



**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER  
TRANSFORMATION**

**SACT's INTERVENTION at**

**The German Council on Foreign Relations**

**BERLIN, 24 February**

**6.30 pm**

***“Towards Warsaw and Beyond  
A Vision for NATO Transformation”***

**Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER**

***AS DELIVERED***



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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure and a privilege for me to take part in this third event in a series of discussions on “NATO before Warsaw” organised by the Future Forum Berlin and the German Council on Foreign Relations.

I want to thank you, Prof. Dr. Sandschneider, for having me and your kind words of welcome.

I firmly believe in frank and honest debates about the fundamental questions our Alliance needs to address, and about how we ensure its current and future relevance as well as its credibility and cohesion.

And let me recognise here the pivotal role the German Council on Foreign Relations and the Future Forum Berlin are playing in helping shape the Alliance’s future by offering such an excellent platform for strategic dialogue and innovative insight.

As NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, it will not surprise you that I have thought a great deal about how we can do that.

Our key objective in this endeavour is to understand the evolution of the security environment to date, and develop an informed expectation of the next 15 years, so that we identify the decisions we need to make today in order to adapt to the future and to determine for NATO the most efficient deterrence and defence posture.



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This is why I continue to push for making the preparation of the future a key theme at the Warsaw Summit.

Today, I would like to share with you my views on:

- the fundamental changes affecting our security environment and their impact on Transformation;
- the short term adaptation NATO has embarked upon in response to these changes, including our expectations for Warsaw; and
- how we can keep the edge by building a modern posture for Alliance forces in the medium to long term.

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While I do not wish to pre-empt the forthcoming White Paper on defence and its assessment of Germany's geostrategic environment, I think we all recognise that the Alliance is now confronted with an unprecedented mix of risks and threats.

It is true that not all of these threats are new – they were already identified in the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept – but their simultaneity, complexity and interconnected nature pose multiple challenges.

They require a global and coherent response strategy from our Nations, NATO and other international institutions.



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*To the East, the crises in Ukraine and Crimea have reawakened the spectre of conflicts between states on the European continent.*

At the recent Munich Security Conference, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg described Russia as our largest neighbour and an international power which was becoming more assertive and which through her actions was destabilising the European security order.

He went on to say that NATO did not seek confrontation, nor a new Cold War, but that our response had to be firm. He offered that the answer would lie with a more robust defence and deterrence post whilst engaging in more dialogue.

Today, I would like to focus on one aspect, namely the use of so-called hybrid strategies which have highlighted the need for a modern, credible collective defence posture for the Alliance, able to deter any aggression against an Ally.

These strategies, relying on all the powers available to a State, including distribution of energy, call for a broad analysis of risks and a co-ordinated approach between many actors. And they require a high level of readiness and responsiveness.

They highlight the need for an organization able to implement permanent strategic monitoring and intelligence sharing to feed political, diplomatic and military needs.



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Such a broader strategic awareness should be achieved through continuous and comprehensive information collection, fusion and sharing, which will help identify and attribute apparently unconnected events across the entire Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economy, Financial, Intelligence and Legal (DIMEFIL) spectrum.

For NATO, the ability to conduct such analyses, requires to build flexible security networks with Nations –Allies and Partners -, other organizations - particularly the European Union - and should also encompass a wide range of actors such as Industry, Centres of Excellence or academia.

Building such comprehensive strategic awareness is, I believe, an important part of the preparation for the Warsaw Summit.

*As we turn to the south, we find that the Arc of Crisis continues to expand.*

We know that our Nations' security is at stake south of the Mediterranean, in Western Africa, Iraq and Syria, and probably also in Libya.

Germany is actively engaged, including in Mali and the Levant.

And as is the case for other Allies, you also have to cope with an unprecedented migrant crisis.

But currently our actions are geared more towards the management of the consequences of these varied crises, rather than their causes. However,



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many of them have a common origin: the existence and inefficiency of failed states.

This will require a common response, which in the long term must rely on reinforcing our Partnerships.

In this area, we have no choice but to continuously improve our efficiency. We must strengthen the coherence of Alliance contributions with those of other Nations as well as those of other Organizations, such as the European Union.

At a military level, individually tailored roadmaps are necessary to meet Partners' objectives and requirements.

These roadmaps could deliver a higher level of interoperability and better complementarity of all military cooperation activities.

Capacity building efforts should be included in these roadmaps and should fit into a broader comprehensive approach, in concert with other national and international actors.

For instance, in the current context, should a government of national accord be successfully formed in Libya, the earlier we can anticipate and prepare a response to any request for assistance in close coordination with other organizations, the earlier we are likely to achieve progress, and perhaps contain some of the fall-out.



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*But I would be remiss in limiting my quick survey to geographical concerns, based on a description of current crises.*

For the Alliance must also prepare itself for possible new strategic surprises.

This will require a better understanding of the risks and opportunities associated with the technological, human, economic and environmental changes our societies are undergoing.

To this end, my Command is examining how NATO can maintain its military superiority as well as its ability to adapt to any future challenges.

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This brings me to my second point.

Given the unpredictability and complexity of our security environment, there is a need for the Alliance to regain the initiative and provide more proactive answers to the various crises, both in the short and long term.

The objective of our Transformation is therefore to provide NATO with the military capability it needs to maintain a defence and deterrence posture which is credible and robust, both militarily and politically, to fulfil its three core tasks, now and in the future.



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This posture is built upon an appropriate mix of conventional, nuclear and missile defence forces at the appropriate levels of readiness and responsiveness required to deploy rapidly for sustained operations.

To be militarily credible, the posture must rely on a modern and solid foundation, a military capacity that enables the Alliance to plan and conduct any type of operation on short notice.

This is what we are achieving through the implementation of the Readiness Action Plan.

I must highlight in that regard the German contribution in the land area, which played a crucial part in testing the very high readiness joint task forces.

But this plan is only one step and we must look ahead beyond the Warsaw Summit.

- First, in the conventional area.

We must provide an answer to the pressing demands made by some of our Allies for strengthening the presence of forces on their territory. The aim would be to arrive at the appropriate balance between forward presence of forces and flexible, rapid reinforcements.





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With that in mind, we are currently examining models of aggregating forces on short notice in the maritime domain, and how this may be extended to the air, land and even cyber domains.

Whatever the case, as was mentioned in relation to hybrid strategies, our readiness will be dependent essentially on an efficient permanent intelligence process, strategic awareness, and an adaptable and flexible command and control capability.

- Second, we must also identify the factors which might undermine the military superiority the Alliance has enjoyed over the last three decades.

In the short term, this will include for instance a review of how sophisticated and highly integrated anti-access/area denial assets are being used at the strategic and political level, threatening our freedom of movement and lines of communication, and what our political and military responses could be.

Looking further ahead, we must improve our ability to anticipate future technological disruptors which might change how we plan and conduct operations or even the very nature of warfare itself.

I am thinking here especially of the technologies which significantly improve the speed, autonomy and range; artificial intelligence; and the ability to process large amounts of data of future weapon systems.



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These will all have the effect of gradually reducing the time we have to take decisions.

Beyond these military considerations, let me underscore the need to reinforce the credibility of our posture also at the political level, as we head towards the Warsaw Summit.

1. First of all, by reaffirming the Allies' commitment to reinvesting in their defence. Many have already demonstrated their intent to fulfil the commitments made in Wales, but more can to be done. The 20% pledge for major equipment and research will be crucial.

A similar pledge for the cyber domain is likely to happen in Warsaw.

2. Capitalising on these investments, the Alliance must work closely with a strong and innovative defence industry on both sides of the Atlantic to leverage any technological breakthroughs.

It is vital we maintain the connection between the Alliance's vision for the future and the US Defense Innovation Initiative, in a spirit of complementarity and interoperability, while also sharing our priorities with the European Union.



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3. Our posture's credibility will increasingly depend on our ability to act together with our Partners, both nations and international organizations.
4. Our resilience has become vital in our response to emerging security challenges. This resilience will only remain effective if it is based on the efforts and investments of all Nations.
5. Our posture's credibility will also rest on our ability to demonstrate its strength in our major strategic exercises such as Trident Juncture 15.

And last but not least, a coordinated and global communications strategy will be required to further bolster this credibility.

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Let me now look well beyond Warsaw as I believe keeping an advantage tomorrow would impact today's decisions.

In the longer term, we have to work on the military foundation of the posture, to ensure our forces will continue to maintain their military advantage on our adversaries, well beyond the RAP implementation.

We have defined six focus areas, essential to support the Alliance's posture: Command and Control; Logistics and Sustainability; Collective Training and Exercises; Partnerships; Capabilities; and Human Capital.



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For the sake of brevity, I will only discuss the first item of that list: Command and Control or C2.

Looking beyond platforms, C2 is vital to the success of future operations by ensuring the interoperability of NATO's Command and Force Structures, and a timely decision making process.

Our future C2 will have to manage large amounts of data originating from a multitude of sensors used by our forces as well as an increased flexibility of the decision making architecture.

This will allow a more flexible use of our forces and increase the operational tempo when necessary.

Designing architectures for this domain must lead to a different approach to connect our future capabilities through a system of system design.

We must mobilize private companies able to develop these cloud-based architectures, which are mostly dual-use technologies.

This is only an example which demonstrates the need to prepare the future through innovative concepts. But innovation is not limited to technological aspects. This is also how we can do differently by regrouping the capabilities of many Nations to meet the most demanding operational requirements.



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And I want to highlight the active part Germany has played in this endeavour.

This can be seen through the development of the Framework Nation Concept.

As this concept's initiator, Germany has brought together many other Allies in order to promote greater coherence in multinational cooperation and thus overcome the many capability gaps identified during the previous defence planning cycle.

Where these multinational projects echo the Alliance's capability objectives, Germany will play a major part in the transformation of the Alliance's military capacity.

But we must highlight that to pool capabilities, we need to have capabilities to pool...and at the right level of training and preparation.

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In closing, I would argue that preserving the political unity and cohesiveness of the Alliance remains of the highest importance in the lead up to the Warsaw Summit and beyond.

As threats and crises become ever more interconnected, the traditional distinction between NATO's Eastern and Southern flanks appears less relevant: destabilizing actions, whether they be conducted by terrorist groups taking advantage of weak States or through hybrid strategies, are aimed at undermining and harming the Alliance as a whole.

Coping with these many complex and various types of threats require more flexibility in our approaches.

With the next Summit in Warsaw, I am confident in the Alliance's ability to respond to our current challenges, while also preparing the future.

I thank you for your attention and I stand ready to answer any of your questions.