

NATO



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400 Delegates attend NATO Symposium

OSLO, NORWAY – Nearly 400 delegates representing government, industry, military and academia from 38 countries attended the Oslo Symposium Sept. 5 through 7 to discuss methods of experimentation that may change the way the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) does business. This change stems from understanding that methods used in the past don't conform to the ways of the future.

The main focus was Concept Development and Experimentation. CDE is designed to maximize all resources from NATO's 19 member and Partnership for Peace nations and pool efforts and new ideas to one collective organization.

"The situation in which we find ourselves is not without precedent," said Army Gen. William F. Kernan, supreme allied commander, Atlantic and commander-in-chief, U.S. Joint Forces Command. "In the 18th century, for example, England's Royal Navy found itself in a similar position: it was charged with protecting the empire's vast interests in the face of an increasingly tight-fisted ex-chequer.

"This led Lord Rutherford to declare to the British admiralty: 'gentlemen, we have no money, therefore we must think.' Intellectual change must lead physical change.

"We must achieve military effectiveness by gleaning greater efficiencies from the processes intended to man, equip, and train NATO forces.

"In order to remain relevant, NATO must adapt to the changing strategic environment by clearly defining its future requirements, developing doctrine and procedural changes necessary to meet those requirements ... breaking Cold War paradigms as we do so ... and finally, by implementing the technical developments required to facilitate and maximize those changes.

"Creating an innovative system to accomplish these goals requires thought. In fact, it requires more than just thought, it demands a campaign plan and action. "We need a forward-looking process that articulates and defines the over-arching joint operational concepts, and one that coordinates research and development efforts between nations.

"I believe that this tool already exists and is manifest in Concept Development and Experimentation," finished Kernan.

"Concept development is not a new thing," said Nils Holme, director general of the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment. "The new thing is the much stronger emphasis in the leading nations of NATO to start with examination and the basic needs, and on a much broader basis, examine what technology can do to serve these underlying needs, conceivable by new concepts, system-wise and tactically."

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Wanting to create new technology to improve military tactics is the desire of NATO. Actually creating that technology and gathering the right minds to do so is not. Craig Mundie, Microsoft Corporation's senior vice president for advanced strategies and one of three keynote symposium speakers, set the tone by emphasizing the importance of technology and adapting to the changing times.

"Our whole lives, our private lives and our military lives are affected by technology," Mundie stated. "At Microsoft we have learned to change in an environment with fast-changing technology. NATO is facing the same challenges. Technology today will be of greater and greater importance in the future, and that means in war-fighting too."

In contrast to Microsoft, NATO has 19 nations that need to be involved to make sure everyone understands what is going on and to ensure that the entire alliance is able to support the new ideas. One of the main issues was technology and how to come up with new tools in such a technologically diverse environment such as NATO. It's important to find a good balance. "Interoperability means that we need a reasonable degree of technological equivalence among the units involved in any given operation," stated Lord George Robertson, secretary general of NATO and chairman of the North Atlantic Council.

The defense capabilities initiative was launched two-and-a-half years ago to identify the capabilities that all allies must have for future operations. It also noted any imbalance there may be between nations and "to ensure that connecting these shortfalls would be a focus of our force-fighting process and to make sure this would be an alliance-wide effort," stressed Robertson. "You don't wait until the crisis comes along and the troops go into action and they face the risks that they inevitably do. You have to do it at the early stages to prepare them for the fact that in the trade off against current day-to-day expenditure and future investment, future investment has got to have a priority, and the expenditure needs to come now.

"So I very much appreciate in this context, SACLANC's continuing efforts to implement the Concept Development and Experimentation initiative. It clearly makes sense to have a forward-looking process for developing and evaluating new concepts before extensive resources are committed," said Robertson. The CDE idea comes at the appropriate time when the need for change in military structure among many allied countries is now.

"NATO, when it was founded, was entirely a defensive Alliance," stated Adm. Sir James Perowne, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic. "We just had large static forces, and the aim of static forces was to keep out the big Soviet bear and make sure that he stayed in his lair and didn't come across the border into ours. And that was all NATO was there for. "But now, NATO has a very different role. It's been 10 years since the Cold War ended. NATO is now mobile, it goes out-of-area, it's looking at crisis-response organization, and thank goodness it has changed. I think without that change NATO would be starting to wither, but to do that we need very different armed forces. It's that change and making them, forcing the nations to face up to that change, and trying to show them ways of facilitating that change in our forces," said Perowne. Recognizing the change in times and the need to adapt to them together as an alliance.

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The symposium served as the stepping stone to bring everyone involved with NATO; to hear and discuss how to formulate a stronger team by using different methods. That's not so say the old method was wrong, just outdated .

“The military produces military requirements, technologists develop new technology and industries compete to meet the military requirements through the application of new technology: quite simple,” said Holme. “Under this model, we also do experiments, but these experiments are really in the form of tests and trials to verify that new systems indeed perform as intended. In such trials and experiments, if the expected results do not materialize, someone is responsible. What is wrong with this traditional method? I am tempted to say that nothing is wrong, but it is too narrow. It is very difficult under this model to actually determine new approaches to meet the underlying needs,” he explained.

To better explain, Holme went back to a time before combat helicopters and when there was a need to improve the capability to attack land targets from a distance. Using the older method, the military would come up with ways to improve their existing technology. With the techniques being suggested at the symposium, new concepts would be introduced and, therefore, different and unique ways to solve an old problem would be created and supported.

To promote the shifting emphasis on experimentation, a pre-symposium session was held a day before symposium discussion began. “The purpose of the pre-symposium is sharing ideas among the multinational partners,” explained Army Lt. Col. Stan Hoskin, deputy chief of the Multinational Concept Development and Experimentation Center. “The intention for the pre-symposium was to be at the level of the staff officers that are really working the concepts on ‘How are we actually going to put this into play? How are we going to carry this forward for NATO so that NATO can actually do these kinds of things from an operational perspective?’ “The main symposium is really looking ... primarily at a strategic level in the sense of bringing the decision makers and policy makers here so that they can make those kinds of decisions that would support the establishment of multinational experimentation as a tool for NATO so that they might use that to transform NATO’s perspective on how they go about doing warfare in the next century,” said Hoskin. This trans-Atlantic change will bring growing pains. To continue operating the way NATO has for the past half-a-century is not pragmatic, so the symposium served as a guide.

“Nations are wrestling with the problems of transformation of their armed forces,” said Perowne. “It would be easy to sit back and wait for nations to pursue their own courses in isolation, each devising their own solutions to similar problems.

“However, we are all in an Alliance, and one of the key conclusions on which we all agree will be the increased importance and frequency of coalition operations in the future. It would be foolish and wasteful not to attempt to coordinate Alliance efforts across nations, so that together, we think our way through the future before we spend and commit resources. And doing so, we shall try to share information and promote collaboration in order both to avoid duplication and to maximize the interoperability of our forces in the future,” Perowne said.

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And that is what CDE is designed to do. Maximize all resources from different countries and pool all the efforts and new ideas to one entity to put all of NATO on the same sheet of paper. Preparation for the symposium itself reflects NATO's desire to promote teamwork. "The Norwegian staff that the Royal Norwegian Air Force has put together has been tremendous," praised Hoskin.

"They supported us from the very beginning with any of the needs that we've had, and, frankly, they have anticipated our requirements for security, any logistics support, transportation issues – whatever the needs were, they were either anticipated or willing to go the extra mile to make all that happen.

"And it has been a joint effort certainly with SACLANT support as they have been the primary supporter of NATO CDE and was able to get that passed through the Military Committee and approved as a concept for NATO's Alliance," he said.

"Joint Forces Command – from my perspective being the multinational CDE representative for Joint Forces Command – has had a great interest in developing U.S. [Department of Defense's] perspectives on how we can go about doing experimentation together, and we saw this as a great forum to be able to bring those forces together to identify places where we can potentially go forward and do other things with multinational experimentation."

The Oslo Symposium hopes to begin a new chapter in NATO's history. In light of all the effort and planning involved to prepare everyone for this transformation, it sets a good foundation to keep the Alliance on the path that it is hoping to stay on ... together.

Speeches, presentations and a photo/article gallery is accessible at www.mil.no. The Web site is in Norwegian, but the Oslo Symposium link, located at the bottom of the page, is in English. A CDE article authored by U.S. Navy Rear Admiral David Crocker, is also posted on the web site, and available for publication and/or background for the Symposium.

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can be found on the World Wide Web:
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