



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER
TRANSFORMATION**

HQ SACT Flag Raising Ceremony

Norfolk, 7 September 2017

Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER



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Generals, Admirals, Air Marshal,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear ACT teammates,

It is a great pleasure to be with you to start another year, after what I hope has been a refreshing summer break – although I know it has been quite busy for some of you, and I will get back to that point. But first, I would like to welcome our newcomers to ACT, to this beautiful region of Virginia. I hope that you will find your time here both challenging and enjoyable, and I am very happy to have you on board.

As I said, this summer has been very active for both Strategic Commands. I just got back from Brussels, where SACEUR and I presented our military recommendations to the nations regarding the adaptation of the NCS. This topic has kept many staff members at work for very long days over the last weeks, but it was worth it. I commend you for your commitment and the work you put in.

This effort is another milestone in what has been a long process.

Our strategic environment today is defined by complexity and unpredictability, underlining the necessity to be more responsive, more resilient, and to work with a wide network of partners. And it also means that we must be ready to face every scenario, including the most demanding ones, in accordance with the Alliance's level of ambition laid out in the Strategic Concept.

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After conducting a functional analysis, we recognized that the current NATO Command Structure was only partially fit for purpose. Consequently, the nations tasked us, both Strategic Commands, to provide recommendations to adapt the NCS.

ACT and ACO have worked hand in hand over the last months, with an unprecedented level of coordination, in order to deliver these recommendations and to provide options. Working together has already proven positive: I co-chaired with SACEUR for the first time a BiSC decision brief in July, involving staffs from our respective commands. This is a very positive trend, which I want us to continue to foster.

This NCS adaptation has two main components.

First, the NCS must enable the Alliance to conduct operations all the way from our baseline activities to the Alliance's maximum level of effort – an all-domain conflict – and to ensure a seamless transition from peacetime to crisis. This is not only an ACO focus, and we have defined ACT's role and responsibilities in the event of a conflict.

Second, we revised the respective roles, responsibilities and authorities between ACO and ACT. The aim is to be able to operate and adapt simultaneously, and to do that, focus ACO on its warfighting vocation, and ACT on its warfare development vocation. Put differently, ACO is in charge of current operations, supported by ACT, and ACT of future operations, supported by ACO.



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Our recommendations have significant implications for ACT. The governance and management of NATO's common-funded capability delivery process must be reorganized. In our recommendations, ACT would assume greater responsibility as capability requirements authority.

On partnerships, ACT would be responsible for providing military advice to the development of strategies and policies in support of NATO HQ, as well as developing new and innovative approaches to partnerships, projecting stability and counter-terrorism.

On training and exercises, ACT would focus our effort on individual training and support to exercises, including transformational issues. The 3Js would remain under ACT's command, since they work on both operations and transformation.

Let me stress that these BiSC recommendations have yet to be approved by the nations, but it is important that all staff members know, understand and support them. The NCS adaptation will continue to guide our programme of work this year, with the objective to achieve a political decision by 2018.

Our objective through these measures is to develop ACT's role as a warfare development command, and to achieve it, we must foster a culture of innovation. Making ACT the NATO hub for innovation is my ambition for this year, and it implies both internal and external aspects.

Internally, we will conduct an innovation seminar, next week, in the headquarters, to initiate the process of teaching innovation to the staff. This



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is just a first step: other initiatives will follow. Overall, the objective is to build a proper mind-set for innovation, which must lead you, every time you work on a new project or a new concept, to ask yourselves: is there another way to do things differently? Did I understand the problem properly before trying to develop solutions?

We also intend to leverage a global network of people and organizations in NATO, partner nations, and in the private sector, which can help fostering innovation through the Alliance. In this domain, the project to create a Centre of Excellence for innovation, here in the US, is an initiative fully encouraged by ACT.

The age of “business as usual” is over, because our strategic environment calls for it: innovation is the key to conduct a successful adaptation of our Alliance. As Saint-Exupery, the author of the Little Prince, once wrote: “A pile of rocks ceases to be a pile of rocks the moment when a single man contemplates it with the idea of a cathedral in mind.” Through innovation, NATO will keep adapting, now, and in the foreseeable future, to meet any possible challenge.

Before I conclude, a word on welfare. I strongly support all welfare initiatives that contribute to reinforcing our cohesion, and I encourage everyone to associate our families to these events.

We just raised our 29 flags simultaneously, to illustrate that ACT is one team, and this team can make a difference for the benefit of the Alliance. I am

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counting on each and every one of you. Challenging and exciting times are ahead of us. Working together, with the individual and collective quality of this staff, I am confident that we will meet all challenges.

I encourage all of you to engage with the FOGOs and the Branch Heads during our informal meeting after the ceremony.

Thank you for your attention.