

Successful concepts begin as good ideas, but it takes many NATO professionals, countless hours and a Herculean effort to transform a concept into a fully developed and tested NATO capability in a timely manner.

This is not a complete success story... yet. The Bi-Strategic Command Concept for Alternative Analysis (AltA) is just a piece of paper until it goes through the difficult implementation process. Only when AltA exists as a worthwhile capability within NATO will this story become a complete success.



Streamlining Concept Development

The AltA Concept represents a new standard for the successful completion of NATO's Concept Development and Experimentation (CD&E) process. The concept was delivered rapidly, just short of 10 months from receipt of the request from SHAPE to approval of the Bi-Strategic Command Concept. Rapid delivery was possible by applying three key ideas. First, a cross functional development team was formed that included broad stakeholder membership. Second, an aggressive development plan was created to maintain positive momentum. Third, a stepped approval and evaluation process facilitated incremental consensus and leadership buy-in. The combined value of these elements, and lots of hard work by many people, drove the short delivery timeline of the AltA concept.

Personalities Matter

Without question, the most important of these elements was the development team. The team exemplified a truly cross-functional approach to a project. At maturity, the concept development team included over 30 members from a considerable number of NATO military commands - HQ SACT, SHAPE, JWC, JALLC, JFC Brunsum, JFC Naples, JFC Lisbon, FC Madrid, AC Ramstein, and MC Northwood. Additionally, it received assistance from subject matter experts within the United States, United Kingdom, Canadian and Dutch militaries. Collaborative effort ensured that the concept was developed and refined through inclusion of a wide variety of

perspectives and more thorough consideration of the underlying ideas.

and innovative management of the CD&E process rapidly transformed this sound idea into a great concept."
— *Brigadier General Giovanni Fungo*

Setting Goals as a Group

The next important element to success was the use of a clearly defined development plan. This plan truly drove the concept's evolution. The plan was widely distributed and became a key component of each meeting or workshop. Exposure to and awareness of the development timeline gave the entire team a sense of responsibility for meeting the goals. Key development events were planned at least six months in advance, creating an expectation that the Capabilities Engineering Division would incrementally deliver more mature products at each of the major development events. The importance of this cannot be overstated. If we waited until the concept reached a predetermined point of development before arranging the next workshop, the timeline would have increased by many months. The development plan also included weekly meetings for ACT members. Frequent, but short, meetings were crucial to keep the positive momentum of our work.

Consensus through Collaboration

The final component of the concept's rapid development was the use of a stepped approval and evaluation process. We first introduced a conceptual framework, rather than a complete concept, as an initial building block that allowed reviewers to comfortably move toward consensus without offering either full concurrence or complete disapproval. It also allowed leadership an early look at the direction the concept was headed, giving them the opportunity for direction and guidance to help ensure its success.

After the framework was approved, the development team began working on the complete concept. A task made easier with the knowledge that the basic structure had been through thorough review and approval. The concept again went through a series of review and approval points before being introduced for final staffing. At each step, ACT and SHAPE leaders were given an opportunity for review. Interested national parties were also given the chance for review and feedback to ensure the widest exposure and a thorough vetting of the ideas contained in the concept.

From CD&E to Implementation

The concept is unique from a capability development standpoint as it seamlessly transitioned from concept development to capability implementation following concept approval in April 2012. ACT is approaching this project as an opportunity to aggressively move from idea to concept to functioning capability, shortening the timeline for delivering transformation by considering capability development as a holistic process of concept development, experimentation, and implementation.

The implementation timeline is purposely designed to be as aggressive as the development

schedule. Initial Operating Capability is expected by January 2013. Full Operating Capability will follow in May 2013 when the pilot course is replaced by a full NATO developed curriculum that includes training for AltA Facilitators, general training for staff, and AltA education lectures embedded in other courses.

The Final Push

If we can meet this timeline and deliver an Alternative Analysis Capability that adds value to the decision making processes within NATO then we can declare a complete victory, but there is still much work remaining to reach this goal.

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