

ACT/NDU host final seminar on NATO New Strategic Concept - ACT

Written by U.S. Navy Petty Officer Sarah R. Langdon
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Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and the National Defense University (NDU) co-hosted the fourth seminar on NATO's New Strategic Concept in Washington D.C., Feb. 21-23.

The event marked the final seminar for the Group of Experts who were commissioned by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and tasked with advising the Alliance on the New Strategic Concept.

In addition to Rasmussen, attendees included U.S. Defense Secretary Dr. Robert Gates; Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State and Chair for the Group of Experts and French Air Force General Stephane Abrial, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau, NDU president, opened the seminar with remarks on the evolution of NATO and the Nations' commitment to transformation.

"The vast effort to define and refine NATO's future began at the first session in Luxemborg and the equally compelling discussions of Slovenia and Norway, speak volumes about our collective shared commitment to make certain that NATO countries stand the test of time and meet the opportunities in front of us," said Rondeau. "NATO has flourished because so many countries have aspired to the ideals as powers by the Alliance and more seek membership because of what NATO represents.

"The continued transformation of NATO's forces, structures and capabilities to keep pace with the dynamic international environment has never been more important or more critical," she continued. "Indeed, NATO's ability to adapt and to meet these new challenges is a hallmark of this great Alliance."

This final seminar focuses on Transforming Structures, Forces and Capabilities and aims to lay the foundation for a New Strategic Concept agreement expected to be presented later this year.

According to Rasmussen, the area of transformation is of extreme significance to the workings

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and effectiveness of the Alliance. Highlighting the importance of improving the handling of resources and focusing on operational needs, Rasmussen stressed the need for the Alliance to work together to achieve common goals.

"In no other area of NATO is the need for creative thinking more urgent than in the area of transformation and capabilities," Rasmussen said. "Getting this right will be absolutely crucial to any NATO Strategic Concept and by extension to the relevance of the Alliance.

"First we must answer a basic question: What is transformation nowadays?" he asked. "It is about improving our working method and preparing for the future while spending out resources more efficiently. We have to seek common solutions to common problems. I am convinced transformation will only succeed if we do it together, we will all benefit, if we all invest in it."

During his remarks, Gates commented on the changes in the Alliance to accommodate the new security threats and become a more strategic and expeditionary force.

"It has been more than a decade since NATO's last Strategic Concept, and in that time there has been a great evolution in the alliance – and also in the international arena and the nature of the threats to our security," Gates said. "At the strategic level, the greatest evolution in NATO over the last two decades is the transition from a static, defensive force to an expeditionary force – from a defensive alliance to a security alliance.

"This change is a result of a new security environment in which threats are more likely to emanate from failed, failing, or fractured states than from aggressor states; where dangerous, non-state actors often operate from within nations with which we are not at war, or from within our own borders; and where weapons proliferation and new technologies make possible the specter of chaos and mass destruction in any of our capitals," he said.

In his remarks, Abrial stressed three qualities militaries can expect from the new concept: realism, flexibility and clarity.

"Clarity is important to the outside world is indeed to friendly or less friendly nations and publics

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at home and abroad," Abrial said. "But, in addition to the Ohms milkman, this document should be equally clear to the Norfolk Sailor, the Milan Brigadier or the Bucharest airman. Military commanders throughout the Alliance need clarity so that the document approved at the end of this year in Lisbon will allow them to properly refine and implement the military consequences which are sure to be far reaching."

The Seminar closed with an address from Albright who reiterated the global responsibility of the Alliance.

"The Alliance must also serve as a steadfast reminder that democratic principles, although imperfect, remain by far the best guideposts of sound governance and the leading indicators of a more peaceful and stable world."