



NATO Photo

Beach landing teams in Scotland in September 2003 during Exercise "Northern Lights", where Allied Command Transformation carried out its first NATO experiments.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING CHANGE IN NATO

by Lieutenant-General J.O. Michel Maisonneuve



**"The only constant is change itself."**

For decades, the management of change has provided business professionals with controversial subject matter to explore and debate. The 1990s were especially rife with articles and books touting the opportunities and pitfalls associated with 'change management', 'continuous improvement', and 're-engineering' — three of a host of buzzwords developed by the gurus. To cope with change, many organizations created temporary staff divisions that were intended to remain in existence only as long as the march towards an 'end-state' continued. Today, however, it is acknowledged that change may not be a march towards an end state at all, but instead may be a perpetual state of affairs. So the next step in the transformation of 'change management' would seem to be the creation of specific organizations whose mandate is to manage change, and, further, to promote innovation, experimentation and lateral thinking. Change has gone from being a negative activity that needed to be managed to a positive one that should be promoted and encouraged.

The US military began to see the need ten years ago, and mandated one of their Unified Commanders with the task of managing change. Just four years ago, this organization was renamed Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), and 'transformation' was added to the list of its missions. NATO has now taken a similar step, and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) was brought into existence on 19 June 2003, with its (Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation — HQ SACT) in Norfolk, Virginia.

This article addresses NATO's efforts to transform by setting out what transformation means in NATO and discussing the manner in which transformation will be applied within the Alliance.

### WHAT IS TRANSFORMATION?

NATO sees transformation as a process and not an end-state; what is important is the journey, not the destination. Managing transformation implies always looking ahead for new concepts, ideas and technology, and quickly integrating the useful ones into all aspects of the organization — its capabilities, doctrine, training, and education. In NATO, transformation will underpin a new concept for future joint and combined warfighting. It is a cyclical process, requiring a different mindset, a different culture. For this reason, an organization such as ACT can serve as a forcing agent for change, as it is a recognized feature of change management that institutional inertia will be an obstacle to required change.

ACT will be both a sensor and a catalyst for transformation. It will be a two-way street for bridging military and security thinking intellectually, culturally, and, ultimately, technically, on a constant basis across the Atlantic.

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## WHY NATO NEEDS TO TRANSFORM

For several reasons, there has been intense pressure on NATO to transform. First, the post-9/11 security context made change imperative. The transformation of defence into security, and the threat from bi-polar to asymmetric, has led to the need for a commensurate response from security organizations. A 'platform-oriented' military culture must mutate into network-oriented systems, and there must be a progression from deconfliction of separate warfighting entities to the full integration of service capabilities.

Even before the events of 11 September 2001, NATO had begun to realize that out-of-area operations could provide a relevant role for its capabilities. Historic decisions taken at the Heads of State and Government Summit in Prague in November 2002 cemented this thinking, and resulted in the creation of the NATO Response Force (NRF), changes to the command structure, and an effort to encourage nations to commit capabilities that were lacking.

At the same time, there was acknowledgement that an intellectual and technological gap in warfighting concepts and capabilities between the US and other Alliance nations was increasing. One way to reduce the gap and remain abreast of new developments within the US was for NATO to ensure that the transatlantic link remained strong. Only thus would NATO be able to provide forces to operate alongside or with the US, be it in high-intensity warfighting, counter-insurgency or peace operations.

## THE CREATION OF ACT

One of the structural decisions made at the Summit in Prague was to go from two strategic operational commands to one (ACE), with the other (ACLANT) becoming a functional transformational command.

Supreme Allied Command Atlantic (SACLANT) had been an operational command concerned with security of the sea lines of communications, and its area of responsibility (AOR) consisted of the Atlantic Ocean. The decision to restructure NATO meant that the new command's AOR would become the future.

**"In NATO, transformation will underpin a new concept for future joint and combined warfighting."**

The SACT Headquarters structure was developed using a strict business modeling approach, which enabled effective management of the five basic processes underpinning transformation (See Figure 1). With this new command, lateral

## Five "Pillars" of Transformation



Figure 1 – Five 'Pillars' of Transformation

thinking has in effect been institutionalized, since every issue is examined from at least 19 (soon to be 26) different cultural views!

ACLANT was decommissioned on 19 June 2003, and its flag lowered from the mast after more than 50 years of effective service. Allied Command Transformation was then officially born, and Admiral Ed Giambastiani of the US Navy was appointed as its commander by the NATO Secretary-General. In that Admiral Giambastiani also commands JFCOM on the US side, NATO achieves significant synergy from his appointment.

The new role of ACT is simple. It is NATO's forcing agent for change (See Figure 2), and it has begun to influence all aspects of NATO's activities.

## BRINGING CHANGE TO THE ALLIANCE

ACT sees its principal 'customer' as the Strategic Command for Operations (SACEUR) and the operations NATO is currently running. This means that any innovation developed in any of the realms that are studied can be applied as soon as feasible to ongoing operations.

### ACT VISION STATEMENT

*NATO's forcing agent for change, leading the continuous improvement of Alliance capabilities to uphold NATO's global security interests.*

Figure 2



NATO Photo

British and Dutch helicopters aboard the Royal Netherlands Navy's landing craft Rotterdam during Exercise "Northern Lights".

The members of the Alliance are the other 'customers'. All NATO nations are currently undergoing some level of transformation in structure, doctrine and operational concepts. There is thus synergy in ACT being a virtual 'hub' for transformation, where good ideas are passed from nation to nation and to the entities and partners of ACT. (See Figure 3) One important asset of SACT Headquarters is its co-location in Norfolk with Headquarters JFCOM, so NATO can easily stay abreast of transformational developments within the US military.

changed from a system of post-mortem-type collection of data to an immediate feed-back loop made possible by the deployment of lessons-learned teams at the outset of missions. Through the coordination of educational curricula of NATO establishments, we hope to ensure that the newest concepts are taught and understood, as well as challenged.

The jewel in the transformational crown is the NATO Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) which was opened on 23 October 2003 in Stavanger, Norway. This Centre will have both a static and deployable training mandate, enabling the training of command elements of NATO forces. It will perform interoperability activities and experimentation, as well as training. As an example of its capabilities, General Tommy Franks and his team rehearsed and trained for months at the US equivalent to the JWC before undertaking Operation "Iraqi Freedom". This new entity will enable the Alliance to build staff skills and bring joint components together — to train instead of exercising.

One of the most useful tools for bringing transformational ideas to fruition is the NATO Response Force (NRF). This network-enabled joint and combined force is meant to be the first line of operations for the Alliance. As well, it will be the mechanism with which ACT experiments and applies new NATO operational concepts to ensure success in operations. The Joint Warfare Centre will be used to train the command elements of the NRF before every rotation.

### ACT as the HUB of Transformation

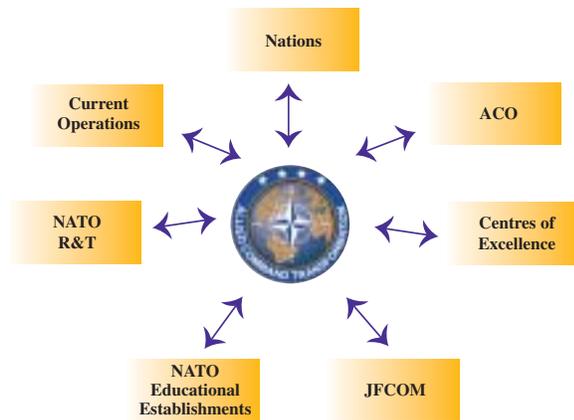


Figure 3

The command will use a system of coordinated concept development and experimentation to examine new ideas and bring them to full capability. We hope to bring coherence to NATO research and development through the coordination of all programmes. We have already improved the existing system of lessons learned by making it much more dynamic; this has

### CANADIAN OPPORTUNITIES

Innovation, forward thinking and development of new concepts make working in SACT Headquarters very exciting, and there are a number of new opportunities for Canada and Canadians. Canada has always been a

very important player in the NATO arena, not only for our considerable financial support, but also for the intellectual horsepower we bring to the table.

The CF are in the process of rebalancing the numbers of positions between the two Strategic Commands (SACEUR and SACT) to ensure that SACT receives a greater complement of CF personnel. SACT needs people from all three environments who are willing to challenge the status quo, who will not be satisfied to do things the same way they were done before, and who have energy to work on the things they do NOT know, as opposed to those they do know. Many of the right people exist in the Canadian Forces and in DND.

To ensure Canada gets the benefit of the innovations being developed within ACT and throughout other nations of the Alliance, the CF are endeavouring to place a Canadian National Liaison Representative (NLR) team in Norfolk, led by a Colonel/Captain (N) who will be SACT Headquarters' direct conduit into Canada's defence transformational agency (for the moment, the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (DCDS) Group). This NLR will likely be accredited both to the US and to NATO, so again synergy can be developed and we can tap into both efforts.

For the CF, there may be merit in considering the creation of our own Transformation Command or entity that would regroup all organizations currently performing transformational activities. Only through this mechanism will the CF have a coordinated programme with people who wake up every morning and think about innovation.

**“The new role of ACT is simple: it is NATO's forcing agent for change.”**

## CURRENT CONCERNS

**M**ajor concerns for ACT centre around resources, personnel, and credibility.

Transformation entails costs, and as our own country has realized, resources must be expended now to ensure they can be saved or used more efficiently later. SACT Headquarters is an entirely new entity, with no resource baseline, and in the current climate of financial constraint, arguments for resource requirements must be compelling indeed. Simply put, nations must be prepared to pay for the decisions they have made.

In terms of personnel, the former SACLAN Headquarters staff numbered about 400. The structure of the new SACT Headquarters will consist (conservatively) of some 550 positions, and it needs the additional 150 people to have the capacity to do the needed work. Member nations have been asked to fill the empty billets, but so far these requests are slow in being met.

**“...The future relevance of the Alliance rests with the member nations believing that NATO can transform and adapt to the new security environment.”**

It is well understood that the credibility of the new command hinges on its transformational product, so strong emphasis has been placed on the achievement of some early ‘deliverables’. Less than one month after the stand-up of the command, SACT hosted a seminar in Stavanger on observations from the Iraq conflict. The US, the UK and coalition partners, including Australia, briefed nations on issues that may become lessons to be reinserted into ongoing and future operations.

SACT has developed a training package for the NRF, which will achieve full operational capability within a few years. The dynamic lessons-learned process in ISAF was mentioned earlier. Then too, a study seminar for Alliance defence ministers was conducted in Colorado Springs in October, and the former Secretary-General, Lord Robertson, termed it the most successful such event of his tenure. So SACT has started delivering, and will do more.

There is no doubt that the future relevance of the Alliance rests with the member nations believing that NATO can transform and adapt to the new security environment, and that there is strength in fostering innovation and improvement of capabilities through a robust Allied Command Transformation. As Lord Robertson has stated, if ACT delivers only 30 percent of what it promises, it is better than what we have in place now. It is the intention of all who serve there to ensure we deliver much more.

[www.act.nato.int](http://www.act.nato.int)



NATO Photo

Allied Command Transformation deployed a NATO Lessons Learned Team to ISAF shortly after the take-over of the mission by NATO in September 2003.