



**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER  
TRANSFORMATION**

**SACT's Closing Remarks at**

**The COTC 2019**

**Norfolk, 12 December 2019**

Ver As declared

**Général d'armée aérienne André Lanata**



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Generals, Admirals,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It has been my distinct honour and a real pleasure to host you at the 2019 Chiefs of Transformation Conference. I thank all of you for your participation and inputs during this annual gathering.

This year, we gathered 364 participants from 28 Member Nations, 6 Partner Nations<sup>1</sup>, Industry, Academia, and NATO Staff.

I also want to point out that, again at COTC, we welcomed national young disruptors to join the senior leaders. This year we also involved our enlisted personal through specific session dedicated to our CSEL representatives. Their point of views are crucial to address the essential Human capital issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Austria, Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland



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I want to congratulate the team of DCOS Strategic Plans and Policy, led by RADM John Tammen, for their commitment and effort with the organization and execution of this event.

I also want to congratulate the ACT's Protocol team, remarkable as always, and the entire hotel management team and staff.

Let's give them a round of applause!

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We were privileged to have yesterday a video opening address by NATO's Secretary General, Mr Jens Stoltenberg, who recognized ACT's efforts and highlighted opportunities COTC provides.



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He highlighted that *"to large degree, our future security will be determined by our ability to understand, adopt and implement emerging and disruptive technologies."*, and concluded that *"NATO has a key role in driving this change"*.

He recognized and commended also all the efforts deployed by ACT in that field through different perspectives such as:

- **Organization of major events** (NATO Industry Forum, NAC Away Day to mention few) ;
- **Implication in the preparation of the London's leaders meeting** main outcomes (Emerging and Disruptive Technology roadmap, declaration of Space as an operational domain) ;
- **Identification of trends and their potential military implications** through SFA and FFAO ;
- **Promotion of innovation within the entire Alliance** by organizing twice a year NATO innovation Challenges ;
- **Development of a LAB capability** within ACT;



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- **Promotion of experimentations during exercises...** in my opinion the best way to bring capability to life, testing at scale some innovative solutions.

Here in ACT we invest considerable efforts in embracing EDTs through innovation and through anticipating its impact both as challenges and as opportunities.

Yesterday I explained our, ACT's, approach to NWCC and innovation. These topics were among several that have been touched upon in our various discussions during these two days. And, they contribute greatly to our Warfare Development.

While we have a clear idea of what Warfare Development is, achieving its objectives will require a lot of effort and, let me stress it again, cooperation.



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Closer cooperation among member Nations, and NATO with partners, particularly with Industry and Academia helps us to ensure the future of the Alliance.

We also proved the benefits of our close interaction here, at this Conference.

My intention is not to try to summarize our two days rich and frank discussions.

But let me emphasize some significant insights we developed together and the actions we need to undertake.

First,

This is not only a question of technology. We are all focussed on technologies; probably too much indeed. Technology is a necessity but only makes sense if it is supported by a military strategy.



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I strongly believe it is essential for us as an Alliance to regenerate our military strategic thinking.

How can we effectively counter the strategic paths of our adversaries? Instead of searching each time for symmetric responses, there are probably alternative ways to oppose to our adversaries.

In this field, I have great expectations in our work on the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept. There is a unique opportunity to emphasize alternative ways which should combine military actions across domains and attempt to synchronize military actions with the other instruments of power.

This is exactly the reason why we have proposed to conduct a session on hybrid warfare. If we can faster attribute any aggression in the new shadow wars we are facing, this will change positively our deterrent effect. Here is one of the question which illustrate in another way the necessity to link better military concept of operations and the way to mobilize technologies.



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The driver should not be the technology!

Second,

I am not repeating myself. This is not only a question of technology. Listening to your views during this conference reinforce a deep conviction that I built since several years.

We are all facing tremendous challenges regarding Human capital and this trends will amplify:

- Birth rates are decreasing in our western societies,
- Our armed forces are competing with private sector to hire specific skills,
- Our environment is getting more and more complex and we will need to help our warfighters but also our decision-makers to better apprehend the different situations.





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Of course this is mainly a responsibility of Nations but I think NATO has, at least, the role of offering a forum of exchanges in order to better apprehend and progress together on this critical issue.

I am also convinced that we must invest in the field of cognitive science.

The notion of man-in or man-out of the decision/action loop is of course a point which has to be debated. We should be careful not to seed this issue incorrectly.

We should always recall that, being an Alliance of values, we will always comply with the law of armed conflict.

Third,

We all recognize that one of the major factor of evolution was not only the technological changes itself but **the pace of its development.**



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All of you expressed the absolute necessity to adapt in depth the way we drive capability development in order to be able to outpace our adversaries. All of you mentioned agility.

This is the reason why ACT is a strong advocate of the full implementation of the new model of common funded capability. At the management level, under the personal commitment of general Sharpy, we have done good progress. There is still work to be done at the governance level and we need your support in this endeavour.

Indeed today we should all recognize, and I will quote here my chief of staff Paul Bennett, that we face a kind of institutional latency here!

But this will not be enough, especially in the field of software development where we have to be definitively more agile.



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In ACT we are investigating new methods coming from private sectors and already experienced by some of your Nations.

- Spiral, incremental development ;
- User centric approach : operational cases instead of stand-alone requirements ;
- Minimum viable products ;
- Experimentations at scale.

All of these are becoming reality in ACT, not only “buzzwords”.

In ACT, we have already made many concrete steps that keep us on track! It’s not only principles here – We apply them to concrete projects.

I mentioned yesterday some examples of these projects, which are covering the identified challenges. For example, with the *Information Environment Assessment* tool, we cope with the challenges in information domain, with our efforts in building resilience we cope with the hybrid challenges but also EDT or adaptation of our capability development approach.



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I can also mention the example of decision making where we develop today a roadmap to support these different dimensions.

My intent is to go further with these initiatives by unifying them and bringing coherence to them. It is linked also with the development of our NWCC. It is our intention to bring all these dimensions and the lessons we learned from these initiatives into our concept.

But, we also need you, your Nations, to take part in these efforts.

We are at the beginning of our journey in this endeavour and I personally believe that ACT could connect initiatives taken in your Nations and act as a “Hub of the Hubs”.

I think that we need to formalize the designation of a “chief of innovation” or an innovation champion, as we have now one in ACT, in your respective countries.



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My concern is also to contribute to the effective implementation of these MVP into capabilities. This is the reason why I investigate the ways to faster contract with winners of our innovation Challenges.

Fourth,

To really unlock the potential of AI and big data, we have to take resolute measures **to treat data as a strategic resource** and to consider a global capability development approach here.

How do we collect, how do we homogenize, how do we share, how do we protect are paramount questions ahead of us at the same level of priority than how do we process!

This is mainly a question of will, not a question of technology. Technologies are already existing...



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Among others, the question of level of classification which slow our ability to share is probably something to consider and discuss. It includes our ability to share information among Allies and with key partners.

Fifth,

Last but not least: Interoperability.

This is one of my main concern. That should be on of yours! We have been until now successful in assuring interoperable forces and we need to continue to ensure it.

Once again this is not only a question of technology. Everything NATO, and especially ACT, is doing in the field of education and training, concepts and doctrines, exercises contribute to interoperability of our forces. We have to be convinced of this tremendous and everlasting effort.



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Of course this new technological developments will bring new challenges. How to make operate legacy systems with latest generation systems?

Few ideas on it:

- We should better leverage the lessons learned process which is yet not adequately exploited for interoperability;
- We should take more into account operational needs in technical standards;
- We should increase our commitment to Federated Mission Network developed by ACT and our contribution to exercises and events such as CWIX or Tide Sprint; They are organized for you!
- We should think interoperability by design throughout the DOTMLPFI spectrum.

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We have clearly identified many opportunities for continued improvement, looking beyond the Brussels Summit and London's Leaders meeting, and in support of the warfare development of the Alliance.



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These improvements, particularly boosted by innovation, will significantly support our Transformation efforts, and result in a fast delivery of tangible and beneficial capabilities to our warfighters.

In fact, you all know that in my mind only one thing is important: concrete deliveries!

I would also like to assure you that we value your feedback. We introduced a different conference format from the COTC 2017, allowing more discussion, engagement and debate. More importantly, we will be working on implementing the takeaways from this event.

As I already touched upon, the takeaways from this year's Conference will help us progressing further and will represent substantial contribution to the elaboration of the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept.





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These are huge challenges in front of us but allow me to be optimistic.

I am deeply convinced that we, 29 Nations, with our increasing military budgets, with the best in best competences in terms of military, technology, industry, academia, research centres, Centres of excellence, and our human capital will succeed in overcoming them. I trust here the power of our network.

Thank you again for the very good discussions, and more importantly for the actionable outcomes we can now link to the work strands and upcoming events.

Above all, after two days of dialogue, we established new contacts, we exchanged ideas and we now know each other better. This work is certainly the guarantee of our collective success tomorrow.

I would like to thank you for your attendance and wish you all a safe trip home, and Happy Holidays and merry Christmas.