

The AURIGE Exercise and the Tactical Simulation as Seen by a Force HQ Commander (“COMEMF”)

Since I've taken up my position in September 2005 as Commander of the 3rd Force HQ (“EMF”), **my experience as far as tactical simulation is concerned** has relied on the two AURIGE exercises that I've had the opportunity to command: one for the benefit of the 1st Mechanized Brigade (1st BM) in December 2005 and the other one for the benefit of the 4th Airmobile (Air combat) Brigade (4th BAM) in March 2006. These two exercises which took place in the CP Battle Command Training Center (“CEPC”) located in Mailly brought into play the **new tactical simulator SCIPIO**, which was experimented for the first time in November 2005 during the AURIGE exercise of the 7th Armored Brigade (7th BB), at that time commanded by the 4th Force HQ.

The AURIGE exercises are used to **periodically evaluate the combined arms brigade CPs in courses of action within the framework of coercion of forces**. The commander of the Land Force Command (“COMFAT”) delegates to his Force HQ commanders the responsibility to prepare and conduct these exercises. The Force HQ supplies the overall animation. The CP Battle Command Training Center builds up the scenario and animates the OPFOR¹. It also makes available its simulation platform as well as its technical and tactical experts. Last, an evaluation team named “3A²” is set up by the Forces Employment Doctrine Center (“CDEF”) in order to help to control in detail the various operational functions that are activated by the brigade.

For several years this set up has operated to the satisfaction of all. However, the experience that I've just been through with my staff leads me to believe that **the synergy between the different players can be improved** as the new simulator, despite its imperfections, shows **a possible step forward as far as tactical evaluation with units is concerned**.

BY MAJOR GENERAL CHRISTIAN DAMAY, COMMANDER, FORCE HQ3

Developing synergy between the players

During an AURIGE exercise, the concerns of a Force HQ Commander are similar to those of a conductor who tries to obtain from his musicians the best possible overall performance. As far as I'm concerned, the fact of having the opportunity to play two exercises after an interval of three months led me to become conscious of the **improvements that can be made in terms of synergy**.

Synergy during preparation

An AURIGE exercise is a long term undertaking that requires several months of preparation. The main thing to do is to evaluate what the level of engagement for the various players will be: Force HQ, CP Battle Command Training Center, AAR team and brigade, depending on the workload that each of them will have before and during the exercise. The picture conducted in common in this way must enable to

determine, in coherency with the operational preparation directives of the Land Force Commander, the **concrete objectives to be reached**: missions to carry out, courses of action and specific assets to be employed, nature and level of complexity of the environment

proposed to the brigade. At this stage, the essential point is that these objectives must be sufficiently challenging to lead the exercise upwards without however being out of reach of the possibilities of the various players.



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Synergy and subsidiariness during the phase of conduct

This search for synergy during the preparation phase is also valid during the phase of conduct in view of optimizing the employed assets. Indeed, the priority nature of the **evaluation of the brigade CP** must not deprive the **Force HQ** of the **opportunity to train as a divisional CP**. Thus, during the 4th Airmobile Brigade AURIGE exercise, based on previous acquired experience, the 3rd Force HQ implemented a formula that one can assess as a “win-win” one. Taking advantage of the technical facilities offered by the Maily location, the intelligence and planning cells of the division CP were reinforced, whilst a *TOC (tactical operations center)* and an *AOCC (air operation co-ordination center: 3rd dimension calls for it !)* were also set up. The 3rd Force HQ was then in a position to propose to the brigade a **more complete animation** and a realistic operation of a divisional CP that favored **exchanges between specialized cells** as well as a **continuous dialogue of quality between commanders**. At the same time, the careful action of the “temple wardens”, i.e. the CP Battle Command Training Center and the AAR teams, enabled to avoid an excessive self-animation of the division CP detrimental to that of the brigade. Furthermore, the system operated correctly because the nervous center of the exercise: division CP, exercise direction, CP Training Center and AAR authorities, OPFOR commander, were co-located in the same building, enabling to reach the best possible subsidiarity. In this way the division CP was able to operate normally as long as this did not jeopardize the exercise scenario. Similarly, for each tactical sequence, the OPFOR commander selected and implemented in complete freedom the routes and assets necessary for his mission. But by doing so, the results of the various confrontations remained uncertain up till the end and, naturally, they did not always turn in the favor of the brigade. In this kind of situation, delicate to master, but which offers a **great interest within the framework of an evaluation**, the tensions amongst the players have a rapid tendency to

exacerbate. The exercise director has then to bring to a close, either by deciding to let the action continue, or on the contrary by re-launching the scenario along new bases.

Place and role of simulation with SCIPIO

All this obviously raises the fundamental issue of the place and role of simulation in tactical exercises, especially when it is the case of testing a combined arms brigade, which is the large tactical unit by excellence.

In fact, the **evaluation** must be **absolutely objective** in order to be recognized as impartial and indisputable. To this end **two conditions must be fulfilled**: first of all, ability to have a **sufficiently elaborated and mastered simulation system** so that the players cannot question its reliability and secondly, **ability to operate in dual action** during tactical phases.

In this respect, SCIPIO has already demonstrated a certain potential in the coercion mode. Even if the automates representing the various weapons systems still need to be refined, the system clearly has recalled the fundamental characteristics of combat to those who had forgotten them, i.e. for example that fires kill, that concentration of efforts and the notion of force ratio cannot be ignored, or else, within the framework of a counter-attack, the confrontation of two forces in movement can only produce uncertain results when nothing hinders

the freedom of action of one of the two parties and when intelligence at contact lacks accuracy. On the other hand, the **performances of the system** give hopes as far as the development of new automates are concerned in order to enable the implementation of courses of action such as crowd control, more adapted to the peace restoring or peace keeping missions that we are presently involved in.

Whatever the case may be, even if a great way remains to go between the improvement of automates and enhancements to be achieved in terms of friendliness and flexibility of the use of the system, the first trials of **SCIPIO** carried out during the 7th Armored Brigade and the 1st Mechanized Brigade AURIGE exercises have given **sufficiently convincing results** for an **experimental brigade tactical evaluation mandate to be issued on this account** to the National Army Training Center commander during the 4th Airmobile (Air combat) Brigade exercise. This step forward needs to be emphasized as it marks a new ambition for the AURIGE exercises, so that we no longer solely evaluate “the technique of the technique”, i.e. the organization quality and the operation of brigade CPs, but also tactics as such.

1 OPFOR: Opposing Force

2 3A = After Action Review (in French: Analyse Après Action).

However, one thing remains certain, a tactical simulator, however efficient it may be, will never be equivalent to the value of the tactical commanders responsible for the implementation of tactics: SCIPIO demonstrated this each time a mediocre maneuver carried out by an elementary unit had, as a consequence, to jeopardize the one of the tactical task force, and even that of the brigade!

This is the kind of reality that anyone might face on operation and maybe SCIPIO, taking into account its potential, one day will enable, provided we invest sufficiently in it, to simultaneously evaluate several tactical echelons!...