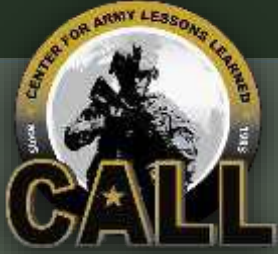


NEWS FROM THE FRONT



French Participation in JWA: How to Prepare Our Future Together



Colonel Pierre-Olivier Marchand
French Army Liaison Officer, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center
Lieutenant-colonel Antoine de Malartic
French Army Liaison Officer, Headquarters, Department of the Army
Lieutenant-colonel Nicolas Konieczny
French Army Liaison Officer, Fires CoE and Joint Modernization Command

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***French Participation in JWA:
How to Prepare Our Future Together***

An enduring commitment to Joint Warfighting Assessment (JWA), the most appropriate platform to evaluate and assess interoperability

The French Army participation in the JWA series started in 2018 with the commitment of the 7th Armored Brigade, commanded by BG Palu, under the 1st Infantry Division (ID) at Grafenwoehr, Germany. Although it was the first time, the environment of the exercise and the good preparation of the French teams enabled the interactions between the U.S. and French headquarters up to the integrated level in some specific areas, including Command Information Systems (CIS) and digital fires.

Therefore, France decided to plan a long-term commitment to these exercises in order to develop and increase interoperability with the U.S. This was consistent with the Strategic Vision Statement which the Chef d'État-Major de l'Armée de Terre (equivalent to the U.S. Chief of Staff of the Army) and the U.S. Chief of Staff of the Army signed in 2015, with the objective of integrating units at the brigade and at the division level. In 2020, the 4th Airmobile Brigade will take over the French position under the 1st Cavalry Division in DEFENDER 20 command post exercise.

In order to sustain the achievements gained in 2018, the French Army staff headquarters (HQ) identified the requirement to be involved in JWA19, not with a brigade HQ (deployment tempo and location of the exercise were not appropriate) but with a detachment of 18 officers, seven of them being currently positioned as liaison officers to the U.S. Army.

As part of the strategic bilateral objectives with the U.S. Army's Strategic Vision Statement, the French Army's vision is to conduct a lasting and long-term commitment to JWA, because it considers this exercise as a key event for improving interoperability at the brigade level, as well as testing new concepts.

Involvement of the French Officers in Key Areas Within the Training Audience and the Exercise Control (EXCON)

The French approach in this exercise was to reinforce the 7th Infantry Division in specific positions. The purpose was to promote human and procedural interoperability and to develop the exchange of information thanks to the commitment of nine French officers embedded in key warfighting functions: the deputy G2 and two staff officers were French, as well as the Joint Air Ground Integration Center (JAGIC) Chief, and G3 Aviation, G4, G5, Coalition Network Operation Security Center (CNOSC) and common operating picture shop staff officers.

The secondary objective was to reinforce the Joint Multinational Interoperability (JMNI) Assessment Team, mainly composed of U.S., Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (ABCANZ) officers and civilians, by providing a non-ABCANZ approach more focused on U.S.-FR and NATO. Three French officers and one U.S. officer, currently

posted in France in the Combat Command Regiment (CCR)-FR, were part of the team and were tasked to support the assessment of headquarters, Department of the Army's (HQDA) priority focused areas, namely: communication and information systems-information management/knowledge management, intelligence, fires, and sustainment, which form the four lines of effort of the main allies' bilateral roadmap.

In order to prepare the future exercises in 2020 (JWA) and 2021 (Warfighting Exercise [WFX] 21-4¹), France decided to deploy five observers, representing French Army HQ, French Land Forces Command, 3rd (FR) Division, and 4th (FR) Airmobile Brigade.

The whole detachment was under the supervision of an Army Colonel, French Senior National Representative for the exercise.

This three-fold organization proved efficient and enabled a perfect interaction and understanding at every echelon (brigade, division, EXCON, and assessment):

- It provided the French liaison officers with a deeper perspective of how U.S. corps and divisions are organized and are conducting operations in a multi-domain environment.
- The level of knowledge acquired by the French liaison officers on their forts within the U.S. Army enabled them to be fully human and procedural-compatible with their U.S. peers. They proved to be high value prior to and during the exercise for the 7th ID staff.
- The French multi-disciplinary approach to assess interoperability was a great opportunity for the JMNI assessment team to get additional observations in all the domains from a non-ABCANZ partner. This approach also allowed the French Army to get an "interoperability snapshot" before the 4th Airmobile Brigade commitment in JWA20.
- The French individuals were able to contribute to the development of new tactics, techniques, and procedures regarding the applicability of multi-domain operations at the tactical and operational levels.

This commitment was made possible thanks to the excellent interaction between Joint Modernization Command (JMC, Fort Bliss) and the French liaison officer in Fort Sill, who is also the "non-resident liaison officer" to JMC and was the officer in charge for the exercise. It highlighted that the first and main condition of interoperability is of human essence.

The French Army commitment with its liaison officers to the U.S. Army was an overall success and paved the way to a long-term participation of this French liaison team in the United States to the series of Joint Warfighting Assessments.

Preparing the Future: Main Lessons Identified and the Way Ahead

Relying on the comments and observations made during the exercise and in order to prepare JWA20, the French Army identified four main lessons learned:

- The Division's procedures (task organization, battle rhythm, standard operating procedures [SOPs], etc.) might be decided (by NATO, ABCANZ, or U.S.) and delivered to the brigade level as soon as possible.
- The digital connections (technical and classification issues) are required to be established and tested prior to the exercise through risk reduction events for all the functional areas and needs to be maintained during the whole exercise.
- The multinational brigade's capabilities have to be well known by the division in order to be efficient and to multiply the effectors for the coalition. This point will be even more relevant in JWA20 because the French brigade will have huge airmobile capabilities.
- The profile of the brigade liaison officers attached to the division is very important. Not only does he have to master the language and the military acronyms (for the French Army it is crucial because we are not native speakers) but also he has to advise the division staff on how his brigade is working, planning, and reacting. Therefore, the recommended approach is to select one of the best and most experienced officers to get his support as well as the well-endorsed capability to take decisions in case of technical communication deficiencies between the brigade and the division.

In 2020, the French Airmobile Brigade (4 BAC) will participate in exercise JWA20 under the 1st (U.S.) Cavalry Division. The role of the liaison elements will be key to facilitate the mutual understanding between the units.

In the perspective of the future exercises, the French Army has also considered two main points raised by U.S. Army LTG Volesky, I Corps Commander: (1) the requirement to better protect the forces (force protection; air defense; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense [CBRN]; and counter-unmanned aerial surveillance [C-UAS]) and (2) to integrate the multinational partners in key U.S. structures, like the Multinational Intelligence Fusion Cell, the Multi-Domain Task Force or the Theater Fires Command. Indeed, these commitments will create a closer loop to get access to multinational capabilities and authorities and will provide the Joint Force Commander with additional flexibility and firepower.

JWA19 was a great achievement for the French Army in order to sustain and, in some areas, improve the interoperability with the U.S. Army. The multi-domain environment of the exercise has triggered challenges and issues that have been identified and fixed by a coalition in a two-week exercise, showing the potential of combining skills not only at the joint, but also at the multinational level. This proved to be an excellent preparation for the commitment of the 4th Airmobile Brigade which will evolve in the same kind of environment in a European theater.