



Challenge: To select a commercial, off-the-shelf solution that would meet the demanding requirements of both national defence and international operations

Solution: Digital TETRA radio terminals from Sepura for use in active operations and training across the army and to communicate with allied forces and emergency services

Results: Successful implementation of a highly flexible but standardised and commercially available system, based on common technology and guaranteed to perform in tough battlefield conditions

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Background

Since 2000, Norway's armed forces have undergone a major programme of investment and modernisation of resources and equipment. The goal has been to create a defence structure that reflects modern times and needs, and that enhances the country's ability to perform and deliver on its national and international commitments. Indeed, international operations have become a prioritised area for Norwegian Defence. The country is strongly committed to demonstrating its ability to contribute to a more stable world, as a NATO alliance partner and participant in UN implementation forces.

A communications infrastructure to keep pace with change

For the Norwegian Army, creating a modern communications infrastructure, capable of supporting both national security and international commitments has been a critical part of this activity.

As well as contributing to international operations, there is a strong focus on the national mobilisation capabilities of its armed forces along with the ability to co-function with the national emergency network. The move to a TETRA (terrestrial trunked radio) digital infrastructure, with its secure, encrypted communications and comprehensive data capabilities, was a critical step.

“When we were defining our requirements in 2002, voice and data were key to our concept of mobile operations. In addition, we wanted to ensure any communications technology we chose exactly fulfilled user needs,” explains Captain Odd Erik Kallokken of the Norwegian Army Signals Division. Selection of the right handset for its forces personnel was therefore a key consideration of the total infrastructure solution.

"We wanted to ensure we had a handset that was durable enough to use in the most demanding of conditions, was user-friendly and also capable of supporting interoperable communications in both national and international operations," says Captain Kallokken.

Meeting a multitude of needs

After extensive trials, the Norwegian Army selected the Sepura SRP2000 terminal as part of its new battlefield system, which went live first time during the summer of 2003. The hand-held device fulfilled a multitude of requirements.

"From a user perspective, we wanted a handset that was lightweight and compact in size, offered similar functionality to GSM, and was ruggedised to cope with battlefield conditions, including the dramatic conditions of our own winter climate" says Captain Kallokken.

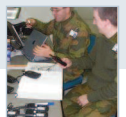
Weighing just 199g with a standard battery pack and 233g with a high-capacity battery, the SRP2000 is built to withstand the harsh conditions encountered by military personnel. Featuring protection against dust and water, and capable of withstanding drops and vibration, the handset can operate in temperatures of -20°C to +60°C. In the army's tests, the SRP2000 survived being driven over by a truck in Iraq and was still able to operate.

The SRP2000 can be used within a fleet of hand-portables and mobiles, with little or no special training, something that has proved valuable in terms of deployment to army personnel.

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Cost-effective and easy to manage

This is the first time that the Norwegian Army has developed a system using commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) equipment. And the deployment of approximately 350 SRP2000 handhelds supported the Army's new strategy for fast, low-cost implementation.



"Taking the COTS route was really important to us," confirms Captain Kallokken. "The SRP2000 needed no hardware or software revision and provided us with communications to recognised standards. In addition, it offered simplified, fast programming and asset-management processes. All these features contributed to achieving the financial and operational benefits we hoped for."

For the future, the drive to standardise systems on common technology will continue. The Norwegian Army will continue to refine its high quality voice and data integration solution, working in partnership with Sepura to further optimise the human interface or menu structure of the SRP2000, in order to meet user needs.

"The success of multinational peacekeeping operations depends on interoperable communication systems and equipment," concludes Captain Kallokken. "There is also an increased emphasis on civil and military co-operation, which is why communications based on recognised standards like TETRA will continue to be a priority."