test had to be repeated if a result was not acceptable.

The test coordinator would then discuss the tests with the testers – after receipt of the information which tests were to be carried out on the particular day. Testers and test coordinator maintained close contact with the unit (MCCC) in order to react as soon as possible and to provide assistance if errors occurred.

After the tests were carried out the test director evaluated the result and subsequently decided whether the test was passed or if it had to be repeated. Subsequently, the next test was processed. There was a daily Test Coordination Meeting. During this meeting the test directors presented a short report about the test results as well as a short look ahead to the next day. During the Execution Phase the yearly Distinguished Visitor Day (DVD) was executed. On this day



high-ranking representatives of all participating nations visited the framework programme of the exercise. During this programme it was demonstrated and presented how the interoperability amongst the participating nations was realised.

Redeployment 23 – 25 May

On 23 May the exercises ended and the redeployment could start. The command post was quickly disassembled. Since a part had to redeploy again by sea, the time pressure was enormous as the ferry was to leave Klaip da in the evening of 23 May. Thanks to the friendly support from the MP of the host nation this deadline could be kept.

The other parts also redeployed via the same route as they had come. Finally, on 25 May all exercise participants reached the garrison again and the majority could

take the following week off.

Conclusion

Finally, it has to be mentioned that there is no alternative for this type of exercise! It takes place at NATO level and offers a unique exercise environment to the numerous participating nations that is not available at a purely national level. Here, the different CIS systems of the individual nations that have to interconnect are together. It is a unique chance for a formation to conduct extensive operability tests and experiments with the respective CIS system in a multinational environment. Here, the future of multinational network-enabled operations is being developed and tested. Results and experiences from these tests are indispensable for the further development of a CIS system in respect of interoperability.

This exercise offers the possibility of using it as a huge interoperability playground if one is not involved as PTA – and to learn from it and to act accordingly.

Moreover, the CIS Community - often the same people participate in this exercise every year - offers the opportunity to start and maintain friendly relationships with other nations. ♻️

Author: Capt Henry Kutscha is the Chief Information System Management of the CISBn 1 (GE/NL) Corps in EIBERGEN (NL) since 01 April 2013.



Command post 1GNC SFCT14