

***Comprehensive Approach:  
Lessons learned from Viking 2011***

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# 1. Introduction – VK11 and the CA activity

Exercise VIKING 2011 (VK 11) was an education and training activity, designed to contribute to preparing not only military individuals and forces but also civilians (including police) to meet the challenges of today's crisis response and peace operations. VK 11 was the 6th exercise in the Viking-series of major joint civilian-military exercises organised by Sweden. The exercise was conducted during the period 4-15 April 2011 in Sweden and several additional countries.

A principal objective of the exercise was to provide participants with the opportunity to acquire hands-on practical skills and knowledge of civil-military-police coordination and cooperation, before their deployment in a multifunctional and multinational Peace Operation. The ambition of the exercise was to improve relations between the different crisis management functions (civil-military-police) operating in a peace or crisis response operation, in order to create better prospects for so-called Comprehensive Approaches during such endeavours. The specific aim of VK 11 was to train and educate participants in planning and conducting a UN mandated, Chapter VII peace enforcement mission, based on a *Comprehensive Approach* and focusing on co-operation and co-ordination involving all stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>

The Swedish Armed Forces' (SwAF) Joint Concept Development and Experimentation Centre (JCDEC) have over the last years been following the international development of the Comprehensive Approach to explore its impact on the SwAF, and did so also during the VK 11 exercise. The purpose of the JCDEC's Comprehensive Approach (CA) activity within VK 11 was to observe the interface between headquarters of NATO's Bogaland Force (BFOR) and the UN Assistance Mission in Bogaland (UNAMIB) to see how the Comprehensive Approach was applied. Observations have focused on the mechanisms for a Comprehensive Approach /Integrated Missions as described in NATO's Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD) as well as UN documentation outlining the principles of Integrated Missions<sup>2</sup>.

This report presents the outcomes in terms of results and conclusions from this Comprehensive Approach activity.

## 1.1. Objectives

The primary objective of the CA activity was to collect, analyse and evaluate CA activities within VK 11 in support of future developments of CA for Swedish Peace Support Operations in general, and for the Swedish application of COPD and the Swedish Working Group on Civil-Military Coordination (Ag CMS) in particular.

The CA- activity was guided by the following research questions:

- Are there any actual or perceived pre-conditions for cooperation within BFOR or UNAMIB that may facilitate or obstruct the achievement of CA?
- How are the mechanisms for coordination implemented?
- Are there any changes over time in the mindset and/or application of CA?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Exercise Concept contained a 'Comprehensive Approach' to implementation, planning, management and evaluation. The reference to a 'Comprehensive Approach' was intended to challenge all parts of the training audience, as appropriate, to find ways to cooperate, co-ordinate, share information and, where possible and as required, conduct joint assessments of the situation and joint planning for operations. This would require an improved capability to support interaction and harmonisation among national and multinational military forces, civilian government agencies, local civil society, international/intergovernmental organisations, non-government organisations, police and the commercial sector

<sup>2</sup> These include the *UN principles and guidelines for UN peacekeeping operations* (Capstone Doctrine), 2008; *Integration, Decisions of the Secretary-General, 2008*; *Integrated Missions Planning Process Guidelines, 2006*; and *Secretary-General's Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions, 2006*

<sup>3</sup> See Annex 1 for more detailed sub-questions

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Data collection**

The purpose of the data collection and analysis was to gather data to gain insights of the application of the Comprehensive Approach during the exercise, as relevant to the research questions.

The following methods were used.

- Systematic *observations of CA related activities* in UNAMIB HQ and BFOR HQ. The observations focused on the overall research questions as well as compliance with the exercise definition of the Comprehensive Approach.
- Focused *interviews* with key players at UNAMIB HQ and BFOR HQ in order to clarify participant actions and approaches. The interview notes were taken in the observer protocol in open documentation format.
- Review of comments on CA implementation in the end-of-mission reports and end of exercise evaluations posted on the Viking 11 web-portal.

Collected data was successively compiled and analysed on a daily basis. The major part of the analysis work was conducted during the last two days of the exercise.

#### **2.1.1. Focus and Delimitations**

The focus of the observations was BFOR and UNAMIB and the interface and interaction between the two as related to the Comprehensive Approach (CA). CA has been understood in accordance with the exercise definition (as presented in section 2.3).

As CA covers a broad set of issues it is impossible to consider all aspects of CA within the framework of the VK11 CA- activity. For this reasons, the focus of the activity has been limited to mechanisms for coordination and cooperation. Nevertheless, not all civil-military relations can be regarded as essential to the Comprehensive Approach. For this reason observations made of civil-military cooperation and coordination focused on the tactical level has been excluded from the analysis because it has been deemed to have little impact on overarching CA.

One major constraint was that CA was not explicitly exercised or experimented on. This meant that there was not any method or model to “measure” CA against. This, in turn, meant that the analysis builds on targeted observations during the exercise. The analysis team did not have the opportunity to influence or manipulate the exercise to test CA or the participants’ attitudes and knowledge about the concept.

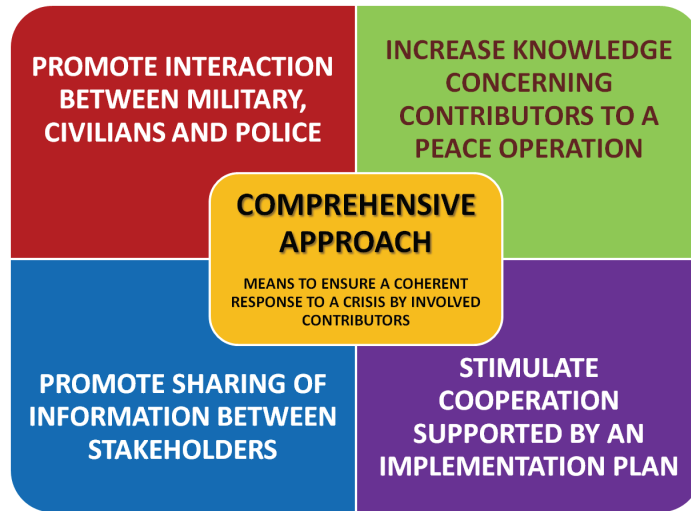
VK 11 is a major exercise, implemented in a high tempo and dynamic interaction between a variety of actors. The analysis team could only cover limited parts of the exercise (and the experiment) which naturally affect the validity of the conclusions.

### **2.2. Exercise preparations for CA**

The first days of the exercise (5-7 April) consisted mainly of exercise in-briefs and educational briefings. One of the five educational briefings provided to the training audience was devoted to the Comprehensive Approach. This presentation, made by Mr David Lightburn on behalf of the Folke Bernadotte Academy, was intended to make the training audience better prepared to work in accordance to CA.

Mr Lightburn’s presentation gave an overview of the civilian dimension throughout the latest Viking exercises. After this he presented the training audience with an understanding of what CA is, and related this to the definition of CA outlined by the exercise control.

During the exercise, CA was defined as ensuring a coherent response to a crisis by the involved actors. Four means were identified as essential to achieve this: Interaction; Knowledge; Sharing of Information; and Cooperation. The figure below was used by senior management during the exercise to depict this definition:



Figur 1 CA-definition used during Viking -11

It is important to note that outside of VIKING there is no common, universally accepted definition of CA but a range of varying interpretations. Therefore, the interpretation of CA by the training audience may very well have differed from the definition presented at the exercise.

In addition to the briefing focusing on CA, other educational briefings that would also have prepared the training audience for working better across civilian and military interfaces were provided. Unfortunately, exercise control recognised that these educational briefings had not always been sufficiently advertised and that some people who may have benefited from them were not aware that they were running.

### 3. CA Results

This chapter describes the observations and results made throughout the exercise. The day-to-day observations can be found in the annex.

#### 3.1. Overarching observations and results

The level of interaction and will to cooperate was very high during the exercise which clearly facilitated a Comprehensive Approach. In general, CA worked well at the strategic level and it was evident that most exercise-participants within UNAMIB and BFOR had a view of CA as something positive and something that should be incorporated, even if the understandings for how this should be achieved differed. Nevertheless, the exercise showed proof of the same challenges to implementing CA as have been discovered during experimentation and experienced in the field. A conclusion that can be made is that, albeit important, CA is not solely bound by a willingness to work together but that appropriate structures, together with relevant skills and knowledge, are also essential and where CA was not fully achieved during the exercise it could often be attributed to a lack of such structures, skills and knowledge.

The following paragraphs describe in greater details some of the general challenges to working in accordance with CA during the exercise:

Military and civilian organizations' structures are different and this can cause problems, some of which were experienced during VK 11. In most civilian organizations the same unit or structure is responsible for a process or function throughout a mission. Military organizations are structured according to other principles and depending on what phase a mission is in there might be different focal points for an issue in a military headquarters. Trust, predictability and effectiveness risk being negatively affected. During VK 11 this was for example exemplified by the difficulties in cooperation between JOPG SSR (J5) and J3 Plans in the handover of responsibility for the DDR and SSR processes. J3 was not prepared to take over responsibility, partly due to lack of resources, and for some time responsibility for SSR and DDR was unclear. This points to a major issue for CA – *crosscutting issues, such as SSR does not fit easily in military structures.*

VK 11 provided some other, related, examples of differences between military and civilian structures. For example, BFOR viewed interaction with UNAMIB in general as a J9 issue, to be dealt with by civil-military focal points. UNAMIB on the contrary designated which staff should be sent to meet with BFOR in accordance with the nature of each meeting. As a result, in most coordination meetings, BFOR had several participants at lower levels while the civilian agencies had only one or two, where one usually was agency head. While the agency heads had the mandate to make on the spot decisions, BFOR often had to bring issues up the chain of command for approval. Among other things, this prevented BFOR from making the commitments to joint projects that the civilians would have needed. The differences in decision-making mandates did not seem to cause any major problems during the meetings but could have raised frustrations in the long-term and could hamper cooperation.

The problem of finding the correct interfaces between actors engaged in CA has been reiterated throughout the development of the concept. This problem was exemplified also during the exercise. The UNAMIB SOP Liaison Matrix for example outlined the UNAMIB Police Commissioner, the Bogaland National Police Commissioner and the BFOR Provost Marshal as each others counterparts in the respective organisations. Equating the responsibilities and authorities of the UNAMIB Police Commissioners – a member of the UNAMIB Mission Leadership Team, reporting directly to the SRSG with the responsibility to ensure that all relevant police plans are coordinated to support the overall implementation of the missions mandate – and the Provost Marshal – head of the military police who usually responsible for policing the armed forces – is a good example of a *failure to understand others organisations and thereby to find the appropriate counterparts.* This might have been a simple EXCON mistake but had a negative effect during the exercise with UNPOL itself recognising that the Provost Marshal was not a sufficient interface and that this had a negative impact on CA.

Furthermore, both civilian and military participants in meetings seemed to be relatively unaware that their own structures and terminology is largely unfamiliar to the other participants. In a lot of meetings there were little or no introductions to who were at the table and when meetings started with round-table introductions, participants merely explained who they were by terms such as “UNHCR”, “J2 Plans” or “Mine Action”. Such introductions do not provide other participants sufficient understanding of what roles and mandates are present at the meeting and do not help to solve any eventual frustrations as regards wrongly interpreted roles and mandates. Proper introductions explaining each function and their purpose in attending the meeting, as well as respective mandate in terms of decision-making would be useful in similar situations. Sharing SOP:s or hosting educational sessions to explain mandates and structures might be helpful in this regard.

The military could appoint one or two “CA” point of contacts, with the appropriate training on how various civilian organisations tend to function, including the basics of the UN system, the humanitarian principles and various development issues but who also has a direct line of communication to the Commander and thereby decision-making power. This person should probably not be placed in one of the J-functions but rather as an adviser to the commander (cf the PRT). Information exchange might also be facilitated by appointing point of contacts within each organisation, preferably persons who have a good understanding of the other organisations mandate, structure and working methods. Military liaisons in important functions like the JOC might be one such example. In general, civilian staff with a military background or understanding of military structures, as well as military staff with a similar understanding of civilian structures is essential in facilitating comprehensive approaches. During VK 11 it proved to be an advantage to have an DSRSG with such a military understanding in that it enabled the different organisations to “speak the same language” during top-level meetings.

There seemed to be a link between “comprehensive” performance in the exercise and field experience. With experience comes an understanding of “who should do what”, which helped promote a comprehensive approach amongst the individuals which such experience. While knowledgeable about the concept of comprehensive approach, several participants that did not have field experience struggled more to find the right channels for cooperation. Where previous knowledge or education does not exist there must be opportunities to gain relevant understanding. During the exercise it was at times difficult for the military to accept the humanitarian principles and the need for humanitarian space. Similarly, the humanitarians did not want to accept QIP:s as a way for the military to win “hearts and minds”. Interaction between the two communities during the exercise was very realistic and a good way of overcoming differences and laying the foundation for what kind of cooperation that can, and cannot be done.

Other than challenges regarding civil-military interaction, there were some obvious challenges as regards implementing Comprehensive Approaches *within* respective organisations as well. One example already mentioned being the challenge of BFOR to manage crosscutting issues. At one point, internal disagreements within BFOR as regards to who was responsible for SSR resulted in there not being a BFOR representative at an inter-agency SSR meeting, which was a big impediment to working comprehensively. UNAMIB, and its SSR unit, who was in lead of SSR, also initially struggled to employ a comprehensive approach to SSR, neglecting to engage all relevant actors engaged in the broad spectrum of activities – security, economy, governance – relevant to SSR. The lack of presence of the UN Country Team, including the UN Development Program, which has an essential role to play in SSR, would have had a negative effect on applying a Comprehensive Approach had this been a real-life scenario.<sup>4</sup> In integrated UN missions the UN Country Team coordination has proved difficult in the field and it is clear that the challenges of the Comprehensive Approach are not solely related to civil-military relations but is also highly relevant as regards civil-civil interaction. It highlights the importance of knowledgeable staff and leadership who have a

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<sup>4</sup> The fact that there were no active players for most of the UNCT, including the UNDP, obviously affected the ability to “interact” with the Country Team during the exercise. This can be considered a major problem with the exercise in itself, and attributed to EXCON, nevertheless, the fact that the lack of presence of UNCT and UNDP in the SSR/DDR process was never, to the knowledge of our team, raised as a concern by the other participants was not positive for CA.

genuine understanding of not only their own roles and mandates but also those of others and therefore more easily recognises opportunities for fruitful interaction.

There were big differences both between and within UNAMIB and BFOR regarding knowledge about functions and processes such as DDR and SSR. This seemed to correlate to field-experience, or at least experience of having previously worked within these areas. Without an appropriate understanding of what the tasks entailed it was naturally difficult to make the connections between the various actors and functions that needed to be engaged in planning for and executing them – thus having negative results on CA. It was evident that there was not a shared understanding of e.g. DDR and what it entails amongst the participants. Such knowledge is a requirement to be able to fully work comprehensively. This highlighted the need for training and education of staff that have not had such experiences. Education and training does not necessarily have to focus on CA but rather on cross-cutting topics, such as SSR, COIN or gender where CA is crucial. This could be one way to make CA more tangible.

## **4. Impact of results on further developments of the CA concept**

To further explore the impact of CA on the SwAF, exercises such as VK11 provides an important arena to study interaction between different actors, military and civilian in peace support settings. VK11 focused very much on cooperation between two HQ:s: one UN-led civilian and one NATO-led military. The differences that one could expect to find in such an environment, in terms of culture, terminology and working procedures were all present.

The interaction during VK11 provided a learning experience for all participants. While the level and frequency of interaction might not reflect reality, it gives the participating audience a unique possibility to familiarize themselves with their counterparts in other organisations. This creates understanding of “others”, while at the same time creating networks that could be of great value in coming international engagements. Experienced participants brought real world knowledge and experience to the game while those who have no previous experience got a feeling of how it is to operate in an international environment.

A range of observations, as outlined in part 3, were made during the exercise that are relevant to the further development of the CA concept. Due to the delimitations of the CA-activity within VK 11, as well as of the exercise in itself, additional forms of analysis need to clarify how these can be managed in the future development of the CA-concept.

The observations have also resulted in a range of questions that are important to explore within the further development of COPD, as well as within the framework of the Swedish Working Group on Civil-Military Coordination. These include:

- How can the liaison function (in both civilian and military HQ:s) be developed?
- How can we contribute to improve the knowledge amongst civilians about military structures and planning processes? (What form of information, training, education is needed? Can we use LNO's for this purpose, how)?
- Could there be a usage of “CA liaison officers” or facilitators? If so, what should this function encompass?
- How are cross-cutting issues such as SSR,DDR, RoL handled in military HQ:s?
- What education and training on cross-cutting issues such as SSR and DDR should be provided to facilitate CA?
- How could differences in the civilian and military structures be managed?
- How do we ensure the best way for JOPG and other working groups to dispose of the SME expertise?
- How do we get civilians to take a greater interest in participating in COPD?
- Would the military (and civilians) benefit on educational training on what it entails to act comprehensively in a peace operation to better prepare them? What would such training comprise of?
- What prerequisites are needed for inclusive information sharing?

### **4.1. Definition of CA**

One general conclusion from VK11 was that there is no commonly understood definition of CA. On the contrary, CA seems to have a very broad range of interpretations. At the centre is often cooperation between different actors involved in a peacekeeping area. Furthermore, it is generally seen as something that happens at the tactical level, in the field, or as CIMIC. Some see CA as considering the PMESII domains through the chain of analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation.

The Viking definition of CA stated that: “CA means to ensure a coherent response to a crisis by involved contributors.” This was based on four factors:

- Promote interaction between military, civilians and police;
- Increase knowledge concerning contributors to a peace operation;
- Promote sharing of information between stakeholders;
- Stimulate cooperation supported by an implementation plan.

This definition did not seem to be properly communicated to (or understood by) the participants since it was never referred to in interviews or discussions. Unfortunately, this meant that it was not possible to test the usefulness of this definition of CA.

Another “working understanding” was presented during the educational briefings. In this understanding the CA concept focused on a few “core elements” – Communication, Understanding, information sharing; and Consultation, Cooperation and Compromise – supplemented by “principal success factors”, including Leadership, Attitudes, Comprehensive understanding of crisis, Flexibility, Common objectives or vision and, Creativity and adaptation. Towards the end of the exercise, it was determined by the presenter that the success factors “leadership” and “attitudes” should rather be seen as core elements.

There are few definitions of CA and there is certainly not one universally accepted definition of the concept. The lack of agreement on what CA constitutes is both an indicator of the need for a definition as well as of the risks associated with developing a definition since the likelihood that it will be accepted by all relevant parties is very low and disagreement might, in a worst case scenario, prevent working comprehensively. The UK MoD is one of the few actors that has developed its own definitions and describes CA as: *‘Commonly understood principles and collaborative processes that enhance the likelihood of favourable and enduring outcomes within a particular situation’*.<sup>5</sup>

Despite initially seeming harmless, this definition has received much criticism – to the degree that the UK MoD is reportedly considering withdrawing it. Should the SwAF seek to develop an understanding or definition of CA it is therefore of great importance that this is undertaken in consultation with other actors, both nationally (e.g. in the Working Group on Civil-Military Coordination) and internationally, to avoid alienating potential partners.

NATO does not have a definition of CA but the concept has been described as:

*‘an orchestration of communication of all activities in a country, coming to a well defined and well understood end state. It means that no single actor in a country is leading CA, but all actors contribute to it in such a way that their actions are all working towards that same end state’*.<sup>6</sup>

This definition might have been appropriate in Bogaland as regards interaction between BFOR, UNAMIB and EUFOR, but may have caused NATO problems elsewhere should this have been its definition. While the emphasis on communication and the statement that no one leads CA are appropriate, the “well defined and well understood end state” that is to be shared amongst all actors limits NATO’s understanding of the CA system to only a few actors. Managing the dependencies required to achieve effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability do not require aligning all actors under the same end-states.

For JCDEC, a definition of CA might be limiting, and cause further problems but a working understanding of CA is probably necessary to be able to develop and further experiment on the concept. The decision to have an understanding of CA during Viking was a good example of meeting the needs of the training audience for guidance but also of the need to have something to measure CA against. Nevertheless, for a definition to be adopted by the Swedish Armed Forces in its entirety and used as a basis for operations, the definition, as stated above, needs to be developed jointly with other organisations.

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<sup>5</sup> Brittiska försvarsdepartementet. 2006. *Joint Discussion Note 4/05, The Comprehensive Approach*, s 5-7

<sup>6</sup> Dijk. G. 2010. “Comprehensive Approach: why it is a big NATO issue”, CIOR symposium om *NATO’s Comprehensive Approach and the Role of Reservists* den 1:e augusti 2010 i Stavanger, Norge. Tillgänglig på: <http://www.cior.net/News/2010/COMPREHENSIVE-APPROACH-%E2%80%A6--and-why-it-is-a-big-NATO.aspx>

Based on the analysis from VK11, together with previous research on CA and related concepts, the following aspects would have to be considered when developing a working understanding of CA:

- There are various ways that CA could be implemented, depending on the context. A definition can therefore not just be formulated to describe the type of CA that is desired within a field-level peace operation (as in the VK scenario) but must also be able to describe for example the basics of CA at the national level (e.g. so-called Whole-of-Government approaches, 3D). Specific definitions for specific types of CA may then be added but an understanding of CA as adopted by the SwAF needs to be sufficiently generic to be able to be appropriate in a broad range of situations, including disaster management at the national level, international crisis management and peace operations.
- At its most common denominator, CA cannot be described as a process or structure but should rather be regarded as a “mindset”, “understanding” or “culture”. Accordingly, CA is not the responsibility of a single function in a military staff but rather an overarching principle that should guide all subsequent work.
- CA is a means and not an end in itself. The purpose is to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the activities undertaken within the system. CA can also result in a range of desirable effects, such as increased legitimacy of actors..
- CA is in essence an understanding of the system within which an actor exist, in particular in terms of understanding of how interdependencies within the system affects the ability of an actor to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of its activities. System-wide understanding/awareness is thus an essential element of CA
- Another fundamental, and related, component of CA is that CA entails some sort of management of the interdependencies within the system (to actively promote as much efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability as possible). This is the harmonisation or coordination aspects of CA. Other than understanding the interdependencies within the system, CA thus also requires some form of actively seeking to deal with these in a positive and mutually reinforcing way. CA= understanding + acting on the understanding.
- Terms such as “integrated” and “coherent” (such as used in the VK definition), should not be included as these indicate a more structural form of CA and thus a) fail to depict CA in its broader sense b) might put off potential partners with which interaction is sought as these may sense a risk of being incorporated into some else’s structures. Even terms such as “coordination” or “collaboration” should be avoided in a generic definition.
- For similar reasons as described above the independence of the actors within the system must be highlighted.

Core elements of a CA definition:

Mindset; System-wide; independent actors; acting on interdependencies; to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

Below is our suggestion for a *starting point* for developing a working understanding, based on the elements listed above.

*CA in crisis management can be described as each independent actor considering itself as part of a system and working to manage the interdependencies that exist within that system, based on the understanding that doing so will help achieve effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.*

This could form a basis for discussions on what a common understanding of the concept could be.