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2008 the Year of the NCO in NATO Campaign

Interview with Allied Command Transformation’s Senior Enlisted Leader
Czech Republic Army Command Sgt. Major Ludek Kolesa

Responsible for advising Supreme Allied Commander Transformation on the military and quality of life issues relating to the command enlisted members and developing concepts and standards for the education and training of the international non-commissioned officer NCO community, Czech Republic Army Command Sgt. Major Ludek Kolesa aims to promote the achievements of NCOs through the 2008 Year of the NCO in NATO Campaign.

Kolesa spoke with ACT’s Public Affairs Office recently about the Campaign.

Q: Why did NATO’s top military leaders decide to name 2008 the Year of the NCO?
A: 2008 the Year of the NCO in NATO “project” was initiated by my counterpart from Allied Command Operations, Senior Enlisted Advisor Command Sgt. Major Bartelle. After we discussed it with both NATO Strategic Commanders, Supreme Allied Commander Europe U.S. Army General Craddock and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation U.S. Marine Corps General Mattis, they agreed to declare 2008 The Year of the NCO in NATO to highlight the importance they place on the NCOs’ role within the Alliance, especially on the ground of NATO-led operations.

Our two Commanders understand that NATO cannot conduct operations without its NCOs who provide leadership, inspiration, and motivation. That is one of the strengths of the Alliance. Interaction amongst NCOs from the member Nations is part of the glue that keeps the Alliance together. So, the Commanders were more than willing to support our initiative.

Q: How are ACT’s NCOs contributing to NATO operations and the transformation of the Alliance?
A: Because of our unique mission as NATO’s transformational catalyst for change, ACT’s headquarters is very “officer heavy.” The process of identifying appropriate ways to utilise NCOs within ACT’s structure can be quite complicated. I am optimistic ACT’s officers and senior enlisted leadership will continue to work together to employ NCOs more effectively and give them more responsibilities.

General Mattis is a great supporter of NCOs and a promoter of the growing importance of the NCOs’ role. With his experience commanding units in the harsh environments of Iraq and Afghanistan operations, he understands the importance of recognising their accomplishments and hard work.

Q: How are ACO and ACT working together on this campaign?
A: Command Sgt. Major Michael Bartelle and I are working very closely to promote this campaign just like we do with all other initiatives in support of NATO NCO development. We are also in touch with the Nations and ask them to provide stories and photographs of their NCOs’ achievements. We have a very interesting story to tell and so far we have received a lot of interest in the campaign. At the beginning of March the two of us briefed the NATO Military Committee in Brussels on the Year of the NCO in NATO. The Chairman of the Military Committee supported this initiative and he promised to invite us back at the end of the year for “wrap up” information.

Q: Senior NCOs gathered in Supreme Allied Headquarters Europe Jan. 23-25, 2008 for a NCO professional development Working Group meeting. What progress was made in establishing a synchronised view of the NATO NCOs’ responsibilities?
A: I took over as ACT’s Senior Enlisted Leader at the end of May 2007. I have spent the last year learning about the NATO NCO Development Programme and its specific pieces. As one of the proponents and lead figures of this programme, I feel we need to step back for a while and analyse what has been achieved since the programme was initiated in 2004 by the NATO Strategic Commanders. I want to discuss possible changes or adjustments and propose the way ahead. My counterparts from ACO, Joint Forces Commands in Naples and Brunssum, the NATO School, and Switzerland agreed and welcomed that proposal, so I called together a Senior NCO NATO NCO Development Programme Working Group. The group met in January at SHAPE, Belgium and we are now working to develop further the outcomes of that meeting. I believe that before the end of the “Year of the NCO in NATO” we will have some results to share.

For more information on the campaign, visit ACO’s website at http://www.nato.int/shape/ynco/
The transformation of NATO has been through significant progress in recent years, and this is a process that must continue. That was among the conclusions at one of the Alliance’s largest summits this week, where the main focus was on expansion and on a French offer to bolster NATO’s Afghanistan mission.

By Mr. Roy Thorvaldsen
ACT Public Affairs Office

“Transformation is not possible without sufficient, properly prioritized resources. We are committed to continuing to provide, individually and collectively, the resources necessary for our Alliance to perform the tasks we demand from it”, the official declaration from the meetings of the heads of state and government said.

NATO-Russia Council Meeting Concludes the Bucharest Summit

By NATO

The last event of NATO’s historic summit in Bucharest was a session of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) held at the level of the Heads of State and Government. For the second time since the establishment of the NRC at the Rome Summit in 2002, President Vladimir Putin met with his Allied counterparts.

The chairman of the NRC, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, described the very fact of holding such a session at the highest level as “a strong signal of our continued commitment to the spirit of the Rome summit.”

NRC leaders gave a positive assessment of the concrete practical achievements of the Council, pointing to numerous areas of practical cooperation, such as the fight against terrorism, civil emergency and Theatre Missile Defence (TMD).

Discussion also focused on many important topics of European and international security. The atmosphere of the session was friendly and constructive, and in this context, participants stressed the value of the NRC as an excellent forum for frank political dialogue. While there is a number of topics where the views of Russia and Allies clearly diverge – and today’s meeting confirmed this – a collective political will was expressed to use the NRC in search for appropriate solutions to existing problems.

Prior to the NRC meeting, the NATO Secretary General and the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergei Lavrov, signed a document which will help to facilitate the land transit of non-military equipment destined for ISAF in Afghanistan, across the territory of the Russian Federation.

Left: UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

NATO Photo
and defending against chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats,” it continued.

The members of the Alliance invited Albania and Croatia as new members. The invitation will be extended to include the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as soon as a name dispute with NATO-member Greece is solved.

NATO also welcomed NATO-hopefuls Ukraine and Georgia: “We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. Therefore we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to their [Membership Accession Plan] applications. We have asked Foreign Ministers to make a first assessment of progress at their December 2008 meeting. Foreign Ministers have the authority to decide on the MAP applications of Ukraine and Georgia.”

The summit gathered some 3,000 officials from the 26 member alliance and non-NATO nations participating in the ISAF mission. Close to 3,000 journalists and other media representatives from all over the world covered the event.

The entire NATO Summit official is available on the Web at http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html.

NATO Launches New TV Channel

NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen launched a new web-based television channel meant to improve understanding of the Alliance roles, operations and missions at the NATO Summit in Bucharest.

The new TV channel is the result of close cooperation between the NATO Public Diplomacy Division and the Danish Government to improve the way the Alliance communicates its work and image to the general public.

“When it comes to video, we are frankly in the stone age. NATO has no ability to gather video from the field to show people what is happening,” NATO Secretary General said during a seminar on public diplomacy in NATO-led operations in Copenhagen in October 2007. This new channel will help address that challenge.

The Danish government provided NATO with a video production facility, two camera teams and an internet-based TV channel on NATO’s home page.

The Danish prime minister stressed the importance of communication to the public on NATO’s operation in Afghanistan. “We owe it to the many men and women in NATO operations, as well as their families to show the results and challenges of their work in mission areas,” he said.

The NATO channel will enable NATO to provide regular news updates and video reports from the different regions where NATO is engaged. NATO Channel footage will also be available at www.natochannel.tv.
French NCO Returns from Challenging Afghanistan Deployment

By U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Crystal M. Raner
ACT Public Affairs

Allied Command Transformation has been providing non-commissioned officers to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters on a six month rotational basis to support its mission. ISAF is responsible for assisting the Afghan government in extending its authority across the country, conducting stability and security operations in coordination with the Afghan national security forces, mentoring and supporting the Afghan National Army (ANA), and supporting Afghan government programmes to disarm illegally armed groups.

Flight Sgt. Catherine Briand recently returned to Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation following a six month assignment in support of ISAF in Kabul, Afghanistan.

She took the challenging assignment because she wanted to learn first-hand about the country and the Afghan people. She also hoped her time in support of the NATO-led operation would make a difference.

“I always wanted to go to Afghanistan because having read many books and press articles related to it, I think it is an absolutely fascinating country,” said Briand.

The ISAF experience varies from region to region. Some on deployment will live in tents and have fewer creature comforts than others. Briand was in the ISAF Headquarters.

Briand, a native of Brittany, France, has been working as the personal assistant for ACT’s Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff Joint Education and Training. ACT is her first NATO assignment since joining the French Air Force in March 1997 and the ISAF experience was her first deployment.

Afghanistan has become the pinnacle of Briand’s 11-year career in the French Air Force.

Briand commented that teamwork and unit cohesion are cornerstones to the development of a strong NCO Corps. Contributions to current NATO operations and peace-keeping support missions made by Briand and other NCOs within the Alliance have not gone unnoticed.

According to Italian Navy Master Chief
In particular, Briand recalls meeting several NCOs who were members of an Operational Mentor Liaison Team (OMLT). OMLTs provide training and mentoring to support ANA units’ operational deployments and act as liaison capability between ANA and ISAF forces to assist in coordinating the planning of operations and ensuring that ANA units receive enabling support.

“Every NCO has a job to perform that contributes to the greater mission,” said Briand. “Some of us encounter greater risks in carrying out duties, but no one’s job is more important than anyone else’s.”

Working in a multinational, multi-service environment can be quite challenging at first for anyone coming into a NATO assignment,” said Briand. “Each nation, each military branch within that nation, has their own definition and expectations of an NCO. I look forward to seeing the progress made by our senior NCO leadership as they continue to reshape the NATO NCO Corps.”

Briand has enjoyed the unique nature of her assignment at ACT and living abroad in the United States. However, the six months she spent in the high desert of Kabul will forever be etched in her mind as the most rewarding.

Maiorano Vincenzo, MacDonald’s experience allows him to better train the junior NCOs.

“His military background and NATO School training, and his impeccable military bearing make him a perfect choice to be Military Member of the Year,” he said.

ACT Senior Enlisted Leader Czech Republic Army Command Sergeant Maj. Ludek Kolesa said this year’s MMOY results were very tight.

“All of the candidates performed very well. It was very hard for the board members to select the best one,” he said.

The Year of the NCO is a joint project between ACT and Allied Command Operations (ACO) and recognises what has been done by NCOs to support current Alliance operations. This year’s candidates for Military Member of the Year are outstanding enlisted representatives for ACT, their Nations and the Alliance.

“You are the future of this Alliance, and I have no doubt that this future is bright,” said Kolesa.

Other Military Member of the Year candidates included: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mark Ledesma, Joint Warfare Centre; Romanian Army Staff Sgt. Catalin Draghiciu, SACT Representative Europe; U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alan Reetz, HQ SACT; and Portuguese Air Force Cpl. Raphael Teixera, Joint Analysis Lessons Learned Centre.

NATO announced that 2008 would be dedicated to recognising the vital role played by Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) within the Alliance.

The NATO strategic commanders for transformation and operations signed a letter presented to the Alliance’s Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, which announced the ‘Year of the NCO’ campaign to highlight the significant contributions that NCOs make to their service, their Nation, and NATO.

According to ACT’s senior enlisted leader, there are many different perceptions of the NCO’s role and responsibilities across NATO’s 26 nations. He hopes this campaign will bring about synergy amongst the Nations and initiate future discussion forums for creating a standardised NCO development programme.

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“...he has been instrumental in leading his department to new heights of academic excellence.”

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“The Year of the NCO project which has been initiated by my counterpart at SHAPE Sgt. Maj. Bartelle and myself, through our commanders, recognises what has been done by NCOs, especially in regards to how they are supporting current Alliance operations,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Ludek Kolesa of the Czech Republic Army.

“Secondly, we want to transform the NCO community to better serve the Alliance in the future.”

“A group of NATO and PfP [Partnerships for Peace] senior enlisted leaders have been working on what we call a strategic paper that includes descriptions and leadership skills required of each NCO rank,” said Kolesa.

NATO held its first event for the Year of the NCO, a professional development conference, sponsored by ACT and hosted by its sister command Allied Command Operations in Belgium Jan. 23-25. The conference focused on capitalising on NCO development through synchronisation of all senior enlisted leaders of NATO and the American military’s European Command.

For more information on the Year of the NCO, visit the campaign web page at http://www.nato.int/shape/ynco/index.html.
ICECAP: Bringing Emerging Technologies to Reality

By U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Crystal M. Raner
ACT Public Affairs Office

Since NATO assumed command in Afghanistan with its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), providing comprehensive command and control (C2) in a dynamic environment has proven to be problematic. The rapidly evolving mission and unique demands of this volatile, uncertain, ambiguous environment have required rapid development of C2 capabilities. This has created a highly theatre specific C2 architecture with associated challenges.

Imagine monitoring seven different computer screens as an ISAF commander or staff officer: Each screen depicts different pieces of data you need to make informed decisions, such as preventing friendly-fire, deploying troops and launching aircraft to fend off insurgent forces, or determining the exact coordinates to drop humanitarian relief supplies.

To ensure interoperable C2 systems are delivered to the fight and put to immediate use, Allied Command Transformation’s (ACT) Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence (C4I) Division is supporting Allied Command Operations (ACO) in the development of the ISAF C4I Enabled Capability (ICECAP) Concept, which aims to improve operational effectiveness and C2 for NATO and Partner nations supporting the ISAF mission. ICECAP will replicate the ISAF C2 structure and fielded systems to enable testing of interoperability and facilitate insertion of emerging technology in a comprehensive manner to enhance the commander’s C2 capabilities and further the realisation of NATO’s Network Enabled Capability (NNEC).

The ICECAP initiative is led by ACO as an operational enhancement with support not only from ACT, but the NATO C3 Agency (NC3A), the NATO CIS Support Agency (NCSA) and the U.S. Joint Forces Command’s Joint Systems Integration Center (JSIC). ACT’s role is important to the overall success of this capability for enhancing testing, experimentation and implementation.

According to U.S. Army Col. John Koivisto, C4I Division’s Operational C2 section head, ACT is responsible for developing the proposed experimentation annex for the concept of operations, which will define the process for systems’ experiments through ICECAP.

“ICECAP is there to conduct experiments in support of the operational commander to ensure that we get emerging technology into his hands as quickly as possible,” Koivisto said.

The C4I Division’s Technology Branch (TCB) is managing the development of this capability in concert with the NC3A and NCSA. This partnership leverages experience gained through environments and programmes, such as Coalition Warrior Interoperability Demonstration (CWID), Technology for Information, Decision, and Execution (TIDE), two key programmes managed by ACT. Other systematic tools are in use by NC3A and NCSA to address individual systems tests, but there is no one system that does it all in a replicated operational environment, Koivisto said.

“We don’t have one total package that is operationally focused in order to provide recognisable, coherent experimentation for the commander,” said Koivisto. “That is our goal in ACT, because it is our initiative to transform NATO through the development of emerging technologies and experimenting with them in an operational context.”

“As we develop the NATO ISAF C2 environment, primarily in The Hague but using various virtual linkages, we will be able to plug into JSIC which should give us a 95 percent certainty of the US C2 configuration in Afghanistan, which is part of the ISAF system; however ICECAP will provide the remaining pieces so we can get the total NATO C2 operational architecture,” Koivisto said.

Even though ICECAP was developed strictly for ISAF, Royal Netherlands Army Maj. Gen. Koen Gijsbers, ACT’s Assistant Chief of Staff C4I, is promoting the initiative to take what is learned through developing ICECAP to support the transformation of NATO and the Nations’ military.

It is a goal of the ICECAP working group, which consists of ACT, ACO, NCSA and NC3A, that the ICECAP concept will virtually connect physically disparate locations through a robust network, allowing Nations to ‘plug in or plug out’ facilitating testing and integration of National C2 solutions in a NATO C2 environment.

“That is where we are leveraging a lot of our energy right now,” said Koivisto. “We are trying to focus on the individual Nations because that is where we generate a lot of synergy. The Nations are doing a lot to assist ISAF.”

The overall NATO concept is to eventually make ICECAP available to the Joint Warfare Centre and Joint Force Training Centre, so that all future national-ISAF rotations can go to JWC and plug their national systems into the ISAF network to gain the benefit of its C2 architecture. This will provide the ability to integrate national C2 systems and procedures prior to deployment to assure success.
ACT’s CMO Staff Engages with Various Organizations for Shared Information

By U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Priscilla Kirsh and U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Carla Burdt
ACT Public Affairs Office

Allied Command Transformation’s Civil-Military Overview (CMO) team engaged with key players March 25-27 during the Workshop on the Visualization of the Humanitarian Situation for Military Planners.

Held in Prague, the workshop was co-hosted by the Swiss Agency for Development and Coordination, the Directorate General of Fire and Rescue Service of the Czech Republic and the Civil-Military Coordination section of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Upon completion of the workshop, the team also visited with members of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime in Vienna.

Additionally, the staff presented the CFC/CMO brief at the International Outreach: Lessons Learned Workshop in Washington, D.C.

Coordinating with representatives from relevant organisations in the international humanitarian, development and security communities provides an opportunity to share information and enhance situational awareness, which is one of the main missions of ACT’s Civil-Military Fusion Centre (CFC) and CMO. Located in Norfolk, Va., the Centre is an experimental organisation designed to support the situational awareness needs of participants responding to a crisis.

Created in 2006, the CFC is an organisation that works with like-minded civilian and military actors to share, gather, fuse, organise and disseminate information.

“Right now we are doing a one-year experiment testing in response to an operational request from Headquarters ISAF,” said Tony Icayan, chief knowledge manager of the CFC. “We are going to monitor the crises in Afghanistan and Darfur.”

Although a combined concept, the focus right now is Afghanistan. Core users are going to be NATO HQ, ISAF; the joint commands and people working with NATO in crisis areas, said Icayan.

“A lot of the challenges that we are facing arise from the cultural differences between the military and civilians,” said Lt. Col. Mojca Pesec, CFC director. “We are trying to give civilians an environment where they can communicate with the military and exchange information securely.”

Icayan said that a shared awareness is important for success in responding to a crisis.

“Lack of information sharing leads to a lack of shared awareness of what is happening on the ground. As military, we are always looking to improve situational awareness.”

According to Icayan, that is how the concept for CFC was developed.

“We started looking at technical enablers,” he said. “We found out from previous work that technical solutions just don’t work, especially in this situation. You can’t expect to bring out a black box, give it to humanitarian workers and expect it will all work. So, we developed something that we call ‘human in the loop’ situational awareness.”

Icayan explained that ‘human in the loop’ situational awareness is subject matter experts who know how to do Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) and who also understand the information requirements of people working in this area.

“This capability, what is important, is to have the right people to do the job that we are doing,” said Icayan. “IKM is important.”

“We are providing ways that people can access information,” said Icayan. “What people mainly see is the Civil-Military Overview. Anyone with access and the opportunity can go to the website and get information. Some people may not have access to a website, or they might have very low bandwidth. They have the option to call our knowledge management organisation directly. We have a group of sector experts available via email or phone to answer questions.”

Icayan explains that CFC’s knowledge managers are vital to the centre’s success.

“Our knowledge managers are ex-humanitarians, ex-human rights people, people that worked on governance issues,” said Icayan. “A lot of these are issue areas where the military doesn’t have the core competency. We have the capability here in the fusion centre to help do that information sharing.”

CFC aims to provide interaction, not just information.

“We are more than a website,” said Icayan. “We have reachback because we have an organisation you can contact at any time, plus we send out bulletins.”

In the future, the website will feature tools such as point-to-point chat, instant messaging, and virtual meeting rooms.

“The capabilities being designed are not just for Afghanistan,” said Icayan. “They are being designed for any conflict or crisis area that we may go to in the future.”

Capt. Rich Rivaux, a civil affairs team chief, directs Afghan soldiers giving out humanitarian aid in Rabat, Paktika Province, recently. Aid to Afghanistan is one of the top CMO priorities. ISAF Photo
Snow Leopard Increases Training and Effectiveness

By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Carla Burdt
ACT Public Affairs Office

NATO Project Snow Leopard wishes to harness recent advances in training technology, delivering more for less to both NATO and the Nations.

Snow Leopard aims to create a joint NATO network and training capability at the strategic, operational and tactical levels by leveraging existing national capabilities.

“Snow Leopard has four pillars: Advanced Distributed Learning Program (ADL), Constructive Simulation, Shared Scenarios, and a blended mix of live, virtual and constructive simulation,” said British Army, Lt. Col. Mark Shelford, Project Manager of Snow Leopard.

“Snow Leopard is not just a computer program,” said Shelford. “It is the name of the whole package, gluing together these four pillars. We then distribute from central hubs out to NATO training centres, Nations and our Partners.”

Shelford explains that various elements are combined during scenarios to make the training as realistic as possible.

“Electronic scenarios, that used to be paper-based country books and individual platform elements are combined so when you start the exercise, all the inputs can be placed into a synthetic environment.”

“In the old days we used to do war-gaming with big map boards. Now it is on a computer. You do an estimate, generate a plan, then you fight the plan against a computer based enemy. Because it is computer-based and interactive, people have to work much harder and the databases have to be more carefully developed. Whilst this generates a higher quality exercise, it also requires higher quality inputs.”

Snow Leopard is not only beneficial to the personnel being trained but also cost effective for the contributing nations.

“Live training is seriously expensive,” said Shelford. “This system is very powerful because it allows Nations the options to target their live training. They can choose not only the type of training but where they will it.”

Snow Leopard will streamline the training, forming a central training library at Joint Warfare Centre.

“In NATO we want to form a repository, a library, where we can put these scenarios and data bases that collectively we spent so much money developing. Unlike now we intend to reuse these scenarios and data bases,” said Shelford. “If you wanted an arctic scenario then perhaps you would go to Norway because they have lots of scenarios for cold weather training. We would get those and put them into the library. If you wanted jungle training, you would go to the British or Australians because they have massive jungle training scenarios. We’ve all got desert scenarios. So, environment by environment NATO will build up a library.”

ADL, another vital part of Snow Leopard, prepares personnel who are deploying to ISAF by familiarizing them with the operations of NATO.

“A number of individuals, for what ever reason, are deploying to International Security Assistance Force missions without having gone through the NATO training,” said Shelford. “NATO is often different from many nations’ functional command chains. You need to be taught how NATO is structured, how it works, about the chain of command and your part in the great scheme of things. ADL goes a long way to fulfilling this requirement.”

ADL is convenient because it is available all the time on the unclassified network.

“ADL is password protected but it is on the unsecure network, so anyone can access it at home or while in theatre,” said Shelford. “Essentially, Snow Leopard is the bearer system to deliver NATO ADL.”

Snow Leopard’s goal is to deliver more realistic training, as close as possible to what troops will experience in a combat situation.

“We are going from paper-based, static training to highly interactive, high quality training, where it has an automatic after action review capability,” said Shelford. “So, when the commander decided to make a decision to send his battle group right instead of left, and right was wrong, this automatic after-action review capability will shine on the commander and say ‘this was the critical moment, we can tell you the exact moment a decision was made.’ The problem is that not everyone is comfortable with that level of attribution.”

The after action review within the system is important to training and lessons learned.

“We want to know why a commander made the decision to go right instead of left because all the combat indicators said that he needed to go left,” said Shelford. “Was it just that he said the wrong thing? Was it that he wasn’t fed those combat indicators? We can start analyzing. We are interested to know that the quality of training we have been delivering has gotten through to the commander and he understands those combat indicators that he was fed up until that critical moment when he made the decision. We can identify the point where he made the wrong decision and why.”

In short there is a significant cultural change with Snow Leopard delivering higher quality outputs but requiring higher quality preparations and management. Although there have been advances, Shelford feels that the program still has a long way to go.

“We have to pull it along, a bit at a time, doing a little bit more each exercise,” said Shelford. “My aim is to deliver a progressive ramp of increasing capability to NATO.”
NATO troops in Afghanistan are faced with a serious threat daily. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), which can be anything from a car packed with explosives to a roadside bomb or a suicide bomber, have caused most of the casualties in Afghanistan.

Allied Command Transformation’s Counter-IED Integrated Project Team is working to reduce this threat to the troops. C-IED recently held an operational seminar at the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) in Stavanger, Norway. Attendees were provided a wealth of knowledge in order to prepare them for future operations.

“We are just giving them a week’s seminar in the latest and greatest in C-IED at the operational and strategic level so that when they show up in theatre they are better prepared,” said U.S. Navy Cmdr. David Culler, head of the C-IED Integrated Project Team at ACT.

“As we first went into Afghanistan, and with NATO specifically, there weren’t a whole lot of Improvised Explosive Device incidents, but as the years have gone on, they have increased dramatically to where it is the weapon of choice,” said Culler.

Culler explained how C-IED works not only to reduce the impact but the number of IED incidents.

“We are looking to figure out ways that we can target those who finance IEDs, those who building them, the operations officers who plan the attacks, the people who supply the material as well as those who store it,” said Culler.

“If we can target those individuals and those specific assets of C-IED then the weapon will never get placed in the road, put into a car or strapped onto a suicide bomber.”

Another important part of C-IED is the ability to disarm a bomb that has already been placed.

“You need to have the training, tactics, techniques and procedures to ensure you can survive in an IED environment,” said Culler. “If you know that a roadside bomb has been planted, trying to detect that weapon and having people that are trained to go in there and render it safe is very important.”

Part of the danger of IEDs is that every bomb is different. Special procedures must be followed after an IED blast.

“Once there has been an incident or explosion the right teams have to be sent in to exploit the scene. You can’t just go in there and collect the material,” said Culler. “You want to have trained personnel that can go in and take a look and see where the blast was and what kind of weapon was used, if it was time-released or maybe where the adversary was hiding when he pushed the button to make it explode.”

Investigation is a vital part of C-IED.

“We are trying to understand the tactical implications of IEDs so we can counter that and also we are collecting all of the material,” said Culler. “We want to collect pieces of the weapons and any of the material that may be there, such as fingerprints from the adversary so that we can use that information to exploit and then try to deter to the left of the boom.”

Once the scene investigation is complete, teams can use the information collected to find the people responsible.

“You might find a cell phone or fingerprints that can be used to take down a bomb maker, the guy that makes the weapons or the guy that supplies the parts,” said Culler. “You can then use these people to get more information on that C-IED cell. If you can take down the cells, you have the potential to dramatically reduce the number of IED incidents.”

To accomplish all of this, C-IED training is essential.

“Specifically, we focus on pre-deployment training,” said Culler. “We take that very seriously and we are trying to make sure that we are providing the best possible capability to all the NATO nations to help them get prepared to go into harm’s way and operate effectively in an IED environment.”

In addition to the seminar at JWC, C-IED also conducts a two-week ‘train the trainer’ course, which focuses on training at the tactical and battalion staff level.

“We are trying to identify the national trainers from the different nations, have them come to this course and teach them to be an instructor in C-IED,” said Culler. “We try to focus on getting people that have a foundation in C-IED. They come to this course and then when they go back to their nations they have the tools in their toolbox to teach their own nation C-IED. Eventually, as we move into the future, NATO will have less of a role in preparing nations, instead nations will have the capability to prepare themselves,” he said.
DSACT, ACT Team Visits Jordan as Part of NTCI Initiative

By U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Priscilla Kirsh
ACT Public Affairs Office

Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (DSACT) Italian Navy Adm. Luciano Zappata, Political Advisor to SACT Ambassador Wayne Neill and civilian and military staff members from the Norfolk-based strategic command visited Jordan recently to open further dialogue as part of the NATO Training Cooperation Initiative (NTCI).

Zappata said Jordan is very important to NATO because of their stabilising role in the Middle East. “Jordan has a very good relationship with Western countries. They understand us, and they can play a very important role,” he said.

During the four-day visit, Zappata, Neill and ACT staff members met with key Jordanian authorities and military leaders to exchange views on a wide range of issues and to strengthen ties between the Alliance and Jordan. These types of communication opportunities help focus on the specific objectives and priorities of individual countries.

“We look at these countries through the eyes of our own culture, so we may not always understand their culture,” he said. “It’s important for us to understand how they see us and if we want to be relevant in proposing to NATO authorities the way ahead for transformation in NATO we need to better know our neighbours.”

Jordan joined the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) in 1995 and makes significant contributions to establishing regional peace, security and stability. Strong relationships with countries such as Jordan help NATO meet future requirements.

One of the initiatives to help strengthen relationships and promote interoperability is the creation of a Regional Cooperation Center at the NATO Defense College, a place where NATO, partners and MD/Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) countries can gather for information sharing, which is a vital component of working together and understanding each other.

In addition to strengthening relationships and opening further dialogue, the ACT team engaged with Jordanians on education and training issues. Jordan is a key contributor to peacekeeping operations training through various initiatives such as the Peacekeeping Operations Training Center (PKOTC).

The PKOTC focuses a majority of their efforts on pre-deployment cultural awareness training, and 75 percent of attendees are foreign personnel. The aim of the training is to improve Arabic cultural awareness in order to better prepare troops for deployment. The center has organized a wide variety of courses to include NATO Terminology, Civil Military Cooperation and other topics that benefit Alliance forces.

“Jordan plays a big role in helping us understand how the Arabic people live and work, which will help us in building our relationships. I think they have set up a very useful center,” said Zappata.

ACT’s NTCI initiatives such as Advanced Distributed Learning as well as NATO School and NATO Defence College courses offer a two-way flow of information and ideas, which increases understanding and cooperation between participants.

Zappata said ACT can support countries such as Jordan through the expertise of the staff and by linking them with other countries that may already have experience.

ACT leaders will visit several MD/ICI countries this year with the goal of strengthening relationships and opening further dialogue.

CMC-elect Visits HQ SACT, Gets Full Support for Alliance Transformation

By U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Priscilla Kirsh
ACT Public Affairs Office

Italian Navy Adm. Giampaolo Di Paola, Chairman of the Military Committee-elect (CMC), visited Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (HQ SACT) on Feb. 27.

Di Paola met with key command leaders and received briefings on various topics that focused on the collaborating efforts of ACT and USJFCOM. The two commands work closely together to benefit from the synergy and U.S. efforts in transformation.

Two projects which involve collaboration are the Multinational Experiment 5 (MNE 5) and the ongoing support to the International Security Assistance Force. MNE 5 and other experimentation programmes allow ACT and USJFCOM to work together to ensure the focus is on solving the right problems and delivering relevant outcomes that can be used in multiple futures.

ACT has pledged to provide to NATO and the Nations a military appreciation of future threats to the Alliance.

Di Paola has more than 44 years of military experience and will lead NATO’s Military Committee in providing direction and advice on military policy and strategy. He will assume the duties of CMC in June 2008.
2008 NSIP Conference Focuses on Delivering Coherent Capabilities

Story and Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Crystal Marie Raner
ACT Public Affairs Office


The three-day working level bi-strategic commander’s conference brought together 200 representatives from NATO headquarters, the Nations and NATO agencies to discuss how to improve the delivery of coherent capabilities.

According to Turkish Army Maj. Gen. Abdullah Recep, Assistant Chief of Staff Resources and Logistics at HG SACT, NSIP is a very relevant programme and can significantly impact the transformation of the Alliance.

“We (ACT) are contributing to the transformational efforts of the Alliance through developing and delivering capabilities in a timely manner by using NSIP resources,” said Recep.

NSIP finances the provision of the installations and facilities needed to support the roles of the NATO Strategic Commands (SCs) beyond the national defence requirements of individual member countries. The investments cover such installations and facilities as communications and information systems, radar, military headquarters, airfields, harbours, navigational aids, and fuel pipelines and storage. As is the case for the military budget, NSIP also covers the eligible requirements for Peace Support Operations.

The introduction of Partnership for Peace in 1994 added a new cooperative dimension to NSIP.

By holding the NSIP conference, planners hope to increase the awareness of the packages and their role in supporting NATO shortfalls and improve medium and long-term resource planning in support of current operations and crisis response operations.

Currently the programme spends approximately 20 percent of its annual programme of 640 million Euros on short-term requirements. It spends the remaining 80 percent providing for the long term horizon, alleviating common funding eligible capability shortfalls via capability packages and other NSIP processes.

“The NSIP involves many stakeholders, all of them with important and complimentary military roles to play,” said Mr. Alvaro Pino, Chairman of the NATO Senior Resource Board. “The conference gives us an opportunity to bring together the stakeholders, make them aware of the challenges we face, and provide us potential solutions that can later be implemented.”

According to Spanish Navy Capt. Ignacio Garcia-Sanchez, NSIP branch head, the stakeholder diversity and coordination of efforts can be problematic at times. ACT is developing a Capability Development Support and Synthesis (CDSS) tool to overcome current challenges.

“The CDSS, when agreed by the main stakeholders, must be the main support tool to achieve a common operational picture of all the efforts undertaken in the capability development process,” said Garcia-Sanchez. “ACT envisions its efforts to be in the area of a Capability Package Master Plan which will feed into the CDSS and help facilitate a broader awareness of the packages and their role in supporting capability development efforts.”

Several initiatives to incorporate an improved business model approach spanning all levels of management are being implemented amongst the various stakeholders in NSIP.

According to Garcia-Sanchez, robust interaction of these bodies and consistent use of effective management practices are essential.

“These initiatives are well coordinated and promise to provide a cohesive and effective process,” said Garcia-Sanchez. “As part of this effort, ACT is leading an initiative that makes use of the PRINCE 2 methodology, trying to incorporate for the first time, business practices to improve efficiency in the management of this important process for the Alliance.”

Conferences such as NSIP provide open forum venues for discussing new ways to improve how NATO manages, develops and implements Alliance capabilities which can impact how successful and quickly NATO forces can respond to world crises and military operations.

NATO Nations Join NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Centre

By U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Crystal M. Raner
ACT Public Affairs Office

Five NATO nations agreed to provide support for manning, activities and training at the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Centre (NMIOTC) in Souda Bay, Greece during a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony held in Mons, Belgium recently.

Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Romania and Turkey became sponsoring nations for the NMIOTC to help the centre conduct the combined training activities necessary for NATO forces to better execute surface, subsurface and aerial surveillance, and special operations activities in support of the Operations Training Centre (OTC).

The NMIOTC is designed to improve allied naval units Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO) expertise through specific training programmes, promote skills, interoperability and cooperation among naval units through sea training and simulation. The centre supports Allied Command Transformation in the development of MIO tactical maritime doctrines, training directives and manuals as well as research, experimentation, modelling and simulation in support of the Alliance.
Good Training Is a Key to Success

Joint Force Training Centre Director Maj. Gen. Agner Rokos was interviewed recently by Mrs. Anna Galyga from the Multinational Corps North East (MNC NE) Public Affairs Office. The interview is reprinted with permission from MNC NE.

Q: Sir, what is the Joint Force Training Centre?
A: Joint Force Training Centre is a NATO Training Centre. Our mission is to train tactical level headquarters, for instance headquarters like IMNC NE. Basically we have two missions. The first one is to help train the headquarters for the NATO Response Force and our emphasis is on training what we call a component headquarters for the Land Forces, the Navy and the Air Force. The second thing we do is training of the staffs for current operations, like the ISAF operation in Afghanistan, for which we train the headquarters to be deployed to Kandahar. In addition to these two major training areas, we also train OMLT Teams (Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams), which are attached to the Afghan Army units with the aim of training and advising them. So we train the trainers, so to speak.

Q: How big is the Centre?
A: We are approximately 90 personnel. And I hope we will grow because the training tasks are growing, too.

Q: Is it a multinational environment?
A: Yes, we have 16 nations; there are all NATO members.

Q: When was the Joint Force Training Centre created?
A: It was decided upon the creation of the Centre in 2003 and it was activated in 2004. Since then we have been located in Bydgoszcz in temporary facilities. A new training centre is currently being built and we are moving there this year.

Q: When did the Centre start training people?
A: In 2004 the Centre started from scratch and slowly the personnel began to be assigned. In 2005 the first training event was conducted. Now we have a number of events a year; we have gone abroad to do the training in parallel with establishing and building our new facility.

Q: Who specifically is trained at JFTC?
A: Our priority is to train the staffs that are deploying to operations so right now our major training audience is the staff going to Kandahar, Afghanistan. It is personnel coming mostly from the United Kingdom, Canada and the Netherlands but also from the United States, Denmark and other countries.

Q: What kind of training is it?
A: We give them mission specific training that is related to tasks they will have to perform in Afghanistan, including some knowledge about Afghanistan – about people and culture. Then we exercise this knowledge and the procedures so that training participants will be able to utilise them when they are deployed. At the same time, it is a multinational staff so it is also team building. Therefore, when they leave us they are ready to deploy.

Q: Are there any other areas of training?
A: For now Afghanistan is the major area but we have also conducted training and courses for Iraqi key personnel. For example at the end of 2006 Iraqi officers participated in a course and exercise planning procedures in Poland.

Q: Approximately how many people do you train?
A: It is difficult to say but when we do the training before the deployment to Kandahar, it is approximately between 200 and 300 staff members.

Q: Does the Centre cooperate with other training centres?
A: Yes, we do. We cooperate with the Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger, Norway. There are two NATO Training Centres – one in Stavanger and one in Bydgoszcz so we are sister organisations, we compliment each other in the training we deliver. In Stavanger their major task is to support and train the NATO Response Force. We also play a role in this area but obviously everything is closely coordinated with Stavanger: We work a lot with National Training Centres, too, especially when we have to go abroad to do our training and normally we borrow facilities from them.

Q: How about the NATO School in Oberammergau?
A: We also cooperate with them. But they have a different mission because they are doing education for individuals and we are doing collective training and exercises for staffs.

Q: How do you see the future of JFTC?
A: We will definitely evolve. The first step will be getting our own training facility this year and it will be supported by CAX – computer assisted exercise system, which is a modeling and simulation tool that will enhance the training.

The future steps are obviously related to training tasks and requirements that are ever increasing and becoming more complex so the challenge is the volume of work and its complexity. There are two dimensions of this complexity – for example the mission in Afghanistan has a lot of players; it is not only a military mission, we have to interface with a lot of civilians – the authorities of the country, Non-Governmental Organisations, International Organisations, humanitarian and private organisations and others. We need to replicate this whole environment for our training. The other element of this complexity lies in the conduct of operations; we have to be able to counter improvised explosive devices for example. What I mean is that there is a whole technological and procedural side of this training that is also very complex. This is something that is being developed and introduced to our training, too.
NATO School Hosts Partnerships Symposium

By U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Crystal M. Raner
ACT Public Affairs Office

Over 300 attendees representing 35 nations attended the annual Partnerships Symposium held at the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany Jan. 23-24.

Known as the flagship event for NATO, the symposium is an opportunity to bring together all of NATO’s partner Nations that represent the Alliance, Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperative Initiative. From across the globe, these nations gathered for the two-day conference to discuss in an open forum how they best believe NATO can improve its partnership relations and collaborate on what kind of learning technologies they would like to see implemented in the future.

According to Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy Ambassador Martin Erdmann, there has been much political change in NATO since the early 90s; therefore, there is an even greater significance for NATO listening to the partners.

“NATO has developed institutionalised relations with some 35 nations,” said Erdmann. “We have developed partnership pillars from the side of this alliance with partners in Central Asia and the Caucasus, with our Mediterranean Dialogue partners, with partners in the Arabian Gulf area and even with countries far beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, countries like Japan, New Zealand, Australia and South Korea.”

Erdmann believes NATO can further develop its partnership relations with nations who are not members of NATO by implementing the same tools the Alliance already uses with the PfP Nations. Tools such as defence reform, security policy issues of a wider nature, and how to cope with asymmetric threats can provide all nations an opportunity to advance their nations strategically and technologically, as well as contribute to global security.

“It is not that much NATO reaching out to partners far beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, of course, we do that as well,” Erdmann said. “But it is a two-way approach. Those partnerships far beyond the Euro-Atlantic area are coming to us because they feel like they are in the same family of nations, they face the same threats in security terms, and are exposed to an insecure world to the same threat dimensions that we face, but they do not have the instruments. They do not have a NATO. They do not have a security organisation where nations stand in for each other: So they want to be part of this family because these nations are based on the same values as we are. And why should we not offer our cooperation to those nations? So it is as we say in English, ‘it takes two to tango,’ and this is exactly what happens. It is NATO plus those partners in a joint effort, and joint endeavour.”

No longer simply an Alliance of nations for collective defence, today’s NATO is engaged globally with an emphasis on collective security. The peace, security and territorial integrity of Alliance members and partner Nations are supported through the transformation of NATO military forces and capabilities. New concepts, doctrine and training tools will empower a more agile, expeditionary and effective Alliance as it engages militarily today and in the future.

Open forum events such as the Partnerships Symposium have proven to be advantageous for all nations supporting the transformation of the Alliance. By collaborating and cooperating, nations are striving to meet the increasing need for support of current humanitarian and military operations in geographical areas outside of the Euro-Atlantic area such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Darfur.

“Tools such as defence reform, security policy issues of a wider nature, and how to cope with asymmetric threats can provide all nations strategically and technologically, as well as contribute to global security.”
NURC’s Work Reflects NATO’s Transformational Themes

By Ms. Lillian Gassie
NURC Information Services

The NATO Undersea Research Centre (NURC) programme of work has been evolving to meet changing trends and directions in naval defense. External forces, such as the pressure caused by a reduction in personnel, a decrease in the number of ships and large performance based systems, and the increase in asymmetric threats, together with the need to develop a NATO expeditionary force, have called for future naval systems that are adaptable, scalable, deployable and affordable.

The rapid development of enabling technologies such as sensors, small platforms, processing, networking and communication are resulting in sensing and weapon systems that are autonomous, networked, coordinated and interoperable.

NURC has responded with a programme of work that reflects NATO’s transformational themes for expeditionary mine countermeasures, surveillance and information superiority. The Centre’s current research focuses on (a) unmanned underwater vehicles with increasing autonomy; (b) distributed autonomous sensing surveillance platforms; and (c) decision support for battlespace environmental superiority. The keys here are scalable capabilities to match the threat or situation, and platform independence to enable multiple, concurrent and perhaps different types of operations.

As an example, NURC is already transforming mine countermeasures operations and defense against terrorism in ports and harbours with the demonstrated use of Autonomous Underwater Vehicles and improved sensing capabilities.

At NURC, research and products are developed through collaboration with NATO nations. For the development of its 2009 programme of work, the Centre received 49 proposals from nations and five proposals from military groups under NATO Naval Armaments Group (INNAG), most of which align with the general trend of small, affordable, deployable and scalable approaches.

There is a focus on interoperability at the early stages of development. The Centre significantly leverage national efforts, as NURC researchers rapidly prototype and experiment with new technologies and concepts in maritime research. The Centre has found that early operator involvement through experimentation is the key to transformation and exploitation of new technologies.
Azalea Symposium Brings Together Expertise in Disaster Preparedness

By U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Priscilla Kirsh
ACT Public Affairs Office

Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation and Old Dominion University (ODU), in conjunction with the Netherlands, kicked off the Azalea Festival Symposium April 15 at the Ted Constant Convocation Center. The theme of this year’s symposium was “Katrina over Hampton Roads: Are We Ready?”

One of the major events of the week-long 55th annual Norfolk International Azalea Festival, this year’s symposium brought together emergency responders, military leaders and academics to collaborate on how best to prepare for natural disasters.

The symposium featured two regions that have much to gain from sharing information on disaster preparedness. The United States and the Netherlands have a long-standing common interest in this issue and derive great benefit from venues such as the Azalea Festival Symposium, which capitalises on opportunities to share information.

The Hampton Roads area is home to the second largest port on the United States East Coast. The Netherlands is one of the most low-lying countries in Europe and is home to Rotterdam, the largest port in Europe.

Two main themes emerged from keynote addresses. First, symposium leaders expected this year’s symposium to produce constructive and globally beneficial outputs. A document from the event is expected to be published and distributed to participants. The aim of the document will be to help all emergency response organisations and militaries work together in disaster preparedness and response.

By U.S. Navy Lt. j.g. Matt Gill
ACT Public Affairs Office

The purpose of the Azalea Festival Symposium was to generate a constructive output to provide practical value to Hampton Roads and the Alliance. The working sessions at the Virginia Modelling, Analysis and Simulation Centre did just that. On the first day, symposium attendees observed formalities, honouring distinguished guests and the Azalea Queen, and listened to remarks from an impressive array of keynote speakers. The second day they rolled up their sleeves, grabbed a boxed lunch and got down to the difficult work of actually creating a document that will help nations and organisations prepare for disasters.

“These sessions were packed full of good ideas,” said Dr. Mike McGinnis, Executive Director of VMASC, and when the recommendations are published and distributed to NATO it should have real value.

The three workshops examined the critical challenges, including collaboration, communication, interoperability, standardisation and preparedness. Each workshop approached these challenges from a different angle, and the common theme running throughout was that a culture of preparedness is essential to any national or regional crisis response.

Modelling and simulation can help contribute to this culture, especially if the psychological effects of disaster, or the “human element,” is included in the model. Prof. Dykstra mentioned the importance of the human element in any disaster, and it was this element that made the disaster of Hurricane Katrina so nationally devastating.

McGinnis concluded the symposium with a challenge to the attendees. “I challenge each of you to go back to your respective communities and put into practice what you’ve learned here,” he said, “beginning with your families and your offices. Start to build a culture of preparedness where you live and work,” so that when the recommendations are published and distributed to the nations, small steps will have already begun.

At the conclusion of the 2008 Azalea Festival Symposium, the leaders involved were very pleased with the results, and hoped that every attendee felt like they contributed to the future security and preparedness of the Alliance.
Delivering Maritime Security in Global Partnership

By U.S. Navy Lt.j.g Matt Gill
ACT Public Affairs Office

Today’s maritime security challenges have increasingly broad impacts throughout the world, and the need for a global partnership to deliver maritime security is likewise increasing.

NATO’s Combined Joint Operations from the Sea Centre of Excellence (CJOS COE) is hosting a conference May 12-15 in Sorrento, Italy to provide a forum to promote innovative discussion on strategies, technologies and initiatives related to the ever-expanding challenge of global maritime security. The theme of the Conference is: “Delivering Maritime Security in Global Partnership.”

“There’s a growing recognition, I think, that most nations have an increased dependency on maritime trade and freedom of the seas to support their continued development or prosperity, and we aim to support improved maritime security by developing new concepts for information sharing and by enabling better cooperation between friendly nations,” said Royal Navy Commodore Bob Mansergh, UK Deputy Director of the CJOS COE.

This is the first conference hosted by CJOS, which is the second-largest of the NATO COEs, and aims to raise awareness of the global nature of maritime security and leverage best practices from all nations and organisations involved.

“The theme recognises that many of the maritime security challenges we now face have impacts far beyond the local area where they’re first seen. For example, piracy in the Malacca straits off Singapore and Indonesia may have significant impacts on tankers passing through those busy waters and would thereby affect the smooth flow of vital oil and gas to the rapidly emerging economies of eastern Asia,” said Commodore Mansergh.

Allied Command Transformation works with all the COEs to distribute their work throughout NATO and to coordinate efforts among the nations and between the COEs. This allows all players to leverage the results of the CJOS COE’s labour. ACT also works side-by-side with the CJOS in a mutually supportive way on a range of maritime projects.

“ACT does contribute to our mission by working with us collaboratively on a range of mutually important projects. They often invite us to investigate specific aspects of those projects where our skill sets offer high value added, and they invite us on occasions to chair their working groups to bring our expertise into the mix,” said the Commodore.

The CJOS especially hopes this conference will attract maritime security experts from a wide range of authorities including some of the smaller countries who may not have traditionally considered themselves engaged in a global maritime partnership. To that end, Commodore Mansergh has invited NATO and non-NATO nations, as well as non-military maritime security experts, and wants them to leave the conference better aware of what they can do to develop the global maritime partnership further without major investment and in the shortest possible time.

“We want people attending this conference to engage fully, to leave understanding better how the maritime partnership should be developed, and to return to their own authorities or countries enthusiastic about joining in in any way they can,” he said.

Most nations recognize that the global scale and persistent nature of maritime security challenges will demand a sustained response, which can only credibly be achieved within a co-operative partnership. “The need for a global partnership is developing rapidly,” said Commodore Mansergh, “and it is a partnership which extends well beyond traditional military missions. Indeed, it would be completely wrong to think that most of these problems are ones that can be solved by navies and other military forces alone. Many of them are effectively law enforcement or civil agency challenges, where the military is the last backstop to prevent a threat from being delivered effectively.”
HQ SACT Kicks Off Festival with Flag Raising Ceremony

By U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Priscilla Kirsh
ACT Public Affairs Office

Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation kicked off the 55th annual Norfolk International Azalea Festival with a flag raising ceremony April 14. The ceremony celebrated the Netherlands as the most honoured nation and paid tribute to all 26 NATO nations.

The NL Royal Marine Band performed along with the U.S. Fleet Forces Command Band.

The Netherlands is one of the seven founding members of NATO and makes significant contributions to the success of NATO and its operations. In addition to troop contributions in Afghanistan, the 45 Dutch personnel on the ACT staff lead critical efforts to keep NATO forces relevant in today's rapidly changing security environment.

Royal Netherlands Army Capt. Mariola Kasemier is the first active duty service member to serve as Queen Azalea. She recently completed a tour in Afghanistan as part of a Provincial Reconstruction Team, an experience she says she will treasure for the rest of her life.

She said she has seen firsthand how we have the ability to make a positive change in someone's life and she is proud that NATO gave her the opportunity to do just that.

"I firmly believe that this positive change could not have been achieved without the cooperation between all Allied forces present in Afghanistan. Together we proved every single day that our combat suits not only represent war and fighting, but also hope and a brighter future."

Kasemier encouraged participants to use the Azalea Festival not only to celebrate NATO as an organisation but to celebrate the men and women who are risking their lives every day to make this world a better and safer place for all.

Dutch Deputy Chief of Mission to the United States Mr. Richard van Rijssen also spoke during the ceremony and noted the long-standing ties between the United States and the Netherlands.

"I am very proud of the ties that link both Norfolk and this wonderful region, and Allied Command Transformation to the Netherlands," he said.

Also in attendance was Norfolk Mayor Paul Fraim, who said the Azalea Festival was the city of Norfolk's way of honouring the allied forces of NATO. "We understand the importance of NATO and we greatly treasure our relationship with the Kingdom of the Netherlands," he said. "Our city is proud to have the privilege of hosting our defenders of freedom."

ISAF Veteran Represents the Netherlands and NATO as Queen Azalea

Royal Netherlands Army Capt. Mariola Kasemier was selected to represent NATO and the most honoured Nation, the Netherlands, as Queen Azalea.

What makes Kasemier's selection so unique is that she was the first active duty servicemember to hold the title. For her, it was an honour to represent the Alliance in the 55th Norfolk International Azalea Festival.

"I have seen with my own eyes what NATO can do in the world, so it's great to be part of a festival that supports NATO," she said.

Kasemier has been an officer in the Royal Netherlands Army since 2000 and is very proud of her military service.

She recently served in support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

"I was part of the Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT), where we worked on some projects together with the local population and local government to start with the rebuilding and reconstruction of the country," said Kasemier.

As a PRT member, Kasemier and her team built multiple police stations, helped provide entire towns with water, built mosques and brought many tribes together:

"I have done a lot of business with the Australian and American military and Afghan government employees," said Kasemier. "It was fascinating to see the different cultures, each with a different way of handling situations, working together."

Kasemier described her service in Afghanistan as one that made a lasting impression, and one that she will never forget.

"It was a wonderful experience, especially working with people so closely so you can really see the results of what you are doing. I don't think you can imagine what Afghanistan is going to be like; it's different than anything you can imagine. It is an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life."

Azalea festival events ran from April 14-19 and celebrated the longstanding relationship between the Alliance and the community of Hampton Roads.
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