



01

FLINTLOCK 2016

JOINT MULTINATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVID J. GREEN



In a loud robust voice, Capt. Malick Sadji (Senegal Infantry Officer) ordered “ATTENTION IN THE JOC!” At once, everyone in the Joint Operations Center stopped what they were working on and listened closely to the announcement that troops downrange had been injured by enemy forces and a medical evacuation was urgently requested. The entire center sprang into action to provide assistance.

Even though this was a Flintlock 2016 training exercise, everyone in the JOC worked feverishly to ensure a quick reaction force and all logistical requirements were expeditiously underway. Flintlock is the premiere annual theater engagement training exercise for the U.S. Africa Command. During this mission, the Special Operations Detachment - Africa (Airborne) and the Naval Reserve Special Operations Command - Africa unit provided the Command and Control of the Joint Multinational Headquarters in Senegal for more than 2,000 special operations forces from 30 African and Western partner countries. The SOD-Africa (ABN) is a unit in the Texas Army

National Guard and the NRSOCAFRICA is SO-CAFRICA's Navy Reserve support unit under the U.S. Special Operations Command in Tampa, Florida. Both are responsible for conducting expeditionary command and control of joint and combined special operations in support of Special Operations Command - Africa. The typical Soldier or Sailor of these small units has more than 15 years of military experience and 90 percent have combat experience. Common skillsets include Special Forces, SEALs, Ranger, Airborne, SERE C and HALO and joint theater-level planning expertise. Over half of the members in the units are fluent in multiple languages. In addition, these Soldiers and Sailors continue to balance one of the most demanding mission sets in the Reserve Components alongside equally demanding and successful civilian careers. Many are law enforcement professionals, doctors, lawyers or serve in the Intelligence community. One is a professional Mixed Martial Arts fighter (Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Kennedy). All Theater Special Operations Commands have U.S. Army National Guard “SODs” and U.S. Navy Reserve units assigned to their AORs.

The NRSOCAFRICA mission commander, Commander John Jones (a Navy SEAL), explained that Flintlock 2016 provided joint and coalition interoperability and cooperation among regional and international security forces to combat terrorism across national borders such as Boko Haram,



al-Qaeda and other violent extremist groups operating in North West Africa.

The SOD-A(ABN) mission commander, Lt. Col. Tim Ochsner (Army Special Forces) explained that these missions are integral for sharing best practices for joint and coalition operations mission planning and execution from a headquarters perspective. All staff sections are jointly manned working together to issue an operation order and subsequent fragmentary orders to 13 subordinate units out stationed throughout Senegal and Mauritania. During the training exercise, instructions critical to the planning process were provided covering a range of military subjects such as civil-military operations (taught by the United Kingdom), riverine operations (taught by the Nigerian Navy) and air-load delivery (taught by Italian Airborne Infantry) and counter-insurgency and the Military Decision Making Process (taught by the U.S. Army).

Flintlock improves interoperability and cooperation among regional and international security forces. SOD-Africa and the NRSOCAFRICA were an integral part of this process. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lt. Col. David J. Green is a Special Forces officer in the Texas Army National Guard.



02

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The Joint Operations Center conducts a shift-change brief. The JOC is manned 24 hours a day by representatives from most of the 30 countries taking part in Flintlock 2016. All presentation materials, charts and briefings are provided in the two main languages of the exercise — French and English.

02, 03
The JOC is a constant hub of activity with breakout groups in different areas of the center going over maps, mission plans and tracking troop movement.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO



03