The Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre hosted the NATO Lessons Learned Conference in Lisbon, Portugal from 23 to 25 October 2012. The conference theme was: “Learning from the Past - Preparing for the Future”.

I think most attendees will agree with me that this year’s conference was the best yet. The theme allowed us to look beyond development of the NATO LL Capability, beyond even the capture and implementation of specific lessons from NATO’s recent activities—although the difficulties in making the LL Capability actually lead to improvements in the way we operate were evident throughout our discussions this week.

Instead, we were given an opportunity to examine from a broad perspective NATO’s activities of the past decade and consider how we can apply what we found to our future activities. We did this by answering three key questions: “What have we learned?” “How did we learn it?” and “How do we apply it to future challenges?”

The answers to these questions were fascinating. We heard a wide array of ideas on what we have learned over the last decade including perspectives from both NATO and Nations. For me several cross-cutting lessons emerged:

- Those of us working in or with NATO do not sufficiently understand how the Alliance works at all levels and this reduces our overall organizational effectiveness.
- Dealing with the modern information sphere continues to be a challenge, whether info and intel sharing, getting our message to others or simply managing the inundation of information, including LL related information.
- We do not yet know how we can better understand the future battlespace, and, closely related to that –
- We’re still not comfortable in planning to deal with the unexpected, that is, on the one hand improving our ability to predict future challenges and, on the other, creating the balance in Alliance and national structures and between preparation and adaptation.
- Incorporating partners continues to be a challenge.
- The LL Mindset has begun to truly take hold throughout NATO.

For me, these are the lessons from that last decade. We, the LL Practitioners, have done our work, we have identified the lessons. But, as General Stough said during his presentation, learning only happens when we change our behaviour as a result of experience.

What will change as a result of identifying these lessons? I cannot say. But I am most encouraged by things I heard this week. Many of this year’s speakers are exactly those leaders who can change the behaviour of our national and alliance organizations. I was encouraged to hear that they too are aware of the lessons that emerged during our decade of conflict and that they are working hard to learn them as we move into the future.

How can we, the LL practitioners help? For my part, I will continue to commit JALLC to providing high quality and intellectually honest analysis products to steer leaders’ understanding of the problems we face. I will also continue to provide and to improve the tools for learning and sharing, such as our portals, handbooks and training course that help you provide a similar product for your leaders.

More specifically, and in support of the theme of this conference, JALLC will in the coming months publish two studies which we presented at the conference: the study presented by Mr Redmayne on a Decade of Conflict, and the project on Redeployment from Operations presented by Maj Hamers.

Finally, I and my staff will continue to champion the specific lessons that we personally think are important.

What do I ask of you as an outcome of your participation? As in past years, I would ask you to champion learning in your organization and push sharing with others. I also asked each one of you to provide input to support two JALLC studies.

This brings us to the most important takeaway from this conference—a reinforcement of your own understanding of your role and your responsibilities for contributing to learning within your organization. After all, every single one of us, regardless of specialty or branch, is a member of the LL Community. The LL Capability cannot function without all of us knowing our roles and executing tasks that lead to organizational learning. Each of you must have a keen personal sense of what you must do to make learning lessons a reality. This is the overriding message of this conference!

Peter Sonneby
Brigadier General, Danish Air Force
Conference Agenda

Day 1 – 23 October

Opening Remarks – Brig. Gen. Peter Sonneby, Commander JALLC

Message from SACT – Gen. J-P Paloméros

Lessons Learned Status Briefings “How is NATO moving forward?”

NATO Lessons Learned: The NATO HQ Perspective – Mr Ilay Ferrier, IS Ops

NATO Military Transformation to Ensure a Mission Ready Alliance – Maj. Gen. Peter Bayer, HQ SACT - DCOS SPP

SHAPE Perspective – Cmdr. Nevzat Özkan, SHAPE - FOR - RER

JALLC Programme of Work and the NATO Lessons Learned Portal – Lt. Col. Gordon Gushue, JALLC

Panel: OUP: A Lessons Learned Framework

Key Speaker: A Perspective on OUP
– Vice Adm. Robert Davidson, CAN MILREP

Development and functioning of CCOMC as a response to OUP”
– Col. Patrick Andrews, SHAPE

Operation Unified Protector – Libya”

Operationalizing Transformation: The Lessons Learned Process in OUP
– Mr Charles Ridgway, JALLC

Panel Discussion: Lessons from OUP

CALL Update – Lt. Col. Clifton Harris

Day 2 – 24 October

Panel: A Decade of Conflict

Key Speaker: A Decade of War” – Maj. Gen. Michael Stough, US Joint Staff

A Decade of Conflict: A JALLC perspective – Mr John Redmayne, JALLC

A NATO Nation View – Lt. Col. Amar Ben Ahmed, French Defence Staff


Panel Discussion: A Decade of Conflict

Panel: ISAF Transition Challenges

Key Speaker: ISAF Transition
– Vice Adm. Anthony Johnstone-Burt, COS HQ SACT

ISAF transition, on the ground view ISAF HQ – Col. Wolfgang Schad, HQ ISAF


JALLC Redeployment Study – Maj. Larry Hamers, JALLC

Panel Discussion: ISAF Transition Challenges

Day 3 – 25 October

Moving into the Future

Keynote Address “What is ahead for NATO?” – Amb. Alexander Vershbow, Deputy Secretary General of NATO

NATO Forces 2020 – Mr Andrew Budd, IS DPP

NATO-EU Cooperation – Brig. Gen. Pascal Roux, EUMS

Closing Remarks – Brig. Gen. Peter Sonneby, Commander JALLC
Admiral Davidson provided a high level but personal perspective of the OUP LL process. He acknowledged the challenges in moving forward with completing overall lessons from OUP. These include the stovepipe structure within NATO HQ and various political challenges that come into play when reporting military issues. He concluded by identifying the need to implement LL from the onset, follow the process, be honest, and understand the goal, and stated that we are very good at learning tactical lessons but need more focus at the strategic-political level. His final comment was that it is as important to look behind us as it is to look ahead.

COL Andrews led off with an overview of 21st century security challenges—Missile Defense, Cyber and other emerging threats have entered the fray and how the CCOMC was developed as a way to tackle these challenges and drive cultural change towards a comprehensive approach. He gave an overview of CCOMC capabilities, guiding principles, process, engagement and governance. The salient lessons in regard to the CCOMC include: this is an opportunity to succeed and do more with less, embrace technology, and the mind-set to change culture comes from the top.

General Weighill gave an overview of OUP from an “Operator’s Perspective”, beginning with the political environment, the conduct of the campaign, and some of the overall planning challenges that were encountered. High level observations included a challenging C2 transition from Odyssey Dawn to OUP, constructive ambiguity on end states, guidance, strategic communications, Intel collection and fusion, and OPSEC. He highlighted the importance of agility and keeping accurate and detailed records. He concluded by cautioning that although there are many lessons to be learned from OUP, we should not focus on these lessons exclusively.

Mr. Ridgway provided an overview of OUP reports and products that are currently available and presented a listing of major themes for lessons. He also described the report endorsement process through NATO HQ and ACO. He concluded with some personal observations concerning the OUP LL process and also concerning the operation itself. Regarding lessons from the LL Process he advanced the notion that while ACO commands have demonstrated an ability to capture basic observations, only JALLC seems able to investigate issues, tie threads of evidence together and discover root causes. With respect to lessons from OUP, he highlighted the flexibility and uniqueness of the NATO Command Structure and proposed that some lessons, such as Intel Sharing and Logistics Reporting, which have surfaced in all NATO operations, may simply not be solvable.

The panel kicked off with a question concerning information sharing and the hurdles posed by national classifications, caveats, and other political concerns. The panel acknowledged that this is always a concern and many times a problem. Admiral Davison commented that many times we need to be practical and Nations need to write reports in a manner that will allow wider distribution. BG Sonneby added that individuals and commands tend to take the safe solution to over-classify and this requires a change in mind-set and focus. There were a couple of questions asked related to political ambiguity in goals and objectives and is there a way to get around it. Admiral Davison acknowledged that it is a problem but certain factors such as political transitions which impact decisions associated with the sharing of lessons learned. The ambiguity can be constructive at times by giving military commanders some leeway in the decision and operations planning processes.
The Lessons from a Decade of Conflict Panel was led off by key speaker, General Stough, who as the Vice Director of the US Joint Staff J7, incorporated his version of lessons learned over the past decade, stressing that the J7 recently took on an expanded role of learning lessons of the past and using them to provide a framework for the future. General Stough continued to elaborate that what the US and NATO prepared to do, they did very well, but cautioned that we must continue to understand the environment in which we are fighting, recognize the conventional warfare paradigm, and win the battle of the narrative. He stressed that as we move forward, the lessons that we have learned need to be embodied in the leaders of the future.

Mr Redmayne provided a JALLC perspective of NATO’s lessons learned over the past decade, which came from over 130 JALLC analysis reports. He highlighted that we must learn from the past to manage future challenges, not to fight the last war. Mr Redmayne mentioned that there is a common perception that NATO does not change, but disputed this by citing profound structural change coming from the three key summits of the last decade, and noted that NATO has evolved more rapidly in the last ten years than it has since its inception. The central element of the presentation was the identification of six cross-cutting themes that together support the central thesis that emerged from the Decade of Conflict study. The thesis is: Like many organizations, NATO’s comfort zone is managing a steady-state system in a stable environment; but when major evolutionary changes and unexpected impulses occur in the environment to challenge the system, NATO labours—and delivers when it counts.

LTC Ben Ahmed provided a National perspective of lessons learned over the last decade and LTC Zettermark contributed a non-NATO, Partner Nation point of view, emphasizing that documentation is extremely important for capturing lessons. There were many similarities among these national perspectives.

The Panel Discussion provided some significant insight, with the main theme being adaptability/flexibility. A somewhat controversial topic arose regarding NATO individuals (some at high levels) not being comprehensively educated on NATO and its many processes, sometimes resulting in a lack of productivity. It was remarked that if you do not understand the process, you are incapable of improving.

The key panel takeaways were that NATO Nations and Partners need to default to sharing more information in order to better disseminate the lessons that have been learned and that they must remain adaptable.
Admiral Johnstone-Burt began by highlighting that we are in Afghanistan in a security capacity, not a political or economic one. The ISAF transition does not mean the NATO mission is over in 2014 but will involve a change from a combat role to a training and advisory role. Lessons from the Balkans, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the recent coalition transition from Iraq are being applied to the ISAF transition. The admiral noted that the three major challenges to the ISAF transition are security, redeployment, and building the ASF. The challenge is to ensure NATO is ready for future support in the region. Admiral Johnstone-Burt concluded with emphasizing that our responsibility is to identify, collect, and process Lessons Identified, which requires a transformational mind set.

COL Schad gave the HQ ISAF perspective on transition, stating that transition is on track and achieving success, and presented some supporting metrics. Transition, he said, is not just geographic, but involves transfer of functional tasks to Afghan entities. Lessons from Iraq have been particularly helpful in planning transfer of such tasks. COL Schad then described some of the positive momentum of the ANSF. The Security Force Assistant Model (train/adviser/assist) has achieved some fundamental milestones towards Afghanistan taking the lead and setting the conditions for overall security.

LTC Kingsbury stated that transition isn’t an event, it is always happening and therefore command friction can occur. This can be the result of ambiguous communication at the strategic level. He highlighted the success of applying lessons learned at the lower level (tactical) stage. This requires framing the campaign and filtering out constructive ambiguity. He discussed lessons from the current transition such as areas of command priorities, risk, time, messaging, and the situation.

MAJ Hamers presented the ongoing JALLC Study on Redeployment from Operations. He reviewed the background, scope, requirements, challenges, and methodology used in the study. He discussed the overall current status and briefly summarized the preliminary findings. This gave the audience insight into the steps involved and the need for inputs/reports/support from the NATO nations to ensure comprehensive lessons are captured in order to support the ISAF transition.

The panel discussion began on the challenge of strategic communication. LTC Kingsbury pointed out that if the agenda is not set at the strategic level, the pressure is on the theatre commander in the interpretation. Admiral Johnstone-Burt countered that there has to be a balance with not interfering too much, thus requiring a high level of trust and communication. With 50 partner nations, this can be extremely difficult, adding the risk of competing commands/nations constructive ambiguity issues.

A question was asked if an innovation or adaptation has a more immediate impact and thus can be more quickly and easily learned as a lesson if it is more technical/tactical. The consensus was that innovation and learning at the Strategic level is harder to see, much less implement. The strategic level at times may not be agile enough for a quick turn around on strategic lessons.

The question was asked at what point do we say there is a failure of objectives (if that occurs). COL Shad replied that the security part can be measured, but the political and economical piece is difficult to judge—“What is the measurement of a good government?” General Bayer emphasized that we need to remember who we serve. Our job is to give the most accurate and complete military advice to the political leaders who make the ultimate decision.

During the conclusion of the panel discussion the question was asked of how many of the lessons are repeats of previous lessons. The answer falls back onto the leadership—does a LL Capability exist to mitigate a commander’s lack of interest in Lessons Learned or because he truly wants to lead an agile and adaptable organization that avoids repeating avoidable problems. The effectiveness and participation in the lessons learned process is directly related to the engagement level of leadership.
The subject for the final day of the 2012 Lessons Learned Conference was “Moving into the Future” with presentations linked to key themes taken from the Chicago Summit. No panel discussion was held.

Although the topic of moving into the future was held on the final day, it was actually broached on Day 1 with a presentation by Major General Peter Bayer from HQ SACT on “Maintaining a Ready Alliance in the Future Operating Environment”. He described the planning timeline based on the situation expected in 2012, 2020, and 2030. 2030 is our emerging future and must be used in planning to maintain readiness and overall military capabilities. There is a need to identify future requirements. There needs to be guidance and objectives for the alliance to operate successfully.

General Bayer explained that we need to examine the future security environment through a strategic foresight analysis. The challenges of the future will be very different from what we experience today. He emphasized that the Lessons Learned Community contributions must be engaged in all steps of future operations planning. This can include participation in working groups and conferences. As planners identify a gap during the DOTMLPF process the lessons learned that are applied can help planners focus on the best courses of action.

Mr Andrew Budd from the IS spoke about NATO Forces 2020—modern, tightly connected forces equipped, trained, exercised, and commanded so that they can operate together and with partners in any environment. With a global shift in focus from Europe to Asia, the US expects Europe to take on an increased share of Alliance (as well as its own) defence. In simple terms, NATO Forces 2020 provides a goal to aim at in achieving the capabilities needed to ensure we can undertake the three essential core tasks agreed in the Strategic Concept: collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security.

Smart Defence and the Connected Forces Initiative are at the heart of the new approach but implementation will be demanding. NATO Nations must embrace the commitment to maintain interoperability and readiness as we continue to drawdown from Afghanistan. His final point was that it is up to the Allies to seize these opportunities, and that NATO itself can play merely a facilitating role. NATO’s greatest strength is its unity. Through 2020 and beyond, stimulated by the requirement to use defence resources more efficiently, NATO will deepen that unity to maintain and upgrade its military strength.

The final speaker was the Director of the European Union Military Staff, Brigadier General Pascal Roux FRA F, who gave a detailed description of the function of the EU military staff gave an overview of NATO–EU Cooperation, noting that both organizations take a comprehensive approach to preventing conflicts and building peaceful and stable society. He pointed out that although NATO and the EU are both complex organizations, they are able to work together, citing an example of the EU delivering an approved C-IED concept based on NATO’s model and highlighting the cooperation with NATO and many other bodies in Counter-Piracy operations.
JALLC was honoured to welcome as the Keynote Speaker for the 2012 NATO Lessons Learned Conference Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, the Deputy Secretary General of NATO. Ambassador Vershbow delivered his remarks on the final morning of the conference within the context of “Moving into the Future”.

The Deputy Secretary General began by noting that he has a great personal and professional interest in lessons learned. According to the NATO Lessons Learned Policy, he is the lead for political lessons of the Alliance. This means ensuring that lessons from operations and previous experience are properly taken into account as NATO develops its future policies and procedures. He stressed that as the Alliance looks to cope with today’s rapidly changing security environment, it is more important than ever to quickly identify and implement improvements.

Ambassador Vershbow referenced the Chicago Summit, giving a detailed outline of the demanding agenda ahead for NATO. At this year’s Chicago summit, national representatives agreed to some challenging goals including an enduring commitment to Afghanistan throughout the transition from conflict to capacity building, a commitment to developing NATO’s capabilities in the face of tight economic constraints and shrinking defence budgets, and a commitment to furthering NATO partnerships both to foster support to operations and through political consultation.

Each of these goals raises questions that lessons could answer such as: What does our experience in Afghanistan teach us about how to cement relationships with organizations we need to work with as part of a comprehensive approach? What can we learn from our historically ad-hoc approach to multinational capability development to make Smart Defence and Connected Forces Initiatives deliver real efficiencies? And what have we learned during Afghanistan and OUP about building and sustaining coalitions of Allies and partners? Policymakers armed with the answers to these questions and more may be able to reach good solutions faster, leaving them more time to focus on emerging security challenges such as cyber defence.

He closed by stressing that if we complete the whole lessons learned process, and incorporate lessons into our policies, then we can ensure that the Alliance’s record of success will continue well into the future.

During the questions that followed his speech, he noted that learning political lessons is not always easy. At the political level, experienced diplomats can be rigid and inclined to think they know it all already, plus the problems they are trying to solve frequently have no clear solution. Therefore, the lessons learned process must not pull any punches but offer solutions; even if they are workarounds for problems that cannot be completely solved. When NATO’s LL Capability is able to do this, he will have fulfilled his role, and the lessons learned process will be doing its job to ensure the Alliance is prepared to cope with the wide range of emerging security challenges in the future.
Conference Statistics

Total Attendance: 221
Attendees from NATO: 117
Attendees from NATO National Bodies: 89
Attendees from PfP National Bodies: 15
Total of Nations Represented: 32

NATO Representation
NATO HQ: IS, IMS
Agencies: NCSA, NSA
NCS HQs: All
NFS HQs: 7
COEs: 9

NATO National Representation
National MODs and Joint Staffs: 21
National Commands/HQs: 37
National Training/Doctrine/LL Centres: 22

PfP National Representation
National MODs and Joint Staffs: 7
National Commands/HQs: 8
National Training/Doctrine/LL Centres: 4

A complete list of attendees with contact details is available on the Conference Site accessible from JALLC's Internet homepage with your conference userID and password.

Conference Action Points

JALLC Commitments

JALLC is committed to providing high quality and intellectually honest analysis products to steer leaders’ understanding of the problems we face. JALLC will also continue to provide and to improve the tools for learning and sharing, such as our portals, handbooks and training course that help you provide a similar product for your leaders.

More specifically, and in support of the theme of this conference, JALLC will in the coming months publish two studies which we presented here: the study presented by Mr Redmayne on the Decade of Conflict; and the project on Lessons from Redeployment from Operations presented by Maj Hamers.

Finally, JALLC will continue to champion the lessons that we personally think are important.

Your Commitments

What does NATO’s leadership ask of you as an outcome of your participation?

- As in past years, you must champion learning in your organization and push sharing with others, whether you are a LL practitioner, an operator, or a leader.
- You are asked to contribute your learning as requested by JALLC, SACT and SACEUR and make suggestion to improve the NATO LL Process, the LLDb, the Portal and other LL tools.

But this year JALLC has a specific request. We want to ask each one of you to provide us your input to support the two studies. Before 15 November, please share what you personally think is the most important lesson from either a Decade of Conflict or from Lessons from Redeployment from Operations. Please submit them to the llconf poc email address by that date.

Update from NATO HQ

Mr. Ferrier began with a current perspective of NATO Lessons Learned from the view of NATO HQ. The IS on behalf of the Secretary General is the custodian of NATO LL policy. He announced the LL Implementation Directive and some of its positive results but that it faces two types of challenges: cultural and functional. NATO has shared objectives for LL for not only the 28 member nations but to also include the 50 nations currently supporting ISAF. The emphasis on the LL Process, he explained, includes not only training but a fundamental cultural change. The Implementation Directive makes it more generic and less focused on HQ specific processes. The major changes are that it outlines for the LL Process inside NATO HQ and provides a trigger for initiating the Process. The implementation directive was finalized in September 2012 and there is also a sanitized version that is available to our non-NATO partners.

Update from SHAPE

CDR Ozkan gave a perspective from SHAPE based on recent experience during OUP. He provided information on ACO manning, achievements, reports, and lessons from OUP. Lessons Learned was a MINDSET from the beginning of the operation, which enabled an early start and clear communication in the LL process. The experience of OUP has greatly increased ACO’s LL capability for the future. He explained the roles for LL staff during all phases of the Crisis Spectrum.

- Participate in the operations planning groups
- Identify stakeholders and their capabilities;
- Train key players during peacetime; and
- Facilitate communication and coordination efforts.

ACO has promoted the LL Process from a learning/training perspective and the individual point of view. This strengthens the learning mindset and ensures repeated success. CDR Ozkan recommended more communication, both vertical and horizontal. The key is to implement a sustainable LL capability and work to improve lessons learned tools in coordination with ACT.
Acknowledgements

JALLC wishes to thank the following organizations and individuals for their support and assistance with this conference:

- The Portuguese Army Military Academy for allowing us to use the facilities, and for their support in IT, catering, and admin during the conference itself.
- The US Navy Reserve, which every year provides personnel who play a major role in the successful execution of the conference.
- All the speakers and presenters—especially Ambassador Vershbow—without whom there could be no conference.
- CAPT Hilaire Ducellier, LTCs Gord Gushue, Ana Hajdic and Fernando Duarte, and Major Stefan Olaru from JALLC Production branch, the lead conference planners for this year’s conference, and the rest of my staff from Admin, CIS Mgmt and BUDFIN branches who assisted in its execution.
- Finally, all the attendees for your engagement and enthusiasm in helping to make NATO into a successful learning organization.

Mark Your Calendars – NATO LL Conference 2013

The 2013 NATO LL Conference will be held 22 to 24 October 2013 in Lisbon. The dates will confirmed during the 2nd Quarter of 2013.

Next year’s conference will aim to offer a greater contribution from and for participants. We intend to break the conference into a series of one day sessions, each for a targeted group. We will retain the training day and follow it with a day designed for NATO, National and Partner participants. We hope then to follow this with a day targeted to a NATO audience focusing on lessons from the coming year and, if possible, at a level higher than unclassified. The final day will be aimed at NATO command structure lessons learned practitioners in a workshop setting to discuss issues with the current LL process and procedures.

This and previous conferences have been open to any interested participant. Next year, in order to support the aims of the individual days, we will put an emphasis on vetting conference applicants to ensure that the right people are present in the right sessions so as ensure that all can contribute positively. Correspondingly, overall attendance will likely be less than in this and previous years.

All conference materials, including all presentations, are available at JALLC’s conference site located on our unclassified Internet website at (note sign-in with conference userID and password is required):

https://www.jallc.nato.int/llconf2012/
Thank you for attending