

The 128,000-strong French Army is in the process of enhancing its simulation capabilities in response to the adoption of new equipment, restructuring and operational deployments. Maj Thierry Cadot, SOULT programme manager at CEISIM, the service's simulation requirements organisation, talks to **Trevor Nash** about current and future programmes.



Enhancing training

The French Army has around 20,000 troops currently deployed on operations and the training required for these deployments is increasingly being provided by simulation. Through its Scorpion programme, which is a modernisation of all arms and inter-agency collaborative training, new procurements are now taking place. The latest is a constructive training system known as SOULT (Simulation pour les Opérations des Unités interarmes et de la Logistique Terrestre).

A diverse portfolio

The French Army is no stranger to constructive training systems and has a number of different applications in service. The challenge of maintaining this diverse portfolio of products was the main reason for the creation of the SOULT project. 'Three years ago, the French armed forces began a rationalisation process of its simulation systems, and on the constructive simulation side, SOULT will thus replace [legacy systems] SCIPPIO, Janus and Romulus,' explained Cadot.

Based on MASA's Sword, SOULT is designed to interface with the French Army's range of communication and battlefield management systems to provide a seamless training environment for 'division, brigade and battalion staffs', Cadot explained. 'This entirely digitalised training brings a real value to command post training.'

As well as replacing older constructive training systems, the French Army's Sword global licence will allow SOULT to be deployed more widely. Current plans will

see the system employed at the CEPC command post training centre at Mailly-le-Camp, five central training schools and 77 battalion-size units by 2018.

MASA is providing a three-year support contract, as well as delivering a series of product enhancements. Asked to elaborate, Cadot said that one 'foreseeable extension for Sword lies with its deployment to the French CBRN and logistics training schools, and for use by other specialised organisations'. Sword will provide an artificial intelligence capability within SOULT that was lacking in older systems, meaning that fewer personnel are required to conduct exercises to act as role-players.

This results in training centres being able to reduce the number of operators and improve realism, explained Cadot. 'Moreover, thanks to its cloud deployment and operator interface, Sword is easier to use than the older constructive training systems that are currently in service.'

Sophisticated expansion

As well as constructive training, the use of sophisticated systems for individual and collective training is also set to expand. The French Army sees this as falling under three headings: virtual training to improve technical skills; virtual technologies – specifically first-person shooter games – to improve low-level tactical skills; and finally, live training systems to meld together technical and tactical 'know-how in hard psychological conditions'. Other changes are also planned.

“ Preparation for operational engagement requires highly capable simulation systems. ”

'The French Army is considering connecting constructive and virtual tools in order to simulate technical-tactical exercises,' said Cadot. '[From] a strictly operational point of view, the French Army is not trying to develop LVC distributed simulation. On the other hand, for strictly technical reasons, LVC will be implemented in the second stage of the Scorpion programme, with dynamic embedded simulation around 2025-2030.'

As well as the continued implementation of SOULT, two other major projects on the horizon are Project Cerberus to provide enhancements to the CENTAC force-on-force live training centre at Mailly-le-Camp and the addition of instrumented buildings at the CENZUB MOUT training site at Sissone.

The future looks to be a very busy one for the French Army's CEISIM organisation and its drive to adopt new LVC simulation systems. In the words of Cadot: 'Preparation for operational engagement requires highly capable simulation systems to support force readiness. This is a major topic for the French Army and today we have the dedicated resources to determine our simulation requirements.' ■