



SOF ROLES IN CT CRISIS RESPONSE SEMINAR

**NATO Centre of Excellence
Defence Against Terrorism**

3-5 May 2023



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Executive Summary

The idea for the SOF Roles in Crisis/CT Management seminar began in 2022 as a collaborative effort between NATO SOF Headquarters (NSHQ) in Brussels, Belgium, and the NATO Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism (NATO COE DAT) in Ankara, Türkiye. These stakeholders, together with the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Study Institute, developed this workshop with three broad goals in mind:

1. To engage NATO SOF partner nations and emerging partner nations
2. To provide an opportunity for NATO SOF allies, partner nations, and emerging partner nations to network and build relationships
3. To share best practices in crisis responses to terrorist incidents and explore how SOF can help inform these responses, including the roles that SOF may—or may not—play in the actual response or before the crisis.

The first iteration of the three-day workshop was held in Ankara at NATO COE-DAT's headquarters from 6-8 July 2022. Twenty-five individuals from eleven countries—Algeria, Australia, Egypt, France, Hungary, India, Slovakia, Tunisia, Türkiye, United Kingdom, and the United States—attended the workshop, representing a range of military ranks and civilians focused on counter-terrorism (CT) at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

The second iteration of the three-day workshop was held in Ankara at NATO COE-DAT's headquarters from 3-5 May 2023. Thirty-one participants from 14 different countries attended the workshop—Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Egypt, France, Georgia, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Niger, Sweden, Türkiye, United Kingdom, and the United States—representing a mixture of SOF units, ranks and positions.

The workshop began with a case study of the 2013 attack on the In Amenas gas production facility in Algeria, masterminded by Moktar Belmoktar and his al Qaeda affiliated group, followed by breakout sessions to discuss lessons learned from the CT crisis response. Day two included a presentation on the 2016 terrorist attack in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, also carried out by Moktar Belmoktar's al Qaeda affiliated group, followed by a scenario counterfactual exercise of the In Amenas attack.¹ Day three provided a presentation on Turkey's 2016 counter-Daesh Operation "Euphrates Shield" in Syria, and ended with concluding remarks.

Some of the key takeaways from the workshop include:

- The importance of having predictive intelligence analysis and capabilities, specifically the need for objective analytics and predictive intelligence – linked to this the need for planned Actions-On should critical conditions be met. Within this, "red teaming", the need to challenge assumptions is critical.

¹ A counterfactual scenario exercise allows participants to identify the shortcomings of the response, and then explore how these shortcomings could have been avoided.

- The need to build relationships with the local population so that they can provide “on the ground” intelligence.
- The need to consider and train for extreme crisis scenarios, including complex disasters, like the potential destruction of an oil facility, or training for a CBRN attack.
- The critical importance of integrating command and control (C2) between local security forces, security forces and the government, and possibly with international forces and other supporting assets. Within this integration, the creation of a “short loop” that allows for rapid decision-making and delegation of authority between the different levels is critical. Conversely, significant challenges stem from parallel forces that have no C2 or integration. This is particularly true with the potential for blue-on-blue attacks.
- The importance of broadening and deepening cooperation with relevant government agencies inside a country, including reinforcing networks and institutional relationships.
- The importance of defining the objective of the operation and being able to measure success against that goal. Is the goal saving lives, or ending the crisis, or neutralizing the terrorists? What should the priority be and why? Within the importance of defining the objective, a mission statement could help focus the CT effort.
- The challenges that come from urban operations and the need to plan and train for these operations.
- The sensitivity that comes from allowing foreign troops into a country to help counter a terrorist attack, which could make a country’s government and/or security forces appear weak.

The next iteration of the workshop will be resumed later.

Suggestions for the next iteration of the workshop include widening the scope of participants beyond the military to include law enforcement, government officials, media, and the private sector.

Potential future topics proposed include Maritime security and SOF; Critical Infrastructure and CT; Crisis Response to Hybrid Threats; and how different NATO countries have developed crisis response cells or teams.

A little about NATO COE-DAT

NATO COE-DAT provides key decision-makers with a comprehensive understanding of terrorism and CT challenges, in order to transform NATO and Nations of interest to meet future security challenges. This transformation is embedded into NATO's three declared core tasks of Collective Defence, Crisis Management, and Cooperative Security.

As a strategic level think tank for the development of NATO DAT activities sitting outside the NATO Command Structure, COE-DAT supports NATO's Long-Term Military Transformation by anticipating and preparing for the ambiguous, complex, and rapidly changing future security environment. COE-DAT is able to interact with universities, think tanks, researchers, international organizations, and global partners with academic freedom to provide critical thought on the inherently sensitive topic of CT. COE-DAT strives to increase information sharing within NATO and with NATO's partners to ensure the retention and application of acquired experience and knowledge.

A little about NATO SOF HQ

NATO Special Forces Headquarters (NSHQ) is the primary point of development and synchronization of all NATO Special Operations activities, providing strategic SOF advice to Commanders. Since its inception more than a decade ago, NSHQ has consistently supported NATO and Partner CT efforts. Its NATO Special Operations University (NSOU) continues to deliver over thirty different courses that include aspects of CT (serving both allies and partners), directly support execution of CT missions, or provide essential pre-deployment training for SOF missions. NSHQ capabilities include Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) through which it delivers training directly to whole-of-government teams, interagency groups or regional stakeholders. NSHQ has developed Multinational SOF Advisory Teams (MSATs), which allow nations to reduce redundancy by harmonizing bilateral SOF initiatives with NATO Partnership mechanisms, to include efforts focused on the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel and beyond. Further, NSHQ's revisions to doctrine strengthen interoperability and guidance to national and NATO defence planning efforts.

Additionally, NSHQ continues to Develop Comprehensive Defence handbooks, courses, exercises and experiments (NSHQ is piloting products and courses tailored for SOF now; potential to expand and/or connect to ongoing larger NATO Counter Hybrid Threat, Comprehensive Defence and Resilience efforts). NSHQ has been working in collaboration with COE-DAT for over a year to enhance its CT efforts with the provision of a CT seminar.

SOF Roles in CT / Crisis Response Seminar 2023

Director's Opening Remarks

3 May 2023

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Participants; I am Colonel Oğuzhan PEHLİVAN, Turkish Army, Director of the Centre of Excellence – Defense Against Terrorism.

Good morning, I would like to welcome you to the second iteration of “SOF Roles in Counter Terrorism – Crisis Response Seminar.”

I would like to offer a special welcome to our colleagues from NATO Special Operations Headquarters, Colonel İlker Temizbaş, Lt. Col. Karl Hearne, and Lt. Col. Frédéric Chat. I would also like to offer a special welcome to our Academic Advisor Dr. Heather Gregg. We are grateful for her expertise and advice, which was instrumental in the planning of this event.

The first iteration opened a window to COE-DAT for in-person activities after a long pause stemming from the pandemic. This year, we have reached a wide community of interest, and hence we are lucky to see you in Ankara face-to-face.

Today I would like to inform you about COE-DAT's activities to support and influence NATO's fight against terrorism. We are truly providing three functions to NATO CT:

- We are an education and training facility providing courses and mobile education targeting partner nations.
- We are the Department Head for Alliance counter-terrorism education and training to synchronize the ever-growing demand for counter-terrorism support and are leading the vanguard to develop a NATO counter-terrorism governance structure for partner nations CT E&T.
- We also serve as a think tank to transform NATO's understanding of terrorism and counter-terrorism through the Analysis and Lessons Learned pillar, the Concept Development and Experimentation pillar, and the Doctrine Development and Standardization pillar through research projects, book development, lessons learned workshops, and conferences.

As NATO's hub for counter-terrorism, our wide network of military, government, and industry experts is vital to our success to stay up to date within the community of interest.

It is obvious that all the partner nations' Special Operation troops are organizationally different and unique in accordance with their requirements. Additionally, struggling with terrorism is not a priority role of SOF. However, when we consider the high professionalism and expertise of SOF, especially in crisis management, SOF may contribute much value to other military and non-military units and organizations. One of the most crucial experiences that we gained last year is that interoperability, intelligence sharing and whole of society and governance approaches are the leading principles executing a response to crisis. I hope that with your effective participation, this year we will find new key takeaways for the benefit of SOF stakeholders.

All of you attending our Seminar this week will help COE-DAT and NATO SOF HQ continue to expand our network and develop new relationships that will undoubtedly help all of us in the fight against terrorism. I look forward to meeting with you all more this evening at our Icebreaker social event in the JW Marriott Hotel.

Thank you again for your attendance and support. Welcome you cordially again!

I will now give the floor to one of my oldest and best friends Col. İlker Temizbaş, from J9 at NSHQ, for his opening remarks...

NATO SOF Headquarters

Head of J9 Directorate's Opening Remarks

May 3, 2023

Good morning all! My name is Colonel İlker Temizbaş, I am the head of the J9 Directorate within NATO SOF HEADQUARTERS (NSHQ). As such we have responsibility for all things relating to SOF Partnership activity within NSHQ. Traditionally our manning also included an individual responsible for CT within NSHQ.

Alongside Russia, Terrorism remains a substantial threat to NATO countries and partners across the globe. This threat has not subsided while the world has been focused on events in Eastern Europe.

Against that background, it is fair to say that there is currently an increasing focus on Counter Terrorism activity and output within our NSHQ as it undergoes a significant transformation effort to a warfighting headquarters in alignment with SHAPE. While most of that transformation effort has been directed at responding to state threats, we have established a CT-focused team within NSHQ, of which LTC Hearne is one. We are also working on a Counter Terrorist Group Campaign Plan, which we hope will be endorsed in the next few months. In short, I expect there to be an uptick in CT focused interest and activity coming out of NSHQ over the short to medium term.

And that is why this seminar is so important to us.

In partnership with the Centre of Excellence – Defense against Terrorism, I would like to welcome you to Ankara and the second iteration of the SOF Roles in CT/Crisis Response Seminar. We realize that while SOF play a small part in the vast array of counter-terrorist activity that occurs across the domain, it can and often does play a critical role, particularly when we look at response or planning for response.

So, the goals of this seminar are broadly the following:

1. To engage NATO SOF partner nations, and that is why partners are prioritized.
2. To provide an opportunity for NATO SOF partner nations and emerging partner nations to network and build relationships.
3. To share best practices in crisis response to terrorist incidents and how SOF can help inform that response, including roles that SOF may—or may not—play in the actual response.

I would like to stress that you will get out what you put into this seminar. Please engage with the speakers and each other. You can speak freely and even disagree if you need to, as long as the comments are constructive.

Finally, welcome again. I hope you all have a great week and I hope you get an opportunity to enjoy some Turkish hospitality!!

Day 1: Crisis Response to Critical Infrastructure Threat

The 2013 Attack on the In Amenas Oil Facility in Algeria

Lt Col Karl Hearne, UKSF²

Just after dawn on January 16, 2013, at least 32 gunmen from several countries affiliated with an Al Qaeda group led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, stormed the In Amenas oil facility in Algeria, near the border with Libya. The facility had a number of unarmed security guards along with a small contingent of Algerian Gendarmerie, which were both quickly overmatched by the gunmen.

After a brief firefight with armed guards on a bus transporting workers near the facility, the gunmen seized two areas on the compound, one in the main production facility and the other in the living quarters. They then released the Algerian workers and took approximately 132 international personnel hostages. An Algerian security guard succeeded in sounding a compound-wide alarm before being killed, giving many the opportunity to hide and allowing a worker to shut down the plant.

The gunmen rigged the facility with explosives, tied up the hostages they found, placing explosives on some of them, and threatened to destroy the plant. They demanded the end of French military operations against terrorist groups in Mali, the release of prisoners in Algeria and the United States connected to Al Qaeda, and safe passage to the border.

Approximately 34 hours after the attack began, on the afternoon of January 17, around 120 Algerian special forces, the “Special Intervention Group (GIS),” initiated an attack on the compound after the gunmen began to move hostages from the living quarters to the main facility, threatening to take the hostages abroad. The counterattack resulted in the deaths of at least 11 gunmen and 30 hostages. Several hostages escaped during the counter-siege, which lasted around eight hours. Ultimately, 40 individuals from 10 countries and 29 gunmen were killed in the attack. Three gunmen survived and stood trial.

A British unit that included Lt Col Hearne was standing by to assist in the rescue of British nationals being held hostage. Ultimately, the Algerian government did not ask for international assistance in resolving the crisis, despite the presence of nearly a dozen different nationalities.

Lt Col Hearne’s presentation of the In Amenas case identified the following nine lessons learned for crisis response to this complex CT incident that included multiple target sites, hostages, and a threat to critical infrastructure:

1. The importance of having predictive intelligence analysis and capabilities, specifically the need for objective analytics and predictive intel. Neither the Algerian government nor the corporations running the facility had these capabilities in place.
2. The need to challenge, or “red team,” assumptions. The In Amenas facility was in a remote part of Algeria and the assumption was that it would not be attacked by terrorists because of its remote location. This assumption proved to be wrong and terrorists actually found the remote location and lack of forces an asset because it gave them time to act before Algerian forces could respond.

² See Appendix B for full biographies of presenters.

3. The need to connect intelligence to force posturing and action. The plant had only a small military presence protecting the perimeter, and private unarmed guards. These forces were insufficient to thwart an attack.
4. The need to consider and train for extreme crisis scenarios. In the In Amenas case, this included the potential destruction of an oil facility, which could have produced a devastating explosion and complex fire. While not the case with the In Amenas attack, training for a CBRN attack is another extreme scenario for which forces need to train.
5. The In Amenas case also presented a multi-dimensional attack that required forces that could respond to multiple activities, ranging from hostage taking to an attack on critical infrastructure.
6. The importance of broadening and deepening cooperation with relevant government agencies inside a country, including reinforcing networks and institutional relationships. The Algerian government did not appear to have a whole-of-government approach.
7. The sensitivity that comes from allowing foreign troops into a country to help counter a terrorist attack. The In Amenas case involved at least ten different countries' citizens, prompting the United Kingdom to put one of its units on alert. However, the Algerian government did not allow foreign troops into the country, perhaps over concerns of appearing weak or compromising the country's sovereignty. While this is understandable, a framework for accepting advice would have been helpful.
8. The need to build relationships with the local population so that they can provide "on the ground" intelligence. The local population was most likely aware of the terrorists' presence but did not alert authorities. Both the oil companies and the Algerian government could have provided resources to the local population as a means of building relationships and trust. These relationships, in turn, could have increased the possibility of the local population providing critical information to the government and the oil company because they had something to lose from the plant's destruction.
9. The importance of considering the strategic context of terrorist incidents like the In Amenas case. While there are many tactical and operational concerns in this case, considering the wider strategic context is critical. In the case of In Amenas, attacks like this have underlying conditions, including population growth and "youth bubbles", which presents the potential for recruits to terrorist groups; political instability, which can create animosity within populations; the proliferation of technology that can connect groups and their cause, particularly social media; how terrorist groups might learn from one another, including tactics and operations; and the growing importance of certain strategic resources, particularly energy and certain resources, which can be targets of terrorist groups.

Takeaways from Day One Breakout Sessions

In the afternoon, participants broke out into small groups to discuss the In Amenas case study with the goal of considering key takeaways and lessons learned. These groups identified the following takeaways:

- The need to develop a CT plan before a crisis occurs. A CT strategy could have helped reduce the response time.
- The need for command and control (C2) to coordinate a response to attacks, particularly the need for an on the ground commander.
- The need to have sufficient forces, including air assets, closer to international sites that could be vulnerable to terrorist attacks, especially with groups that aim to attack international assets in a country.
- The need for better risk assessment and adjusting the size of forces and their capabilities based on that risk assessment.
- The need for a legal framework that could allow for different types of support—including international support—prior to the crisis.
- SOF advisors could have helped with the crisis, both with planning beforehand and when the crisis unfolded. This could have included a country's SOF and international SOF. The Algerian government ultimately did not allow international forces in to assist in the crisis, but international advisors could have provided suggestions without violating Algeria's sovereignty.
- The need to define the mission's objectives and measures of success. The In Amenas operation succeeded in killing 29 terrorists and bringing three to trial. The plant was also back in production after six months. However, 40 individuals from ten countries were killed as a result of the attack. What should the measures of success be in incidents like these?

Day 2: 2016 Ouagadougou Attack and Scenario Exercise

“January 16, 2016 Ouagadougou Attack”

LTC Frederic Chat, French Special Forces³

Beginning around 2010 and lasting a decade, several countries in Africa experienced a wave of deadly terrorist attacks aimed at inflicting as many casualties as possible. Several factors contributed to these attacks: ISIS emerged as a threat on the continent during this time and created competition with Al Qaeda for support and attention; several indigenous groups, including Boko Haram and Al Shabaab also grew in prominence and perpetrated numerous deadly attacks in this time frame; political instability was also a problem in the region, including instability in Libya, the political crisis in Algeria, and political transition in Burkina Faso in 2015; finally, increased pressure from regional and international actors, including European and US forces, threatened terrorist groups in the region, prompting a response from terrorist groups designed to disrupt alliances and make regional and international actors appear weak.

On January 15, 2016, at around 1900 in the evening, several gunmen connected to the same leader as in the 2013 In Amenas attack, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, were dropped off in downtown Ouagadougou at the Cappuccino Restaurant across the street from the Splendid Hotel, both of which were frequented by international patrons. The gunmen first fired on patrons at the restaurant and then opened fire on the Splendid Hotel. Burkinan Gendarmerie confronted the gunmen in the hotel, forcing them to retreat to Café Taxi Brousse across the street, where a siege ensued.

Several hours later, a detachment of French Special Forces (SF) arrived at the request of the Burkinan government. They helped secure the Splendid Hotel and then engaged three remaining gunmen in the Café Taxi Brousse. The incident lasted a total of 13 hours and resulted in 30 deaths of individuals from 11 countries.

LTC Frederic Chat was the ground force commander of French SF sent to help counter the attack. He described that, while the attack in Ouagadougou was instigated by the same leader as the In Amenas attack, it had several important differences. Critically, the attack occurred in an urban center, which presented unique challenges for securing the area and confronting the gunmen. The attack also had far fewer perpetrators than the In Amenas siege, and they were not as easy to identify, which presented challenges for neutralizing them. Another important difference is that the Burkinan government asked for international assistance to end the siege.

LTC Chat presented that French SF brought several important practices to the counterattack. First, French SF had a preconfigured tactical and operational command and control structure (C2) that it could draw on and use to confront the terrorists. Second, French SF has a “short loop” that allowed it to communicate quickly with France’s General of Special Operations Command (GCOS), which created a quick reaction time to evolving dynamics and permission to act. This short loop gave the incident command authority and freedom to decide which actions to take and when.

Countering the attack in Ouagadougou also had specific challenges. Perhaps most critically, there was no coordination plan between French SF and local forces; it was done all ad hoc and on site. Furthermore, French SF and local forces had not trained together and the incident commander

³ See Appendix B for full biographies of presenters.

was unaware of their capabilities or their interoperability of equipment and tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs). These factors increased the chances of a blue-on-blue attack significantly.

Ultimately, Burkinan forces created an outer cordon and controlled who entered the active shooter space. French forces created an inner cordon that included both tactical and operational C2, and an incident commander.

Lt Col Chat identified six lessons learned from the 2016 Ouagadougou terrorist attack:

1. It is critical to think fast, but also think well. Time is crucial. The longer a terrorist incident drags on, the more likely people will die. Having “shell structures” and practicing cordoning and moving on a target helps to shorten response time and improve operations.
2. Whenever possible, coordination plans between the host country and international forces should be developed prior to a crisis, as should training. Emergency scenarios must be imagined, planned, and rehearsed. Such planning would allow groups to understand each other’s capacities and capabilities.
3. A C2 plan should be developed before a crisis, not during one. This could be as sophisticated as shared radios and communication lines between forces, or as simple as having shared cellphone numbers...whatever works.
4. Coordination should extend beyond SOF forces and include non-SOF elements. SOF needs non-SOF support.
5. Tactical and operational medical capabilities should be robust and part of the plan. They are essential for saving lives.
6. Incidents require an After Action Review (AAR), including a hotwash immediately after the incident, a review at “D+1”, and a final AAR with full effects, in order to learn from real-life crisis responses.

Takeaways from Day Two Breakout Sessions

Participants broke out into small groups to discuss the 2016 Ouagadougou attacks with the goal of considering key takeaways and lessons learned. These groups identified the following takeaways:

- The critical importance of integrating local security forces, security forces and the government, and possibly with international forces and other supporting assets. Perhaps if integration had occurred before the crisis, the response could have been quicker and more effective.
- Connected to this first point, the dangers that come from parallel forces that have no C2 or integration. This is particularly true with the potential for blue-on-blue attacks.
- The need for vertical integration of C2, including the ability to connect the ground commander to leadership at higher levels, possibly at the ministerial and/or embassy levels. Vertical integration is particularly important if a CT crisis has strategic implications for the region and internationally.
- The importance of defining the objective of the operation and being able to measure success against that goal. Was the goal in this case saving lives, or ending the crisis, or neutralizing the terrorists? What should the priority have been and why? Within the importance of defining the objective, a mission statement might have helped focus the CT effort.
- The need for a strategic communications strategy. None appeared to be present in this attack and it allowed terrorists to control the narrative.

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Exercise: Counterfactual for the In Amenas Terrorist Incident

In the afternoon, participants broke into small groups to conduct a “counterfactual” scenario exercise of the In Amenas case, in which participants considered what the shortcomings of the response were, and how they could have been avoided.

Takeaways from the exercise

A summary of the groups’ responses to the scenario exercise identified five broad considerations:

1. Challenging assumptions about the possibility of a terrorist attack could have helped identify warning signs of an impending attack. Officials assumed that the site was too remote for a successful terrorist attack, which turned out to be wrong. This assumption may have further shaped incoming information about terrorist in the region, their intentions and the possibility for attack. Within challenging assumptions, it appears that the facility owners and Algerian security forces had not done a proper risk assessment of the facility, which led them to be underprepared for an attack.
2. Better intelligence and “connecting the dots” could have prevented the attack. AQIM had

made its intentions clear to attack western targets, and the In Amenas site was a prime location in Algeria to do that. In particular, the local population was an untapped source of intelligence and could have served as an early warning. Better intelligence and risk assessment, in turn, could have allowed for better force posturing and training for an attack on the facility, including training for a complex attack involving the possible destruction of an oil facility.

3. Given the national and international importance of the site, Algerian security guards should have been vertically integrated with the MoD to allow for a quicker and more robust response time, as well as clarifying roles and responsibilities of those responding. In other words, Algerian forces would have benefitted from a “short loop,” as described in the presentation on the 2016 attack in Ouagadougou. A short loop would allow for political input and possibly input from relevant international actors as well.

4. The responders to the In Amenas attack would have benefitted from defining what their objectives were in countering the attack. Specifically, they should have identified the priority in the counterattack: was it the successful release of hostages or minimal loss of life or the terrorist neutralized or minimal damage to the facility? While all three would be ideal, successfully getting all three would be unlikely. Which objectives were most important and why would, in turn, help prioritize force posturing and other considerations. Similarly, a mission statement would have helped focus the counterterrorism effort, as would measures of effectiveness.

5. The Algerian government and facility owners also should have thought about “controlling the narrative” both before and after the crisis occurred. It appears that the terrorists still claimed a victory in their attack on the In Amenas facility; they gained international attention and controlled the narrative by allowing hostages to call out to family members and the press. If a critical goal of terrorists is publicity, then they terrorists did in fact win in the In Amenas case.

Day 3: Turkish Special Forces

“Operation Euphrates Shield (OES): Syria 2016

Col Coskun Tulemez, Turkish Special Forces

The day ended with a presentation from Col Coskun Tulemez, Turkish Special Forces, on “Operation Euphrates Shield (OES): Syria: 2016.”

Col Tulemez began his presentation by describing a series of deadly attacks in Türkiye perpetrated by Daesh, including Suruc in July 2015, in which 34 civilians were killed; Ankara in October 2015, in which 109 civilians were killed; Istanbul in June 2016, in which 45 civilians were killed; and Gaziantep in August 2016, in which civilians 59 were killed. Overall, these attacks reflect 10 suicide bombings, one regular bombing, and three small arms attacks.

Türkiye deemed it necessary to intervene in the uncontrolled area that constituted a safe haven for terrorists in Syria. The objectives of Operation Euphrates Shield were to close the terrorist corridor between Türkiye and Syria, protect citizens by ending Daesh threats and attacks inside Türkiye, end illegal migration from Syria into Türkiye, protect historic and religious sites, and secure the region. The operation began on 24 August 2016, on the anniversary of the 1516 Battle of Marj Dabiq, and lasted until 29 March 2017.

Operation Euphrates Shield aimed at fulfilling the objective of sealing Türkiye’s border with Syria, which is also NATO’S southeast border, from terrorist infiltration and attacks. It began with a campaign to remove Daesh from Jarablus, Rai, Azez, and Dabiq to neutralize Daesh’s Information Operation campaign, including especially its social media capabilities and creation of Dabiq magazine. The next phase of the operation aimed to take El Bab, a strategic point for Daesh. The overall objective of taking back El Bab was to deny Daesh the ability to engage in rocket attacks and end terrorist attacks on Türkiye.

Within El Bab, Akil, a hill on the edge of the city, was particularly difficult to secure. It was the strategic high ground in the region; whoever controlled Akil controlled the city. Turkish forces, which included a combination of SF and conventional troops, launched the assault with limited Intelligence, Reconnaissance and Surveillance (ISR) and air support because of inclement weather. In the end, 16 Turkish troops were lost, but more than 300 Daesh were killed before Turkish forces took the hill.

Once Akil was secured, Turkish Special Forces and Conventional forces along with Free Syrian Army Forces began conducting urban operations and counter improvised explosive devices (IED) operations in the city, creating a grid system, numbering and then searching every single building. Turkish forces also made good use of human intelligence (HUMINT) to rout out any remaining Daesh fighters.

In the end, Operation Euphrates Shield resulted in 3,843 Daesh killed, 413 wounded, and more than 4,500 Daesh fighters neutralized. The operation is credited with eliminating Daesh attacks on Türkiye. Moreover, the border was secured and illegal migration stopped. The operation also helped move formerly Daesh held areas towards stabilization and helped facilitate coalition forces operations in Syria.

Col Tulemez identified the following takeaways from Operation Euphrates Shield:

- The importance of recognizing the changing character of the battlespace in modern warfare and the ability to react and adapt
- The challenge posed by asymmetric threats and hybrid warfare and that they may require major military operations to counter
- The need to consider the human domain as a domain of warfighting and how it is situated within multidomain operations
- The challenges posed by urban operations, which are chaotic and extremely difficult to secure
- The need for interagency cooperation and for better training and collaboration between conventional and special forces to address hybrid threats
- The need to update doctrine to capture lessons learned and best practices for subsequent operations
- Demonstrating that the use of partner forces for countering terrorist threats is critical and of the utmost importance
- The critical importance of an Operational Headquarters for coordination with strategic, operational, and tactical levels

Appendix A

Next Iteration and Possible Topics

The next iteration of the workshop will be evaluated later.

Suggestions for the next iteration of the workshop include widening the scope of participants beyond the military to include law enforcement, government officials, media, and the private sector.

Potential future topics proposed include Maritime security and SOF; Critical Infrastructure and CT; Crisis Response to Hybrid Threats; and how different NATO countries have developed crisis response cells or teams.

COLONEL OĞUZHAN PEHLİVAN (PhD)
DIRECTOR, COE-DAT



Col Oğuzhan PEHLİVAN is the Director and Turkish senior national representative at the NATO Centre of Excellence for the Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT) in Ankara, Turkey. As the Director, Colonel PEHLİVAN leads all aspects supporting the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation in his effort to transform NATO in the field of counterterrorism.

Colonel PEHLİVAN graduated from the Turkish Military Academy as an Infantry Officer in 1996 and from the Infantry School in 1997. He served as platoon leader; company, battalion and deputy brigade commander prior to his assignment at COE-DAT. Col PEHLİVAN is married to Serpil PEHLİVAN, with a son named Burak Kağan PEHLİVAN. He also got PhD in Sociology at Hacettepe University in 2017.

EDUCATION

1988 - 1992 Kuleli Military High School, Istanbul, High School Diploma

1992 - 1996 Turkish Military Academy, Ankara, Bachelor's Degree in System Engineering

2019 - 2020 Turkish Staff College, Istanbul

ASSIGNMENTS

1997 – 1999 Platoon Leader, 172nd, Armoured Brigade, Islahiye/Gaziantep

1999 – 2001 Border Security Platoon Leader, 70th, Mechanized Infantry Brigade, Mardin

2001 – 2004 Platoon Leader, Turkish Land Forces Headquarter Support Group, Ankara

2004 – 2008 Company Commander, Turkish Land Forces Headquarter Support Group, Ankara

2008 – 2010 Company Commander, 70th, Mechanized Infantry Brigade, Mardin

2010 – 2011 Foreign Affairs Officer of Turkish Land Forces Commander, Ankara

2011 – 2014 Liaison Officer, ODC-Turkey, Ankara

2014 – 2016 Battalion Commander, Turkish War College, Ankara

2016 – 2018 Deputy Brigade Commander, 3rd, Commando Brigade, Erüh/Siirt

2018 – 2019 Military Police Commander, 5th Corlu/Tekirdağ

2019 – 2020 Chief of Staff, 3rd, Armoured Brigade\ Cerkezköy/Tekirdağ

2020 – 2021 Chief of Operations, 2nd Army, Malatya

2021 – 2021 Chief of Operations and Education, Logistic Command, Ankara

2021 Director, COE-DAT, Ankara

MISSIONS

July 2002 - February 2003 Military Police, KFOR

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATION AND TRAINING

2004-2005 Defense Science Institute, Master Program to Human Resource Management, Ankara.

2012-2017 Hacettepe University, PhD in Sociology, Ankara.

AWARDS

NATO Medal for KFOR mission in Kosova

EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION

Second Lieutenant, 30 August 1996

Lieutenant, 30 August 1999

Captain, 30 August 2004

Major, 30 August 2010

Lieutenant-Colonel, 30 August 2014

Colonel, 30 August 2016



NATO SPECIAL OPERATIONS HEADQUARTERS

QUARTIER GÉNÉRAL
DES OPÉRATIONS SPÉCIALES DE L'OTAN

RUE CLARK, BLDG 915
7010 SHAPE, BELGIUM



NSHQ Partnership Directorate

Col Ilker TEMIZBAS (TUR-A), J9 Partnership Director

Colonel TEMIZBAS graduated from the Turkish Military Academy as an Infantry Officer in 1996 and from the Infantry Branch School in 1997. He joined Turkish SOF Command (TUR SF COM) in 1997 and has served in every level of TUR SF COM until 2022. Some of COL Temizbas' previous postings included staff, training and command positions. Additionally, he served in the NATO SOF Coordination Center (NSCC) as a planner in Exercise Branch between 2009-2010. He has deployed operationally across Middle East. Colonel TEMIZBAS arrived at NSHQ in August 2022.

Presenters



NATO SPECIAL OPERATIONS HEADQUARTERS

**QUARTIER GÉNÉRAL
DES OPÉRATIONS SPÉCIALES DE L'OTAN**

**RUE CLARK, BLDG 915
7010 SHAPE, BELGIUM**



NSHQ Partnership Directorate

Lt Col Karl Hearne (GBR, UKSF), Head Global SOF Partners Team & CT Lead

Karl arrived in NSHQ in Oct 2022. He has 37 years of military service, 31 years in Special Operations Forces. He has deployed operationally across Africa, the Levant, Afghanistan, the Arabian Peninsula and the Balkans. Previous postings have included training positions, but the majority of his career has been operationally focused UKSF roles. Civilian educational achievements include earning an MSc in Security and Risk Management in 2008 from Loughborough University in the UK. Lt Col Hearne is a British late entry officer, so he has promoted through the ranks before commissioning. This is his first NATO tour and his last before he retires in 2026.



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NSHQ DCOS OPS-J3-NOCC

Lt Col Frederic CHAT (FRA, FRASOF), NOCC Geoband Team leader

Frederic arrived in NSHQ in August 2021. He has 32 years of military service, 14 years in Special Operations Forces. He has deployed operationally across Africa, the Levant, and Afghanistan. During his different assignments, he specialized in educational and training programs, operational security and SOF capability development.

It is his first NATO tour that will end in 2024.

Heather S. Gregg, PhD

George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

Academic Advisor to the Seminar



Heather S. Gregg is Professor of Irregular Warfare at the George C. Marshall Center European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch, Germany. She is also a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Dr. Gregg's academic focus is on irregular warfare, terrorism and counterterrorism, causes of extremism, and leveraging culture in population centric conflicts, including resiliency and repairing communities and national unity in the wake of war and political instability.

Prior to joining the Marshall Center, Dr. Gregg was a professor at the U.S. Army War College, and the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where she worked primarily with Special Operations Forces. She is the 2017 recipient of the NPS school-wide Hamming Award for excellence in teaching. Dr. Gregg was also an associate political scientist at the RAND Corporation from 2003-2006.

Dr. Gregg earned her PhD in Political Science in 2003 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She also holds a Master's degree from Harvard Divinity School, where she studied Islam, and a Bachelor's degree in Cultural Anthropology, with honors, from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

In addition to academic experience, Dr. Gregg has spent time in several regions of conflict, including Palestine/West Bank and the former Yugoslavia, in addition to working in Qatar and Japan, and studying in Hungary. From 2013-2015, she was part of teaching and engagement teams with security forces in Tajikistan. In 2016, she taught at the Indonesian Defense University on subjects relating to asymmetric warfare. Most recently, she has participated in a series of engagements with NATO's Center of Excellence, Defense Against Terrorism in Ankara, Türkiye.

Dr. Gregg has published extensively on irregular warfare, religiously motivated conflict and extremism, including: *Religious Terrorism* (Cambridge University Press, 2020); "Religiously Motivated Violence" (Oxford University Press 2016); *Building the Nation: Missed Opportunities in Iraq and Afghanistan* (University of Nebraska 2018); *The Path to Salvation: Religious Violence from the Crusades to Jihad* (University of Nebraska 2014); and co-editor of *The Three Circles of War: Understanding the Dynamics of Modern War in Iraq* (Potomac, 2010).



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