



A 105/35 'Light Gun L 118' howitzer fires . Field Artillery Group VII, at the National Training Center of San Gregorio (Zaragoza, Spain).

VJTF BRIGADE

road to certification

Bétera headquarters and the airborne light infantry brigade are preparing at home before traveling to Poland to participate in 'Brilliant Jump' maneuvers, at the end of May

Around 2,000 Spanish military - the main force of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) of the Atlantic Alliance - are now ready to move to Zagan (Poland) at the end of May to participate in the second phase of the exercise 'Brilliant Jump 16', whose implementation will serve to certify the full operation of the new Multinational Brigade of the NATO.

The initial phase –named Alertex - took place between 1st and 10th April at the respective countries that integrate this Brigade. This exercise tested, first of all, the speed and rapid deployment

capability – it's to say, in 48 hours – of a first battalion acting as the initial deploying unit of the VJTF and then the remaining elements of the Brigade that must be ready to act in a term of between 5 and 7 days.



The Polish General, Deputy Chief of the North East HQ, close to General Varela – left- and his Chief of Staff at the Inicial Command Post of the VJTF in Bétera

The activation order came from Mons (Belgium), seat of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied forces in Europe (SHAPE), to Brunssum, the German town where is located the Allied Joint Command that leads, at operational level, the Response Force (NRF) and its reduced version, the VJTF.

From there, in the center of Europe, the alert message toured the continent in direction East-West and even crossed the Atlantic Ocean. Just passed a few minutes between the alert launched from Mons to different points of Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Spain, United States, Poland, Portugal and United Kingdom, the main countries that contribute forces to the VJTF. Its headquarters, NATO Rapid Deployment Corps–Spain (HQ NRDCESP) in Bétera (Valencia), was responsible for transmitting the alert to all subordinate units under his command, mainly the Airborne Light infantry Brigade ‘Galicia VII’.

The first to receive the order to enter their bases and respective barracks to move overland to the closest ports and airports of embarkation were the members of the ‘San Quentin’ Battalion, belonging to the Regiment ‘Prince 3rd’ of the Airborne Light Infantry Brigade located in Siero Asturias (North Spain), the Recognition and Link Team of the HQ NRDCESP and a Command and Control initial element of this Brigade, at Figueirido (Pontevedra). This contingent constitutes the authentic "Spearhead" of the VJTF.

Were then activated the remaining units of the High Readiness Brigade whose deployment is broader, between 5 and 7 days. The staff that make up these units comes from the

headquarters of Bétera (Valencia) and the Airborne Light Infantry Brigade as well as from the Infantry Battalions of the United Kingdom, Belgium and Croatia and a Polish mechanized Leopard tanks – in addition to San Quentin – and a strategic transportation unit of the USA and other supporting to combat units, mainly belonging to the Light Infantry Brigade.

LOGISTICS

In Spain, the Alertex also featured the participation of operational logistics force and its logistics group, LOG Group 61, the National Support Element, responsible for launching the VJTF units from Spanish territory to any part of the world. During the development of the initial phase of the Brilliant Jump were activated, likewise, the General Headquarters of the Multinational Northeast Corps in Szczecin (Poland) and one of its five NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) at the town of Bydgoszcz, also on Polish territory. This NATO Unit of Integration of the Force – the NATO has six of such units available in the East Europe - is, in fact, a small headquarters of about 40 national and allied military already operational as a logistics, ammunition and transport base, ready if required for the deployment of the NRF and the VJTF on this flank, both in real operations as well as in exercises, for example, the Brilliant Jump 16.

COMBAT SUPPORT AND MANOEUVRING

To prepare the deployment to Zagan, the Airborne Light Infantry Brigade carried out two Beta type exercises, at battalion level, in late April at the National Training Centre of San Gregorio (Saragossa), and Renedo-Cabezón (Valladolid).

The first of them served to instruct the Field Artillery and Recognition Cavalry Groups, the battalion of Sappers and an Anti-Aircraft Artillery battery. Up to 33 British engineers and Sappers and seven



Members of the sapper's battalion of the Airborne Light Infantry Brigade remove a barbed-wire to facilitate the passage of the rest of the force during a urban combat operation.

Belgians of the same specialties joined these units to test their cohesion, interoperability and effectiveness in urban combat tactics, breach crossing, and shooting in motion among others. At the same time the San Quentin Light Infantry Battalion performed in Valladolid helicARRIER operations covered by the Army Aviation.

J.L. Expósito

Photo: Pepe Díaz

Revista Española de Defensa (Spanish Defence Magazine), May 2016

Translation by Office of Communication, ESP-MoD