MASA's Sword Prepares French Army for Civil Response

The terrorist attacks in Paris in November tragically highlighted the need for a rapid, coordinated response from the military and security services.

The French Army had already increased its presence on French streets under Operation Sentinelle in response to the attacks in Paris on 7-9 January 2015, including the Charlie Hebdo attack.

Following the events of November 13, the Sentinelle deployment was increased to 10,000 military personnel, while more than 50 units were mobilized to deal with the increasing number of participants in Operation Sentinelle 7.

The French Army was already restructuring its simulation systems and how it conducts command training, but the events this past year have underscored the need for more effective training to assure force readiness.

Chef d'escadrons Thierry Cadot, French Army program manager for simulation, told *Show Daily* that while command posts have been using simulation in order to perfect their procedures for more than 15 years, integrated solider training was a more recent development.

"It was developed when battalions discovered the real value brought by simulation, its low cost and the possibility to repeat indefinitely," Cadot explained. "In the French Army, preparation for operational engagement using simulation includes: preparation for the future, operation support, and force readiness – both group and individual training."

"This is a major topic for the French Army and today there are sufficient dedicated resources for it – the rationalization of tools has been identified as a key factor and was taken into account when designing the operational simulation system for the French Army."

He said the French Army started a rationalization of its many simulation systems in 2013, opting for MASA Sword, which will replace the legacy SCIPIO, Janus and Romulus systems.

"Nowadays all training is entirely digitalized, bringing real value to command post training. SOULT is the complete system assembled by the French Army, in which Sword v6 is the leading engine."

The French Army is now fully using Sword and only Sword and not adding any other layers of software integration.

In October it was announced that the army had acquired a global license for Sword to facilitate its wider fielding.

MASA Group President and CEO Juan-Pablo Torres said that while the earlier versions of SCIPIO were also based on Sword, this was the first time the system was being used for all software applications.

"The big difference is the French Army is now fully using Sword and only Sword and not adding any other layers of software integration or user interface as they did in the past. What is the significance of this? First of all, it is less expensive because you don't have an additional layer of software developed by a systems integrator," Torres explained.

"But you still maintain the customization capability thanks to what we have been trying to develop with Sword in past years, which is maintaining a very modular software that can be customized very easily."

The latest version of Sword is being deployed in the Training Centre for Command Posts (CEPC) in Mailly, and as of mid-2016 it will be fully operational in the engineering training school, replacing JANUS. Then SOULT will replace JANUS in other training schools in the French Army and will have fully replaced JANUS by the end of 2017.

Chef d'escadrons Thierry Cadot

By 2018, Sword will be installed in the French Army's 77 regiments.

Cadot said "for strictly technical reasons", live, virtual and constructive training will not be attempted until the second phase of the Scorpion army modernization program in 2025-2030.

Torres noted that the French High Committee for Civil Defense (HCFDC) had also used Sword earlier this year to enhance the potential response to a scenario involving a violent flood in Paris.

Around 500 representatives from 15 organizations took part in a two-day training exercise based on the occurrence of two weeks' of major flooding in the streets of Paris.

Staged on 29-30 September, the exercise was based on the catastrophic 1910 Great Flood of Paris, during which the Seine rose 8m above its usual seasonal level.

Sword simulated the flow of water and the impact of rising flood levels on the city's infrastructure, while testing the participants' reactions and response.

Given that Paris has historically experienced a major flood every 100 years, authorities are concerned that the next one is overdue.