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12 August 2010

DSG(2010)0528
**Silence procedure ends:
18 Aug 2010 17.30**

To : Permanent Representatives (Council)
From : Deputy Secretary General
Subject : **MILITARY CONCEPT FOR NATO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

1. Please find attached a Military Concept for NATO Strategic Communications (MCM-0085-2010). The document has been developed by the Allied Command Transformation following a tasking of the Military Committee to elaborate such a concept as an implementing document, from a military perspective, of the overall NATO Strategic Communication Policy (PO(2009)0141). The concept has been approved by the Military Committee.

2. The Military Concept is an enabling document, supporting the development of long-term professional StratCom capabilities within the military forces and structures of the Alliance. Thus, the Military Concept for StratCom will not only provide a sound basis to support NATO Commanders in the organisation of their StratCom efforts and the appropriate cross-coordination that this requires, but it will also help develop a broader common understanding of strategic communications. The Concept has been widely discussed and coordinated within the entire – political and military - NATO Strategic Communications community.

3. I do not believe the document requires discussion by Council. Therefore, **if I do not hear to the contrary by 17.30 hours on Wednesday, 18 August 2010**, I shall assume that the Council has approved the Military Concept for NATO Strategic Communications.

(Signed) Claudio Bisognero

1 Annex

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NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE
COMITE MILITAIRE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD



((August 2010

MCM-0085-2010
Revised

SECRETARY GENERAL, NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION

MILITARY CONCEPT FOR NATO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

References

- A. MCM-0135-2007, Enhancing NATO's Strategic Communications, 31 Oct 07
- B. MC 0457/1 (MILDEC), NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs, 19 Sep 07
- C. MC 0422/3 (FINAL), NATO Military Policy on Information Operations, 08 Jul 08
- D. PO(2009)0141, NATO Strategic Communications Policy, 29 Sep 09
- E. MCM-0164-2009, NATO Strategic Communications Policy, 29 Sep 09
- F. IMSM-0596-2009, Tasking for a Military Concept for Strategic Communications, 06 Oct 09

BACKGROUND

1. In 2007, MC advice to NAC drew attention to NATO Public Diplomacy and military Public Affairs (PA) shortcomings which were putting at high risk the pol-mil strategic Centre of Gravity for the Afghanistan operation, and negatively affecting organisational credibility (Reference A). In spite of efforts to revise military policy for individual military information disciplines (References B and C), an overarching pol-mil policy was required to provide an understanding of NATO Strategic Communications (StratCom) authorities and relationships, and to serve as a foundation document for the development of a professional NATO StratCom process, based on well resourced, trained and coordinated capabilities, able to cope with the communications challenges of the 21st century.

2. The NATO StratCom Policy (Reference D) constitutes the overarching pol-mil policy setting out the principles and definitions that govern all other NATO policy, concepts and doctrine for NATO StratCom. MC advice to NAC (Reference E), endorsing the NATO StratCom Policy, drew attention to recent reports that had identified the military Public Affairs function as inadequately resourced and inadequately trained. The MC concluded, inter alia, that ACT be tasked to develop a concept for StratCom focussing on military aspects. Reference F tasks ACT, in coordination with SHAPE, to develop a Military Concept on the implementation of the NATO StratCom Policy, in support of the development of a long-term professional StratCom capability.

3. Since then, discussions at the May 2010 NATO StratCom Conference in Lisbon have revealed that military implementation of NATO's StratCom Policy is still at the embryo stage, and that there is still some way to go before a common understanding of

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NATO StratCom and its full integration into military planning and mindset is achieved. An agreed Military Concept for StratCom will not only provide a sound basis to support NATO Commanders in the organisation of their StratCom efforts and the appropriate cross-coordination that this requires, but it will also serve to educate.

AIM

4. To submit, for NAC approval, the Military Concept for Strategic Communications.

MC CONSIDERATIONS

5. The Military Committee considers that:
 - a. The Military Concept for Strategic Communications is a sound and comprehensive paper that sets out a framework within which StratCom planning and execution should be conducted by NATO military forces. It particularly focuses on ways to implement the NATO StratCom Policy from a military standpoint.
 - b. It identifies nine required military capabilities essential to delivering effective NATO StratCom initiatives.
 - c. It gives a clear outline on the way ahead for military StratCom process development, and of its supporting military communication and coordinating capabilities, critical in addressing current shortfalls, both on the Peacetime Establishment (PE) and the Crisis Establishment (CE).
 - d. It underlines the importance to effective StratCom of dedicating and maintaining national personnel contributions to NATO, especially with trained and qualified practitioners from all the military communication and coordinating disciplines. It further encourages those nations that have not previously had such capabilities in its forces to develop cadres of such personnel.
 - e. Changing mindsets to understand the complexities and benefits of effective StratCom NATO-wide will take time and education. NATO's StratCom ambitions can only be successfully achieved through building a strong, professional force of information practitioners, able to deal with the challenges of the global communications environment, and to proactively tell and explain the NATO story to the widest possible audiences, building understanding and support for the Alliance.

MC CONCLUSIONS

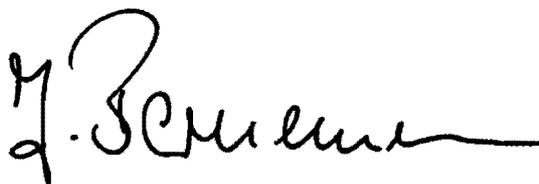
6. Accordingly, the MC endorses the Military Concept for Strategic Communications at Enclosure 1, as an enabling document in the development of the military StratCom process and its supporting military communication and coordinating capabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. The Military Committee recommends Council to approve the Military Concept for Strategic Communications as a document in support of the implementation of NATO's Strategic Communications Policy.

8. This document clears IMSWM-0023-2010 and all SDs thereto.

FOR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE:



J. BORNEMANN
Lieutenant General, DEUAR
Director General
International Military Staff

Enclosure

1. NATO Military Concept for Strategic Communications, 27 Jul 10

Copy To As for basic document

Action Officers Colonel M. Panizzi, PAA (5983); Mrs. K. Dehaes (5423)

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Enclosure 1 to
MCM-0085-2010
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NATO Military Concept for Strategic Communications



27 July 2010

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1. Introduction

1-1. Strategic Communications (StratCom) has emerged as an increasingly vital field of Alliance endeavour in recent years. There have been several attempts to address Strategic Communications in an Alliance context, including the publication of a North Atlantic Council endorsed NATO Strategic Communications Policy, the publication of Strategic Command directives, and the establishment of positions in various headquarters to lead its implementation.

1-2. Despite the high level of interest and attention, Strategic Communications is still a field in its initial stages of development, both for the Alliance and the Nations.

1-3. All aspects of NATO activities have a critical information and communications component. This concept proposes that Strategic Communications is not an adjunct activity, but should be inherent in the planning and conduct of all military operations and activities. As part of the overarching political-military approach to Strategic Communications within NATO, the vision is to put Strategic Communications at the heart of all levels of military policy, planning and execution, and then, as a fully integrated part of the overall effort, ensure the development of a practical, effective strategy that makes a real contribution to success.

1-4. The aim of NATO Strategic Communications is to ensure that NATO's audiences, whether in the Nations or in a region where a NATO operation is taking place, either friendly or adversarial, receives truthful, accurate and timely information that will allow them to understand and assess the Alliance's actions and intentions. This will deter aggression and promote NATO's aims and objectives.

1-5. In accordance with NATO Policy, NATO Strategic Communications is the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs (PA), Military Public Affairs, Information Operations (Info Ops) and Psychological Operations (PsyOps), as appropriate - in support of alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims.

2. Aim

2-1. This concept provides guidance, as directed by the Military Committee, for the development of capabilities consistent with, and to support the delivery of, the NATO Strategic Communications Policy.

3. Scope

3-1. This concept is applicable to all those in the NATO command and force structures or working in support of NATO military authorities to develop the Alliance military force's capabilities necessary to support NATO Strategic Communications.

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4. Military Implications of NATO Strategic Communications Policy

4-1. Delineation of responsibilities.

a. NATO StratCom is a leadership-driven process focussed on enhancing the Alliance's ability to coherently articulate its narratives, themes, and messages to external and internal audiences. NATO StratCom provides strategic political and military guidance and direction-based on a NAC-approved information strategy.

b. Within the military structure of the Alliance, effective NATO StratCom will be achieved primarily through the existing professional military communication capabilities (Public Affairs, PsyOps and Info Ops). Info Ops is NATO's advisory and coordination function for military information activities. Commanders at operational and tactical level ensure through the Info Ops function that all military information activities are properly coordinated as well as integrated into the operational planning process and support the overall StratCom approach. This includes that military information activities must be closely coordinated with PA in order to ensure consistency in the message released by the military to outside audiences and to promote overall effectiveness and credibility of the campaign. Public Affairs and Information Operations are separate but related functions. There shall be no personnel overlaps during operations of staff designated for Information Operations on the one hand, and Public Affairs officers on the other.

c. Adherence to the NATO StratCom strategic guidance and direction as well as its implementation at all levels is a command responsibility, which requires a command group function.

4-2. Military Operations.

a. The conduct of military operations brings the use of force into the communication equation. This adds a variable to military communication considerations that is absent from communication at the political level, where communication is principally conducted through the use of words and imagery. The message sent by potentially lethal operations will have an immeasurable impact on people's perceptions and therefore requires proper coordination and integration with NATO's communication and information activities. In military operations, actions speak as loudly, if not louder, than words.

b. As a result, the Strategic Communications implications for military forces are significant. Military planners seeking to integrate Strategic Communications into operational planning from the earliest stages, as called for in the NATO Strategic Communications Policy, must also consider the communication impact of the critical operational non-lethal and lethal elements of military operations.

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4-3. Consequences and Outcomes.

a. Everything NATO and its partners say, do, or fail to do and say, has intended and unintended consequences. Every action, word, and image sends a message, and every military member is a messenger, from the individual soldier in the field to the theatre commander. Every operation, even the smallest tactical engagement, can have Strategic Communications consequences, and unintended audiences are unavoidable in the global information environment. Therefore, NATO military leaders must undertake a comprehensive assessment of potential Strategic Communications outcomes when they plan operations.

b. Rapid, timely and trustworthy communication during, and in advance of, evolving conditions is important, as these situations may result in strategic consequences. Communication must reach the intended audiences through customized messages relevant to the intended audiences. Strategic Communications involves aligning actions, images, and words to support policy and planning, to meet overarching strategic objectives. Acting within friendly and adversarial decision cycles is also important because tempo and adaptability affect perceptions of credibility. Frequently there will be a limited window of opportunity for specific messages to achieve a desired result.

c. Military support for NATO's Strategic Communications efforts should focus on long-term desired end states or desired effects. The military contribution requires diligent and continual analysis and assessment which feeds back into operational planning and action. In addition, it supports the organization's objectives by adapting as needed, and as plans change. This requires collaboration across all lines of operations. Effective coordination processes require the capacity to operate at a sufficient tempo to meet the demands of the communication environment.

4-4. Leadership.

NATO's military leaders must decisively engage and drive military support to NATO Strategic Communications, so that at all levels support to NATO Strategic Communications is a command responsibility and a command group function. To ensure integration of communication efforts, leaders should place a high priority on communication. Successful Strategic Communications – integrating actions, words, and images – begins with clear, coordinated leadership intent and guidance that are considered in the operational planning process. Leaders must properly resource Strategic Communications at a priority comparable to other important areas such as logistics and intelligence.

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4-5. Organisation.

Executing Strategic Communications may require change in military organisations as it requires a network-centric approach and speed of decision making that may be at odds with more traditional, hierarchical structures. Strategic Communications is a consistent, collaborative process that must be integrated vertically from strategic through tactical levels, and horizontally across stakeholders. Leaders should coordinate and synchronize capabilities and instruments of power within their area of responsibility to achieve desired effects.

4-6. Empowerment.

a. In NATO military structures, the authority to communicate or release information, including imagery and other communication products, has traditionally been restricted to high levels within the command structure. Effective support to Strategic Communications is enhanced by military commanders choosing to delegate communication authority widely, empowering more personnel to communicate the NATO narrative through actions, words and imagery.

b. This requires military leaders to maintain awareness of information released and the ability to refine this information as necessary to ensure its accuracy. Commanders must balance the requirement for speed in the release of information with legitimate concerns for its accuracy and the demands of operational security. In the current and foreseeable future global information environment, the use of new and emerging technology such as internet or mobile telephone based Social Media has resulted in a requirement to release information in as close to real time as possible; as events unfold, not minutes or hours later. By empowering more of our people to communicate, NATO will help ensure that it is not only the best source of information about the Alliance that gets out, but the first, best source as well. The willingness of leaders to empower is dependent upon their confidence in the community of interest achieved through successful training and education.

4-7. Training and Expertise.

The success of NATO's Strategic Communications effort is significantly influenced by the willingness and ability of Nations to provide experienced, trained personnel in the traditional military communication and information disciplines, with the expertise necessary to support the Strategic Communications process, when participating in NATO missions. Communicators must be developed over time, so those Nations that have not previously had such capabilities in its forces should begin to develop cadres of such personnel.

5. Required Military Capabilities

5-1. This concept proposes nine capabilities with subordinate associated tasks required by NATO military forces to effectively contribute to the delivery of NATO Strategic Communications. These capabilities are to be developed through the existing military communication and coordinating capabilities as well as other supporting and related military capabilities. They are:

a. The ability to coordinate NATO and coalition force information and communication activities with other military actions, to shape the battle space and maximize desired effects on selected audiences.

(1) Integrate Strategic Communications considerations into the planning and execution of NATO operations from the beginning, in accordance with the overarching political-military NATO Strategic Communications framework.

(2) Build and maintain shared situational awareness within NATO and coalition forces with respect to Strategic Communications.

(3) Implement and disseminate within NATO and coalition forces the relevant communication capabilities, tasks and information activities of force elements.

b. The ability to coordinate NATO and coalition information and communications activities with the efforts of other agencies and partners within the context of a broader NATO strategy, in accordance with the Comprehensive Approach Action Plan¹ on the aspects it addresses.

(1) Identify potential outside agencies with influence efforts in the operational area.

(2) Establish robust liaison, support and working agreements, to include structures, processes and permissions for sharing information with partners.

(3) Coordinate with outside agencies in assessing the perceptions, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of potential audiences.

(4) Coordinate with outside agencies to establish objectives, determine courses of action, and deliver messages.

(5) Collaborate with other agencies and mission partners in detecting, monitoring, translating and assessing the effects of NATO and others'

¹ C-M(2008)0029-COR1, 2 April 2008

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influence efforts.

c. The ability to access, produce and maintain updated information and knowledge on the perceptions attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of potential audiences.

- (1) Identify and segment potential audiences.
- (2) Access, collect, produce and maintain existing knowledge databases on perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of the selected audience(s).
- (3) Establish close coordination with existing intelligence assets.
- (4) Conduct social network analysis of selected audiences.
- (5) Collect market research information on the perceptions, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of the selected audiences from external organizations, or hire external organizations to perform such research.

d. The ability to access, produce and maintain updated information and knowledge on complex social communication systems, to include the characteristics of various media agencies.

- (1) Identify relevant communication channels, social communication systems and media agencies affecting the NATO and coalition operations area.
- (2) Analyse the flow and change of information through relevant communication channels, social communication systems and media agencies.

e. The ability to detect, monitor, translate and assess the effects of the Strategic Communications efforts of other stakeholders -- whether friendly, neutral or adversarial.

- (1) Detect and monitor messages, activities or signals of others who have influence within the NATO and coalition operational area.
- (2) Assess the effects of others' messages, actions and signals on various audiences within the NATO and coalition operational area.

f. The ability to estimate the direct and indirect effects of potential actions and signals on the perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and actions of the selected audiences.

- (1) Estimate the potential impact on any course of action on the perceptions, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of audiences.
- (2) Conduct environmental or media analysis into the potential effects of various actions and signals.

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- (3) Sponsor opinion-polling or other research into the potential direct and indirect effects of various actions and signals.
 - (4) Develop and maintain culturally differentiated databases on the likely effects of various actions and signals on selected audiences.
 - (5) Assess the effects of messages, actions and signals on various audiences within the NATO and coalition operational area.
- g. The ability to develop and disseminate timely and culturally-attuned messages based on narratives (including spokespersonship).
- (1) Identify the audiences of any messages, actions and signals, to include key influencers.
 - (2) Determine the appropriate medium and method for communicating messages, actions and signals.
 - (3) Determine the appropriate timing, frequency, content and packaging for any message, action and signal.
 - (4) Anticipate potential mutation or change of friendly messages, actions and signals as they move through social communication systems.
- h. The ability to quickly develop and disseminate information designed to influence approved audiences.
- (1) Identify available information and imagery acquisition, production and dissemination resources.
 - (2) Maintain sufficient information and imagery acquisition, production and dissemination resources with access to the NATO and coalition operation area.
 - (3) Contract with local media to be able to use their assets to broadcast NATO and coalition messages.
 - (4) Develop productive relationships with credible external organizations to transmit messages.
 - (5) Delegate message and information release authority to the lowest practical level.
 - (6) Produce, sponsor, and support credible and culturally attuned messages and distribute them through the appropriate range of information media (print, radio, television, internet-based media, etc.)
- i. The ability to document NATO and coalition force operations and exercises, and to disseminate this information in real or near-real time.
- (1) Provide support to embedded journalists and visiting Media.

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- (2) Acquire, store, process and distribute audio, still image and video capture of joint force operations, down to small-unit and platform levels.
- (3) Assure that any released documentation of joint force actions does not violate operational security or personal privacy.
- (4) Coordinate and organize appropriate use of Social Media tools.

6. Capability Development Roadmap for Military Support to NATO Strategic Communications

6-1. This Concept will require substantial follow-on work to fully establish the lines of development necessary to provide a comprehensive military contribution to NATO Strategic Communications capability. The following proposal uses the Doctrine, Organisation, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities, and Interoperability (DOTMLPFI) framework to present a way ahead that addresses follow-on activities in each area. In each case, further investigation and work is required to generate a set of initial products consistent with the terms of this Concept.

6-2. These products can then serve as the basis for assessment and agreement by the Nations in considering a Capability Implementation Plan for the military contribution to NATO Strategic Communications. Production of this Plan will serve as the basis for guidance, resourcing and investment decisions within the appropriate NATO, Multinational, and National functions.

- a. **Doctrine.** Although agreed policy and doctrinal documentation exists for the military contributors to NATO Strategic Communications (Public Affairs, Information Operations, Psychological Operations) in the form of Military Committee (MC) Documents and Allied Joint Publications (AJPs), the AJPs are not fully integrated and lack a comprehensive, overarching point of view. An AJP for Strategic Communications should be considered for development as a capstone doctrine in line with policy.
- b. **Organisation.** The need to address organisation comes from the recognition that the Strategic Communication process requires doctrine and a supporting organisation.
- c. **Training.** The area with highest potential for positive near term results is the establishment of Strategic Communications training and the integration of Strategic Communications into already existing training. Initial surveys have verified that Nations have a strong interest in improving their capacity for Strategic Communications, but, in most cases, very limited infrastructure and processes to achieve this improvement. Training is necessary for professional communicators, but also for commanders, unit leaders, and staffs who are responsible for blending and integrating the efforts of military forces. Every professional military entity within NATO commands and forces needs some level of Strategic Communications awareness training. The level of expertise of every individual working in a Strategic Communications related function needs to be improved.

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d. **Material and Technology.** A significant imbalance exists within NATO and the Nations in terms of material and technology dedicated to support Strategic Communications. The range of shortfalls includes implementation of Social Media tools, visual imagery systems, video transmission and reception systems, mobile communications systems such as portable internet access systems, and information sharing services. Studies into these areas are required to inform the development of follow-on implementation plans that use the methods within the New Defence Planning Process to deliver material and technology to NATO and the Nations. Once a baseline is established, a means to monitor evolving shortfalls must be implemented.

e. **Leadership.** Significant ongoing improvement in NATO commanders' awareness of the power of Strategic Communications must be continued. This development area will focus on identifying steps to strengthen the knowledge, expertise, and cognitive focus of NATO and National commanders in recognising and operationalising the principles of good Strategic Communications both internally within the command and externally as an important part of carrying out assigned missions. Establishing the role of the commander, as a champion for Strategic Communications responsible for blending and synchronising the efforts of contributing disciplines to reach stakeholders and audiences is a critically important goal.

f. **Personnel.** Nations' personnel contributions to full, qualified manning in the individual disciplines which contribute to Strategic Communications are critical. This development area will identify specific steps and mechanisms to continually maintain awareness of manning levels (quantity), monitor the achievement of qualifications (quality), and the steps to be taken to advise Nations when shortfalls are identified using existing practices. The initial need is to strengthen the individual communication disciplines, which in turn strengthens Strategic Communications.

g. **Facilities.** As a process, Strategic Communications requires minimal facilities; however, an investigation is proposed to verify the sufficiency of existing capability.

h. **Interoperability.** Successful Strategic Communications will depend on information sharing across differing operational domains, cross-national boundaries, and interfacing with civilian organisations. This development area will explore the identification of standards, protocols, and information models necessary to enable seamless delivery of messages across multiple media types.

7. Conclusion

7-1. The military provides critical support to NATO's Strategic Communications effort and its further capability development. Strategic Communications is also a critical enabler for waging the battle of competing narratives. Strategic Communications is at the heart of NATO efforts to reach key audiences to support NATO interests, but is not a stand-alone process. NATO Strategic Communications considerations must, therefore, be integrated into all operational planning and execution from the very beginning.

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7-2. Synchronizing words, actions and images significantly increases the potential to create an accurate understanding of NATO's actions and intentions among audiences, in support of NATO's interests and objectives.

7-3. Within NATO, Allied Command Transformation, in concert with Allied Command Operations, will begin a Strategic Communications capability development program based upon the DOTMLPFI framework. The results of a properly resourced capability development process for Strategic Communications across the full spectrum of military tasks will support NATO military forces' capacity to effectively enable NATO Strategic Communications efforts.