

**SPEECH BY REAR-ADMIRAL KELLER
HEAD OF THE U.S. DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY (DLA)
AT A DINNER HONORING
NATO ALLIED COMMITTEE 135 ON CODIFICATION
TUESDAY, 18 MAY 1999, BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am both delighted and honored to be afforded this opportunity to address this very distinguished audience.

This dinner is being held to honor each one of you, our guests, and I am pleased and honored to welcome each of you on behalf of the Defense Logistics Agency; the U.S. Defense Department; and the people of the United States.

I sincerely hope your meetings here will be both stimulating and productive. And I also hope that you find the information to be shared on « DLIS DAY » to be informative and beneficial, as well.

DLIS our acronym for « The Defense Logistics Information Service » is playing an exciting and increasingly more focal role in many revolutionary developments within our U.S. Logistics operations and during « DLIS DAY » you will learn about some of the more significant of these developments.

Aside from the business part of the agenda, I hope that the « personal » part of your visit will also have long-lasting results. I hope that each of you will have some « free » time to just be « tourists » to see a bit of our country, to meet the American people, and to make new friends both during the meeting events and apart from them.

I would, of course, like to single out the historic nature of the NATO Allied Committee 135 meeting and the special status of three new member countries within NATO - the Czech republic, Hungary and Poland. I think I speak for all of the U.S. Defense community and the other NATO countries when I say that we look forward to a long and fruitful partnership. This partnership, of course, has already begun on many fronts, not the least of which is in the area of Codification.

From my viewpoint, the NATO alliance is composed of a number of what I would call separate, but integrated, « Defense Communities ». Apart from the Armaments community, we have communities representing many specialized fields such as Air Defense, Command & Control, Communications, Research & Technology, and, of course, Standardization. And, I can think of no defense community that has been more successful than the Codification community in supporting NATO.

I am also conscious of the fact that the role of Codification and of managing Logistics data does not always receive the publicity and recognition that it deserves and some of the reasons for this are not hard to find. The NATO codification system is an « invisible partner » in the day-to-day business of Logistics. Most people tend to be more fascinated by the large and more

glamorous armaments projects. They forget, all too often, that there are other areas of defense cooperation which, at the end of the day, are just as important.

The NATO Codification System has an important and critical role in fueling the day-to-day operations of the NATO Logistics systems. As our military operations become more and more dependent on the precise delivery of Logistics the necessity of our collective Logistics systems to be seamless and interoperable becomes even more vital.

The standard language of the NATO Codification System has been « the key » to interoperability within the NATO alliance, and increasingly, has been the cornerstone for developing Logistics cooperation between nations and, this committee, the NATO allied committee 135, has been at the forefront in forging historic new partnerships. The codification system, which you govern and oversee, will continue as the critical common, operational language leading to enhanced communication & interoperability; improved understanding; and deepened friendship between nations.

Winston Churchill, a man who knew and understood the importance of Logistics, probably better than most, once said :

« Victory is the beautiful, bright colored flower and Logistics is the stem without which it would never have blossomed ».

That was true yesterday it is true today and will continue to be true tomorrow.

As we all know, the world of Logistics is becoming more and more global and international in flavor and the NATO allied committee 135 has been leading the way in adapting to this trend through your international programs and use of new technology. Use of the NATO Codification System is growing, today, at a faster rate than ever before.

Your committee is currently presiding over an international expansion that encompasses every inhabited continent and a large number of countries and defense alliances. This expansion includes, primarily, the Partnership for Peace alliance countries as well as, the member countries of the Pacific Area Cataloging System, which, by the way, will also be holding their annual forum meeting here in Battle Creek next week. But, this expansion also includes: a number of countries in the Middle East – like Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates; countries in South America, such as Argentina and Brazil; and countries in south Africa.

And this international expansion of the NATO Codification System has been greatly facilitated by the cross reference capability your committee has established between the United Nations Common Coding System and the NATO Codification System.

I think we all recognize that this worldwide expansion has been necessitated by, and, in large part, has been the direct result of a number of external, but interrelated, factors.

First, for both political and financial reasons, national defense has become a multi-national undertaking. This was illustrated dramatically during Desert Storm in the early 90s. It is currently being illustrated again today in Bosnia and elsewhere and, it will continue to be true in the future.

Secondly, today's market place is a global market place, and the business based upon which our collective national Logistics rely is becoming, more and more, international in nature.

And lastly, and probably, most significantly the rapid explosion in information technology and related capabilities, has made international cooperation equally more feasible and affordable.

It has been in this last area, this critical area of information technology, that the NATO allied committee 135 has been a true leader through your development, use and exploitation of a sophisticated system of data communications, known as the NATO Mailbox System (MBS) and through your adoption & exploitation of internet technology.

The NATO codification system, as you all know, had its beginning in the mid-1950s, and today provides standards for the use of a common stock identification system throughout the NATO Alliance. Beyond international expansion and expansion of the NATO alliance, perhaps the NATO allied committee 135's single, biggest challenge for the future will be the integration with and adoption of common standards for automatic identification technology. The use of uniform & common standards for linear and two-dimensional bar codes and radio frequency capability within our multi-national Logistics systems. This interoperable Logistics capability to provide our allied warfighters the knowledge of where, precisely where, material and supplies are, in the Logistics pipeline, will be the most critical component of our future Logistics delivery capability.

I am also aware of some of the great work this committee has already done in this area, and I have every confidence that, collectively, you will fully meet the future Logistics information challenges and needs that lie ahead.

In closing, I would like you to reflect on our current NATO efforts in Kosovo and on operation « Allied Force ». I know, like me, you are all following these operations closely as is the international press corps. And what I want to relate to you is an article, by the associated press, a few days ago.

This article addressed an « interoperability » problem among NATO forces and, specifically, it highlighted a problem in communications. What the press « highlighted » and reported on was the fact that because NATO forces communication systems were not fully « interoperable », our allied pilots had to revert to « unsecure » means of communications in order to talk to each other during the prosecution of coordinated air strikes and as a result, possibly, made their specific targets known, as well as, placing themselves in jeopardy from anti-aircraft fire.

The reason I mention this, is because, that while NATO and our allied forces are clearing wrestling with « interoperability » issues on the operational front, we are not on the Logistics front. This is directly the result of your committee's hard work and dedicated efforts over many years to establish standards and make them work! One of the reasons we do not get the publicity/recognition that we desire, I suspect, is in part, because you have made these interfaces « transparent ». You have, in fact, created a Logistics capability that is, « in effect », truly interoperational and transparent. And you should all be immensely proud of this! !

So let me thank you and thank you very sincerely for everything that the Codification community has done to support the NATO alliance, and for the cooperative Logistics efforts you have supported between nations beyond NATO. You have a long and well recognised history of success within the international Logistics community. I urge you all to continue this superb support. Your community represents practical defense cooperation at work and at it is absolute best!

The NATO allied committee 135 has played an important role and a critical role in strengthening the axis upon which our Alliance was built and upon which depends the transatlantic axis. I look forward with complete confidence to your ability to support our new, transformed Alliance as it addresses the evolving role of NATO and the Logistics information challenge now before us.

Thank you.