

NATO Protocol Goes To School - ACT

Written by Ms. Maryse Mele-Larche, Chief of Protocol at Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation



Transformational steps are often marked by events where behind the scenes organisation is essential. It is the vital work of the Protocol staff which ensures each event is seamless. These essential elements made up part of the first pilot course on all things related to protocol in an international environment.

A French statesman was known to say *"Diplomacy is nothing but a lot of hot air."* Clemenceau replied. *"All*
etiquette is hot air, but that is what is in our car tires, and notice how it eases the bumps."

In an international environment where working with civilians, and joint service military from 28 Member nations and 22 Partner nations is a daily occurrence, Protocol is not a job for the faint-hearted. Protocol is a serious business conducted at the highest political and military level, which allows no room for mistakes.

Protocol 101

Specialised protocol training is now being offered by the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany. The inaugural course welcomed a diverse international group of students and instructors in January 2012. The course curriculum included a historical overview of NATO and its mission, the Alliance structure and our relationship with the numerous governmental and non-governmental organisations which engage with NATO on a daily basis. Instructional periods were interactive, with role-play, practical exercises and some syndicate work. Comprehensive and contemporary course material ranged from Defining Protocol in an

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International Environment, to Global Communication Skills and Conference and Ceremonial Management. Also included was instruction on core skills such as Attributes of a Protocol Officer, Rank and Order of Precedence, Titles and Forms of Address, Flag Etiquette, Seating Plans, Military and Business Etiquette, Conference Management, and Executing a Distinguished Visitor Programme and Ceremonies; a varied and challenging package. The guest speaker, Mr. [Desmond Parker](#), who taught history, mission and structure of the United Nations, highlighted the challenges of coordination amongst 193 nations. He also shared some personal insights.

Mr. Parker reinforced the value of the Protocol Officer, stating that Protocol Officers are the guardians of civility and proper decorum.

Protocol Hallmarks

Good sense, integrity, civility, order, proper procedure, and tactfulness are not simply the hallmarks of protocol; they are the hallmarks of good living, the field of endeavour. These characteristics are indispensable in the conduct of international affairs.

A career in Protocol comes with challenging and interesting journeys and allows personal development in skills that will last a lifetime. Seasoned Protocol officers will find the new Protocol course a vital networking opportunity while reinforcing professional development required for success.

The new NATO Protocol Course is an extremely important initiative to enhance and develop the protocol culture, both within our organisation and beyond. As such, it will become a benchmark training event, making our Protocol Officers more effective and aware of the multi-cultural environment in which the Alliance and its Partner nations operate.

The next protocol course will be held in January 2013.