



The Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre saw first-hand the success of their lessons learned policy through the crisis response operation Operation Unified Protector.

Rebounding on a Success

In October 2011, after seven months of naval and air operations, NATO successfully concluded its mission in Libya. Operation Unified Protector (OUP) has proven to be not just a military success, but a success of self-reflection — commanders and leaders at every level of NATO examined their actions in search of the lessons to be learned. At the onset of the mission, these commanders and leaders, from the Secretary General down to component commanders, initiated the Lessons Learned Process in accordance with the NATO Lessons Learned (LL) Policy and the Bi-Strategic Command (Bi-SC) LL Directive.

Method is Paramount

The NATO LL Policy and the Bi-SC LL Directive form the documented basis for NATO's LL Capability. NATO recognized, following its first crisis response operations in the 1990s in the Balkans, that it needed a more formal organisational approach to capturing and learning lessons from its activities. This recognition led to the creation of LL and analysis structures within NATO Command Structure (NCS) bodies and the establishment of a new dedicated NCS body for joint analysis and LL: the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC). These structures have actively contributed to NATO transformation ever since by providing the insight needed to drive intelligent change in the Alliance.

The NATO LL Process consists of six steps divided into two main phases. The analysis phase involves capturing observations on what went right and wrong, then analysing the observations to determine root causes and possible solutions. The result: Lesson Identified (LI) a recommendation on how to institutionalize the learning gained, and action body implementation recommendations.

The remedial action phase begins with leaders and commanders endorsing the recommendations and tasking the assigned action body to implement the recommendations. Then the recommendation is implemented and effectiveness validated. The last step is sharing which must take place throughout both phases.

OUP allowed for the first activation of the NATO LL Process in a short-notice and rapidly stood-up crisis response operation with the aim of capturing the full range of lessons that arose.

Broad Expectations

The Secretary General formally initiated the NATO LL process in early April 2011. Consequently, each headquarters involved in OUP prepared LI reports. And JALLC, ACT's premier body for operationalising transformation through the NATO LL Process, was instrumental in making it happen.

During OUP, JALLC was involved at each level, from NATO HQ to the operational-level staff of Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) OUP, helping LL staff officers identify, record, and report lessons. JALLC staff were deployed to provide their expertise in capturing lessons. Their efforts helped ensure that the LL Process was activated from the very beginning of the operation and that valuable lessons from the onset, especially those concerning the NATO Crisis Response System and operations planning in the lead up to OUP, were recorded for future analysis. JALLC's next significant contribution followed with involvement in the SHAPE-led Strategic Analysis Team (SAT). SHAPE established this team in order to collect lessons from the planning of the Operation, the way it had been conducted and the effect of these methods on the Operation. JALLC provided one-third of the team personnel and the work led to over 70% of the LIs produced in the final report and endorsement paper.

Reports on Time

After the operation was complete, the JALLC was tasked by SACT to produce a report on the lessons from OUP: OUP – Lessons for the Alliance.

A total of 15 OUP lessons were identified and presented in three broad categories: political considerations, organizational and doctrinal issues, and NATO assets and capabilities. SACT submitted the report to the IMS in February 2012. Following several rounds of review and feedback from Defence Ministers, all 15 lessons and the Military Committee (MC) advice on implementing the associated recommendations were approved by the North Atlantic Council's (NAC) in June, paving the way for the political and strategic level remedial action phase. Identifying a gap in the process, JALLC also published a second report: OUP – Lessons from National Military Perspectives representing the Nations views on the NATO LL Process.

A Complete Panel of Products

As a final product for OUP, JALLC has published a bibliography and annotated reference list of the major products published as a result of the OUP LL Process. This bibliography is designed to be a study aid of the lessons from OUP and as a LL Process guide.

The NAC's approval of the military advice on implementing the lessons from OUP and Chief of Staff SHAPE's endorsement of the SHAPE OUP SAT Final Report mark the completion of the endorsement and tasking step. These endorsements form a strong foundation for the Remedial Action Phase of the NATO LL Process and close out the analysis phase. The analysis phase may be over but there is still a substantial amount of work to be done to learn and implement the lessons identified from OUP.

JALLC is most proud of their direct contribution to OUP, representing an expenditure of over 10,000 man-hours. The analysis has been completed successfully, the lessons have been identified, and the way ahead has been approved. The onus is now on Commanders and assigned actions bodies to make the necessary changes in how we do business to ensure NATO continues to learn and improve.

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