Multiple pieces in recent Proceedings have already testified to the accelerating pace of operations in SIXTH FLEET, so I will not expound on this trend and merely state that both HST and IKE CSGs have conducted OIR strikes from the Eastern Med.\(^1\) WASP has supported Operation Odyssey Lighting from the Central Med.\(^2\) The Russian Federation Navy (RFN) is in the East Med and interacted unsafely and unprofessionally with our CRUDES. In the Baltic, the tepid RFN response to increased US and NATO presence possibly contributed to the mass firing of the Baltic Fleet Commander and 50 of his staff.\(^3\) Nevertheless, one interaction in the Baltic – a SU-24 30ft flyover DONALD COOK – was unsafe and unprofessional.\(^4\) This high OPTEMPO is challenging and for SIXTH FLEET MOC warfighters it continues to be a great opportunity to put plans into action.

For MOC professionals what is interesting, too, is the mechanics of how to ramp up to plan, execute and sustain ops with a higher tempo both for the fleet and for the staff. A key question before beginning a new operation has to be: “Do we need to adjust our battle rhythm?” Planners and watch standers do not like this question. No one likes change, especially change
which will invariably mean more watch standing, more meetings to plan and synchronize. However, as leaders it is incumbent upon us to prepare our staff and sailors for the next operation. We know it is far better to be over prepared than caught by surprise. Thus, before an operation, I usually opt for scheduling an extra sync with the stakeholders with the proviso that we can always back out of it, once the operation is established and the updates can be folded into the normal routine.

However, I also guard against the invariable human temptation on any staff to relax after things have been established as going well. This could lead to complacency and all of us know what that will bring – failure to anticipate changes in the environment, failure to take advantage of opportunities, etc.

Finally, on a different topic but also of interest to MOC professionals, C6F has just finished its second Communication Denied/Degraded Environment (C2DE) exercise in our SILENT RESPONSE series. Last year, we worked through a computer network attack to exercise C2 over a Non-combatant evacuation. This year, we fought through satellite jamming attack, which FINEX’d with a MOC-to-MOC shift of exercise C2 to the COMFIFTHFLT MOC. Both were challenging C2DE scenarios but the staff had to respond differently in each scenario to accomplish the mission. The computer network attack required much more staff ingenuity and problem solving techniques. The satellite jamming was overcome by maneuvering the communications circuits and pre-planned responses. The shift of the MOC’s required much advance planning and testing during which the JICOs discovered and fixed several technical show-stoppers. As MOCs are supposed to be standardized to 80%, you do not want to discover during an emergency shift that there’s a glitch. A MOC shift in crisis has to be a smooth process, so that you can focus on the crisis and not on the shift. We intend to incorporate MOC shifts into future SILENT RESPONSE exercises.

If you have any questions about how the SIXTH FLEET MOC runs, please don’t hesitate to send me an email: Brendan.mclane@eu.navy.(smil).mil.

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