



**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER  
TRANSFORMATION**

**SACT's Opening and Closing REMARKS to**

**Signing Ceremony MOU  
Multinational Aviation Training Centre (MATC)**

**NORFOLK, 29 Sep 2016, 0930 Hr**

**Final (as delivered)**

**Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER**

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Admiral,

Air Marshal,

Generals,

Gentlemen,

In a few moments we will proceed with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Headquarters Allied Commander Transformation and the **M**ultinational **A**viation **T**raining **C**entre nations.

I therefore especially welcome the NLR of the Czeck Republic, Colonel Lanci, representing the Framework Nation; the Croatian NLR, Colonel Matkovic; the Hungarian NLR, Colonel Juhasz; and the Slovakian NLR, Colonel Bohus – representing the Supporting Nations. I also welcome the Smart Defence team for their coordinating, supporting and facilitating role in establishing this functional relationship.

Before the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding that establishes this functional relationship between HQ SACT and MATC, allow me to share some thoughts with you.

The roots of the MATC can be traced to the Multinational Helicopter Initiative in 2008. The Multinational Helicopter Initiative started on the basis of a bilateral agreement between France and the United Kingdom, initially focussed on raising the number of mission capable helicopters for ISAF. Helicopters were an important operational shortfall in Afghanistan, and the idea rose to pool the resources and help countries that did not have those resources to deploy and operate transport helicopter operations on their



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own. In addition, the Multinational Helicopter Initiative also supported the HiP Helicopter Task Force initiative, which facilitated the deployment of Czech helicopters to ISAF in 2010-2011.

Capitalizing on this success, and building on the experience gained in Afghanistan, the Czech Republic took the initiative to conceive a Smart Defence project by creating the MATC. On 21 February 2013, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia and the United States signed in Brussels a “Letter of Intent” – expressing the political will of the participating nations to start the practical work on forming the structures of the MATC for crews of Mi-type helicopters. Hungary also formally joined this initiative on 20 September 2013.

In June 2015, the MATC, with its 4 participating NATO nations (Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia), started providing comprehensive training for flying and maintenance personnel for Allied and Partner nations on Mi-type helicopters to maximise the use of existing resources and to minimize duplication of effort.

Since then, MATC is working on this basis, with a potential to expand to other nations, and with a possibility to include other aviation platforms and capabilities in the future.

The basic goal of MATC is to provide the full spectrum of training for pilots and ground specialists by optimizing the use of existing capabilities offered by the participating nations.

MATC main objectives are to:

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- improve, harmonize and standardize training and education;
- improve interoperability and sharing of expert capabilities and experience;
- take an active role in the development of training standards and concepts;
- support the deployment of helicopter capabilities and trainers to theatres of operations via a comprehensive training scheme.

The signing of this MOU is thus a next step on the road of transformation, by establishing a functional relationship that will encourage optimal development and utilization of MATC capabilities in support of NATO's transformational goals.

Closing remarks:

Gentlemen,

Thank you again for this initiative. We can make this MOU an important step to reach NATO's transformational goals. The establishment of the Multinational Aviation Training Centre is a concrete example of a Smart Defence successful project. It illustrates that through multinational cooperation, the participating nations can efficiently pool their resources and build capabilities that are required by the Alliance as a whole.

This is the aim of the Smart Defence Initiative. It may not be any longer on the front row of visibility, but it remains a main tool to enhance cooperation and to mitigate identified shortfalls by a combining effort of many nations.

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We will continue this work and encourage the development of Smart Defence projects as well as other multinational initiatives that will enable the Alliance to build robust forces and to tackle any future challenges.

Thank you for your excellent work!