

Effectively Engaging Multinational Networks: The JMRC Raptor 14 and Badger AtN Approach

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“We are all in the same boat, in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty.” — G.K. Chesterton

In December 2001, the United Nations Security Council established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for combat operations in Afghanistan. During the last 12 and a half years, we have worked extensively with NATO members, NATO member partner states, and other countries during combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have developed relationships and partnerships that will extend beyond 2014 and have fostered a goal of cultural understanding and military interoperability. The intent of this article is to highlight how the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) Badger Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) Team (now called Raptor 14 Multinational C-IED Team) facilitates multinational army staff training and interoperability through mutual respect, cooperation, and application of Attack the Network (AtN) fundamentals.

The Badger 11 AtN Team partners with multinational nations in order to enhance overall readiness and combat effectiveness through tailored and expanded staff training. The AtN course focuses on the lethal and non-lethal actions and operations against networks conducted continuously and simultaneously at multiple levels, with an emphasis on the neutralization of IED networks. The operational approach for AtN includes three lines of effort (LOEs): supporting friendly networks (priority effort), influencing neutral networks, and neutralizing threat networks. The best practices and lessons learned outlined in this article are a result of almost three years of AtN, counterinsurgency (COIN), and company-level intelligence (company intelligence support teams — CoISTs) training in 14 European nations. This article does not discuss the actual AtN program of instruction and curriculum; it outlines the core pillars of AtN and how we apply these concepts to all aspects of training development and execution. The team formally and informally applies these pillars to our mission and interaction with our partners. Our end state is in line with the overall commander’s intent to evolve world-class specialty training and prepare for the future.

Understand the Mission: Past, Present, and Future

As we transition out of Afghanistan and shift paradigms, it is important to maintain focus on unified action through connected forces training. Decisive action (offense, defense, and stability) by means of combined arms maneuver and wide area security are not new concepts and must be re-trained for efficiency and favorable conflict resolution. The majority of the European countries we train have extensive experience in warfare by strategic doctrine (specifically conventional, irregular, joint, and terrorism). In order to better understand and train this pillar, we must have an understanding of host-nation history. Before we train locally or deploy to a country, we conduct an assessment of current or previous conflicts in order to tailor lecture and practical exercise discussion points. For example, for training in Croatia, we studied the Croatian War of Independence or “Homeland War” fought from 1991-1995. We encouraged the students to discuss drivers of instability, overlapping problems of conflict, and the operational environment’s conditions required to start a conflict from their country’s history. Many of the students are old enough to remember the tactics, techniques, and procedures that were used during the war at various levels. The Homeland War incorporated a variety of warfare to include asymmetric and conventional. This correlation helps students relate doctrinal concepts and provides us with a mutual understanding of their experiences and perspective. We must continue to learn from our

partners' experiences of conducting operations in urban environments. These concepts prepare us for future conflicts in urban and highly networked combined environments. Lastly, they set the planning conditions for identifying interoperability focus areas for future training rotations at JMRC.



Romanian soldiers conduct analysis and all source intelligence fusion to support lethal and nonlethal targeting assessments at a training center in Ramnicu Valcea, Romania. (Photo courtesy of author)

Understand the Operational Environment: Host-Nation Culture

During training with our multinational partners, we focus on culture as a key social operational variable. This is a key component in understanding and defining the operational environment. It is imperative that we continue to develop a concise understanding of culture as a means to connect. Fortunately for us, we live in Germany and are exposed to European culture daily. We apply an understanding of customs, dress, religious beliefs, and traditions as our primary cultural elements at home station and abroad. The idea of understanding culture has always been a core tenet in partnership and must be deliberately applied and executed during all training events. During our initial mission coordination, we receive guidance from our host-nation counterpart with regard to training day scheduling, holidays, meal times, and local events. This specific coordination allows us to modify or adjust the training schedule as needed prior to arrival. We are able to accommodate and are typically included in national holiday events and celebrations. Finally, the majority of the team enjoys trying traditional meals and never turns down a bowl of Ciorba (Romania) or Saltibarščiai (Lithuania).

Next, sports are a very large element of culture and differ slightly throughout Europe. We typically follow the current sporting events in the country and incorporate some of those references into our lectures. For example, Lithuanians follow basketball more than football (soccer) and have a proficient understanding and ability playing the sport. We use basketball-related analogies during the course lectures and practical exercises in Lithuania. An example from the network class is as follows: What environment is conducive to playing basketball? What conditions allow the team to play? Is a basketball team a network? How are they composed? What are their roles and duty descriptions? What must the point guard do in order for the team to win the game? Hockey is extremely popular in the Czech

Republic while football reigns supreme in Germany and many other countries. With that being said, football examples are used where applicable during the measures of performance (MOP) and effectiveness (MOE) course to reinforce understanding of task accomplishment and progress measurement.

Additionally, we continue to make concerted efforts to remain unbiased and not to inundate our partners with U.S. military culture. Many of our students have interacted with Americans on a variety of occasions and are familiar with customs and courtesies. This notion is especially important during classroom instruction. We refrain from the use of U.S. military slang and idioms. They do not translate well and cause more confusion than clarification. Terms like “get in the weeds,” “meat and potatoes,” and “nuts and bolts” are avoided for clarity of instruction and understanding. Lastly, it is important be cognizant of the speed, pattern, and accent of our speech. If an interpreter is required, we coordinate prior to mission execution to ensure time for course material translation, review, and rehearsal. The latter point seems obvious, but it is important to meet and develop a rapport with the interpreter prior to executing training. They can easily identify areas or topics that may cause friction and misunderstanding.

Lastly, a basic attempt at learning and applying the host-nation language goes a long way in forging bonds and connecting. In some cases, it is not the fact that you can say the words or phrases correctly, but the fact that you understand the importance of trying and being heard.

Understand the Network: Host-Nation Military Organizations, Leaders, and Soldiers

In order to provide country or theater-specific AtN training, we must have an understanding of host-nation military network components and characteristics (composition and structure). Many European militaries are re-structuring because they have identified the future state from recent combat and peacekeeping operations. Before, during, and after our missions, we are constantly assessing military network concepts in order to identify gaps and requirements for future training events. We have found that some European countries have more robust intelligence, engineer, explosive ordnance detachment (EOD), or special operations networks in their overall formation. Bulgaria, for example, sent a specialized police force to an AtN course and we were able to leverage their experience during network template analysis, narcotics trafficking, and lethal targeting. Based on real-world threats and network composition, we have chosen to improve our scenario’s criminal networks and infrastructure subsystems for future training events. The concepts of emerging hybridity are important as we conduct human and specific sub-system analysis in future irregular conflicts. We must first understand ourselves before understanding asymmetric threats combining traditional, irregular, and criminal tactics. The broad concepts of social-network analysis can also be applied and refined during all aspects of friendly training and operations.

Next, friendly and partner network analysis and engagement can be extended to the “nodes” or actual people. Initially, we meet with the host-nation commander and senior NCO prior to the course and receive guidance and mentorship. Oftentimes, the command team includes a senior officer and NCO who have completed a variety of NATO and U.S. Army professional military education. They are well versed in counterinsurgency operations and are very active during the course. They highlight the strengths and weaknesses of their formations and overall training objectives. The interactions with the host-nation command team are instrumental in mission success and strengthening future relationships.

Finally, it is important to leverage the officers and NCOs who have completed U.S. or NATO training (general purpose forces [GPF] and special operations forces [SOF]). They typically want to showcase their experience and can be great motivators for the rest of the class. They may also interpret the intricate concepts involved in intelligence analysis and targeting. The same can be said for Soldiers who

have deployed on various missions before (combat or peacekeeping operations). It is important to engage them and solicit their responses and insight during lectures and practical exercises. We encourage debate during the course based on a variety of perspectives and experiences. We also encourage the students to express themselves in their native language if they are having difficulty in English. On-the-spot interpretation can be done with little to no issue. It is imperative that we share perceptions and interpretations in order to develop viable courses of action during future working groups. We are not always right, and there is not always a clear-cut answer.

Organize for the Fight: Training Audience Selection

The application of this pillar to our partners involves the identification, organization, and direction of resources needed to complete the mission. Initially, all parties involved need to understand classification measures and maintain approved and releasable programs of instruction (POIs). Concise coordination with the appropriate foreign disclosure officer (FDO) is crucial to training success. Next, in order to conduct a successful training event, the proper audience must be in attendance. In order to conduct a successful AtN course where the students receive a course completion certificate, the proper audience has to be identified and resourced during initial mission planning. As course instructors, we coordinate directly with the host-nation liaison or sponsor to outline student language ability, demographics, rank, duty position, and any prior related training. Students who have attended the NATO C-IED Staff Officer Awareness Course (SOAC) typically bring a concise understanding of C-IED pillars and understanding of lethal and non-lethal network engagement.

It is important to note that students may come from various units throughout the country to train collectively during the course. There may be personnel from the same unit or even the same staff, but we rarely get an organic staff that has cohesion based on their working relationship. Below are some of the core competencies and prerequisites for host-nation staff personnel attending Badger 11 Team courses:

- Expert/near native English-speaking ability and knowledge of U.S./NATO doctrinal military terms and concepts.
- Brigade and/or battalion staff-level experience; current company level not excluded.
- Formal training in the military decision-making process (MDMP) and the targeting cycle.
- Prior combat deployment experience is encouraged but not mandatory.
- Academy cadets are welcomed based on their existing professional ability and future training and assignment projection.

AtN is a staff training course where the staff collectively supports targeting, so we recommend a broad sample of students from all battalion and/or brigade staff sections. The focus is predominantly on the S2 and S3 sections but includes the other sections for coordination and working group execution. The staff collaboration creates varied perspectives, shared understanding, and unity of effort. All staff sections must work together in order to meet the commander's intent and successfully complete the mission. Lastly, organizing for the fight means assessing and incorporating both U.S. military and NATO C-IED doctrine into the training. It is imperative that we remain current and adaptive with the emerging doctrinal changes and updates.

Engage the Network: Execute Training

The Badger Team supports friendly networks through training that focuses on sustaining the partnerships and the interoperability we have achieved during the last 12 years of war. We seek to leave an impression on our partners and the tools required to continue training when we are gone. One of the best initiatives that we developed with our multinational partners was an AtN train-the-trainer (T3)

program in Lithuania. It takes time to officially certify the entire POI, but selected classes can be approved for follow-on organic training.

The training may overlap with training that the unit is already conducting and serve as a review of fundamentals and key concepts. This is an enduring mission component and part of our sustained partnered capacity building.

Assess: Students, Instructors and POI

During and post-course after action reviews (AARs) are instrumental in identifying training gaps or lack of relevancy in certain subject areas. During a Romanian mission rehearsal exercise (MRE), we assessed the need to update various intelligence tools based on the staff execution of their targeting cycle during their rotation after the AtN course. Their methods were in line with doctrine and recent Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) deployment standard operating procedures (SOPs) in Regional Command-South. We updated these products in November 2013 in order to support Romanian training events in the spring of 2014. The feedback that we receive from our partners is paramount for the AAR and improvement process. We receive a variety of course feedback both formally and informally. We conclude the course with a student-led briefing and 20-question exam that gives us immediate feedback. The students also complete a course evaluation sheet and list sustains and improves for the overall course material. At the end of the day, all of this feedback is incorporated into the next training event for continued improvement and host-nation training support. Finally, assessment means conducting analysis of current events and changes in the contemporary operational environment for implementation into future training.

In conclusion, the AtN principles and NATO C-IED doctrine can be applied to a myriad of operations as the foundation of critical analysis for systems and human engagement. The abilities, proficiency, and overwhelming hospitality of our partners continue to impress and motivate us. We try to live what we teach by applying these fundamentals to our core mission of training multinational staff sections. Our goal is to continue building enduring partnerships which allows access, opportunity, and cohesion for the future.

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