



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER
TRANSFORMATION**

All hands Innovation Week

Norfolk, 13 September 2017

1400 - 1500

As delivered

Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER



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Generals, Admirals,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear ACT teammates,

- I'm very pleased to be here with you today, at this first internal innovation week in ACT.
- I also especially welcome all the newcomers.

⇒ This week is the beginning of a journey that will not end on Friday, this is only the beginning.

- But, first and foremost I want to thank you all, both the “organizers” as the “participants” at all levels of the staff, for your efforts, your enthusiasm and your engagements to make this week a success, I know a considerable effort has been put into this week's activities.
- As I said at last week's Flag Raising ceremony, innovation is one of my lines of effort for the rest of this year.
- I also said that I want ACT to become the leading organization for innovation for our Alliance – what we do this week internally must set the pace for more.
- It is indeed my ambition for this year to make ACT the Innovation Hub for NATO, by extending and pollinating innovation initiatives within NATO, with the nations, to complement in new and smart investments, and foremost also to maintain interoperability – which is key in everything we develop.



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⇒ Why do we need innovation?

It is not a task we received from the NATO HQ in Brussels. We were not tasked to do innovation.

But we have to implement innovation in our work, because the complexity of our environment requires us to do so.

- The Warsaw Summit already acknowledged this complexity at the scale of our Alliance, and the Warsaw decisions all aim for important adaptation efforts.
- We are currently finalizing the SFA Update 2017 that clearly defines this complexity across some 20 political, social, technological, economic and environmental trends. From these trends, 59 implications for NATO are derived, and we're looking at the horizon of 2035 – a future that is not so far away.
- This complexity is illustrated by a number of characteristics :
 - No clear distinction between peacetime, crisis and conflict – in certain domains (Cyber for example) we seem to be in a permanent crisis.
 - There are too many factors interacting with each other making it impossible to anticipate everything, making surprise inevitable.
 - There are multiple parameters and many different actors interacting, or the same actors interacting with different agendas in different crises, it is extremely different to oversee everything and to identify all the links and patterns.



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- Resilience is of utmost importance, because we will be surprised and will never act alone, using the same technologies, the same infrastructures and dealing with the same threats.

I invite everybody to read the SFA 2017 Update. It is important to study these trends to better understand the environment.

Without understanding the environment, we will not be able to adapt.

To do so, we must think differently. We must step out of our comfort zone.

Speaking frankly, those who do not want to challenge themselves by stepping out of their comfort zone, are not in the right place.

- ACT has done a considerable amount of work on the medium and longer-term implications from our changing environment, and we must continue to work on this adaptation hand in hand with ACO.
- There is a clear supporting/supportive role between the two Commands: ACO is in charge of current operations supported by ACT, and ACT for future operations supported by ACO.
- That is why, “operate and adapt” are key words in this equation – both SC’s must work together, hand in hand – it is of utmost importance.
- We have particularly demonstrated this “shoulder to shoulder” work ACT-ACO with an unprecedented level of direct coordination the last couple of months in our main work strand on delivering the Bi-SC recommendation for NCS Adaptation (which is one of the decisions taken at the Warsaw Summit).

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- In our recommendation, ACT's main focus will be future warfare development. Of course, we must do this hand in hand with NATO's other strategic command, ACO that will focus on warfighting.

We must not forget that the adaption is about the transformation of the military capacity of NATO's posture, now and in the foreseeable future, and:

ACT's future role as Warfare Development Command, can only be achieved if we foster a culture of innovation.

That is why it is my intention to spread a culture of innovation across the Alliance as a whole.

But the first step is to foster this culture in our own organization, within ACT – because it is our role!

Of course this is not totally new, since its inception, ACT has been innovating.

As I already mentioned we analysed the trends that will impact future operations, challenges and technologies in the SFA. Then we derive and update the military implications in the FFAO.

But between short term adaptation and long term trends there is a need to identify the mid-term potential breakthroughs and game-changers at the 10 to 15 year mark.



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To drive this work we identified 6 areas for which we anticipate important breakthroughs: command and control, logistics and sustainability, exercises and training, partnerships, capabilities and human capital – as pillars for the adaptation of the robust military posture.

We challenge existing policies and influence new strategies – and the CT and PS concept take our ideas into account.

Partnerships are an important part of our posture because we cannot imagine to address contemporary crises without partners.

The overarching principle that drives our partnership and PS policy is that no nation nor organization holds alone the key to every crisis – and therefore we must better enable our Partners to work with us.

The network that we build to do so, requires persistency, because it is key to make information exchange possible and to build trust between all the participants.

Many initiatives regarding Partnerships in NATO and outside NATO have been initiated, and this calls for better coordination, streamlining of efforts and harmonizing common objectives with all actors involved.

It is SOS: Simplify – Optimize – Synchronize.

It is the application of a federated approach.

These are our ideas, this is our work.

And it also goes for all the tools that we are developing in Education and Training.



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- Many of these tools are used through on-line courses and hands-on, e-Learning, bring the battlefield to the classroom through simulation. And now we try to improve them through a better insertion in our Human Capital FA.

Or for others, such as:

- Alternative analysis (used for concept and plan development for a number of work strands and deliverables (Hybrid Warfare, A2AD, Logistics, FMN); experimentation (CWIX), “out of the box” engagements (Tide Sprint) – and of course also our Innovation Hub at ODU.

In Capability Development we apply this new approach by spending a lot more time on understanding the problem in a much wider scope, analysing the functions we need, and war gaming them before defining possible solutions.

The AFSC, AGS, JISR, etc. are good examples why we must be innovative.

⇒ The time of business as usual is over, and we must all contribute to the change we need for the adaptation of NATO's posture.

In doing so, we must identify the breakthroughs that will make the difference, in concepts, in technologies, but also in the threats we must overcome.

⇒ Do not refuse these breakthroughs to bring you more questions than answers.



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- This is exactly what we must challenge; in the complexity of our environment there are no obvious or easy solutions, on the contrary – by solving one problem we will probably generate another one because everything is interrelated.
- Here it is important with whom we partner to find solutions.
- I quote Dr Singer : *“the 1st solution that will come to your mind to solve a problem, will most probably not be the best one”*.
- We must therefore also try to share innovation initiatives. This is what we aim to do at the COTC in December with FRA, US, UK, ESP and DEU.
- It is very important to see where Allies are going with new initiatives for future capabilities taking into account the adaptation to the complex environment, because we must make sure that new and future developed capabilities can work together – interoperability is key!

⇒ This brings me to, what do we mean by innovation?

- Innovation is not just about new ideas, but about the implementation of ideas.
- It is not only about future solutions, but it also concerns new solutions of today’s problems that will remain valid in the future.
- But we need training to implement innovative ideas. It takes practice.

⇒ How can we do this?



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- The first step is to understand the environment. This will allow us to better identify the breakthroughs.
- Then we can develop a shared perception of this environment and a common consciousness of the problems we must fix.
- These are the conditions to give the impulse to step out of our comfort zone.
- But no one has all the answers, no one can come up with the sole solution: we must work together, and link up the different teams who are working on the same objectives.
- These objectives are described in our Campaign Plan.
- We will make a business plan for our roadmap on innovation, consistent with our Warfare Development role.
- Innovation will be a key theme for the coming year.

⇒ We must work as ONE team.

- To be successful in the change of mind set to do things differently, we must all (every member of the staff, at all levels, regardless of your job description and responsibilities) feel concerned.
- Every one of us must feel empowered to engage the Command Group and propose new ideas. All ideas must find their way to the senior leadership.
- There will always be resistance, because it's a natural thing – people fear change. Do not let yourself be hampered by it, and move forward with determination and good sense. Push it further.



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- However, to be fully concerned and to conceive innovative ideas it is important you also fully understand how your work is connected with the Alliance's objectives. If you don't understand, if it is not fully clear, you must come out and ask questions.
- You individual recognition will be part of our collective success to meet those objectives.
- That is what I expect from you, not for me, not for ACT, but for our Alliance. I'm sure I can count on you – you are our main asset – our human capital. Unless ACT, there's no other staff or organization within NATO that has the task to prepare for the future, nobody else will do it if we don't get the job done.
- But we must also do this in a good mood. I've said this before, it is not forbidden to have fun at work.
- Welfare is important to me, so take an active role in our activities, with your families and friends, it will benefit our cohesion to act as one.

So, let's do it all together, as one team.

Thank you for your attention.