

STRENGTHENING C2 AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE HIGH NORTH AND BALTIC SEA REGIONS

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Just over 70 years ago, The Washington Treaty was signed by the 12 founding nations at the Departmental Auditorium of the State Department in Washington DC. The 14 articles explain the purpose of NATO, its principles and how it will react at a time of crisis. The focus on the values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law are its bedrock and have never been more important. These principles have been the foundation of the strength and unity of the Alliance, allowing it to successfully address the instability that threatens the Alliance, whilst maintaining peace in Europe. As we enter the eighth decade of NATO, the core tenets of NATO's existence remain the same, yet the landscape has changed considerably. Existing threats regenerate and evolve, new threats emerge – currently, NATO faces the twin threats presented by terrorist groups and Russia – as well as the challenges posed by climate change and by state and non-state actors alike. As NATO continues to adapt, it has welcomed new members to support the fundamental principles of cooperative security, collective defence and deterrence and crisis management.

Confronting and competing against these threats means that NATO will have to pick up and maintain its current programme of adaptation. The nature of this adaptation is structural, conceptual and operational and Headquarters Joint Force Command Brunssum has an important role to play since SACEUR has given it the responsibility for coordinating deterrence activity in the High North and Baltic Sea Regions. Alongside our sister command in Naples, which is responsible for Southern Europe and the Mediterranean Region, NATO is now able to orchestrate deterrence across the whole of Europe. Naturally, we cannot do this alone and rely heavily on the capabilities provided by the Single Service Commands (SSC); MARCOM, LANDCOM and AIRCOM. In addition, at the tactical level there is a growing network of regionally-focussed HQs, in our case Multinational Corps North-East (MNC(NE)), Multinational Division North (MND(N)) and Multinational Division North-East (MND(NE)). To supplement these permanent HQs, there are the more familiar deployable elements such as UKMARFOR, the UK JFAC and HQ ARRC which take their place in the NATO Response Force cycle. Their deployment to our Region would be enabled by the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs); small, joint units who are NATO's liaison elements in the three Baltic States, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.

This describes a broad mosaic of C2 capabilities and entities, all designed to provide the brains behind any future crisis

or conflict. But as I have already mentioned, the challenge today is for NATO to contribute towards a deterrence strategy which will require us to compete in a tense and corrosive hybrid environment. The question, therefore, is how to adapt these structures designed for crisis and conflict – and all that they do to prepare for such – for modern hybrid deterrence. It is worth mentioning two points before explaining how we are doing this at JFC Brunssum. The first is that the NATO Command Structure is a powerful capability in and of itself, not just providing the brain but being a repository of insight and influence for all three NATO tasks: collective defence; crisis response; and security through partnerships. Secondly, and consequently, these structures are not 'overheads' and we must counter the self-harming narratives concerning numbers of HQs. There are certainly efficiencies that can

be made and there is a strong argument using national HQs (such as the Norwegian JHQ or the UK's SJFHQ) in support of NATO. But the benefit of having a comprehensive C2 network is incalculable in assisting NATO's situational understanding and in allowing a rapid and robust response to crises. More immediately for the problem at hand, this C2 network allows NATO to contribute the military instrument far more meaningfully to deterrence; or as NATO describes it, Baseline Activity and Current Operations (BACO).

So how is JFC Brunssum contributing to BACO? In terms of 'Ends', classification prevents exposing much detail but contesting the hybrid space in all domains, including information, space and cyber is the express aim described in SACEUR's Deterrence and Defence in the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA). Describing the two main threats to NATO as being Russia and terrorist groups, it is the first NATO Strategy to have been produced since 1967. As a joint operational HQ, Brunssum is ideally placed to deliver joint activity in cooperation with SSC and MNC(NE) (in essence, our components) and to orchestrate this with national activity (principally training and exercises) as well as International Organisations and when appropriate Non-Governmental Organisations. Brunsum's formal agreements with partner nations, Finland and Sweden, and its strong links to US EUCOM, PJHQ and the Norwegian Joint HQ also allow a significant degree of coordination in the High North and the Baltic Sea Regions.

The 'Means' for this approach are the authorities granted to JFC Brunssum to achieve all of this and, for the first time in many years, these have been granted. The Joint C2 Concept of Operations and the accompanying Domain C2 Concepts will clarify roles and responsibilities for BACO as well as all other types of operation. Regardless of formal command relationships, as ever with NATO the most important 'Means' is unity of effort. It is striking, although not



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especially surprising, that those allies in our regions (including partners) recognise JFC Brunssum's authority to coordinate and synchronise activity in BACO as NATO's military contribution to deterrence and are very keen to do so.

But it is the 'Ways' which we at Brunssum have been focussing on these past six months under the Commander's initiative of 'Strengthening C2 and Relationships in Implementation Area (North)'². First and foremost it recognises that command, control and coordination of all these interlinked bodies has become exceedingly complex. Secondly, it recognises that the increasing political and security responsibilities must be matched by increasing effectiveness to allow NATO and allies to respond at the speed of relevance and in a coordinated way. Thirdly, it preserves the sovereignty of specific capabilities and activities that are provided for national defence, although often these support NATO requirements. Fourthly, and consequently, it does not aspire to centralising command but achieving unity of effort among allies and partners with a common purpose. And finally, it exploits JFC Brunssum's capability 24/7/365 as an operational headquarters that is joint, multi-national and interagency by design.

In the relatively short period of implementation, there has been positive and encouraging progress. The most important consideration has been the provision of clear leadership for NATO's contribution to deterrence in our Regions. This has meant providing the vision, the thought leadership and taking responsibility for doing the hard yards or coordination. It also means clarifying the existing C2 relationships in the Brunssum area, many of which are based on legacy decisions made in good faith but which have been overtaken by adaptation. In this sense, reaching out to establish relationships with joint and operations staff in the Allied and Partner Nations (particularly Sweden and Finland) has been equally valuable. Given that the majority of NATO's contribution to deterrence

²Implementation Area (North) is an historic phrase used to describe the area contained within the Graduated Response Plans for which JFC Brunssum is responsible: Iceland, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. It may also comprise US, UK, Denmark, Greenland, Sweden and Finland according to permissions and circumstance. Allies who provide the framework nation apparatus for NATO organisations such as NFIUs and eFP can also be included in specific circumstances.

is training and exercises, this approach creates the mechanism to coordinate (and if possible synchronise) the larger and more joint exercises, most of which have been planned years in advance, to achieve the right effects.

What does this look like? Once again, it is important to emphasise that it does not equate to JFC Brunssum 'commanding' or taking ownership of national activities. To date, most allies have volunteered to align their exercises to NATO requirements. As a start point, we have focussed on ensuring that between HQ JFC Brunssum and the lead joint HQ there is shared situational awareness, concurrent monitoring of indicators and warnings, and alignment of StratCom. This has had the effect of linking up JOCs (preferably with a Common Operating Picture), intelligence collection branches (important for information sharing) and communications divisions (to reinforce social media messaging). Since May 2019, Brunssum has achieved this during the US-led Baltic Operations (BALTOPS), Exercise BALTIC PROTECTOR (the UK-led JEF deployment to the Baltic Sea, pictured below), the German-led Exercise NORTHERN COAST and the UK's eFP fleet rotation (Exercise TRACTABLE). Looking forward to next year, US DEFENDER 2020 offers a further opportunity to expand this linkage and, particularly with US EUCOM, deepen it. The benefits in terms of NATO's ability to take command rapidly of a deploying force, regardless of the providing nation, are obvious. As we know, deterrence aims to change an adversary's calculations, making the costs of a potential course of action outweigh the benefits. The benefits of smoothing the seam between national and NATO responses to crisis in our regions are self-evident.

The 'Strengthening C2 and Relationships' initiative is only a start and, based on the principle 'think big, start small' Brunssum will continue to develop ways of organising NATO for deterrence and reassurance in IA(N). As part of this, we must integrate national activity, particularly with allies in our regions and key framework nations such as US and UK. In time, the aspiration is to have the ability to target and modulate activity to achieve the desired reassurance or deterrence effect in all domains.

