


Exercise STEADFAST DETERRENCE 2025 - Lessons on Interoperability

Report published 15 December 2025

In this factsheet you can read about some of the key findings in the JALLC's report on interoperability lessons from Exercise STEADFAST DETERRENCE 2025. Download a full copy of the report from the classified version of the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, or contact the JALLC to obtain a copy.*

Introduction




Exercise STEADFAST DETERRENCE 2025 (STDC25) was the first occasion for SHAPE, as NATO's Strategic Warfighting HQ, to train alongside United States European Command (USEUCOM). SHAPE requested the JALLC conduct analysis during the exercise to identify lessons relevant to interoperability between SHAPE and USEUCOM related to information sharing, situational awareness, and the decision-making process continuum.

Overview


Exercise STDC25 brought together more than 4800 military and civilian personnel from the NATO Command and Force Structure, including Allied Land Command, Allied Maritime Command, Allied Air Command, Special Operations Forces Headquarters, Joint Support and Enabling Command, as well as component commands and non-military entities. In response to a simulated highly complex crisis, it offered many opportunities for the Training Audience to exercise pre-crisis military deterrence within SACEUR's Area of Responsibility.



LANDCOM Command Group attending Battle Rhythm events in Exercise STDC25



During Exercise STDC25, the project team directly observed the relevant events where SHAPE and USEUCOM had touchpoints, through the three dimensions of interoperability (i.e., Human, Procedural, and Technical)



Participants were interviewed during the Battle Staff Training and the execution of Exercise STDC25, and the project team had opportunities to interact with the Key Staff from the Training Audience, USEUCOM Forward Integration Team (EFIT), SHAPE Permanent Liaison Officers in USEUCOM, the Joint Warfare Centre Advisor Team, Allied Command Transformation's Team in SHAPE and Senior Mentors.



Key Findings

The JALLC identified the following four aspects as impactful for interoperability between SHAPE and USEUCOM during Exercise STDC25:

Coordination of Multinational and National HQs

Many good practices were observed in the context of this key finding, especially in areas where preparation for the exercise has been thorough. The report recommends formalizing undocumented practices into NATO directives to ensure these practices transfer to standard operating procedures.

Organizational Alignment

During the exercise, SHAPE and USEUCOM worked well at aligning their organizations and liaising with each other. The report recommends further developing and testing the identified liaison structures.

Warfighting Levels

Although no impact on interoperability was observed in respect of the different warfighting levels of each HQ, it remains an important aspect to be considered in interactions between SHAPE and USEUCOM to ensure no issues arise in the future.

Interoperability Tools

Software designed to transfer data between NATO members was functional although there is room for improvement. The current software should continue to be maintained until next generation tools provide the same breadth and depth of interoperability.



All pictures in this factsheet courtesy of the Joint Warfare Centre, HQ Allied Land Command, the US Army, the US Department of War, and USEUCOM.