



**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER  
TRANSFORMATION**

**SACT's REMARKS to**

**Alliance Revitalized**

**Session 3**

**Washington D.C., 15th December**

**Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER**



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Ambassador,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure and a privilege for me to take part in this third conference of the “Alliance Revitalized” project.

First of all, I would like to thank Dan (Hamilton) and Hans (Binnendijk) for their kind welcome and introductory words as well as for the organization of this conference series.

It is also an opportunity for me to thank in person the Centre for Transatlantic Relations (CTR), the Atlantic Council, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the German Marshall Fund and the Centre for a New American Security (CNAS) for their cooperation and commitment to strengthening our Alliance by bringing innovative insights together which will help prepare its future.

I am convinced your final report will feed the preparatory discussions for the Warsaw Summit and have a significant impact, just as the Alliance Reborn report did in 2008.



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After reading the takeaways from the two previous editions, I was impressed by the depth of the reflections and your willingness to address all of NATO's security challenges, without shying away from controversial topics.

I believe in frank and honest debates about the fundamental questions our Alliance needs to address, and about how we ensure its current and future relevance as well as its credibility.

These candid discussions are the best way to encourage trust and confidence between Allies and Partners and to reach consensus on the way forward to preserve our Alliance's main strength - what M. Eikeland correctly identified as our unity and solidarity, our cohesion as an Alliance.

As NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, it will not surprise you that I have thought a great deal about how we must transform "in order to preserve the cohesion of the Alliance".

Our key objective in this endeavour is to understand the evolution of the security environment to date, and develop an informed expectation of the next 15 years, so that we identify the decisions we need to make today in order to adapt to the near future.

We can then provide operational commanders and political leaders with the ways to maintain an appropriate deterrence and defence posture.



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This morning, I would like to share with you my perspectives on the many changes across the Alliance's landscape, which highlight the need to bolster short-term adaptations for Warsaw, while building an enhanced model for Alliance forces well beyond the next Summit.

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**I should begin by stating that I agree with your conclusions from the previous sessions, identifying that the Alliance is now confronted with an unprecedented mix of risks and threats.**

However, I would add that none of these threats are entirely new.

They were already identified in the 2010 Strategic Concept, and their potential for instability was recognised in our future works (both in the Strategic Foresight Analysis and in the Framework for Future Alliance Operations).

But the simultaneity, complexity and interconnection of these crises require us to find a strategy based on solidarity, which takes account of national sensitivities and addresses threats from all directions.

In Crimea, the international principles established in Helsinki guaranteeing the sanctity of borders and the territorial integrity of Nations were called in question.

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We should also be concerned by evolutions of some nuclear-armed countries' posture and increasing bellicose speeches from some political and military leaders.

In response, NATO should nevertheless continue to avoid provocation and escalation. The Alliance remains committed to step up its work on transparency and risk reduction, to avoid incidents and accidents spiralling out of control.

But the use of hybrid strategy in Ukraine [*by combining conventional and non-conventional warfare, overt and covert activities, by military, paramilitary, irregular and civilian actors, targeted to achieve (geo)political and strategic objectives*] has highlighted the need for a modern, credible collective defence posture for the Alliance, able to deter any aggression against an Ally.

These strategies, relying on all the powers available to a State, including distribution of energy, call for a broad analysis of risks and a coordinated approach between many actors.

Our Alliance needs to be prepared to face these new challenges which would require a high level of responsiveness. This would lead to some important adaptation.

A broader strategic awareness should be achieved through continuous and comprehensive information collection, fusion and sharing, which

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will help identify and attribute apparently unconnected events across the Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economy, Financial, Intelligence and Law enforcement (DIMEFIL) spectrum.

For NATO, the ability to conduct such analyses, requires to build flexible security networks with Nations –Allies and Partners -, other organizations –particularly the EU- and should also encompass a wide range of actors such as Industry, Centres of Excellence or academia.

This strategic awareness is the key for political and military leaders to seize opportunities and respond correctly to emerging crisis. They will need more than intelligence collection assets, to detect, understand, visualize and adapt to the nature of emerging crises.

To do so, I believe an important part of the preparation for the Warsaw Summit should address the issue of building this comprehensive and integrative strategic awareness.

Closer work with the European Union would help fuse intelligence on the whole spectrum.

This higher common strategic awareness would also help defining common solutions between NATO and EU for the quick movement of troops over the European territory.



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But this effort on strategic awareness will definitely require a new mindset based on creative and critical thinking to imagine new options, a mind-set that we have to foster in our education and training programs.

*To NATO's Southern direction, we are also witnessing the destabilisation of entire regions, which weak or unstable states are powerless to halt.*

These lawless zones emerging on Europe's periphery, especially in Syria and Libya, provide support bases for terrorist and extremist groups which have struck deep inside Alliance territory.

These major security issues as well as massive influx of refugees are the consequences of a main root: the failing or already failed status of States.

This is why a major answer to the South must be the strengthening of States through the development of Partnerships. This should be done in a pragmatic way with one question: what NATO can bring to Partners but also what Partners can bring to NATO.

At a military level, individually tailored roadmaps are necessary to meet Partners' objectives and requirements.

These roadmaps could deliver a higher level of interoperability and better complementarity of all military cooperation activities.



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Defence Capacity Building (DCB) efforts should be included in these roadmaps and should fit into a broader comprehensive approach, in concert with other International Organizations such as the EU.

For instance, in current context, should a Government of national unity be formed in Libya, the earlier we can anticipate and prepare a response to any request for assistance in close coordination with other organizations, the earlier we are likely to achieve progress, and perhaps contain some of the fall out.

*To the North, we should be able to anticipate potential future instability situations due to increasing competition over resources.*

Similarly to other directions, the Alliance will have to improve its strategic awareness in the Arctic, in particular with an enhanced maritime strategy, taking into account this new situation in the High North.

*But I would argue that we should go beyond this “current” geographical approach of threats that was discussed during the two first sessions of Alliance Revitalized. Hybrid and extremist strategies may be manifested in a different manner and in other directions in the future.*





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As a matter of fact, we must understand the risks and opportunities from the other political, human, technological, economic or environmental trends which might shape the future strategic context.

This is the aim of the Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA) whose 2013 edition is being updated. This will help consider the effects which might lead to the gradual circumvention of our military power.

However all these changes in our security equation do not call into question the underlying principles of the Strategic Concept.

Therefore, despite the need for a continuous adaptation to these new challenges, the three core tasks defined in the Strategic concept remain valid.

For military entities, our aim is to translate these tasks in military strategic effects which, collectively, will enable us to defeat all threats we will face.

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**This brings me to my second point. On the way to the next Summit in Warsaw, we prepare to accelerate the pace of our Transformation.**

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My first part has essentially mentioned what context and which actors are driving an acceleration in our transformation. I will now turn to how I foresee this continuous and concrete change.

There is a need for the Alliance to regain the initiative with a more proactive mode in response to all the threats, whatever their origin.

I see, as the main output of our Transformation, the building of a deterrence and defence posture, credible at both the political and military levels, necessary for the Alliance to keep fulfilling its three core tasks, now and in the future.

This posture is built upon the appropriate mix of conventional, nuclear and missile defence forces at the appropriate level of readiness, with the responsiveness required to deploy, sustain operations and redeploy rapidly.

*And to be militarily credible today and in the future, this posture must rely on a solid and modern foundation, a military capacity that enables the Alliance to permanently, or on short notice, plan and conduct any kind of operations.*

The military capacity has been the main strength of the Alliance since its inception. And adaptations are ongoing in this field, in particular through the RAP (Readiness Action Plan).



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About the posture, a few considerations might usefully be raised by the Warsaw Summit:

- First consideration, we have to look more closely to the right balance between persistent, although rotational, forward presence of forces and flexible, rapid reinforcements.

At the military level, there are some initiatives in NATO to enhance the quick reinforcement of the Standing Naval Forces by aggregating ships of NATO Nations identified at sea, but not necessarily under SACEUR's command.

This is a current study that could and should be extended to other domains, air and land.

These ad-hoc and unpredictable solutions would give the Alliance more flexibility to aggregate forces at short notice and in fact extend its responsiveness.

It would help to look beyond the VJTF model to ensure the quick deployment of forces, capitalizing on forces directly available in an area of operations, should they start under a national command before a transfer of authority to NATO.

- Second consideration: we must identify what could undermine our current edge or advantage; this advantage, built upon the US



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second offset strategy, which has been taken for granted during the last thirty years.

This is a reflection that we should have in the short term, while we face sophisticated Anti-Access Area Denial (A2AD) and over the long-term, looking at opportunities and risks inherent to future technological breakthroughs.

[A2AD] It is true that A2AD weapon systems can affect and contest areas where we deploy. But when addressing this challenge, we must clearly delineate its political and military aspects.

Indeed, these systems, combining integrated anti-aircraft defence and other ballistic, anti-ship and anti-submarine equipment are built for defence purposes. But they are not really new.

What is new is that the Russians have shifted their role from the tactical to the strategic and political levels, threatening the free access to international spaces and lines of communication.

At the political level, this would require dedicated answers and the demonstration of preserved freedom of movement in international spaces.



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At the military level, we must prepare ourselves to defeat, degrade, breach or bypass these systems.

In the short term, this could call for the planning and conduct of large scale operations and, in the longer term, the development of integrated systems that could network a mix of sensors and forces necessary to neutralize complex defence architectures.

I won't go further on A2AD and the Global Commons as it will be addressed by Rear-Admiral Gumataotao in panel 2.

[New technologies] Looking beyond the current sophistication and innovation of some adversaries' weapon systems, maintaining our military credibility leads to assess the potential of emergent technological breakthroughs that could affect our current perception of the battlespace, in its physical and time dimensions.

For instance,

- Platforms and weapons will have extended ranges and perform their missions with increased autonomy.
- Artificial intelligence and the capabilities used to collect, analyse and identify trends and associations in huge amounts of unstructured data will continue to improve.



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- Lastly, new technologies will also continue to compress the time in which we have to make decisions, in particular when faced with hypervelocity weapons.

But the credibility of our posture does not rely only on military considerations.

*At the political level, there is also a need to strengthen the credibility of our posture.*

There are five the areas I think we might focus on, as we head towards Warsaw.

1. First, political leaders must ensure we have sufficient resources to sustain the Alliance's posture over time and at 360 degrees.

Therefore, the Defence Investment pledge must be reaffirmed and turned into reality, especially when so many potential opponents are clearly reinvesting in their defence.

The 20% pledge for major equipment and research will be crucial to keep up with the rapid pace of major technological change. A similar pledge for the cyber domain might be useful in Warsaw.

2. Capitalizing on these investments, the Alliance must ensure it works closely with a strong and innovative Defence Industry on both sides



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of the Atlantic to ensure that, together, we can leverage any technological breakthrough.

Here, there are high stakes in maintaining the connections between the Alliance's vision for the future and the US Defense Innovation Initiative.

Both intends to ensure a military advantage for the next 15 years. And both should aim to maintain the interoperability between the systems which will be developed.

Through this new vision of the future, the Alliance should rely on the whole of Industry approach to coherently leverage all innovation and build the capabilities it needs for the future.

3. And the development of these capabilities should also include our Partners, wherever possible.

Partnerships should be a major priority for this Summit. In addition to greater coherence and simplicity to Partnership tools and mechanisms, I stress there would be a virtue in addressing the sensitive political question of prioritizing some of the Partners, as already mentioned.



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4. Future challenges have also highlighted the need to enhance our Nations' and Partners' military, political and societal resilience. This is a national responsibility found in Article 3 of the Washington Treaty.

Emerging challenges will require even greater shared resilience, so that Nations have the ability to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of strategic setbacks in a timely and efficient manner.

5. The credibility of our posture will also depend on the demonstration of the scope of our abilities. For that purpose, strategic exercises, on the model of Trident Juncture<sup>15</sup>, with 36,000 forces deployed during its live phase must be ambitious and contain specific objectives tied on the messages we want to address to our potential adversaries.

In the end, the enhancement of the political and military credibility of our posture will also require the affirmation of a strong political will through an efficient strategic communication plan.

The speed, connectivity, and effectiveness of Strategic Communications, are areas that must considerably be enforced.





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We should also be able to better assess the deterrence effects of our posture. Such an assessment requires objectives, plans and teams of specialists able to evaluate the perception of our adversaries.

These are in view, our main efforts on the path to Warsaw.

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**Let me now look well beyond Warsaw as I believe keeping an advantage tomorrow would impact today's decisions.**

We have to work on the military foundation of the posture, to ensure our forces will continue to maintain their military advantage on our adversaries, well beyond the RAP implementation.

*Priorities must be set on six focus areas: Command and control, Logistics/Sustainability, Collective training and exercises, Partnerships, Human Capital and Capabilities, the sum of them providing what we call NATO's capacity.*

The implementation of the Readiness Action Plan is addressing issues in all these areas, but these are only adaptations of our current model of forces.

We need to design a new model of forces which will provide the strategic awareness, operational agility and security networking necessary to succeed in future operations.



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*It is the philosophy of future warfare and military leadership that is at stake.*

- how do we want to implement new and more flexible architectures of command and control;
- how future capabilities will interact together on the battlefield;
- how will we organise the sustainability of these forces;
- how will we organise our capacity to integrate a wide range of Partners;
- what are the skills required from every war fighter and particularly future military leaders at all levels;
- how should forces be collectively trained?

These are just some of the questions we have to answer while building this new model of military capacity.

As already exposed previously, decision making and strategic awareness will be key tenets of success in future operations.

Therefore, we need to have a new approach for Command and Control at the heart of this new combat system.

To act faster and more efficiently than our opponents, we have to build a new architecture networking NATO Command and Force Structures together to deliver our military strategic effects.

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In this architecture, looking at what the commercial world would call a cloud, we would have enhanced possibilities to collect and process in a timely fashion huge amounts of data.

In this cloud, we would enable the distribution of operation control to enable any leaders to better manage the tempo of military actions.

We have already developed some requirements and capability packages in coordination with Allied Command Operations and the NATO Communications and Information Agency for the core command and control.

For instance, the Federated Mission Networking, Cyber Defense, Joint ISR, NATO Air Command and Control System, Core enterprise services, the Land/Maritime C2, Satellite communications, Enterprise Architecture, Core Enterprise Services (CES), NATO Communication services are initiatives that should be brought together in a coherent way.

This new mindset for NATO's fighting capacity will also depend on coherent preparation, stockpiling, deployment and projection of forces or power, wherever needed at whatever the duration.

Future sustainability will include more modular approaches, faster moment and visibility, and commonality producing a smaller logistics tail. We will think in terms of hubs, 3D productions to create spare parts on demand, just to give two examples.



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Furthermore, the resilience of our sustainability and logistics will become a critical factor to operate in a contested environment where lines of communication are not secure or contested.

Command and Control and Sustainability are certainly the main areas for improvement to build the new architecture of forces.

And we will have to do it by leveraging our Defense Planning Process, Partnerships and by setting new requirements in terms of Education, Training and exercises, Partnerships and Human Capital.

LTG Lofgren will address some of these points during panel 3.

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In closing, I would argue that the political unity and cohesiveness of the Alliance must be preserved at all costs in the lead up to the next Summit in Warsaw and beyond.

As threats and crises become ever more interconnected, the traditional distinction between NATO's Eastern and Southern flanks appears less relevant: destabilizing actions, whether they be conducted by terrorist groups taking advantage of weak States or through hybrid strategies, are aimed to undermining and harming the Alliance as a whole.

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Coping with these many complex and various types of threats require more flexibility in our approaches, source of readiness and responsiveness.

In our discussions today, I'm looking forward to hearing your innovative ideas which no doubt will suggest ways to make the best use of the contributions and strengths of all Allies, and wherever possible Partners.

With the next Summit in Warsaw, I'm confident in the Alliance's ability to respond to our current challenges, while also preparing the future.

I thank you for your attention and I stand ready to answer any of your questions.