

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE SIMULATION NETWORK (SEESIM): AN EXAMPLE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE IN THE FIELD OF CRISIS RESPONSE DEALING WITH DEVASTATING EMERGENCIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS, NATURAL OR MAN-MADE

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Abstract. The South-eastern Europe Simulation Network (SEESIM) Computer Assisted Exercise (CAX) is a series of exercises, conducted every two years, within the framework of the South-east Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) process. The purpose of the exercise is to promote cooperation, coordination and interoperability of civil-military operations and enhance crisis response within and among the SEDM nations through effective use of computer modelling and simulation (M&S). The scope of this exercise is to develop the capabilities and procedures of national and regional coordination, cooperation, and mutual assistance among the SEDM nations in the face of devastating emergencies and environmental disasters, natural or man-made.

Keywords: South-eastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM), South-eastern Europe Simulation Network (SEESIM), Joint Theatre Simulation System (JTLS), modelling and simulation (M&S).

AIMS AND BACKGROUND

The SEESIM series of exercises is a South-eastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) project aiming to increase integration, cooperation, and coordination among the SEDM nations through a series of simulation-based exercises in the area of Civil Protection. The participants are agencies and services from the Ministries of Defense, Ministries of Interior and Ministries of Environment of SEDM countries.

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The present paper is representing the development and evolution of SEESIM exercises. In addition, in Discussion, the paper presents the framework and objectives of the current exercise SEESIM 08 along with the scope of the Greek participation in SEESIM 08 and the perspectives of future exercises. Finally, it is summarised the main conclusions derived from the work presented in the present paper.

In October 2000, the Defence Ministers (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and United States) of the South-eastern Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) process endorsed a United States proposal for a South-eastern Simulation (SEESIM) Network. Through a series of simulation-based exercises, SEESIM is designed to serve as a foundation for integrating several initiatives functioning within the SEDM framework. These initiatives include the South-eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) and its Engineer Task Force (ETF), Civil-Military Emergency Planning (CMEP) workshops, and the US sponsored Partnership for Peace Information Management System (PIMS). SEESIM is also intended to be a prelude to regional live exercises and real world emergency response operations.

SEESIM 02

On 9 October, 2000, the SEDM ministers agreed to move forward on a South-eastern European Simulation Network (SEESIM)^{1,2} as a tool for integrating several related SEDM initiatives through a series of simulation-based exercises. The goal was to begin the exercises with a demonstration in 2002 using a civil emergency scenario. The ministers also agreed to establish an appropriate mechanism as a focal point for developing SEESIM and its initial demonstration.

In accordance with the statement above, the intent of SEESIM is to promote cooperation, coordination and interoperability among the nations of the South-eastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) and the SEDM Initiatives (South-eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG), Engineering Task Force (ETF), Crisis Information Network (CIN), and South-eastern Europe Civil-Military Emergency Planning Council (CMEP), etc.) through effective use of computer modelling and simulation (M&S).

The SEESIM 02 Demonstration and Exercise that took place from 14 to 24 October and between 9 and 19 December 2002, respectively, were the first in a series of a computer-simulation training events. SEESIM 02 was hosted by Greece, supported by the US and had active remote computer simulation sites in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, and SEEBRIG HQ in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Italy participated as an observer.

The key guiding principles of SEESIM 02 were to: facilitate regional cooperation, promote the testing, operation, application, and coordination of internal civil-military emergency procedures, staffs, and resources within each nation, and

reinforce the ability of SEDM members to respond to real crises. The mission of SEESIM 02 was to strengthen military support for civil protection agencies, and enhance national and regional cooperation and interoperability in the face of a devastating natural disaster. The scenario for SEESIM 02 was a series of nearly simultaneous earthquakes in multiple nations of the region. The scope of SEESIM 02, by simulating this widespread disaster was testing national plans and regional coordination for humanitarian assistance to the severely affected citizens, searching for the missing, and rapid repair of damaged communications, electricity and water supplies, dams and levees. The SEESIM 02 Demonstration and Exercise were Greek-hosted, and US-supported, computer-assisted events. Both events are based upon a computer-assisted simulation of a devastating natural disaster caused by a series of earthquakes that strike multiple nations almost simultaneously. A simulation software model called Joint Theatre Level Simulation (JTLS) and a Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) will create the simulated environment. These simulation-based events are intended to stimulate the national Military and Civil Protection Agencies, and other responding organisations, to carry out the essential tasks and responsibilities necessary to respond to the emergency.

The primary mission of SEESIM 02 participants was to conduct a successful demonstration and CAX to test and refine national and international civil-military planning and response to a series of earthquakes in the South-eastern Europe region. The secondary mission was to expose each nation to the CAX training environment.

More specifically the SEESIM 02 objectives were as follows:

a. General

(i) Exercise national civil-military emergency procedures;

(ii) Exercise the staffs of Military, Civil Protection, and other agencies, SEEBRIG HQ, and other responding bodies and organisations in each of the participating nations while planning and executing a response to a domestic natural disaster in a realistic, time-compressed environment;

(iii) Exercise the staffs of Military and Civil Protection Agencies, SEEBRIG HQ, and other responding bodies and organisations in each of the participating nations to plan and execute assistance to other nations in the region affected by a natural disaster;

(iv) Exercise emergency information exchange among the nations and with two response cells: United Nations-Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA); UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and two role-players: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC);

(v) Exercise existing communications in the participating nations;

(vi) Exercise SEEBRIG HQ procedures for regional emergency planning and response to natural disasters.

b. Interoperability

(i) Exercise regional communications and information management for civil-military emergency planning and subsequent response operations;

(ii) Exercise existing commercial phones, fax, email, and the Partnership for Peace Information Management System (PIMS) in national civil-military emergency organisations in South-eastern Europe;

(iii) Exercise international civil-military emergency procedures, connectivity, and information management.

According to SEESIM 02 scenario, objectives and Terms of Reference, each affected nation was to assess its internal damage and its ability to react to the crisis, determine what external support might be required, and make the appropriate requests for that external support. Each nation in a support role was to analyse its ability to meet potential requests for assistance, prioritise the requests received, and take the steps necessary to deliver timely support. Participating nations analysed existing bilateral and multilateral agreements that might influence predetermined responses. The primary training audiences for the SEESIM 02 Demonstration and Exercise were National Military, Civil Protection, National other agencies and SEEBRIG HQ.

SEESIM 04

SEESIM 04 (Refs 3 and 4) hosted by Turkey, with a scenario that was approved at the annual SEDM Ministerial meeting in Italy, December 11, 2002. The Concept Development Conference and Initial Planning Conference of SEESIM 04 were held in Istanbul on 17–19 September 2003 and 17–20 February 2004, respectively. The Main Planning Conference, the Final Planning Conference and the SEESIM 04 CAX were held on 2–4 June 2004, on 7–10 September 2004 on 3–12 November 2004, respectively, all in Istanbul.

SEESIM 04 was larger and more complex than its predecessor in terms of Consequence Management, Border Security, Counter-Terrorism as well as Counter-Proliferation of WMD. In SEESIM 04 9 nations participated, HQ SEEBRIG and Italy as active participants and US as supporting nation. It was involved both military and civil protection personnel and organisations, a host site in Istanbul and 10 remote sites dispersed among SEDM nations. SEESIM 04 was the second in a series of disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and/or peace support operations for the South-eastern Europe region. Participating nations were Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, and the United States (as an exercise supporter and advisor). The Exercise Control Group was established in Istanbul, Turkey. Each participating nation hosted a National Simulation Support Cell (NSSC) and participated with its civil protection agency (CPA) and responding support providers, that included the military as a minimum, and other fire and emergency response agencies. Ad-

ditionally, Joint Theatre Level Simulation (JTLS) supported the exercise. JTLS is an interactive, computer-assisted simulation. JTLS was designed as a tool for use in the development and analysis of joint and combined (coalition) operations plans, but is frequently used as a training support model. Finally, exercise objectives were as follows:

(i) Establish and employ multiple communication means to ensure contact with regional nations and activities;

(ii) Refine and publish information management techniques and procedures to facilitate regional information sharing;

(iii) Train national EOCs in their regional functions relating to counter-terrorism, including identifying deficiencies. For purposes of SEESIM 04, these procedures were limited to Consequence Management, Border Security, and Counter-Proliferation;

(iv) Practice existing procedures for border security during response to incidents of regional significance.

SEESIM 06

The third exercise in the South-eastern Europe Simulation Network (SEESIM-NET) project conducted on 08–17 November 2006. SEESIM 06 (Refs 5 and 6) was a distributed simulated Computer Assisted Exercise (CAX). The purpose of SEESIM is to promote cooperation, coordination and interoperability among the SEDM nations and the SEDM projects through effective use of computer modelling and simulation (M&S).

The exercise conducted from two Exercise Control Groups (ECGs), one located in Bucharest, Romania and the other in Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In addition, there were 9 other exercise locations, in each participating country and at HQ SEEBRIG in Constanta. Each nation trained their National Emergency Operations Center manned by civilian and military agencies. Romanian ECG Main organised in the Simulation Training Center (STC) within the General staff (located inside the National Defense University) in Bucharest. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia organised ECG Main at the Simulation centre within the Military Academy, in Skopje.

Romania and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were co-host-nations for SEESIM-06. The exercise conducted by military and civilian agencies of all eleven SEDM nations and HQ SEEBRIG (South-eastern Europe Brigade Headquarter) with remote sites in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, and Ukraine. The United States were exercise supporter and advisor and Sweden was the technical advisor of the exercise. Other exercise participants include international organisations related to disaster relief operations are UNOCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), EADRCC (Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordi-

nation Centre), IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), RACVIAC (Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre), EU-MIC (European Union Monitoring and Information Centre, as an observer) among others. In addition to the exercise participants, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Serbia were invited as observers.

SEESIM 06 based on a couple of large-scale natural environmental disaster events (flooding and earthquakes) and potential terrorist threats to SEDM nations. Exercise aims were to improve procedures for timely information exchange between national and regional coordination centres and train national Emergency Operational Centres (EOCs). Furthermore, it aims to improve regional procedures for coordination of humanitarian assistance, consequence management and disaster response operations. The exercise will also promote cooperation between civil and military emergency planning authorities.

DISCUSSION

The South-eastern Europe Simulation Network Computer Assisted Exercise named SEESIM 08 (Refs 7 and 8) will take place 22–31 October 2008 in the Bulgarian National Military Training Center (BNMTC) ‘Charalitzia’⁹. This is the fourth Exercise in the SEESIM series, following SEESIM 02 hosted by Greece, SEESIM 04 hosted by Turkey, SEESIM 06 co-hosted by Romania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Bulgaria is the Host Nation for SEESIM 08. The United States and Sweden are Supporting Nations for the Exercise. The Exercise includes military and civilian agencies of the SEDM nations Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine. The Exercise Control Group Main will be in the BNMTC. Remote sites of the Exercise Control Group and National Crisis Centers (Emergency Operation Centers – EOCs) will be activated in all participating nations. South-eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) Headquarters will participate in Istanbul, Turkey with a Crisis Engineer Cell. Other potential participants include international organisations such as UN OCHA, IFRC, NATO EADRCC, EU MIC, DPPI and RACVIAC. Additionally, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia will attend the Exercise as observers. The scenario will highlight some of the priorities specified by the SEDM Ministers, including commitment to contribute to NATO efforts to strengthen security, stability and lasting peace in South-eastern Europe and support of International efforts in the Global War on Terrorism. This will enhance Regional Communications, Information Management and subsequent Response Operations, Regional Information Sharing, Confronting Transitional Issues, Consequence Management, Counterterrorism, Counter-proliferation and Border Security and will promote the strengthening of capabilities of both allies and partners.

The purpose of the Exercise is to stimulate national Civilian/Military Agencies from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense and from Civil Protection structures in the participating nations to carry out essential tasks and responsibilities in response to emergencies. According to the intent of the Exercise, consequence management is defined as actions taken to mitigate a terrorist event and manmade or natural disasters. Also, it is worth noticing the fact that SEESIM 08 is not designed to practice engaging terrorists. The aim of the present Exercise is to:

- (i) Exercise national and international civilian and military organisations in Southeastern Europe;
- (ii) Practice and improve standard procedures and the timely exchange of information between national and regional coordination centers;
- (iii) Promote the application of internal procedures and coordination among appropriate national civil and military organisations;
- (iv) Present multiple complex problems to participants in a short period of time;
- (v) Offer challenges to the decision makers and their processes;
- (vi) Test and evaluate emergency response communication and coordination procedures;
- (vii) Avoid expenses associated with moving large numbers of participants and equipment through distributed simulations;
- (viii) Enhance national and regional simulation capabilities.

The Broad Scenario is designed to enhance the exercise scope by utilising the achievements of other important SEDM initiatives such as ‘Defence/Military Support to WMD Counterproliferation, Border Security, and Counterterrorism (CBSC)’. The major national and regional objectives of SEESIM 08 are to:

- (i) Promote national and international/regional preparedness and cooperation between civil and military emergency planning officials and ministries of interior in an effort to mitigate the effects of terrorist activities, transnational threats or natural disasters; increase national capabilities to respond to such events or activities;
- (ii) Practice timely information exchange between nations and international organisations; identify procedures which facilitate information flow; enhance national/regional ability to quickly respond to potential terrorist or Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Explosive (CBRNE) proliferation activities or mitigate the effects of manmade or natural disasters.

The Broad Scenario for SEESIM 08 is defined as:

‘A series of terrorist attacks and incidents occur throughout South-eastern Europe. The resulting destruction and loss of life prompts national Civil Protection and Military/Civilian agencies from Ministries of Defence and Interior to perform essential tasks and exercise the responsibilities necessary to respond to national and regional emergencies. These tasks include promoting regional cooperation in the South-eastern Europe and the Black sea area, fighting terrorism, consequence

management, border security, counter-terrorism, and counter-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), confronting transnational threats, promoting building allies and partners capability, promote Maritime Domain Awareness, conduct crisis response.’

For the purpose of this exercise, consequence management is defined as actions taken to mitigate a terrorist event – for example, measures to protect public health and safety, restore essential government services, and provide emergency relief to those affected by consequences of terrorism and disasters.

SEESIM 08 is being supported by the United States and Sweden. The United States is continuing to provide executive assistance and technical support throughout the planning process and execution. Sweden is providing technical and operational expertise in the areas of civil-military cooperation. The active participation of several International Organisations (IOs) and role-playing of others will help provide a more realistic training experience.

ESIM 08 ORGANISATION

Participating nations and SEEBRIG HQ have developed National Scenarios designed to achieve the goals specified in the SEESIM 08 Broad Scenario. National Scenarios will promote regional communications and information sharing, as well as information management and subsequent response operations. A synchronised Main Event List/Main Incident List (MEL/MIL) and simulation will drive the exercise. SEESIM 08 is designed to address significant issues in the region and promote regional cooperation in dealing with those issues.

Exercise Control (EXCON) constitutes the control organisation that allows the training audience to develop and practice coordination procedures and accomplish the exercise objectives. EXCON includes controllers, liaison officers, response cells replicating national elements, role players, after-action review (AAR) personnel, and scenario manager. EXCON Main will be located in ‘Charalitzza’, Bulgaria.

The training audience is the national Emergency Operations Centers (EOC). These EOCs consist of personnel from national Civil Protection and Military/Civilian agencies from the Ministries of Defence and Interior. These personnel are responsible for performing essential tasks in response to national and regional emergencies. Personnel in each national EOC will conduct planning to coordinate assistance from national and international organisations, as well as surrounding nations in response to a crisis situation in their country. They will react to exercise events they receive and will coordinate with role players and other EOCs to request and offer assistance as required.

Response cells are composed of personnel who simulate the activities of agencies that may interact with the training audience. For SEESIM 08, the national role players in the EXCON Forward and International Organisations Cell will act as response cells. They will respond to requests for assistance from the training

audience and provide notional resources (equipment, personnel, supplies, etc.) that the training audience will use during their planning process. The EOCs will receive pre-scripted exercise events from controllers and take the appropriate action.

Role players are members of EXCON who represent specific agencies/organisations during the exercise and make decisions for those agencies/organisations in response to questions or requests from the training audience. These organisations include national or international organisations that are expected to be involved in national and regional emergencies.

Controllers are personnel whose primary responsibility is to create the environment in which the exercise objectives, as well as other areas of emphasis may be achieved. Controllers have access to all information provided to the training audience and response cells. They communicate through established channels and alter response cell actions to control the progress and direction of the exercise. All changes to the progress and direction of the exercise must be approved by the Exercise Director.

For SEESIM 08, the Joint Theatre Level Simulation (JTLS) will be used. One JTLS workstation will be provided for each nation to enter unit movement directives issued by the EOC. JTLS is used only as a control tool to maintain situational awareness and monitor resource availability for each nation. The training audience will not have direct access to the simulation.

White Cell meetings are held daily to provide a forum to review the events of the past 12 h and preview the next 24 h. The SEESIM 08 White Cell meetings will be a forum for the Exercise Director to review the status of the exercise and issue guidance for implementation. This meeting will be held at the end of each exercise day. Appendix 3, SEESIM 08 White Cell Meetings, establishes responsibilities and procedures for conducting the daily White Cell meetings.

Training for training audience personnel is conducted through a series of training workshops that were conducted in April 2008 (Ankara, Turkey) and another one in September 2008 (Zagreb, Croatia). In the same framework, 'Athens SEESIM 08 International Conference: CBRN Defense and Response to Terrorism' took place in Athens on 21–23 May 2008, hosted by Greek MoD. Training for EXCON personnel will be conducted in September and October 2008.

To help manage the exercise, the master scenario is organised into a Main Event List/Main Incident List (MEL/MIL). The MEL/MIL describes the events that drive the anticipated course of the exercise scenario. Individual events were scripted prior to the exercise by each participating delegation and will be injected by the appropriate MEL/MIL Tracker or role player at a pre-determined time. Additional events are scripted during the exercise as required. During the exercise design for SEESIM 08, exercise objectives were analysed in relation to the core scenario. The analysis provided the basis for a list of scenario events that facilitates attainment of the exercise objectives. Scenario events are the vehicles that trigger

the training audience information flow and coordination processes. The scenario was examined to determine how best to inject scripted events into the exercise play. The MEL/MIL injects will be the primary tool for sending information to the training audience.

GREEK PARTICIPATION

As regards the Greek participation in the present exercise, it is the first time in the SEESIM series that the spectrum of participating national agencies is so wide. Up to today, in the preparation phase, agencies from Ministry of National Defense along with others from the Ministries of Interior, Environment, Public Health and Mercantile Shipping have had a close cooperation for preparing the Greek involvement in SEESIM 08. The main focus of Greek participation is the familiarisation of the Greek Training Audience to existing plans coping with consequence management in the aftermath of large scale man made or natural disasters with devastating environmental impact. Another of equal importance goal for Greek participation is the promotion of effective and close cooperation of the involved domestic agencies in order to open new and deepens existing paths for inter-ministerial cooperation in the face of imminent crises in the field of civil and environmental protection. The corner-stone of this effective cooperation was the undoubted success of the ‘Athens SEESIM 08 International Conference: CBRN Defense and Response to Terrorism’¹⁰, where operational agencies along with academic institutions presented to an international audience innovative concepts. Notably, the conference was part of the preparation for SEESIM 08.

SEESIM FUTURE

During the preparation phase of the present exercise a survey was conducted in order to make a list regarding the benefits gained by the participating nations in SEESIM series and to create an inventory of nations perceptions regarding future SEESIM exercises¹¹. As regards the former, in some SEESIM member countries Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, and SEEBRIG HQ SEESIM ‘Lessons Learned’ were an **important component** in the:

- (i) Introduction of new legislation and in the review and amendment of existing legislation relating to civil emergencies, crisis management, rescue operations, etc.;
- (ii) Clarification and definition of civil protection regulations;
- (iii) Distribution and specification of support functions among pertinent Ministries, agencies and public organisations;
- (iv) Reorganisation of the capabilities and responsibilities of the various emergency response organisations;

(v) Transformation of post World War II national civil defense systems into post-independence crisis management systems;

(vi) New SEESIM member countries are actively seeking to incorporate SEESIM 'Lessons Learned' into the institutional and legislative bases of their civil protection and emergency management systems now under construction;

(vii) Most SEESIM member nations underscored the continued importance and utility to their individual nations and the region of the current SEESIM planning cycle and computer-assisted Exercise (CAX), procedures, objectives, results, and lessons learned.

Regarding the national perspectives for further development in future exercises several proposals were submitted. However, no SEESIM member nation proposed any radical change that would fundamentally alter the thrust, direction or character of the SEESIM project. With two exceptions, new proposals offered were intended to be additions to the current SEESIM project rather than changes or substitutions. The two exceptions were proposals to:

(i) Actively involve key personnel and real forces and their capabilities in SEESIM Exercises;

(ii) Replace national scenarios with one general scenario for each SEESIM Exercise to be drafted by a Team (unspecified) and refined by participating nations.

The remaining new proposals were to:

(i) Hold Expert Workshops on: (a) Energy critical infrastructure protection (CIP) issues; (b) Civil-Military Emergency Planning (CMEP); (c) global information system (GIS);

(ii) Request PIMS upgrade and strengthen the PIMS system (Emergency Information Network (EIN)) in SEDM nations to better support civil protection in accordance with SEESIM lessons learned;

(iii) SEESIM participating nations to draw up an inventory of unclassified information on significant industrial facilities associated with hazardous materials, specifying the substance, quantity, geographical location, and potential risk to people and the environment;

(iv) Offer SEESIM exercises as an opportunity to test the viability and efficiency of the Civil-Military Emergency Planning (CMEP) Council for South-east Europe, and test the CMEP Council portal during a SEESIM Exercise.

CONCLUSIONS

In the present paper has been presented a brief overview of SEESIM series of exercises and the way that exercise has developed and evolved to its present state. Additionally, it has made an approach in the benefits gained by the participating nations and presented also their views regarding SEESIM future development. Also, from the above analysis it is evident that SEESIM has been evolved in a

forum that promotes regional cooperation in South-eastern Europe in the field of civil protection^{12,13}. Besides, it is clear that SEESIM turns out to be a driving force, for all participating nations, that helps to reinforce and develop the framework and concepts that deal with domestic civil protection response.

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