

Exercise Scenario

Change in leadership in ORANGE in February 1983. Criticism of policies of old government for allowing West to gain new influence in the Third World, especially the Gulf states and for failing to prevent the BLUE decision to modernise Western theatre nuclear forces in Europe.

March 1983: Continuing Iran-Iraq War, with ORANGE providing political support and some arms deliveries to Iran. Also arms deliveries to Syria and South Yemen. US expresses deep concern.

April 1983: Gulf States feel threatened by growing ORANGE involvement in the area, seek US military aid. US sends military advisors and increases naval presence.

May 1983: growing unrest in Eastern Europe

June 1983: ORANGE unable to keep its economic aid promises to Eastern Europe. Unrest increases. Also pro-ORANGE political party and pressure groups in Finland campaign against the government's policies and calls for closer alignment with ORANGE.

July 1983: ORANGE steps up propaganda campaign against the West.

August 1983: ORANGE condemns US military presence and naval deployments in the Gulf area.

August 1983: Internal situation in Yugoslavia worsens; central government faces strong challenges from pro-ORANGE elements. Major disturbances take place in Kosovo, with strong indications of an Albanian role in this unrest. Yugoslav Government approaches several Allied countries with requests for economic and military assistance.

Worsening political situation is matched by considerable increase in ORANGE military activity after the new government comes to power in February 1983. Frequent field training exercises, stockpiling of equipment, increased activity in naval dockyards, factories go on round-the-clock production.

September 1983: heavy ORANGE pressure on Finland, Northern Region NATO countries and Yugoslavia.

18 September: mobilisation exercises begin in ORANGE.

Early October – forward deployment of military aircraft. ORANGE forces around Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are at high state of readiness.

31 October – ORANGE and ORANGE Bloc forces invade Yugoslavia.

3 November – ORANGE forces cross the Finnish border.

4 November (E-3 = Three days before start of the exercise) massive air and naval attacks against BLUE installations and ORANGE invades Norway. ORANGE forces also

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cross Inner German Border, and ORANGE forces also cross into Greece while naval forces conduct attacks in the Adriatic, Mediterranean and Black Seas.

5 Nov (E-2) ORANGE leadership decides to use Chemical weapons against BLUE on 6 Nov (E-1).

6 Nov (E-1) Due to strong resistance by BLUE, ORANGE initiates selective use of chemical weapons by ORANGE.

7 Nov – Exercise begins. Increased use of ORANGE chemical weapons is reported.

8 Nov – E+1 (morning): SACEUR requests initial limited use of nuclear weapons against pre-selected fixed targets. Request is approved by political authorities (being simulated by response cells) in the evening, and the weapons were employed on the morning of 9 Nov (E+2). ORANGE aggression continued, so SACEUR requested follow-on use late on E+2. Approval was granted on the afternoon of E+3 and execution took place early on E+4. The exercise ended at mid-day on E+4.

No further details are available on the actual course of the exercise – the various incidents that were simulated, the messages sent/received - because this kind of exercise material was not preserved in the archives. All I have is the brief summary of the major events which I have given you in the above paragraph.

Participants in the Exercise (all are headquarters, not troop units, because this was a Command Post Exercise, not a Field Training Exercise)

SHAPE

AFNORTH (Allied Forces Northern Europe)

HQ NON (North Norway)
HQ SON (South Norway)
HQ BALTAP (Baltic Approaches),

AFCENT (Allied Forces Central Europe)

HQ NORTHAG (Northern Army Group)
HQ CENTAG (Central Army Group)
HQ AAFCE (Allied Air Forces Central Europe)
HQ 2 ATAF (2nd Allied Tactical Air Force)
HQ 4 ATAF (4th Allied Tactical Air Force)

AFSOUTH (Allied Forces Southern Europe)

HQ LANDSOUTH (Land Forces Southern Europe)
HQ LANDSOUTHEAST (Land Forces Southeastern Europe)
HQ AIRSOUTH (Air Forces Southern Europe)
HQ 5 ATAF (5th Allied Tactical Air Force)
HQ 6 TAF (6th Allied Tactical Air Force)
HQ NAVSOUTH (Naval Forces Southern Europe)
HQ MARAIRMED (Maritime Air Mediterranean)

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HQ SUBMED (Submarines Mediterranean)
HQ STRIKFORSOUTH (Strike Force South)
CTF 502 (Combined Task Force 502)
HQ HFA (Hellenic First Army)
HQ HTAF (Hellenic Tactical Air Force)

HQ UKAIR

JCS Washington (Response Cell)
MOD UK (Response Cell)

SACLANT (Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic) - just the Allied Command Europe representatives there.

CINCHAN – Commander in Chief Channel Command) - just the Allied Command Europe representatives there.

NATO Headquarters did not participate in the exercise; it was simulated by the DISTAFF (Exercise Directing Staff). Nations did not participate in the exercise, with the exception of the small response cells in Washington and London.

Responses to your queries

Exercise scenario (see above)

Course of exercise (see above)

Units participating (see above)

Involvement of politicians (see underlined material on page 1)

I am not aware of any units moving into the field to simulate sending message from the battlezone, and I do not believe that any such movements took place because this would not be necessary. Simulation of message traffic from the “battlezone” can be done just as easily from a headquarters as from the field.

There was apparently some movement into the field – or at least into an alternate location (where, I do not know) - by the SHAPE Alternate War Headquarters. I suspect that this was not actually the “field” because the after action reports talks about some new testbed equipment used in the exercise as being “non-ruggedised” and “non-transportable”. The ADP system was something known as Lena, which I have never heard of before, but I am not an expert on 1980s ADP equipment. The report mentioned problems with the computer’s paper tape reader due to a dusty environment. One of the things that was practiced during the exercise was shifting command from the Permanent War Headquarters to the Alternate War Headquarters.

I have no idea of what kind of signals equipment was used during the exercise and we have no records on this subject (this is a strategic level headquarters). Perhaps the Royal Signals museum (whose location I do not know) can help you.

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The SHAPE Headquarters Building has not changed much since 1983, except for the addition of many more national flags in front. I am sure that you could arrange a visit to do some filming through our PIO office.

I have no knowledge of any other ABLE ARCHER exercises being postponed and do not have the time to check all of their records.