



Naval Criminal Investigative Service

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NCIS Tech Services Field Office Identity Activities Branch Supports NATO Exercises Northern Challenge, Northern Spirit 2021

Two Identity Activity Specialists and a Supervisory Special Agent assigned to the NCIS Technical Services Field Office Identity Activities Branch provided biometrics and identity intelligence support to the NATO Northern Challenge 2021 and NATO Northern Spirit 2021 exercises October 18-28 in Keflavik, Iceland.

Exercise Northern Challenge is an annual multinational explosives ordnance disposal exercise hosted by the Icelandic Coast Guard to prepare Power for Peace, NATO, and Nordic nations for international deployments and defense against terrorism. During the exercise, EOD technicians simulated neutralizing non-explosive improved explosive devices that did not contain live ordnance. Participants included service members from the U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, Belgium, Denmark, Britain, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Hungary, Norway, New Zealand, and other U.S. federal partners.

Exercise Northern Spirit is an annual exercise hosted by the NATO Communications and Information Agency to enhance technical and operational interoperability of biometrics and identity intelligence in a scenario simulating concurrent NATO-led operations in both maritime and land joint areas of operation. Objectives included exercising the search and match of biometric data in the NATO Automated Biometric Identification system, conducting the basic I2 analysis, testing and validating the NABIS Biometrically Enabled Watchlist, and enhancing interoperability of the NATO biometric standard between ABIS and multiple vendors.

At NCIA's request, the NCIS TSFO-IA served as the chief training team and identity intelligence subject matter expert, providing scenario development, scripting support, training curriculum development, and on-site support for both Northern Challenge and Northern Spirit exercises. The NCIS TSFO-IA also conducted a training block during Northern Spirit covering topics such as NATO biometrics, NATO identity intelligence, and associated NATO-specific policy documents.

The NCIS TSFO-IA provided an Identity Activities overview brief and portable biometric collection device training to four maritime EOD teams from Norway, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. Additionally, the NCIS TSFO-IA conducted law enforcement liaison and introductory briefings with the Icelandic Coast Guard and Icelandic National Police. The support NCIS provided was the first of its kind to be included in a NATO exercise.

“Having the [TSFO-IA] support multinational exercises such as Northern Challenge/Northern Spirit 2021 provides NCIS the opportunity to showcase its technical expertise and leadership in leveraging innovative technologies, such as identity activities, that enable defense and law enforcement forces to identify, track, monitor and ultimately apprehend threat actors,” said TSFO Special Agent in Charge



Michael Robinson. “The TSFO-IA participation in these exercises also enables NCIS to conduct liaison with foreign partner forces to discuss potential operational activities that integrate with and enhance NCIS geographic field office operations and investigations that support greater Department of Defense and Department of the Navy counterterrorism, force protection, and counterintelligence objectives.”

NCIS is a federal law enforcement agency that investigates felony crime, prevents terrorism, and protects secrets for the DON. NCIS employs approximately 2,000 personnel, including 1,000 federal special agents, in 41 countries and 191 locations around the world. NCIS also assigns special agents to serve as task force officers at FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces across the country.

To learn more about NCIS, visit www.ncis.navy.mil and follow NCIS on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. To learn more about the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, visit www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism/joint-terrorism-task-forces.

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