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**NATO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK – NATO OPERATIONS IN
SUPPORT OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1973**

Introduction

1. Following the popular uprising which began in Benghazi on 17 Feb 2011, Libya remains highly unstable and violent. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1970 imposing sanctions, instituting an arms embargo, freezing personal assets of Libya's leaders, and imposing a travel ban on senior figures. This was followed on 17 March with UNSC Resolution 1973 calling for the implementation of a No-Fly-Zone and authorizing all necessary means to protect civilians.

2. NATO has established 24/7 airborne surveillance of the central Mediterranean and deployed maritime assets to the central Mediterranean. On 22 March, the NAC approved an execution directive allowing NATO forces to interdict violations of the arms embargo. On 24 March, the NAC agreed to start operations to establish a no-fly-zone over Libya, and on 27 March, the NAC agreed to launch operations to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack in Libya. At the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Berlin on 14 April, Allies laid down conditions for an acceptable ceasefire, including regime withdrawal of all its military forces from populated areas they have forcibly entered. It also strongly endorsed the international Contact Group's call for Qadhafi to leave power.

3. A coordinated and integrated StratCom approach to support NATO action in response to events in Libya is key to achieving the Alliance's overall objective. Managing the information domain will be critical to NATO's efforts being understood – and ultimately supported - by the audiences. It will require the use of the full range of information and communication capabilities, in line with NATO policies and authorities establishing an appropriate level of NATO visibility will be important to ensure unity of message, to manage and shape perceptions, to counter potential misinformation and to build public support.

Aim

4. This paper sets out the NATO Strategic Communications Framework, based on political guidance, providing top-level political-military context and guidance to steer NATO's activities in the communications and information environment during NATO activities in support of UNSCRs 1970, 1973 and Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR (OUP).

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5. StratCom Objectives

- a) All audiences clearly understand NATO's mandate and the scope of its actions, which are seen as a positive contribution to help mitigate the crisis, in support of UNSCRs 1970 and 1973.
- b) Support for NATO's actions is fostered and sustained, regionally and more widely within the International Community.
- c) Communications activities and messages by NATO are seen as integrated with other players, including partner nations that are taking an active role.
- d) StratCom activities contribute to enhancing cohesion in the Alliance and the wider coalition.
- e) Those actors which may contribute to a worsening of the humanitarian situation and/or seek to undermine NATO actions are deterred from doing so.

StratCom Core Message

6. The guiding core message for NATO operations and activities in and around Libya is :

“NATO's operations are taking place in support of the UNSCRs 1970 and 1973 as part of the broad international effort. All NATO allies are committed to meet their responsibilities under the UN Security Council Resolution to stop the violence against the Libyan people and in support of their legitimate aspirations.”

StratCom Themes

7. The following themes are to be promoted to help achieve our StratCom objectives. These themes will, in turn, be reinforced by communications focus topics. Local circumstances will determine the precise manner in which the themes are promoted, but the aim is to leave audiences with the understanding that our mission reflects the following:

- a) **Responsibility** - NATO is a responsible international actor and takes its obligations seriously. There is a clear and unambiguous responsibility to protect the Libyan people. NATO, as a multinational military alliance whose core tasks include crisis management, is best placed to help.
- b) **Legitimacy & Support** - NATO is operating under a clear international legal mandate, in coordination with the Contact Group on Libya, and with broad regional support.
- c) **Commitment** - NATO Allies are committed to use all necessary measures to protect Libyan civilians from violence or threat of violence, and to uphold the strong and clear mandate from the United Nations.

- d) **Resolve** – NATO has the means and political resolve to sustain the effort against the regime until the will of the international community is obeyed by Qadhafi.
- e) **Cooperation & Realism** – NATO is cooperating with a broad range of other actors, locally and regionally, and within the context of a larger international response. The crisis cannot be resolved by military action alone.
- f) **NATO as a Crisis Manager** – NATO’s action is in line with NATO’s New Strategic Concept that commits NATO “to prevent crises, manage conflicts” in close consultation with its international partners, as they may affect Alliance security.

Focus Topics

8. Focus topics provide further guidance on the scope of communications activities, products and programmes at the strategic level. The focus of communications efforts will be on the following topics, once NATO political direction is given, which provide opportunities to promote and/or reinforce the themes :

- a) **Protect Civilians** – By taking action, NATO is contributing to the broad international effort to protect the Libyan people.
- b) **No-Fly-Zone** – NATO is enforcing a no-fly-zone over Libya and using all necessary measures to deter and prevent attacks on the civilian population and to facilitate the unhindered flow of humanitarian assistance.
- c) **Expectation management** – The use of airpower, while it has saved many Libyan lives and blunted the regime assault, cannot solve the problem on its own. Explaining what airpower can and cannot achieve is critical.
- d) **Arms Embargo** – NATO is making the principal contribution to international efforts to enforce UNSCR 1970, and implement UNSCR 1973 which facilitates active enforcement of the arms embargo.
- e) **Humanitarian Assistance** – as a responsible international actor, and in support of its regional partners, NATO stands ready to respond to any requests for assistance to ease the humanitarian situation that has resulted from the uprising in Libya
- f) **Regional Dialogue** – NATO will continue to build on regional support to ensure that its actions, both in the near term and in the long-term, are acknowledged as helping improve the security and humanitarian situation in the region.
- g) **Conditions for an acceptable ceasefire:** NATO has clearly defined the conditions the Qadhafi regime has to meet: 1. Qadhafi’s forces have stopped all attacks and threats against the civilian population; 2. the regime has withdrawn all its forces back to their bases; 3. humanitarian aid has to be given unfettered passage to all Libyans and other civilians that are in need.

StratCom Risks & Mitigation

9. StratCom risks and mitigation measures are identified at Annex 1.

Coordination and Integration

10. NATO Headquarters will lead all communication efforts related to NATO's operations in support of UNSC Resolution 1973. Within NATO, StratCom will be executed in accordance with NATO StratCom Policy¹. Led by NATO HQ, and supported by ACO StratCom this will require close coordination, especially on themes and messaging, of all elements of the information domain. Supported by ACO, StratCom coordination between NATO, participating nations and the key international organizations will primarily be led by NATO HQ Press Service. Coordination with other NATO Divisions and Military Authorities will be undertaken under the authority of the NATO Spokesperson. Engagement and coordination within the Joint Operations Area will be led by Combined Joint Task Force UNIFIED PROTECTOR (CJTFUP), in coordination with higher headquarters. Coordination on press and media handling will be necessary between NATO HQ (Press & Media and IMS/Public Affairs), SHAPE Public Affairs, Joint Force Command Naples Public Affairs, CJTFUP Public Affairs, NATO units and participating partner nations as required. Interaction with external actors also involved in the implementation of UNSC Resolution related to Libya – such as other international and regional organisations – will take place with their respective communications agencies, as appropriate and as directed by the NATO Spokesperson.

- a. **Calendar.** The duration of NATO activities/operations is dependent on a highly volatile and dynamic environment and will be based on political decisions at NATO HQ.
- b. **Top-Level Messages.** Up-to-date messages will be provided by NATO HQ and distributed to the relevant chain of command and TCNs, following close coordination within NATO headquarters and with the relevant international organizations and partner nations. Top-level messages will change as the situation evolves.

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¹ See PO(2009)141 dated 29 Sep 09, NATO Strategic Communications Policy.

STRATCOM RISKS & MITIGATION

Risk	Mitigation
NATO's actions are misrepresented or misinterpreted.	Messaging to ensure all audiences clearly understand NATO's mandate and the scope of its actions. Engagement - Close contact between NATO, the UN, the Contact Group and regional entities to prevent misunderstandings.
NATO perceived as not doing enough or not taking actions quickly enough.	Messaging to ensure all audiences clearly understand NATO's mandate and the scope of its actions, and complexity of operations being undertaken.
Civilian casualties	Clear messaging on NATO doing its utmost to carefully target only air related military objectives and avoid civilian casualties.
Negative impact on NATO credibility if arms embargo seen to be ineffective.	Messaging, combined with an improved coordination with the other actors implementing the arms embargo.
NATO credibility within Arab/Islamic world is compromised/undermined.	Messaging, supported by a clear legal basis and recognition by the International Community, including Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council, that NATO is acting legally and in support of the Libyan people.
NATO nations fail to provide sufficient funding, commercial lift or sufficient military assets to execute a possible humanitarian assistance mission.	Through messaging clearly articulate the scope of the NATO contribution to a possible humanitarian assistance and migrant evacuation operation.
NATO personnel/assets harmed or damaged.	Clear messaging on the risks associated with the mission.
NFZ does not stop suppression of Libyan civilians by other means	Expectation management – clear articulation of the limits of a NFZ.
NATO actions to protect civilians from attack is seen as inadequate	Maximum clarity in political messages and maintaining a coherent line, while at the same time managing expectations regarding NATO's role and mission.
Discontinuity of national viewpoints within the Alliance	Close, active, engagement with Nations, including the sharing of lines and updated information to ensure unity of message.
NATO messaging appears out of sync with other actors including partner nations and international organizations.	Close liaison with those nations that are actively involved outside the NATO effort to coordinate and integrate communications activities for unity of effort.