



A collaborative and innovative organisation, the NATO ACO Civil-Military Fusion Centre (CFC) is exploring information sharing. It brings people and ideas together, helping to bridge information gaps, facilitate civil military cooperation, and could enhance open source security.

NATO's current [Strategic Concept](#), adopted at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, underlines that effective crisis management requires a comprehensive approach involving political, civilian and military elements and entities. Building upon lessons learnt from past NATO operations in crisis-struck areas, the Strategic Concept states that military functions are necessary but insufficient to "address the varying [complex challenges](#) to the Euro-Atlantic and international security" on their own. Allied leaders agreed at Lisbon to enhance NATO's contribution to a comprehensive approach to crisis management and to improve NATO's ability to contribute to stabilization and reconstruction.

The CFC and Open Source Sharing

"The [comprehensive approach](#) not only makes sense – it is necessary", says NATO Secretary General Rasmussen. "NATO needs to work more closely with our civilian partners on the ground". Furthermore, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), Admiral James Stavridis, wrote in a 17 April 2012 blog post that more "[open source security](#)

" is required. He stated that this "means that wherever we can, we should be creating teaming arrangements between nations (international); governmental organizations (interagency)". He went further to identify areas that might yield results in searching for opportunities specifically [private-public cooperation](#)

which according to SACEUR, "offers potential in humanitarian activities, medical diplomacy, disaster relief, and linked development".

In 2008, NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) introduced the Civil-Military Fusion Centre (CFC) as an experiment in Norfolk, Virginia. The CFC enabled the sharing of open-source, unclassified information between civilian and military stakeholders working on complex crises in an effort to bridge the information divide.

The CFC concept, developed by ACT, is now actively engaged and functions as an operational capability for NATO Allied Command Operations (ACO). Currently, the CFC is ACO's only footprint within the USA, generating innovations and contributing to ACT and ACO as well as other non-NATO entities (NNE), including international and non-governmental organisations, throughout the world.

The CFC has, since its founding, contributed to improved responses to global crises which demand comprehensive, civil-military forms of assistance.

Comprehensive Approach in Action

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, the CFC helped link humanitarian aid and military actors to facilitate the delivery of supplies to affected populations. The CFC continues to engage with both civilian and military organizations regarding improvised explosive device and demining information in order to help those working or living in regions affected by explosive remnants of war.

The CFC, via its online portal at www.cimicweb.org, is able to search, locate, fuse and share well informed, timely, and relevant information concerning SACEUR's Strategic Spaces. At this portal, through social media outlets such as Facebook, Scribd and Twitter, and using other online tools (e.g., podcasts, ReliefWeb), the CFC is able to connect with a global audience and better serve its end-users. The CFC does this not only through publications, such as weekly reviews and thematic reports, but also by creating online resources vital to civilian and military communities. Recent examples include the launched Afghanistan Map Library, which contain several hundred maps containing information on demography, geography, ethnicity, governance and so on, and the Afghanistan Provincial Indicators database. The CFC has also established, in recognition of gaps in existing information, web pages on the 2011 Bonn Conference and the 2012 Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan. Having become a trusted resource for various stakeholders, the CFC gains the ability to foster increased awareness and, perhaps, trust and understanding across the civil-military divide.

In addition, the CFC's Request for Information (RFI) service, which is free for subscribers, has enabled both information sharing and the establishment of linkages between civilian and military stakeholders operating in crisis contexts. For instance, upon the request of a subscriber, the CFC worked to facilitate contact with Kenyan development organisations along the country's coast in efforts to provide possible civil-military engagements with various projects in the region. In another example, the CFC linked an [ISAF](#) officer from an ISAF Regional Command, who needed information regarding local humanitarian conditions, in touch with local officials from a major international organisation dealing with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The ISAF officer received the information he needed but also formed a professional contact that will enable him to directly obtain and share information in the future.

A Catalyst Towards Open-Source Security

The CFC is as an example of the comprehensive approach in action and serves as a catalyst towards open-source security. It is able to connect and bridge a seemingly wide information and relational divide. In doing so, the CFC helps to bring non-military views, or the "views of others" operating in crisis contexts, deeper within NATO. According to SACEUR, "[Open-source security is about connecting](#) the international, the interagency, the private and public — and lashing it together with strategic communication largely in social network." Simply put, the NATO ACO CFC is an active operational capability and a proven example of that 21st century connecting force to which SACEUR speaks.

Please visit the CFC at www.cimicweb.org

[Back to Cover](#)

[Next Article](#)