

“I never promised you a rose garden..... but fun, it was !!”

The 9th world-wide symposium on NATO codification, Luxembourg 17-20 September 2001



400 participants, 40 exhibitors, 70 spouses from 45 different countries and no noticeable incidents of any kind. That is the result of many months of detailed planning and preparation. The LZ organizing staff can now relax. As Programme Manager LZ, I am extremely proud of them because it was THEM who made this possible; it was THEM who did the work. I have seen how a team came into being, driven by a common goal... We'll fix it, anytime! This symposium was THEIR symposium. At this very point, let me make it clear that the LZ staff was not alone. There were people of other organizations involved as well. I mention the staff of AA, AP, EE, FF, LS, and PP. It was a NAMSA success! We made it happen by working together.

And as you can imagine, thousands of details had to be taken care of. It all started in 1998 at the 8th Symposium in San Diego. It was decided that the next symposium would be held in 2001

and should ideally be organized by NAMSA. Almost 4 years to think about a symposium. In early 2000, the final decision was taken with the help of the NAMSA Management Team. Quite a responsibility to take on, but NAMSA accepted.

When you accept, you must deliver. Where would we hold such a symposium? The AC/135 had an objective of 400 to 450 participants. The Conference Centre of NAMSA cannot accommodate that many people. The choice was rather limited: either the Foire Internationale or the Hémicycle of the European Congress Centre on Kirchberg. The choice was quickly made: the symposium would take place at Kirchberg, a wonderful facility with wonderful people running it. The managing Director, Mr Knaff and his team, made difficult things look easy. In the meantime, the NAMSA hotel team, Nikolaos Derventzis and Chantal Muller, was reserving blocks of hotels rooms while trying to avoid liability and costs: a headache! In total 550 rooms were booked.



Find an interesting theme and set up the program. A challenging task to say the least! After all, codification appears to be such a boring topic. Isn't it? Committees are formed; tasks are assigned and the real work starts. By mid 2000, the LZ organization looks as a military operation. One team, headed by Torsten Schueler, takes care of registration, and customer support. A second team under Henning

Rose, takes care of payments, social event and transport arrangements. A third team (Nikolaos Derventzis) looks after accommodation while a fourth team, André Felten and Sigrid Pierson, look after the necessary computers and other technical equipment required to support such an event. Finally, one man, Denis Lampron, ensures the overall co-ordination while working on the Program and liaising with the AC/135.



Pieces of the puzzle start falling into place and the budget is approved by the AC/135. Thanks to the sales of the N-MCRL, the AC/135 Committee takes full financial responsibility and subsidises part of the costs of the symposium. It should be said, however, that the participants, the exhibitors and the advertisers paid for the major portion of the costs through their registration fee.

Henning Rose creates a database to start recording as many details as possible on the participants. Besides the standard information such as name, address, Email, Fax and phone number, details are recorded such as food restrictions (vegetarian, diet, religion), hotel requirements, arrival, departure, means of transport, method of payments, etc, etc. Alain Valli, Torsten Schueler, Pierre Thillen and Patrice Verlaine become instant database users as they are the ones that must read the registration forms

and enter the data... Not an easy process!

A social programme is established. Amongst the many possibilities that Luxembourg offers, we retain a spousal programme to visit various tourist sites of Luxembourg, a welcome cocktail in the bar area of the Congress Centre of Kirchberg, a dinner at Casino2000 in Mondorf-les-Bains and a farewell cocktail in the Chateau de Vianden.

Mr. Jos Berg contacts the Luxembourg Government. Our wish-list is perhaps a little ambitious but you don't get anything if you don't ask... transport assistance, the Army band, high-level speaker for the Opening Ceremony, security arrangements, and perhaps some financial contribution? To our great satisfaction we get it all! The Luxembourg Government supports the Symposium 100% and offers a financial contribution of 1.5 Million LUF in addition to the rest of the wish-list. Jos Berg proves, once more, how skilled he is in "tapping" resources in Luxembourg. Thanks a million (1,5 actually) Jos!



By than, it is time to get the registration process rolling and to start collecting the money. Subscribing is one thing; getting the money is yet something different. Unaccepted VISA cards, stolen cards, bank transfers that never made it, cheques that cannot be

processed; we have seen it all! Pierre Thillen, Patrice Verlainne and Henning Rose are driving Liette Bettemes of Finance up to the ceiling !

It appears that every single subscription is a problem. Missing data, unreadable entries and unknown organisations, A multi-level control system is set-up! Annabelle Madron and Philip Meldom get crash training in “self-imposed-auditing”.

One person inputs the data, another verifies the data and a third starts contacting the candidate attendee to get the missing data; a fourth person controls the money transfer in close co-operation with Finance, yet another books hotel rooms. Once everything is in place, and payment has been confirmed, the attendee obtains his or her final registration confirmation and hotel booking. Torsten Schueler and Patrick Perl are on the front line for the confirmation packages.



In the meantime, Henning improves the database. Many different reports can now be produced. How many people in what hotel? What is the total number of people to be transported every day? How many people will take lunch on what day? Who participates in the spousal programme, the welcome cocktail, the dinner, the farewell cocktail? How many special meals?

A decision is made to publish the entire symposium documentation on the AC/135 Web site. People can even subscribe via the Internet. André Felten spent hours and hours designing this most professional Web site. I consider the site itself as the mirror of the work we have done. If you have time to look at it, please do so at: www.nato.int/structur/AC/135/main/links/e_symposium.htm



By now, we are spinning at full speed. It is now July 2001. Tension increases! For most other people in NAMSA, the leave period starts. LZ staff cannot go on leave or if they go, it is very much controlled. Two weeks max! No leave in August! Etc.

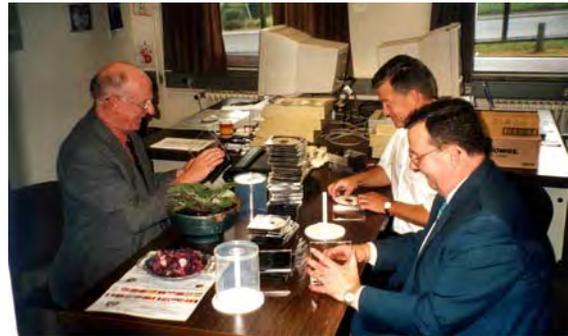


In addition to the registration work for the participants, another team takes care of the exhibitors. We are a little the victim of our success. We get too many!!! We need to rearrange the exhibition area at the Congress Centre to ensure we can accommodate them all. We also need to co-ordinate, one

more time, the transport arrangements of exhibition materiel with the Depot. By then, it is time to put the official program together and to get it printed. A special committee of the AC/135 takes care of the programme, the speakers and all arrangements for the composition of the content of the three days of the Symposium. It is decided, after consultation with John Larsen and François Petit of AA, to produce the booklet in NAMSA. A major undertaking for the reproduction staff during the leave period! I do not want to dwell on this but we received so many changes that Denis Lampron goes “nuts” and drives many people around him to do just the same. Ask Jean-Marie Boeker and Jean-Jacques Feller of the reproduction office...!



In parallel we prepare all the technical details. Sigrid Pierson works with Joao Ribeiro (AO) to get us the best equipment we can get. Lap-top computers and back-ups are required to ensure that all speakers can perform their speech without any problems. André Felten and Denis Lampron spend hours contacting each speaker to ensure we receive their presentation. André tests them all and takes out any features that may cause the system to block (some briefings look like cartoon video's....).



After this is all done, André is ready to start the production of a CD containing all the presentations. We do not want to produce a hard copy manual. We are now in August 2001 and shall demonstrate that we are up to it.



Torsten Schueler and his team (Gérard Simon, Patrick Perl, Annabelle Madron Philip Meldon and Jeannine Sprumont) can start assembling the registration package (500 copies). The package contains a nice carrying bag, a pen-set, the programme, a note-block, the CD-ROM, etc.

Torsten and the repro boys are now producing ID badges for the attendees. Different badges depending if the attendee is a speaker, a “normal”(?) attendee, an exhibitor or an “official”.

Final plans are put into place for the Internet corner. That proved to be quite a success. Attendees lined up at 0830 and kept going until 1800, every day.

We are in the second week of September; one week before the start. We are ready to move all our materiel

to the Congress Centre. We are making our very final preparations when the unexpected happened! The shocking terrorist attack in the United States. That is it; we are all certain the Symposium will be cancelled. Security is on our minds. However, a contact with the US delegation of the AC/135 confirms the firm intention of our US colleagues to proceed with the Symposium.

Additional measures of security are taken. Co-ordination takes place between the NAMSA Management Team, the Chairman of AC/135, NATO HQ and the Luxembourg Government. The message is: "We will support you"! This translates into our message, Denis and I, to the LZ team: "OK, Let's make it happen!"

Friday, 14 September, is a big day! All the equipment is packed and moved by the Depot and LZ personnel to the Congress Centre. Unloading is a piece of cake and before we know, we have everything accounted for.



The Team has unpacked, installed and tested everything. The war-room is the first target. This room will prove its value. We meet there every morning at 07.30 to ensure that every one knows exactly what has to be done during the day. To ensure the energy level is sufficient for the day, coffee and croissants are served. What a way to start the day!

Saturday, 15 September, This is it ! People start arriving. In the morning, Henning Rose, Pierre Thillen, Patrice Verlaine and Alain Valli, the transport co-ordinators, are in place. We can receive the first visitors. A welcome desk is set up at the airport and a shuttle bus moves the participants to the hotels.

Saturday morning, we continue to install the help-desk, the registration desk, the Internet corner and ensure the exhibit area is ready. By Saturday afternoon everything is working and ready to go.



Sunday, 16 September, 11.00 Hours. A visit to the airport shows Alain Valli in the reception hall, ready to take on AC/135 symposium visitors. "Sir, can you tell me where the toilets are?" Alain does not change face and says: "Straight ahead, first left, then right ". "Sir, excuse me, where can I change money? ". "Not today, lady". As it turns out, Alain is not very busy at that moment with attendees for the AC/135 Symposium, but he IS doing a GREAT job as information stand for air travellers from all over the world.....



Monday morning, 17 September, we attack! The first attendees arrive for registration. First hurdle, the security check. Personnel from a security agency, SECURICOR, check all the bags. Next step, "My name is.....". Yes we have his name! One more control, did he pay? Does his spouse want to participate in the social program? "Ah, you only have Canadian Dollars, No problem Sir, we take them! "Yes you can pay with VISA, no problem. No, we cannot accept Rubbles but US Dollars are OK!



The People at the Registration desk, are doing wonders. Liette Bertemes of FF assists in collecting payment by credit card. Her participation proved to be more than valuable.....it is worth its money in the true sense of the word !

Disaster! While testing my presentation, the computer crashes! I try everything, nothing works. Both laptops are not working. Disaster! I am ready to go and buy two new laptops

when our astute technician, André decides to try one last thing.... He plugs the laptop. Miracle! The computer works! What can I say? When you operate a computer, it works better if it is plugged in!



Monday evening, some 450 people are coming for a drink ! It is time for the Welcome Cocktail. The transport coordinators dispatch the busses from the hotels to the Congress Centre. The first attendees arrive just on time. We now have a little problem. Many do not wear their official ID badge. Is this NORMAL? These people did not yet register. Did we make a mistake in our strategy??? Quick fix.....LZ staff control the entry....No badge ???, your name please.....OK you can go in and have a nice evening.....



It is 20.00 hours. The busses are there, but nobody wants to leave.....!! Ladies and Gentlemen, my father used to have a saying.....: "When nobody wants to go home, the party is a success, but the best moment to break

is when it is time to break.....”The busses are waiting. The first day is over! The NAMSA Team can breathe a bit easier. Everything went better than anticipated. Let’s build on this! Breakfast at 07:30 tomorrow morning!

18 September. The symposium starts.



Formal opening. Coffee break and visits of the exhibitor stands. Now we are truly in business.

Everything runs as foreseen. Even Andre Felten is relaxed (his pulse runs at 90 in lieu of 120). No technical problems thusfar.



19 September evening. The transport co-ordinators dispatch the busses from the hotels to the CASINO2000 in Mondorf-les-Bains.

Everybody spends a great evening. Top quality food; very effective service (..a military operation). The Luxembourg Army Band performs in style. Top class!



Time for speeches (Oh NO.....!!!) . John Clark, the Chairman of the AC/135 is perfect. Timing shows, he uses 7 minutes a speed record!

Then the exception to the agreed rule, Colonel Kaminski from the Ukraine wants to say a few words... “In recognition of his devoted work for the Ukraine in introducing the NATO Codification System, I hereby promote Mr Lampron to honorary Colonel of the Ukrainian Codification Army.....!!!”



23.30 Hours.....Busses are ready. A first group of participants go back to their hotels. Some stay behind to use the Casino facilities. 01:00 Hours, That is it; everyone must go. Our transport dispatchers, Pierre and Patrice break another record.....nobody is left behind ! What a fantastic evening! Almost 500 people for dinner and everything went as planned! Boss, are you sure you want us for breakfast at 07:30 Hrs tomorrow???



20 September. Final day of the Symposium. Formal closure. A last farewell drink, and time to collect the appreciation sheets. Again, it is difficult to make them return. It is really too bad we had to cancel the Farewell Cocktail at Chateau Vianden. However, it would not have been appropriate given the circumstances and the security risks.

While the participants of the Symposium were working hard, the NAMSA Team had organized a very nice program for their spouses. There were some 70 of them accompanying their husband or wife. A guided tour to la Petite Suisse Luxembourgeoise and Echternach, another one at the Moselle river and a walking tour in Luxembourg Ville. This provided a very nice image of Luxembourg to the visitors from around the world. Theresa Rose and Diane Lampron agreed to accompany the spouses to ensure everything went well. While they tried to negotiate a higher salary, I am told that Denis and Henning were successful in getting their valued help for only promises... to take them shopping later.... That may en up costing you a lot more than you bargained for my dear colleagues.

21 September. Attendees start shuttling from the hotels back to the airport. AC/135 Main Group holds a wrap-up meeting. It was a success thanks to all the NAMSA staff.

Certificates are handed out and the well deserved applause by the members of the AC/135 Main Group Committee is appreciated. By Friday 12.00, we finish the dismantling work. It is over! We all go for a drink and some food at Denis Lampron's place.



Many thanks to those of you, who made this possible. It was YOUR Symposium in support of making NAMSA the Logistics Agency of first choice!.

Nico Oorebeek
9 October 2001