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V CORPS EXPERTS PUT DEPLOYMENT KNOWLEDGE EARNED IN IRAQ TO USE TRAINING NATO CORPS

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SZCZECIN, Poland – V Corps Soldiers learned a lot of hard lessons deploying to Operation Iraqi Freedom, and those lessons are now helping some of the corps' North Atlantic Treaty Organization partners learn how to deploy as well.

NATO's Multinational Corps Northeast, made up of German, Danish and Polish forces, is developing its mission of providing NATO with a corps-sized element ready to deploy to defend the Baltic approaches to Europe. To provide the MNC NE with expert advice on how to perform the deployment part of that mission, leaders from the transportation, operations and logistics divisions of the V Corps headquarters were invited to come here to take part in the first phase of the MNC NE's exercise Baltic Express from June 1-4.



STAFF SGT MANUEL TORRES-CORTES
John W. Long Sr, V Corps senior logistical plans and operations officer, draws a diagram of the corps' command structures for German Lt. Col. Dirk Schubert of NATO's Multinational Corps Northeast during the study period for exercise Baltic Express in Szczecin, Poland. The June 1-4 study period, the first of two phases of the exercise, used lessons learned from V Corps' deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom to train leaders from the MNC NE in deployment skills.

“Our task and purpose was to provide the MNC NE an overview of the lessons learned by the Special Troops Battalion in support of headquarters, V Corps during the pre-deployment and deployment phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom,” said senior logistical plans and operations officer John W. Long Sr.

The intent was to provide the MNC NE with the benefit of V Corps’ experience and knowledge of deployment operations by studying what went well in its deployment to OIF and what adversities had to be overcome, said the V Corps team members.

Baltic Express 2004 has two phases. The first phase this month was a study period to help the MNC NE prepare and develop standard operating procedures and guidelines for deploying the MNC NE’s units from home station to a theater of operations. The second phase, a hands-on NATO exercise which will be conducted in the fall, will test and certify the MNC NE’s ability to successfully deploy.

MNC NE officials are anxious to put their ability to deploy to the test, but realize that to be fully successful will take time.

“The steps ahead go very slowly. You want to make a big step after the first exercise, but this cannot be,” said Lt. Col. Klaus Fraedrich, German Supply School officer. “You must spend a lot of effort, and you will make only a small step forward at first.”

During the study period, V Corps transportation analysis John Knowlton provided information and tools to help MNC NE officials better understand the complexity of deploying thousands of vehicles, Soldiers and equipment.

Knowlton cited the significant challenges the V Corps logistics team faced throughout its OIF deployment, such as weather, terrain, long distances, and combat equipment that arrived before logistics support equipment, and provided examples of the corps' success in helping manage those challenges.

"V Corps was the first unit to use new technology such as the Movement Tracking System and Radio Frequency Identification Technology to track and maintain accountability of equipment and moving pieces," said Knowlton. "It worked extremely well."

Long and Knowlton emphasized that host nation support from Germany was vital to V Corps' deployment success. Allowing deploying V Corps units to use German railways, roads and barge sites to transport vehicles and equipment was critical, they said. In addition, Germany supported deployment by providing troops and police officers to assist in force protection at U.S. bases and as escorts for convoys.

While Knowlton acknowledged that V Corps experienced a myriad of trials and tribulations throughout its deployment, he noted that those complications provided lessons learned that will help ensure V Corps' success in future operations.

While designed to help the MNC NE succeed, the V Corps team members said they took something positive away from the study period as well.

"I walked away with a better understanding of the multinational environment, (its) diversity, and the logistical planning and requirements," said Long.

“Not only did we provide information, but we are helping our allies that support us in the war on terrorism,” said Maj. Rob Worsham, V Corps international relations and political military officer. “This strengthens our allied bonds with the Germans, Polish and Danes, so that we can work together to help strengthen the corps to prepare for future missions.”

As the study period wrapped up, MNC NE leaders expressed their appreciation to their V Corps counterparts for the willingness to attend and share their knowledge.

“We are very proud to have received this briefing, because we know that it doesn’t come from just anybody ... it comes from a nation that has actually deployed to Iraq and even has fought there,” said Fraedrich. “There is something special (in) the fact that a nation with a lot of military experience has given us the honor to receive this information.”

Lt. Gen. Egon Ramms, commander of MNC NE, thanked the V Corps team for their visit, saying he felt their expertise has moved MNC NE closer to their goal of becoming a deployable asset for NATO.

Holding up the V Corps team’s briefing slides, he said, “This is what must be done.”

