



Soldiers of 91st Brigade Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, prepare to breach road block set up by opposition forces during exercise Combined Resolve II at Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, May 2014 (U.S. Army/Nicholaus Williams)

Making Soup with Stones

JMTC Partnership and the NATO Connected Forces Initiative

By John G. Norris and James K. Dunivan

First published in Europe in 1947 by Marcia Brown after World War II, many children have grown up reading a classic story titled “Stone Soup.” Most of us are probably familiar with this tale, based on French folklore, of three hungry and tired soldiers

approaching a village where the peasants hid their meager rations of food upon learning of their approach. In a wily and enterprising solution, the soldiers begin boiling a large pot of water in the town square as they profess to make soup from three small stones.

The people of the village, impressed by this notion, begin contributing bits and pieces of meat and vegetables to create a meal for everyone, thus highlighting the power and importance of cooperation and what small contributions by all can produce for the greater good.

The overarching theme of this story still resonates today, particularly among North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries. During the 50th

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anniversary of the Munich Security Conference on February 1, 2014, then–Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel outlined “renewed and enhanced” partnership and cooperation with NATO as a fundamental component of our National Security Strategy:

In reviewing U.S. defense priorities, tempered by our fiscal realities, it’s clear that our military must place an even greater strategic emphasis on working with our allies and partners around the world. . . . The United States will engage European allies to collaborate more closely, especially in helping build the capabilities of other global partners. We’re developing strategies to address global threats as we build more joint capacity, joint capacity with European militaries. In the face of budget constraints here on this continent, as well as in the United States, we must all invest more strategically to protect military capability and readiness. The question is not just how much we spend, but how we spend together. It’s not just about burdens we share, but opportunities, as well.¹

This idea not only sustains the marriage of cooperation the United States has developed for the past 12 years with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, but also provides an endorsing reminder for Smart Defense outlined by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the 2011 Munich Security Conference. During his keynote address, aptly titled “Building Security in an Age of Austerity,” the Secretary General invoked the Alliance to recognize Smart Defense—“how NATO can help nations to build greater security with fewer resources but more coordination and coherence”—as a means to prudently maintain and improve our collective security in a resource constrained environment.²

One year later the Secretary General identified the Connected Forces Initiative (CFI) as a critical component and example of Smart Defense:

Smart Defence is about acquiring the necessary capabilities. Connectivity is about

making these capabilities work together most effectively. The Connected Forces Initiative mobilises all of NATO’s resources to strengthen the Allies’ ability to work together in a truly connected way. This is particularly important as we wind down our combat operations in Afghanistan at the end of 2014. I see three areas to focus our efforts in the coming years: expanded education and training; increased exercises, especially with the NATO Response Force; and better use of technology.³

These three important focus areas of CFI are complementary to Secretary Hagel’s defense priorities of collaboration and building joint capacity with our European Allies.

These three focus areas are also manifested within the U.S. Army Chief of Staff Strategic Priorities. These tenets of developing “Adaptive Army Leaders for a Complex World,” sustaining “A Globally Responsive and Regionally Engaged Army,” and maintaining “A Ready and Modern Army” provide nested and necessary guide posts for future operations and engagements, particularly for a Combat Training Center (CTC).⁴ To that end, the leaders and Soldiers of the U.S. Joint Multinational Training Command (JMTC) headquartered at Grafenwoehr, Germany, to include the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) at Hohenfels, have worked tirelessly to “make soup” with these “three stones” that comprise the CFI and advance the intent of our Army and national defense leadership.

Education and Training

The JMTC, especially throughout the past decade, has been instrumental in preparing U.S. and multinational units for service abroad in operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. The state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, maneuver area, and most importantly its proximity to allied and partner nations in Europe have made the JMTC an affordable, accessible, and economical location of choice to train, validate, and certify coalition units to enable their operational success.

Proximity does not directly equal access, however, so the JMTC uses the “3P” approach to developing partnership—persistence, patience, and presence. Once trust, confidence, sincerity, and respect are achieved at all levels of engagement, the access we acquire enables effective training and presents more training opportunities. This access promotes mutual understanding and greater interoperability among soldiers and leaders. Brigadier General Walter Piatt, the JMTC commander, likes to remind us that “Nations do not have relationships, people do. We gain credibility through shared hardship.”⁵

Global challenges have offered ample occasions to share hardship, but as the United States and NATO prepared to conclude the ISAF mission at the end of 2014, the Alliance is expected to shift its emphasis from operational engagement to operational preparedness. This presents an unprecedented opportunity for education and training with our European partners at JMTC. We can continue to capitalize on the relationships and sustain the partnerships established during a time of war, but with latitude to shift from an operational environment-specific “readiness exercise” to a decisive action “leadership laboratory” with first-class, realistic training against a near-peer competitor tailored to specific objectives and desired outcomes.

While a majority of partnered education and training occurs at JMTC, a tremendous amount of this effort occurs on the home soil of our allied and partner nations. Enabled by geographical proximity, a majority of our senior experienced trainers travel to various countries to conduct leader training programs, specialty training, training center development, and military-to-military cooperation events. This expeditionary capability and ability to export our training expertise has greatly strengthened our partnership with other nations, both reinforcing the U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) and U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) key task of Theater Security Cooperation and, perhaps demonstrated more tangibly, enabled U.S. and multinational



Reservist with 6250th U.S. Army Hospital watches for injured Soldiers during mission at U.S. Army's 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command's Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, July 2014 (U.S. Army/Christina M. Dion)

units to “enter the box” at a higher level of training readiness when operating together in the field.

An increased level of training readiness obviously contributes to a more successful outcome. More important, completion of a capstone training event that complements home-station training and offers an opportunity to work with other Alliance or partner nations allows units to demonstrate their national capabilities while increasing interoperability, readiness, and collective security. A premier manner to accomplish all of these objectives is through participation in a multinational and multi-echelon named exercise.

Exercises

Exercises in Europe and the JMTC are nothing new—they have been successfully executed for many years

under such auspices as the Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise program. What is unique—and enabled by geographical proximity and personal partnership in Europe—is JMTC's eagerness and initiative to use an exercise construct to increase multinational interoperability and mission command, which are vital components of NATO's vision of Smart Defense and CFI in achieving enhanced collective security.

In November 2013, the JMTC conducted Exercise Combined Resolve, which was designed as a proof of principle for the European Rotation Force and focused on improving NATO interoperability (nine different nations) by integrating warfighting functions, personnel, and doctrine, while integrating the USEUCOM Army Contingency Response Force company to demonstrate our ability to rapidly mobilize and

integrate our forces across a theater of operations to support our allies with a responsive combat force.

Following Army Chief of Staff guidance to Combat Training Centers as a design framework, Combined Resolve also established a standard for future exercises at JMRC. Leader development was paramount as we transitioned from assessing readiness to a focus on leaders at all levels training their subordinate commands. Special operations forces (SOF)—conventional force interdependence was not only maintained, but the inclusion of multinational SOF from France also demonstrated the interoperability required for coalition warfare. JMTC inculcated an expeditionary mindset as the forces from all countries operated out of tactical assembly areas in the austere German winter environment, while leveraging force structure challenges of working with nonorganic enablers such as National Guard engineers, U.S. Close Combat Aviation, and fires provided by Czech Republic Artillery while receiving support from a limited logistics footprint. Finally, the entire exercise scenario exemplified a dynamic operational environment as forces trained in force-on-force missions ranging from combined arms maneuver to wide area security.⁶

Adding to the complexity of the operational environment, the active participation of our multinational partners during Combined Resolve demonstrated a positive example of the benefits of CFI and fulfilled the NATO Secretary General's goal of bringing together “modern, tightly connected forces, equipped, trained, exercised, and commanded so that they can operate together, and with partners, in any environment.”⁷

Given the unparalleled success of this exercise, JMTC began the process of planning Combined Resolve II for May 2014. This exercise, focusing on Army Chief of Staff guidance to support development of responsive forces, will continue as a multinational training event that expands upon the interoperability lessons learned during Combined Resolve I. This iteration will include live-fire gunnery and more force-on-force

Soldiers provide cover for bounding troops during exercise Combined Resolve III, October 2014, in Grafenwoehr, Germany (U.S. Army/Marcus Floyd)



training days to truly test the rigors of multinational brigade operations and sustainment in a decisive action environment. Fifteen countries and over 3,000 personnel—including the European Response Force from Fort Hood, Texas, as well as numerous joint, multinational, and National Guard partner states—are scheduled to participate in this exercise, making it one of the largest multinational exercise events ever to be hosted at JMTC.

Technology

Given the strong interest and recognized value in conducting multinational exercises, JMTC is working to use technology to expand these training events

beyond JMTC to allow multi-echelon training across a connected domain throughout Europe. There are many aspects of technology that drive interoperability and Smart Defense, many of which are beyond the JMTC sphere of influence. Relative to our focus within CFI, however, is leveraging technology to build on our dedication to realistic training and increased exercises that stress enhanced interoperability and NATO compliance. Accordingly, JMTC is developing an initiative to harness network and simulation technology to enable “Connected Training.”

Currently, JMTC supports individual training to collective training, soldiers to brigades, in exercises that blend live,

virtual, and constructive events. At the division level and three-star headquarters, JMTC events focus on using both virtual and constructive realms. Technology enables JMTC to conduct exercises that integrate allied forces based in various global locations and has been demonstrated in numerous named regional exercises such as Saber Strike, Saber Guardian, and Saber Junction. Under the auspice of Connected Training, JMTC is now pursuing the capability to conduct simultaneous live exercises that are distributed among partner CTCs throughout Europe.

A majority of USEUCOM and USAREUR partner nations have established fully operational and capable

Combat Training Centers with live, virtual, and constructive capabilities. These national CTCs have a unique range of capabilities to host sizable simulated command post exercises with maneuver space to support company- to battalion-level training, as they are modeled and equipped similar to JMTC. They are also an excellent way to minimize training costs as they allow many countries to train at home station or in a neighboring country. This dramatically cuts the costs associated with travel and shipment of large pieces of military equipment as it is cheaper to “push electrons” within a Connected Training network.

Reduced costs for training will undoubtedly lead to continued expansion of the network and larger exercises in support of CFI. Building on years of security cooperation and numerous military-to-military partnership-training events, USAREUR and USEUCOM now have the ability and the capacity to integrate or “connect” a larger number of our allied forces into their training exercises. Furthermore, the opportunity to connect regionally in a distributed environment is no longer limited to the tactical level. We have the capability to connect the tactical to operational level command with a corps headquarters, establishing a joint operations center at the Joint Multinational Simulations Center in Grafenwoehr to control and “fight” the distributed exercise. At the JMRC in Hohenfels, a multinational brigade headquarters conducts a live exercise with subordinate battalions, companies, or adjacent brigade headquarters located at JMTC partner CTCs throughout Europe.

During the post-ISAF environment paradigm shift of emphasis from operational engagement to operational preparedness, the timing and opportunity are right to fully implement and explore the capability of Connected Training. This could serve as an ideal training model for NATO and Allied Land Command as it looks to train its nine NATO Rapid Deployment Corps and the contributing nations of the NATO Response Force, allowing the Alliance to further enhance responsible readiness and collective security. Vigorous exploration and application of Connected

Training will build on the success of previous training and exercises while sustaining multinational partnerships and interoperability with our Allies, which will ultimately fulfill the intent defined by Smart Defense and the CFI.

Stirring the Pot

None of this will be easy. In his successful book *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, John Nagl begins by addressing T.E. Lawrence’s aphorism that “Making war upon insurgents is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife. . . . It is difficult to fully appreciate until you have done it,” he writes in the foreword, “Intellectually grasping the concept . . . is a different thing from implementing the measures required to do it.”⁸ The same can be said for JMTC partnership and the CFI.

Over the past year, however, the JMTC has fully committed its time, energy, and resources to achieving success “soup” with the three “stone” focus areas of education and training, exercises, and technology. There is more to be accomplished as we expand partnership and pursue technology to fully enable Connected Training, but we are on glide path to achieve irreversible momentum toward realizing the full potential of the CFI and its implications for Smart Defense. The associated gains in collective security for the Alliance with interoperability and increased readiness to face future contingencies and challenges to that security make it all worthwhile.

With NATO CFI as a desired end-state—or waypoint—our ability to move forward will continue to depend on a willingness to apply “blood and treasure” to JMTC. With only two U.S. Brigade Combat Teams in Europe, there may be a natural disposition to assume a robust training center is not required on this continent. However, as long as policy developers and decisionmakers view JMTC as a strategic capability within Europe, with a scope that extends beyond the training and readiness of our own U.S. forces, then a convincing argument can be made that JMTC is a notable “stone soup” that Alliance partners can season. In a resource-constrained environment

in particular, the Connected Training opportunities that are afforded by JMTC, with prime proximity and years of productive partnership, are a viable and prudent direction to pursue.

As then-Secretary Hagel noted in Munich, “The challenges and choices before us will demand leadership that reaches into the future without stumbling over the present.”⁹ While no one can accurately predict the region, type, or scope of the next conflict, most can agree that agile and adaptive readiness is essential for collective security. If we clearly identify with the vision set out by the former Secretary of Defense in maintaining NATO as “the centerpiece of our transatlantic defense partnership,” then the present JMTC initiatives contributing to CFI will continue to extend our security reach for generations to come. JFQ

Notes

¹ Chuck Hagel, Remarks at the 2014 Munich Security Conference, Munich, Germany, February 1, 2014.

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Keynote Address at the 2011 Munich Security Conference, Munich, Germany, February 4, 2011.

³ NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Remarks at the Allied Command Transformation Seminar, Munich, Washington DC, February 28, 2012.

⁴ General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army, “Waypoint #2,” February 21, 2014.

⁵ Brigadier General Walter Piatt, USA, commander, U.S. Joint Multinational Training Command, Combined Resolve Final Brigade Combat Team After Action Report Notes, November 25, 2013.

⁶ Raymond T. Odierno, “Transformation of the Combat Training Centers,” September 4, 2013.

⁷ NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Remarks at the NATO Defence Ministers Meeting, Brussels, Belgium, October 22, 2013.

⁸ John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xi–xvi.

⁹ Hagel.