



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER TRANSFORMATION

SACT REMARKS to

MARCOMET

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Admiral (George) Zambellas, Vice Admiral (Peter) Hudson, distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen.

I feel very honoured to have been introduced by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Zambellas. George, thank you very much for your kind words and warm welcome. It is really a pleasure for me to be here in London to discuss maritime issues in a country with such a long lasting tradition of maritime excellence.

And each time I come to the United Kingdom, I like to remind myself of the excellent and intellectually very challenging year I spent attending the Advanced Staff Course at the Royal Air Force Staff College in Bracknell. I very much enjoyed this first contact at the joint level through exercises and strategic thinking. This course emphasized the importance of Education, Training and Exercises which is one of ACT's main tasks.

I also feel privileged, as the Commander responsible for the Transformation of our Alliance, to introduce this conference, which seeks to address the challenges and issues facing our maritime forces, now and in the future.

It is certainly a propitious time to reflect on maritime domain because the questions our maritime forces are dealing with are multifaceted. On the operational side, there is an increasing demand for naval assets and our forces are stretched between contributing to on-going operations – Active Endeavour, Ocean Shield, Atalanta and now EUNAVFOR-Med launched last week – and responding to an increased Russian naval activity.



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They also need to be able to operate and project power in a more complex environment where our traditional military superiority is likely to be challenged. On the capacity and capability side, shrinking budgets result in the downsizing of the fleets, and this trend is aggravated by the rising costs of new platforms, I should say new weapon systems, which are more capable and sophisticated, but in fewer numbers, and this qualitative versus quantitative equation is perhaps one of the most pressing challenge in NATO's Transformation.

I often describe Transformation as the golden thread linking the past to our future. We must assume our past, learn from it, capitalize on it, we must adapt to the present and short-term requirements while developing our vision, and our strategy for the future.

So, looking first to our past and the present, it's important to stress the key historical tenets of NATO's superiority in the maritime domain and to reflect on the near future, taking into account adaptations NATO has undertaken since Wales and drawing some long-term transformation perspectives.

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Since the building of our Atlantic Alliance, maritime operations have always been a defining feature of NATO and one of its historic strengths.

During the Cold War, exercise REFORGER was intended to demonstrate annually that NATO had the ability to quickly deploy forces to reinforce West Germany, in the event of a conflict with the Warsaw Pact. It remains today a symbol of the transatlantic bond that underpins our Alliance.

Sea power was also a key component of many Alliance's operations. In the Balkans, NATO warships conducted cruise missile strikes and contributed to the air campaign over Bosnia and particularly over Kosovo.

More recently, in Libya, NATO's Standing Naval Forces were very responsive in carrying out the arms embargo, they were as well able to conduct strikes swiftly after the transition from Operation Odyssey Dawn to Operation Unified Protector. The added value of aircraft carriers and amphibious assault vessels carrying Army attack helicopters, in conjunction with the Air campaign, significantly contributed to the success of OUP.

In addition, units such as the Royal Marines have also been deployed to Afghanistan where they brought their skills and tremendous joint experience to complex counter-insurgency operations.

Yet, the ability of the Alliance to maintain this superiority in the maritime domain is already being challenged by the rapid adaptation by our potential opponents.



First, at the lower end of the spectrum, although we have made substantial progress against piracy in the Horn of Africa, it remains an enduring threat that may continue to demand the attention of a significant number of naval assets for the years to come. More generally, Non-state actors may also seek to create safe havens from where they will generate more instability and be able to engage in various criminal trafficking, such as the exploitation of the flows of refugees that focus the attention of our navies today.

Second, the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine and increased activity of Russian submarines and vessels in the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean highlight the necessity for the Alliance to ensure its collective defence at sea. Therefore, Prevention, Assurance and Deterrence must continue to be for us over-riding priorities.

Thirdly, the dissemination of weapons that were previously the domain of states, as well as the use of unconventional asymmetric tactics, such as swarming, will challenge our ability to project power ashore. We could for instance face complex combinations of integrated missile defences – such as the Russian Bastion system – naval mines, fast attack craft armed with anti-ship missiles and torpedoes, or suicide boats, which could operate in swarm attacks. We cannot either underestimate the, capacity to jam, attack or disrupt our networks, or the use of disruptive autonomous systems and potentially hypersonic missiles in the future to deny us access and manoeuvre space.



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These observations should lead us to reflect on how best to optimize the use of our increasingly stretched naval assets.

This question is clearly on our agenda in the scope of the operationalization of NATO maritime strategy.

In that perspective, we should focus on two priorities.

On the one hand, we need to reinvest in the operational preparation of our forces and on the other hand, we must optimize their employment and their deployments.

First of all, we need to bolster our exercises qualitatively toward high intensity warfare. This is our aim with the Alliance's Connected Forces Initiative.

CFI reorients our training and exercises program toward more demanding, high intensity operations and manoeuvre warfare covering the full spectrum of our strategic concept from a low intensity, crisis management type environment to a high intensity, collective defence situation.

Recently, the very demanding 11 day Trident JEWEL exercise enabled the certification of MARCOM full operational capability in the context of a joint multinational operation.



Next, in October, our major exercise Trident Juncture 15 will also give evidence on this new focus on high intensity and manoeuver warfare with almost 36,000 personnel engaged. The maritime component will include 70 ships, 8 submarines, 10 maritime patrol aircrafts and 3000 Marines, a level which has not been reached for 20 years.

In addition, we must continue to evolve our scenarios so that we can train in a more realistic and complex environment, integrating new dimensions such as Joint ISR, Cyber, and Ballistic Missile Defence or elements of Hybrid warfare.

This renewed approach to operational preparation is a key asset in support of our maritime strategy.

At the Wales Summit, the Heads of State and Government tasked NATO to pursue the implementation of the Alliance Maritime Strategy (AMS), synchronised with the development of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP).

As Allied navies are subject to significant constraints, we must optimise more than ever the employment of Alliance maritime capabilities, enhance their effectiveness, their interoperability through increased coordination, cooperation and complementarity between NATO and the European Union.

In March 2015, several Allies, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States proposed setting up a Comprehensive NATO Maritime Framework, which would meet these objectives.



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It was brought forward by France in the scope of the recent defence ministerial meeting. This Comprehensive NATO Maritime Framework, could be developed to become a deliverable of the RAP's maritime component and a standing support linked with defence plans and operations. The spirit of those initiatives, based on mutually beneficial exchanges would constitute the baseline of an enhanced joint presence of Alliance naval forces to provide:

- a more robust Maritime situational awareness of all maritime areas of strategic interest;
- an adapted presence, thanks to increased and more flexible response and reaction assets, in SACEUR's AOR, and beyond if the NAC so decides;
- a high level of interoperability, through "high-end" exercises and training (in line with CFI objectives);
- practical cooperation with partners, especially the EU.

Extant NATO mechanisms would therefore need to be adapted along the lines of greater flexibility, readiness and operational effectiveness through associated support, information sharing, composition of standing naval forces and exercise programmes.

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The Summit was also the occasion to reaffirm the strength of the transatlantic cooperation, with a special emphasis on maritime support to the Ballistic Missile Defence.

As BMD capable Aegis frigates are now deployed by the United States in Spain, they will provide a significant increase in NATO BMD capability. And to maintain the transatlantic balance, the Alliance and the EU should also support European nations developing in common similar capabilities.

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If the Alliance is certainly able to successfully provide efficient answers to these immediate challenges, the future global and complex maritime environment also requires a coherent and consistent long-term Transformation, fuelled by an analysis of potential game changers and Innovation oriented.

Considering the resource constraints, but as well, the opportunities offered by enhanced cooperation and new technologies, practical and efficient innovation is an imperative if we want to keep our technological edge, and fill our main capability shortfalls while placing the burden of cost on our future adversaries.

Transformation is about keeping or retaking the initiative and imposing our tempo on our adversaries.

To achieve this aim, we must make the most benefit of every single tool in our inventory. ACT is already actively involved in maritime capabilities improvement and innovation through the Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentations – the former NURC. With the CMRE we are looking for technological game changers particularly in Anti-Submarine Warfare capability and counter-mine operations.

For instance, in mine warfare we have recently been able to demonstrate, during exercises, the ability of an underwater unmanned vehicle (UUV) equipped with a high resolution imaging sonar to automatically search, map and classify mines in littoral areas.



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CMRE's prototypes improve their performance and regularly outperform conventional MCM vessels during NATO exercises.

Similarly, our ASW program shows similar promise. In 2013, for the first time, two underwater robots (UUVs) autonomously detected and tracked a submarine.

We have continued to improve the performance and endurance of these UUVs as was demonstrated recently during the NATO exercises Dynamic Mongoose in the sea of Norway last May.

The underwater world could be about to see a major evolution, partly driven by NATO's Science & Technology efforts. Nations can benefit directly from these findings as a growing number of them are now considering further autonomy in MCM and ASW missions.

As we are looking to optimise our resources and our expertise, I do encourage you to take the most benefit from CMRE and I would also stress the potential of our NATO certified maritime Centres of Excellence: the Combined Joint Operations from the Sea, based in Norfolk, USA, the COE for Operations in Confined and Shallow Waters in Kiel Germany and the NATO Naval Mine Warfare Centre in Oostende Belgium. We must also maximise the use of our certified Training and Education Centres like the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operations Training Centre in Greece.



We also have to apply innovation to adapt our surface fleet to new threats, particularly regarding the Anti Access / Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities supported by the continued development of long range, high velocity precision strike technologies.

The increasing emergence of precision guided, ballistic, cruise or hypersonic missiles, and swarming concepts, is raising the issue of cost to effectiveness ratio in developing or adapting our defence system. One aim of transformation is to improve this ratio to turn it into decisive advantage.

Inspired by the third offset strategy launched in the USA, Europe has the opportunity to take its full share in this innovative endeavour to offer flexible responses to many existing and foreseeable challenges, including A2/AD.

For instance, the United States is already assessing the potential and the affordability of game changer technologies such as electromagnetic rail guns and so-called directed-energy weapons.

Other technological improvements are coming such as compact long-range radars that can track multiple targets or new ways to protect communications networks, including space-based ones. To improve on maritime situation awareness we can take the full benefit of chains of high altitude, long endurance drones to improve permanent and real time intelligence.



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Eventually, drones may also offer an alternative or a complement to the deficit in air maritime patrol across the alliance. But at the end, I think a key advantage should/will rely on our ability to connect in real time different platforms and complementary systems which will enable NATO or ad hoc coalitions to master the operating tempo and maximise operational effect.

Above all, success in Innovation will also depend on our ability to “operationalize” emerging technologies, to encourage creative thinking, innovative concepts and to deliver ‘out of the box’ solutions.

We will therefore continue to deepen our cooperation, on both sides of the Atlantic, with think tanks, academia and Industry to explore new ways of taking forward the development of our capabilities.

From our on-going discussions, we have come to the conclusion that we must adopt a pragmatic approach in our equipment design and acquisition. We must find the right balance between quantity and quality.

On one hand, we must develop a sufficient number of platforms, in the air, sea or sub-surface to ensure an appropriate level of resilience and on the other hand define the right modules required to achieve the mission.

In other words, whatever the asset, there is a clear advantage in building common, modular, multi-role adaptable, reconfigurable platforms on which you can plug military capability tailored to the mission and making use of the latest and affordable technology



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In conclusion, and to close on innovation, I have no doubt in the ability of our maritime forces, *in your ability*, to capitalize on current capabilities and to innovate, to push the boundaries of what is in the art of the possible to maintain the maritime military superiority of the Alliance.

I would like to thank MARCOM for providing us this unique opportunity to come together and share new ideas, to candidly exchange our points of view on how to continue transforming our maritime capability so that it continues to protect the peaceful principles enshrined in the Washington Treaty.

President Theodore Roosevelt once said "*A good Navy is not a provocation to war. It is the surest guarantee of peace.*" I do think it is still very true today.

I thank you for your attention.