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14 September 2017

**DOCUMENT**  
C-M(2017)0045-AS1

**IBAN PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE  
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR NATO EXERCISES**

**ACTION SHEET**

On 13 September 2017, under the silence procedure, the Council noted the IBAN report IBA-AR(2015)40 attached to C-M(2017)0045 and agreed the recommendations contained in the annexed RPPB report, including tasking the Council Operations and Exercise Committee (COEC) to monitor and report progress to Council on the development of the NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan and, in line with the agreed policy in PO(2015)0052, agreeing to the public disclosure of IBA-AR(2015)40.

(Signed) Rose E. Gottemoeller  
Deputy Secretary General

NOTE: This Action Sheet is part of, and shall be attached to C-M(2017)0045



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6 September 2017

**DOCUMENT**  
C-M(2017)0045  
**Silence Procedure ends:**  
**13 Sep 2017 17:30**

**IBAN PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE  
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR NATO EXERCISES**

**Note by the Deputy Secretary General**

1. I attach the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) performance audit report on the need to improve the effectiveness of the lessons learned process for NATO exercises. The IBAN report addresses to what extent NATO's military commands implement the NATO lessons learned process for military exercises and to what extent lessons are shared among NATO commands.
2. The IBAN report has been reviewed by the Resource Policy and Planning Board (RPPB) which has provided its own report with conclusions and recommendations to Council (see Annexes).
3. I consider that no further discussion regarding this report is required. Consequently, **unless I hear to the contrary by 17:30 hrs on Wednesday, 13 September 2017**, I shall assume that the Council has noted the enclosed IBAN report IBA-AR(2015)40 and agreed the recommendations contained in the annexed RPPB report, including tasking the Council Operations and Exercise Committee (COEC) to monitor and report progress to Council on the development of the NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan and, in line with the agreed policy in PO(2015)0052, agreeing to the public disclosure of IBA-AR(2015)40.

(Signed) Rose E. Gottemoeller

Annex 1: AC/335-N(2017)0052-REV1  
Enclosure 1: Summary Note + IBA-AR(2015)40

1 Annex  
1 Enclosure

Original: English

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**IBAN SPECIAL REPORT TO COUNCIL ON THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE  
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR NATO EXERCISES**

**Report by the Resource Policy and Planning Board (RPPB)**

References:

- (a) IBA-A(2016)40 & IBA-AR(2015)40
- (b) DGIMS-BUS-0146-2017

**Introduction**

1. The present report by the Resource Policy and Planning Board (RPPB) contains the RPPB's assessment and recommendations concerning the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) Special Report to Council on the need to improve the effectiveness of the lessons learned process for NATO exercises (reference (a)). The report takes into account the RPPB requested military input provided in a letter signed by the Director General of the International Military Staff (reference (b)).

**Aim**

2. The aim of this report is to provide the Board's position on the IBAN observations and make recommendations to Council.

**Background**

3. All NATO training and exercise activities are required to capture and incorporate lessons identified so that they become lessons learned. According to NATO guidance, lessons identified are problems that have been observed, documented, analysed to identify causes and recommended remedial actions, and recognised by a given authority within NATO, such as a commander or other senior leader. The lesson identified becomes a lesson learned once it has been addressed and validated by the overseeing authority. NATO's lessons learned process is described in the NATO Lessons Learned Policy, which was approved in May 2011<sup>1</sup>. The NATO Lessons Learned Portal has been operational since 2014.

**IBAN report summary**

4. The IBAN report addresses the following questions:

- 4.1. To what extent do NATO's military commands implement the NATO lessons learned process for military exercises?
- 4.2. To what extent are lessons shared among NATO commands?

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<sup>1</sup> PO(2011)0293-AS 1

5. The IBAN draws two main conclusions:

Majority of lessons identified are not sufficiently learned

5.1. NATO commands are identifying lessons from exercises, but because of shortfalls in reporting and incomplete implementation of the remedial action process, few of those lessons are sufficiently learned. Of the 142 lessons identified from 5 recent major exercises, only 3 lessons have been recognised as being learned.

5.2. The IBAN found that reporting and implementation of the remedial action process was affected by the lack of a single party responsible at the appropriate command level for monitoring the implementation of the lessons learned process for each exercise, and unclear guidance. Further, reporting requirements were not actively enforced and senior leadership had little visibility on the performance of the lessons learned process. Further still, some NATO commands were assessing performance through activities outside of the lessons learned process, creating the risk that some lessons may not be shared and applied.

Lessons are disseminated but information sharing is too limited

5.3. NATO commands are uploading lessons onto the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and sharing information through various formats, such as an annual lessons learned conference. However, the commands are limiting the information they make available to other commands. Lessons considered internal to a command or not applicable to others are not shared, and lessons from smaller, command-specific exercises are also often not shared. The IBAN found that lessons learned guidance does not provide detailed instructions on information sharing. The IBAN also found that the difficulties of transferring information from one lessons learned database to another, and the large number of available databases hosted both internally and externally to NATO, are an impediment to information sharing. This increases the risk of less effective efforts in the area. Lastly, the accuracy and validity of the data within the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, NATO's primary lessons learned information sharing platform, are questionable because of a lack of data quality controls and guidance. Without more detailed guidance and stricter controls from engaged senior leadership, NATO commands may not fully implement the NATO lessons learned process for a given exercise. As a result, NATO's ability to incorporate and retain information that could improve its ability to meet its mission in an effective and efficient manner, and adapt to a continuously changing security environment could be significantly compromised.

6. The IBAN has made a number of detailed recommendations. These recommendations fall under the following two overall recommendations:

6.1. Recommendation 1: To ensure better implementation of the lesson learned process when conducting exercises, the IBAN recommends that the Strategic Commands increase timeliness, accountability and visibility of the process.

6.2. Recommendation 2: To better institutionalise lessons from exercises and make this knowledge readily available NATO-wide, the IBAN recommends that sharing of this information be enhanced.

**RPPB Conclusions**

7. The Board welcomes this IBAN Special Report to Council on the need to improve the effectiveness of the lessons learned process for NATO exercises; acknowledging the complexity of the issue and that the subject is outside of the RPPB's normal remit. The issue raised in the report is important to the Alliance as part of preparing its commands and forces for operations in peace, crisis and conflict, thus also enhancing its overall resilience against the full spectrum of threats in a constantly evolving security environment. The IBAN finding that the NATO lessons learned process for exercises is not efficiently or effectively contributing to enhancing the performance of NATO activities is of considerable concern.

8. The Board notes with concern that NATO commands have not sufficiently implemented the NATO lessons learned process for military exercises and information sharing on lessons between the commands remains limited. The NATO lessons learned process during exercises is not consistently implemented in accordance with guidance. NATO commands are identifying and learning some lessons from exercises and have made some changes to policies, standards, plans and the planning of future exercises as a result of those lessons. However, the majority of lessons identified are not formally learned or fully addressed by the NATO lessons learned process. As a result, the NATO lessons learned process for exercises is not efficiently or effectively contributing to enhancing the performance of NATO activities.

9. The Board further notes the IBAN's assessment that much of the challenge in completing the lessons learned process involves a lack of well-defined roles and responsibilities, clear guidance and senior leadership engagement at all levels within NATO. As a result, NATO's ability to incorporate and retain information that could improve its ability to meet its missions and adapt to a continuously changing security environment could be significantly compromised.

10. In light of the above outlined concerns, the Board is pleased to note (reference (b)) that the Strategic Commands have now agreed to proactively engage in responding to the growing concern regarding the effectiveness of the NATO Lessons Learned Policy implementation at all levels. The Board notes that the Strategic Commands have started developing a NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan<sup>2</sup> aimed at improving and sustaining an effective NATO Lessons Learned capability by taking actions along four lines of effort: Lessons Learned governance, rebalancing JALLC's role, NATO Lessons Learned Portal as the single tool, and Lessons Learned cultural adaptations. These elements are detailed under 14 Tasks/Functions and 56 Activities/Actions that are expected to be addressed in short term (2017), medium term (2018) and long term (2019). For each action a lead implementation body has been identified. To this extent, all NATO bodies, Centres of Excellence, Allies and Partners will be engaged as a way of increasing the effectiveness of lessons sharing. In this respect, the oversight of the implementation will be assured by Bi-SC Lessons Learned Steering Group, with an active support from the JALLC. In this regard, the Board recommends that appropriate milestones are put in place.

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<sup>2</sup> SH/PLANS/J7/PLL/LEL/FJPA/17-316640  
7800TSC FET 0100/TT-170211/Ser:NU0430

11. Taking all into consideration, the Board concludes that the NMAs are actively engaged in responding to the growing concern regarding the effectiveness of the NATO Lessons Learned Process and that appropriate action appear to be underway to mitigate the identified shortcomings of the NATO Lessons Learned Process for NATO exercises. In this regard, the Board recommends that the Council Operations and Exercise Committee (COEC) be tasked to monitor and report progress to Council on the Action Plan's development.

12. With regard to public disclosure, the RPPB concludes that the IBAN Performance Audit Report to Council and its own report do not contain information which, according to the NATO Policy on Public Disclosure of NATO Information<sup>3</sup>, should be withheld from public disclosure, and therefore, in line with the agreed policy in PO(2015)0052, recommends that the Council agree to the public disclosure of the subject IBAN report.

**RPPB recommendations**

13. The Resource Policy and Planning Board (RPPB) recommends that Council:
- (a) note the present report along with IBA-AR(2015)40;
  - (b) endorse the conclusions outlined in paragraphs 7 through 12;
  - (c) task the Council Operations and Exercise Committee (COEC) to monitor and report progress to Council on the development of the NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan;
  - (d) in line with the agreed policy in PO(2015)0052, agree to the public disclosure of IBA-AR(2015)40.

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<sup>3</sup> C-M(2008)0116; AC/324-D(2014)0010-REV1

## **Summary note to Council on the need to improve the effectiveness of the lessons learned process for NATO exercises**

### **Context**

In 2012, NATO began implementing reforms, referred to as the Connected Forces Initiative, to achieve a coherent set of deployable, interoperable and sustainable forces that could better address emerging security challenges. Allied leaders at the 2014 Wales Summit also agreed to implement the NATO readiness action plan, which outlines security measures to improve the capabilities and responsiveness of the NATO Response Force. NATO's military exercises are the means to assess and validate many of these reforms and security measures, as well as to certify its force readiness. All NATO training and exercise activities are required to capture and incorporate lessons identified so that they become lessons learned. According to NATO guidance, lessons identified are problems that have been observed, documented, analysed to identify causes and recommended remedial actions, and recognised by a given authority within NATO, such as a commander or other senior leader. The lesson identified becomes a lesson learned once it has been addressed and validated by the overseeing authority. NATO's lessons learned process is described in the NATO Lessons Learned Policy, which was approved in May 2011. The NATO Lessons Learned Portal has been operational since 2014, being the successor portal of the NATO Lessons Learned Database.

### **Audit objectives**

The IBAN addressed in this report the following two objectives:

1. To what extent do NATO's military commands implement the NATO lessons learned process for military exercises?
2. To what extent are lessons shared among NATO commands?

To answer these objectives, the IBAN reviewed NATO policies, directives and other forms of lessons learned guidance and analysed electronic data stored in digital lessons learned management systems. The IBAN also interviewed officials from the NATO Command Structure and other NATO bodies.

### **Majority of lessons identified are not sufficiently learned**

NATO commands are identifying lessons from exercises, but because of shortfalls in reporting and incomplete implementation of the remedial action process, few of those lessons are sufficiently learned. Of the 142 lessons identified from 5 recent major exercises, only 3 lessons have been recognized as being learned within the NATO lessons learned process. The IBAN found that reporting and implementation of the remedial action process was affected by the lack of a single party responsible at the appropriate command level for monitoring the implementation of the lessons learned process for each exercise and unclear guidance. Further, IBAN found that NATO command leadership was not actively enforcing reporting requirements and had little visibility on the performance of the lessons learned process, resulting in significant

delays. The IBAN also found that some NATO commands were assessing performance through activities outside of the lessons learned process, creating the risk that some lessons may not be learned or shared.

### **Lessons are disseminated but information sharing is too limited**

NATO commands are uploading lessons onto the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and sharing information through various formats, such as an annual lessons learned conference. However, the commands are limiting the information they make available to other commands. Lessons considered internal to a command or not applicable to others are not shared, and lessons from smaller, command-specific exercises are also often not shared. The IBAN found that lessons learned guidance does not provide detailed instructions on information sharing. The IBAN also found that the difficulties of transferring information from one lessons learned database to another, and the large number of available databases hosted both internally and externally to NATO, are creating an impediment to information sharing. This increases the risk of less cost effective efforts in the area. Lastly, the accuracy and validity of the data within the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, NATO's primary lessons learned information sharing platform, are questionable because of a lack of data quality controls and guidance.

Without more detailed guidance and stricter controls from engaged senior leadership, NATO commands may not fully implement the NATO lessons learned process for a given exercise. As a result, NATO's ability to incorporate and retain information that could improve its ability to meet its mission in an effective and efficient manner, and adapt to a continuously changing security environment could be significantly compromised.

### **Recommendations**

The IBAN has made a number of detailed recommendations in this report. These recommendations fall under the following two overall recommendations:

1. To ensure better implementation of the lesson learned process when conducting exercises, the IBAN recommends that strategic commands increase timeliness, accountability and visibility of the process.
2. To better institutionalise lessons from exercises and make this knowledge readily available NATO-wide, the IBAN recommends that sharing of this information be enhanced.

In their formal comments SHAPE and HQ SACT agree overall with our recommendations and recognize our findings and conclusions. They also provided factual comments which have been taken into account in the final report.



01 March 2016

## **International Board of Auditors for NATO**

**Special report to Council on the need to improve the effectiveness of the lessons learned process for NATO exercises**

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## **1. Background**

### **1.1 Context**

1.1.1 In 2012, NATO began implementing reforms, referred to as the Connected Forces Initiative, to achieve a coherent set of deployable, interoperable and sustainable forces that could better address emerging security challenges. Allied leaders at the 2014 Wales Summit also agreed to implement the NATO readiness action plan, which outlines security measures to improve the capabilities and responsiveness of the NATO Response Force.<sup>1</sup> NATO's military exercises are the means to assess and validate many of these reforms and security measures, as well as to certify its force readiness. Accordingly, NATO exercises are becoming more frequent and more complex. More live exercises are being planned as NATO forces shift from preparing for counterinsurgency operations to major campaigns against potential aggressor state actors.

1.1.2 According to the NATO Education, Training, Exercise, and Evaluation Policy from 2014, all NATO training and exercise activities are required to capture and incorporate lessons identified so that they become lessons learned. According to NATO guidance, lessons identified are problems, or positive observations, that have been observed, documented, analysed to identify causes and recommended remedial actions, and recognised by a given authority within NATO, such as a commander or other senior leader. The lesson identified becomes a lesson learned once it has been addressed and validated by the overseeing authority.

1.1.3 According to the 2011 NATO Lessons Learned Policy (see paragraph 1.3.1), the lessons learned process is an essential component of an organisational culture and is an operational doctrine committed to continuous improvement and development. Also, it states that lessons from NATO exercises, among other activities, that have been systematically processed and addressed will lead to increased effectiveness, efficiency and sharing of best practices. Moreover, NATO recognises, as stated in the policy, that lessons learned can contribute to successful reform and transformation of the Alliance.

### **1.2 Exercise Programme overview**

1.2.1 This International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) audit focuses on lessons learned in the NATO Military Training and Exercise Programme. In 2013, the responsibility for managing the Exercise Programme and its budget transferred from Allied Command Operations (ACO) to Allied Command Transformation (ACT). HQ SACT produces an annually updated five-year exercise plan and schedule based on training requirements and guidance from SACEUR. The latest five-year exercise plan (2015-2019) calls for 95 NATO-organised exercises in that period.

1.2.2 Table 1 shows that the common funded ACT exercise budget increased from EUR 10.1 million in 2013 to EUR 17.2 million in October 2015. The Budget Committee

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<sup>1</sup> NATO Response Force is NATO's high readiness, multinational force comprising land, air, maritime, and special operations forces components that the Alliance can deploy quickly. NATO Response Force is a subset of the NATO Force Structure and is NATO's primary capability in response to emerging crises across the full range of military options.

approved in October 2015 the transfer of EUR 1.5 million from the Nations to ACT in support of exercise Trident Juncture 2015. Furthermore, in 2015 ACT received EUR 6.7 million from the 2013 ACO reorganisation budget to support exercise activities related to NATO's readiness action plan. This brought the total budget available for exercises to EUR 23.9 million. However, these figures do not include NATO common-funded activities that may be used to support an exercise but that are not considered part of the exercise programme.

**Table 1: Allied Command Transformation exercise budget (in EUR millions)**

	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Final budget authorization (excluding carry forwards)</b>	10.1	10.2	17.2	15.2
<b>Additional credits transferred from Allied Command Operations and Nations</b>			6.7	-
<b>Total budget available</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: NATO official documents.

Note: Complete numbers from 2016 not currently available.

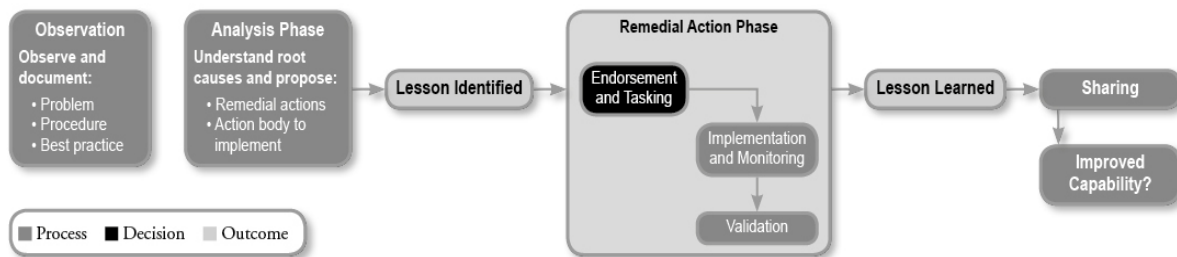
1.2.3 Also, the total costs associated with NATO exercises are more than the NATO common-funded budget, because it does not include the costs incurred by national forces participating in exercises. Lessons from exercises included in the NATO Military Training and Exercise Programme could be beneficial to individual member nations.

## 1.3 Lessons learned process overview

1.3.1 NATO's lessons learned process is described in the NATO Lessons Learned Policy, which was approved in May 2011. The policy states that each command and body within NATO will execute the NATO lessons learned process in order to enhance best practices. Further, the policy calls for effective implementation of the lessons learned process by senior leadership at all levels within NATO.

1.3.2 Complementing this policy is the bi-strategic command lessons learned directive 080-006 (July 2013). It provides direction and guidance to NATO commanders on implementing and executing the NATO lessons learned process, including how recommended improvements should be addressed. This directive applies to all NATO headquarters, centres and agencies participating in or supporting NATO's operations, exercises, training events etc. as well as normal daily activities for NATO Command Structure headquarters. The directive emphasizes that sharing of lessons should start as early as possible and be repetitive. Figure 1 summarises NATO's general lessons learned process. (More details on the process are in Appendix 3.)

Figure 1: NATO lessons learned process



Source: IBAN analysis of NATO lessons learned documents.

1.3.3 Under the lessons learned directive, HQ SACT is considered the lead for the NATO lessons learned process. HQ SACT is also responsible for the outputs of the lessons learned process for collective training and exercises. Exercises are collective activities where headquarters and/or formations are trained to fulfil their missions, and are typically assessed for readiness. Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) is responsible for lessons learned from operations. The NATO Lessons Learned Portal is NATO's primary lessons information sharing platform and is intended to contain lessons from all NATO activities including exercises. The NATO Lessons Learned Portal has been operational since 2014, being the successor portal of the NATO Lessons Learned Database. According to SHAPE the use of the Portal is still in early stages and requires more time to be fully institutionalized.

## Lessons learned resources

1.3.4 NATO commands have dedicated lessons learned officers and civilian personnel to support the lessons learned process. Table 2 shows that the total number of NATO staff assigned to lessons learned, including lessons learned from exercises, have increased since 2010 with the exception of HQ SACT. Some of the commands were not able to provide information before 2013 because of recent reforms to the NATO Command Structure. However, the data provided indicate that the total number of lessons learned staff were lower before 2013. The table also shows that the number of positions filled has been lower than the number of positions authorised since at least 2013.

**Table 2: Lessons Learned Peacetime Establishment positions  
(authorised/filled)**

NATO Command	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
HQ Supreme Allied Command Transformation (HQ SACT)**	6/5	6/5	6/5	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE)	*/*	*/*	*/*	6/4	6/4	6/5	6/5
Joint Force Command Brunssum	3/3	3/2	3/2	5/2	5/4	5/5	5/5
Joint Force Command Naples	*/1	*/1	*/2	5/4	5/5	5/4	5/4
Allied Land Command	0/0	0/0	0/0	3/1	3/3	3/3	3/3
Allied Air Command	*/*	*/*	*/1	7/4	7/7	7/4	7/4
Allied Maritime Command	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2
Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre and Joint Warfare Centre	9/9	9/9	9/9	9/9	9/9	9/9	9/9
<b>Total</b>	<b>20/20</b>	<b>20/19</b>	<b>20/21</b>	<b>40/29</b>	<b>40/37</b>	<b>40/35</b>	<b>40/35</b>

Source: IBAN analysis of NATO command data.

\* Information was not available.

\*\* Numbers from HQ SACT were not available. Information from ACT lessons learned staff is an estimate.

## Lessons learned as applied to exercises

1.3.5 The lessons learned process for NATO exercises is described in the bi-strategic collective training and exercise directive 075-003 (October 2013), which is the primary guidance for exercise planning and execution for the NATO commands. It refers to the lessons learned directive and provides more detailed guidance on the lessons learned reporting deliverables for NATO exercises. In this way, the directive establishes an exercise-specific lessons learned process within the full set of reporting deliverables.

1.3.6 This collective training and exercise directive describes planning milestones and reporting deliverables, along with the roles and responsibilities of exercise stakeholders, including those involved in the lessons learned process. Table 3 describes the major exercise stakeholders and their responsibilities.

**Table 3: Exercise stakeholders**

Stakeholders	Exercise Responsibilities
Officer Scheduling the Exercise (OSE)	The OSE is the commander who establishes the requirement for the exercise, schedules it in the Military Training and Exercise Programme, and directs the exercise planning and execution.
Officer Conducting the Exercise (OCE)	The OCE, designated by the OSE, is responsible for the planning and execution of the exercise, and reports exercise results to the OSE. The OSE may also elect to serve as the OCE.
Officer Directing the Exercise (ODE)	If required, an ODE can be designated by the OSE. The ODE supports the OCE for the detailed planning and overall execution of the exercise.
Other stakeholders	<p><u>Examples of other stakeholders in an exercise:</u></p> <p><i>Training audience:</i> Participants that execute the missions within the exercise.</p> <p><i>Action bodies:</i> Any unit or organisation tasked with the remediation of a lesson identified.</p> <p><i>Senior mentors:</i> Former commanders who provide mentorship to commanders and provide informal reports.</p>

Source: IBAN analysis of NATO exercise documents.

1.3.7 The exercises stakeholders above are expected to produce the following deliverables associated with the lessons learned process:

1. Final Exercise Report (FER): Produced by the OCE, the FER is the authoritative report of an exercise to the OSE. It includes observations and lessons identified.
2. Lessons Identified List (LIL): Produced by the OCE with support and input from the other exercise stakeholders, the LIL provides the key observations and lessons identified from the exercise along with the proposed action body for remedial action and recommended actions.
3. Lessons Identified Action Plan (LIAP): Once the OSE endorses the OCE's LIL, it becomes known as the LIAP. It details the lessons identified during the exercise, remedial actions, approved recommendations, designated action body and tasking to the action bodies. Each tasking should include guidance for the implementation, monitoring and validation of each approved remedial action and a request that the action body submit a detailed action plan for the implementation process.
4. Remedial Action Report (RAR): Produced by the OCE who is responsible for issuing this report to the OSE, the RAR updates the status of actions taken and progress made regarding the implementation of remedial actions taken since the submission of the FER.

## **1.4 Audit objectives**

1.4.1 In accordance with Articles 2 and 4 of its charter, the IBAN submits this special report to Council to assess the lessons learned process for NATO exercises. The IBAN did this by addressing the following two audit objectives:

1. To what extent do NATO's military commands implement the NATO lessons learned process for military exercises?
2. To what extent are lessons shared among NATO commands?

## **1.5 Scope and methodology**

1.5.1 The IBAN focused on the lessons learned in the NATO Military Training and Exercise Programme. The scope concentrated on the implementation of lessons learned processes for military exercises that NATO considered strategically important to the Alliance.

1.5.2 To meet the audit objectives, the IBAN used several methods to examine the following five subjects:

1. NATO guidance on exercises and lessons learned,
2. studies on NATO's lessons learned process,
3. command-level lessons learned programmes,
4. select NATO exercises, and
5. NATO lessons learned information systems.

1.5.3 A 2009 external review contracted by HQ SACT of the NATO education, training, exercise and evaluation efforts found that NATO was not yet a 'learning' or 'knowledge-based' organisation. The external review considered lessons learned to be a critical requirement for achieving substantive improvements. The external review also concluded that lessons learned by commanders from exercises did not become part of a body of knowledge available to NATO.

1.5.4 In March 2015, the NATO Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC) identified several issues and risks associated with NATO's exercise reporting process, including a lack of clarity in the lessons learned reporting time frames. The JALLC also recommended a number of revisions to bi-strategic directive 075-003 on collective training and exercises. There have been opposing views among the NATO exercise stakeholders as to how to adjust the exercise reporting process. The directive is scheduled for revision. The work is expected to be finalised in August 2016.

1.5.5 The IBAN reviewed the NATO Lessons Learned Policy, lessons learned and exercise planning guidance issued by the strategic commands, procedures and instructions developed by the individual commands within the NATO Command Structure, and the JALLC's *NATO Lessons Learned Handbook* to identify criteria in which to assess the performance of the NATO commands in implementing the NATO lessons learned process. The collective training and exercise directive (075-003) was also used in the IBAN's assessment of the lessons learned reporting for exercises (The criteria are in appendix 2).

1.5.6 The IBAN also reviewed studies on the NATO lessons learned process to identify areas of potential overlap and knowledge gaps, and obtain preliminary data. These studies included the JALLC's 'Analysis of NATO's Exercise Reporting Process' (March 2015) and 'The NATO EXTRA Portal: Development and Testing of the NATO EXTRA Portal' (January 2015).

1.5.7 To assess individual command lessons learned programmes, the IBAN conducted site visits to several NATO commands and interviewed officials involved in lessons learned and exercise planning activities. We also reviewed command-issued guidance, training requirements for lessons learned staff, management tools involved in the lessons learned process and exercise documentation. Specifically, the IBAN visited HQ SACT, SHAPE, the JALLC, and the HQs for each of the joint force commands and single service commands. We also interviewed the Joint Warfare Centre to discuss its role in the NATO lessons learned process.

1.5.8 To assess the implementation of the lessons learned process during NATO exercises, we performed an in-depth study of the reporting deliverables from four 2014 Trident-level exercises (Joust, Jaguar, Lance, and Juncture) and the 2013 Steadfast Jazz exercise. These exercises were selected for review because they represented strategically important exercises that NATO used to assess and determine the capability of its forces to execute missions, thus representing potential high risk for the Alliance, and had been completed before the beginning of this audit. Exercises that were not expected to be finished by August 2015 were excluded from the in-depth study, but the IBAN did review documentation to the extent possible from other 2015 exercises to obtain further



information on the NATO lessons learned process. The IBAN also sent a survey to HQ SACT, SHAPE and each of the joint force commands and the single service commands to collect data on their individual lessons learned programmes.

1.5.9 To assess the degree to which lessons were shared from exercises, the IBAN also reviewed the files stored in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and the NATO EXTRA Portal.

## **2. Majority of lessons identified from NATO exercises are not sufficiently learned**

### **2.1 NATO Commands are identifying lessons and taking some actions to implement changes**

2.1.1 NATO commands have demonstrated the ability to identify lessons from major exercises through the formal lessons learned process as defined in the lessons learned and collective training and exercise directives. Table 4 provides a few examples of the lessons identified that were captured during some of the major exercises in 2014 and 2015.

**Table 4: Examples of lessons identified from NATO exercises by command**

Command	Exercise	Lessons Identified
Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum	Trident Joust 2014	Civilian casualties: The command identified that the Joint Task Force command element did not include a civilian casualty tracking cell or a set of standard operating procedures (SOP) for civilian casualty mitigation.
Allied Joint Force Command Naples	Trident Juncture 2014	Cyber documentation: The command identified that its cyber SOP had not been updated for the exercise. Although the SOP was valid, certain tasks and processes remained undefined.
Allied Maritime Command	Trident Jewel 2015	Network analysis: The command identified that its headquarters did not have personnel trained in network analysis.

Source: IBAN analysis of NATO exercise documentation.

2.1.2 According to NATO command officials, lessons from exercises are used to inform the development or updating of policies, plans and standards, and the planning of future exercises. For example, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's 2015 annual guidance on NATO education, training, exercise and evaluation (SAGE) identified recent lessons that are expected to be incorporated into the 2016 exercise programme. One lesson to be incorporated is to plan the force generation for live exercises two or three years before the start of the exercise.

2.1.3 In addition, according to ACT officials, lessons identified in exercises are used to inform the planning efforts of HQ SACT's Force Development Board, which is an advisory body set up to advise the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation on capability development and delivery, among other responsibilities. In addition, officials from SHAPE stated that lessons from exercises are also used to inform the development and upkeep

of the command's force standards, which are sets of military capability and readiness standards used to assess the performance of NATO forces.

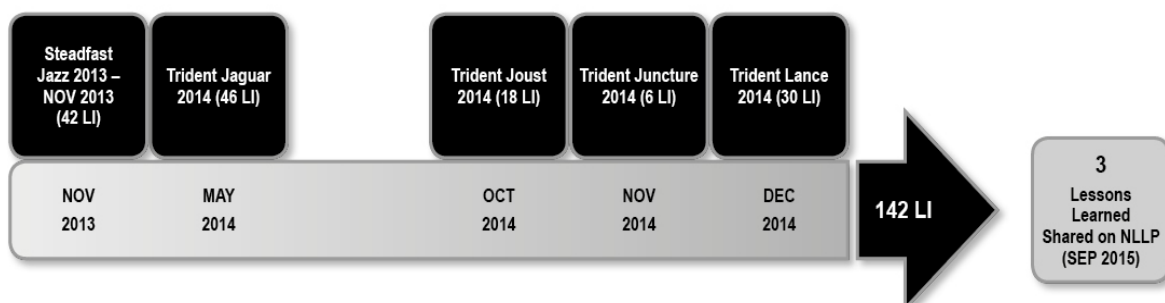
## 2.2 Majority of lessons identified are not sufficiently learned

2.2.1 However, the majority of the lessons identified and recorded in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal do not appear to have been formally recognised as lessons learned. According to the lessons learned directive, a lesson identified is not formally recognised as a lesson learned until it has been endorsed by the appropriate tasking authority, tasked to a designated action body and then implemented by that action body. If deemed necessary, validation may be required before the lesson is recognised as a formal lesson learned.

2.2.2 The IBAN found 769 individual files labelled as lessons identified, but only 91 files labelled as lessons learned in the main library of the NATO Lessons Learned Portal as of end of September 2015. Further, of these lessons learned files, 6 were uploaded in 2015 and none were from the major exercises held in 2014. The IBAN did confirm that there were 2 additional lessons learned from Trident Joust 2014 that had been uploaded to the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, but not within the main library. Neither was labelled as a lesson learned. Instead, they were referred to as lessons identified, along with 76 additional lessons identified, in the tracking area of the NATO Lessons Learned Portal (as of the end of September 2015).

2.2.3 The IBAN also reviewed the lessons identified in the reporting deliverables from major exercises in 2014 and 2013. We found that of the 142 lessons identified, only 3 lessons have been formally recognised as being learned in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal (see Figure 2), though a number of the lessons identified have been reported as addressed or closed in some of the reporting deliverables. Of the 3 lessons learned described in Figure 2, only 1 was labelled as a lesson learned in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the other 2 were labelled as lessons identified in the portal, but the IBAN confirmed that they were categorised as lessons learned in the lesson owner's internal database.

Figure 2: Lessons identified (LI) and lessons learned from exercises shared on NATO Lessons Learned portal (NLLP)



Source: IBAN analysis of NLLP data and exercise documentation.

\* Lessons Identified were derived from Lessons Identified Action Plans or Lessons Identified Lists.

Additional lessons identified/learned may be found in internal databases not shared with the NLLP, but were not included in this analysis.

2.2.4 The IBAN found a number of causes for this delay in formally recognising lessons learned. These are presented in section 2.3 below.

## 2.3 Shortfalls in exercise reporting and the remedial action process

2.3.1 The commands have not adhered to the lessons learned reporting time frames for Trident exercises in 2014. Specifically, the commands have for all the exercises reviewed by IBAN delivered late the lessons identified list, the lessons identified action plan and the remedial action report.

2.3.2 Table 5 summarises the lessons learned reporting deliverable time frames as set out in the collective training and exercise directive.

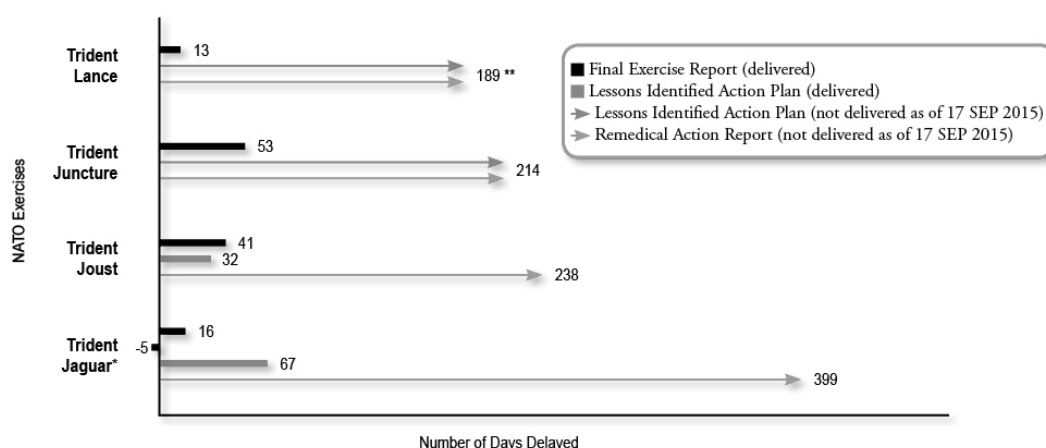
**Table 5: Lessons learned required reporting deliverable time frames**

Reporting Deliverable	Time Frame
Final exercise report	60 days after the end of exercise
Lessons identified list	Two weeks after the end of exercise
Lessons identified action plan	No specified time frame
Remedial action report	90 days after the end of exercise

Source: IBAN analysis of NATO exercise guidance.

2.3.3 The IBAN assessed the delivery dates of the lessons learned deliverables from four Trident exercises conducted in 2014 against the time frames described above. The analysis is summarized in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Length of delays of lessons learned reporting deliverables from 2014 NATO exercises



Source: IBAN analysis of NATO military command reports.

\* Trident Jaguar 2014 involved two Officers Conducting the Exercise (commands), both of whom were expected to provide separate final exercise reports and remedial action reports. Since there was only one Officer Scheduling the Exercise, only one lessons identified action plan was expected.

\*\* Since no Remedial Action Report from the Officers Conducting the Exercise has been released and only some exercises released Lessons Identified Action Plans, we used 17 September 2015 as the cut-off date to determine the length of delay. Also, since timeframe for the Lessons Identified Action Plan was not established in the collective training and exercise directive, we used the timeframe for the Remedial Action Report for our calculations.

2.3.4 As shown in Figure 3 the IBAN analysis found significant delays in the delivery of both the final exercise reports and the lessons identified action plans, though one final exercise report was delivered earlier than required by guidance. The length of delay for these delivered reports ranged from 13 to 67 days beyond the limit required in the guidance. The IBAN also found that some of the required reports had not been delivered

as of end of September 2015. Further, none of the required remedial action reports from the officers conducting the exercises had been delivered. As of end of September 2015, the delay in these undelivered reports ranged from 189 days to 399 days.

2.3.5 Delays in the release of the lessons identified action plan have led to delays in the implementation of remedial actions. For example, some commands have forwarded lessons identified directly to other commands, including strategic commands, but they have not received notice that the remedial actions have been implemented or that any actions are being planned to address the lesson. Because some of these commands lack the authority to direct other commands to act, their lessons identified remain open until acted upon by other action bodies.

2.3.6 Command officials have cited procedural challenges in addressing lessons from exercises. For example, some commands may require some form of validation to occur in another exercise before formally recognising a lesson from a prior exercise as being learned. NATO command officials explained that many of the lessons from one exercise may not be validated in the next exercise because of overlapping time frames between the exercise planning cycle and the lessons learned process. As a result, a command may have to wait a year or more before they can validate a lesson through an exercise. By that time, staff turnover or other factors may reduce the likelihood that command staff will formally recognise a lesson learned. According to the collective training and exercise directive, however, validation through another exercise is not necessary for the formal recognition of a lesson learned.

2.3.7 Also, the lessons learned process in the NATO commands are managed mostly through military personnel who are subject to rotation back to their home country, which affects the ability to institutionalize or retain corporate knowledge. For example, the IBAN was unable to collect information on a certain exercise because no one within the command had detailed knowledge of the exercise. The officer who could provide that information was no longer with NATO and no other officer was assigned to the exercise due to staff resources limitations.

2.3.8 Finally, the IBAN also found a number of complex and persistent problems that the NATO military commands often experience in exercises. For example, IBAN found commands citing in multiple exercise documents the need for more personnel to fill certain positions. Also, NATO command officials said that limited resources often impact the ability of a command to implement the lessons learned process. For instance, some commands may need to reassign lessons learned officers to help support exercise planning teams. Additionally, lessons learned personnel may have no prior training or experience in the lessons learned process, which would mean these officers may spend up to a third of their tour of duty learning to become proficient in their lessons learned duties.

## **2.4 Roles and responsibilities are not well defined**

### **No overall responsibility for the exercises lessons learned process**

2.4.1 In addition to the procedural challenges, the IBAN found ambiguities in the roles and responsibilities of exercise stakeholders involved in the lessons learned process that contributed to delays in both reporting deliverables and the implementation of remedial actions. Specifically, the IBAN found that no single party among the exercise stakeholders, either in guidance or in practice, had responsibility for the overall management of the implementation of the lessons learned process for a given exercise.

2.4.2 The lessons learned and collective training and exercise directives relegate responsibilities of implementing the lessons learned process to the individual commands. Specifically, those commands or units designated as 'tasking authorities' are required to direct action bodies to implement remedial actions, monitor the progress of those actions and report on the status of the lessons identified. However, there is no central authority that has been designated in guidance to ensure that the lessons identified from exercises are fully adjudicated through the NATO lessons learned process across all the commands participating in the exercise.

### **The roles and responsibilities of the strategic commands for implementing the lessons learned process during exercises are not well defined**

2.4.3 Although the collective training and exercise directive identifies and defines the roles and responsibilities of the strategic commands, it does not provide specific instructions on how the two commands should reconcile their different authorities when implementing the lessons identified action plan. According to the directive, once the lessons identified action plan has been endorsed by the officer scheduling the exercise, the action bodies and tasking authorities should begin implementing the remedial actions described in the plan. However, in practice, it's not clear what authority the lessons identified action plan has in compelling NATO commands to act, leading to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness.

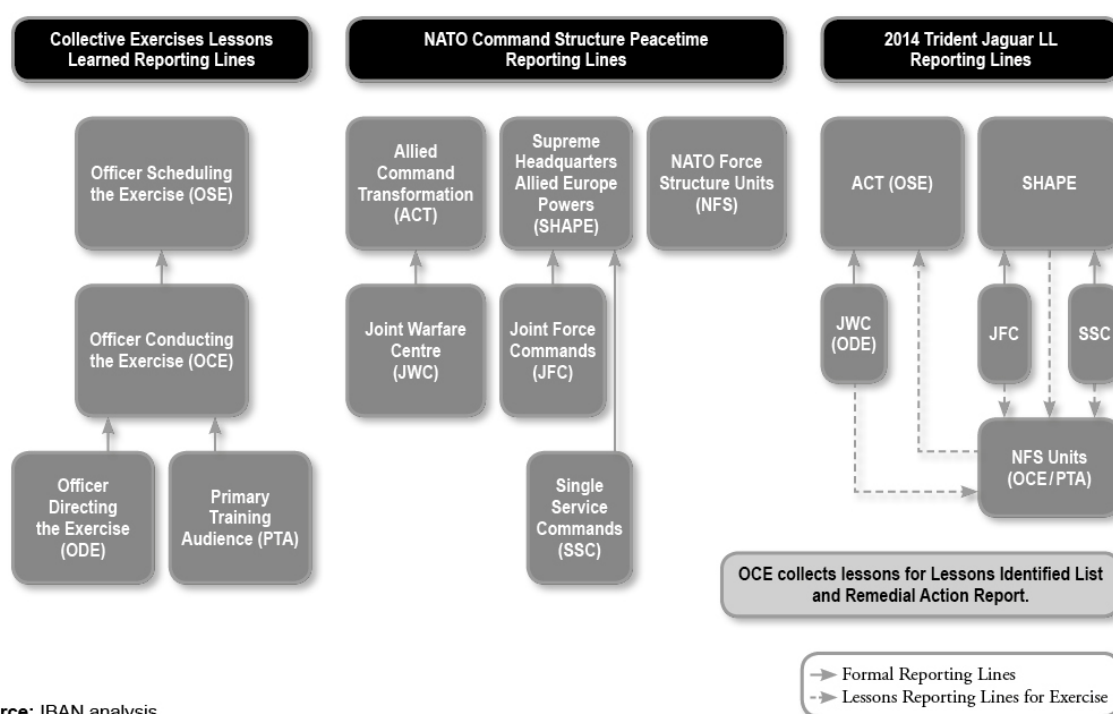
2.4.4 According to SHAPE and HQ SACT officials, the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, acting as the officer scheduling the exercise, may endorse a given lessons identified action plan, but this endorsement does not compel any ACO command to act, because they operate outside of his or her authority. Rather, HQ SACT would have to make a formal request outside of any process described in the collective training and exercise directive to SHAPE to address the lessons identified action plan and vice versa. This ambiguity on how to address the lessons identified action plan complicates and contributes to delays in implementing the lessons learned process for major exercises.

2.4.5 Under the collective training and exercise directive, there is a clear and linear reporting line between command levels that complements each stakeholder's reporting responsibilities. However, the peacetime reporting lines of NATO commands do not conform to this model. The reporting lines may align temporarily during the execution of an exercise, such as in the case of Trident Jaguar 2014, as shown in Figure 4. However, once the exercise has concluded, NATO commands will return to their peacetime

configurations. Figure 4 illustrates how the roles and responsibilities for the key exercise stakeholders in the collective training and exercise directive do not adequately address the cross-organisational reporting lines that occur during major exercises.

2.4.6 As a result, the officer conducting the exercise may not be able to obtain the necessary information to develop a remedial action report after an exercise concludes due to the reporting line differences among commands and between command levels.

Figure 4: Comparison of reporting lines for NATO commands in peace time and for lessons reporting in Trident Jaguar 2014



Source: IBAN analysis

## 2.5 Remedial action lacks clear guidance and tracking and monitoring is not sufficient

2.5.1 There is a lack of clear guidance regarding lessons learned and remedial action reporting that has affected the delivery and content of lessons learned reporting deliverables.

### Incomplete guidance on the development of the lessons identified action plan

2.5.2 The collective training and exercise directive requires the officer scheduling the exercise to release a lessons identified action plan, but the directive does not specify a time frame for delivery. However, because the lessons identified action plan is based on the lessons identified list, and the remedial action report, to some degree, is based on the lessons identified action plan, the IBAN determined that the lessons identified action plan should be released between those two delivery time frames.

2.5.3 Further, this directive provides incomplete guidance on the content of the lessons identified action plan. Specifically, the directive states that for each lesson identified, this plan should identify the originator, topic, discussion, approved recommendations, designated action body and tasking to the action bodies. However, the guidance does not specify the identification of the tasking authority who would direct the action body to implement the remedial action. As mentioned previously, the tasking authority is ultimately responsible for addressing the lesson.

### **Lack of clear and detailed guidance to ensure completion of remedial actions**

2.5.4 The collective training and exercise directive is unclear on the process for following up on remedial actions after the remedial action report is issued. According to the directive, the officer conducting the exercise is expected to issue the remedial action report 90 days after the end of exercise. However, the directive does not state whether additional reports should be issued to monitor remedial action implementation or to ensure that the lessons identified action plan has been fully addressed. There are also no instructions on what to do with these reports at the strategic command level. Based on the lack of instructions and completed reports it appears that the strategic commands have no apparent use for these reports.

2.5.5 As a result, there is no systematic tracking and monitoring of remedial actions across individual commands and across bi-strategic command organisations. Also, there is no centralised tracking or monitoring of remedial actions from lessons identified in exercises at the strategic command level. SHAPE officials stated that they can monitor the lessons learned activities of its subordinate command through the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and other reporting methods, but they stated that they do not routinely require subordinate commands to report on the progress of their lessons identified or remedial actions. In practice, there is no office or person designated at the strategic command level to follow up on remedial action reports and to intervene or act in cases of overly delayed remedial action implementation.

## **2.6 Lessons learned process leadership challenges**

### **No visibility on the performance of the lessons learned process by higher command**

2.6.1 There is no mechanism or report within NATO that provides visibility on the status of lessons from NATO exercises or that could be used to assess the performance of the NATO lessons learned process. Once a remedial action has been endorsed through the lessons identified action plan, the particular action body is tasked to carry out these responsibilities. This is most commonly done through the particular action bodies' tasker tracking system, at the command level of the action body. Because of this, and because there is no centralised monitoring and follow-up on remedial actions on lessons identified from exercises, NATO-wide remedial action is not transparent.

**Assuring more efficient remedial action efforts**

2.6.2 As of September 2015, only one remedial action report has been issued from the officer conducting the exercise to the officer scheduling the exercise for any 2014 Trident exercise as required by the collective training and exercise directive. This remedial action procedure of the lessons learned process is critical to transition a lesson identified into a lesson learned. This is not happening effectively in practice and is a significant problem in the implementation of the exercises lessons learned process.

2.6.3 According to the lessons learned directive, a critical success factor to NATO lessons learned is senior leadership engagement. The *NATO Lessons Learned Handbook* further states that leadership will review lessons identified to determine how to proceed with the lessons learned process. Endorsement and tasking as well as implementation and monitoring are a leadership responsibility. The handbook also states that leadership support is critical in the endorsement of the remedial action and tasking of the action body. Without command direction on the remedial action and action body, the lesson will likely stall in the lessons learned process because the organisation will fail to 'institutionalise' the learning. Finally, according to the handbook, in order to deliver sustainable improvement to the efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation through the lessons learned process, leaders should pay attention to the status of remedial actions and prioritise resources to ensure it gets completed. Leaders should also provide the necessary support to develop and monitor progress of lessons identified.

**Leadership not enforcing timelines or the implementation of remedial actions for lessons from exercises**

2.6.4 The IBAN found in guidance some instructions from senior leadership to subordinate commands to implement the NATO lessons learned process, but there is little evidence to show that leadership is regularly enforcing these instructions. According to officials from the NATO commands that the IBAN interviewed, there does not appear to be any follow-up orders to provide status updates on remedial actions or lessons from higher level command. One strategic command official said that even if subordinate commands did provide the official with status reports, there is no leadership guidance to instruct on what to do with those reports. This also applies to the remedial action reports.

2.6.5 As a result, lessons learned reporting is delayed or non-existent. According to NATO command officials, much of the delays could be due to a lack of sustained interest from the command group in addressing lessons from exercises, given other priorities facing the commands. A few of these officials reported that demonstrations of command interests could help facilitate the lessons learned process by influencing command staff to be more proactive and supportive of the lessons learned process. They explained that without leadership engagement, there is a tendency for commands to forego further implementation of the lessons learned process once the exercise has been concluded.

**NATO leadership not keeping all lessons learned guidance current**

2.6.6 Another area where NATO leadership can demonstrate engagement is by keeping guidance updated and current. The strategic commands are updating guidance



to the lessons learned process. However, the IBAN found that not all directives from other NATO commands or policies have been updated since the latest version of the collective training and exercise directive was released in October 2013. For instance, the NATO Lessons Learned Policy has not been updated since its release in 2011, and thus does not reflect current changes to NATO's exercise programme or lessons learned process. For example, the policy does not reflect the transfer of exercise-related lessons learned responsibilities from SHAPE to HQ SACT as reflected in the 2013 lessons learned directive.

## **2.7 Not all lessons identified are included in the reporting process**

### **NATO lessons learned process is bottom-up and submission of lessons is optional**

2.7.1 The lessons learned process is a bottom-up system and submission of observations is in practice optional. There are a variety of reasons why staff do not submit observations. According to NATO command officials, some staff may not record observations because they are busy with other tasks, or may have forgotten the details of the issue because too much time has passed. Some staff may simply choose not to record an observation. Also the guidelines state that all observations and lessons should be provided in a reporting format recommended by the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre, which is compatible with the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. If the staff does not follow this format, and testimonial evidence suggests this has happened, the observations may not be captured and thus might not become part of the NATO lessons learned process.

### **Commands filter lessons identified differently before submitting lessons into the exercises lessons learned process**

2.7.2 There are separate levels of lessons learned efforts relating to exercises: the formal NATO lessons learned process as described in guidance and a variety of alternative efforts driven by the command's own interests. As a result, relevant lessons are not always addressed through the formal lessons learned process.

2.7.3 The IBAN found that commands are filtering lessons differently before submitting lessons into the exercise lessons learned process. Some commands distinguish between on the one hand which lessons are related to the exercises (to improve the exercise) and, on the other hand which lessons are related to the command's performance carrying out the exercise (such as processes and procedures). According to some command officials lessons related to the exercises are not managed through the NATO lessons learned process, but through alternative processes conducted by internal teams. For these commands only lessons related to the command's performance are managed through the lessons learned process. Another HQ also has an internal parallel team to deal with issues in exercises. This HQ does not make the before mentioned distinction between the lessons though. Instead it is not clear for this command to what extent the observations identified by the internal team all reach the NATO lessons learned process.

**Currently two disjointed levels of exercises lessons learned efforts**

2.7.4 The IBAN found that there are two disjointed levels of exercises lessons learned efforts. Issues from exercises may not be documented and processed as observations in the NATO lessons learned process. If an observation of lesson identified is managed outside the formal NATO lessons learned process, it may not ultimately become a formal lesson learned and may not be shared as such through the centralised NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

2.7.5 Some commands have alternative internal performance reviews and reporting that are concurrent to their lessons learned process during exercises. The IBAN identified the following teams:

- Joint Force Command Naples uses internal performance teams to collect performance information for the Chief of Staff.
- Joint Force Command Brunssum uses an analyses, assessment and reporting team to collect performance information for the Chief of Staff.
- Single service commands use observation and training teams to collect performance information for the Chief of Staff.

2.7.6 These internal teams are working to enhance the conduct of exercises, but they are not doing this through the NATO lessons learned process. These teams are designed to rapidly deal with problems found in an exercise. For example, Joint Force Command Naples says that its internal performance team (IPT) is to provide quick action on issues that the NATO lessons learned process is not able to. The lessons learned process and IPT process both produce remedial actions, but Joint Force Command Naples's IPT does not require the same level of deliberation, analysis and documentation that is required for the lessons learned process. Similar teams are used at Joint Force Command Brunssum and two single service commands. One consequence is that it is not certain that lessons from these processes are shared through the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, and thus become formally part of the NATO lessons learned process.

**Third-party reporting**

2.7.7 Some parties, such as the Joint Warfare Centre, have produced reports detailing lessons, but are not included in any specific lessons learned programme. The Joint Warfare Centre is often assigned as the officer directing the exercise for Trident exercises, but they have no specified role in lessons reporting. In Trident Jaguar 2014, the Joint Warfare Centre produced a doctrinal lessons identified report that was a separate effort from the lessons learned process. This additional report was sent directly to HQ SACT's Deputy Chief of Staff for Capability Development for further action. The observations and lessons identified included in this additional report were not included in the lessons identified list for Trident Jaguar 2014. However, neither the Joint Warfare Centre nor HQ SACT is monitoring the status of the lessons identified from the doctrinal lessons identified report.

2.7.8 Similarly, potential lessons or observations might be captured in senior mentor reports, but are not necessarily included in the lessons learned process. These reports

are informal advice or observations written by former generals or experts serving as mentors to operational commanders during exercises.

2.7.9 The IBAN found an example of a lesson from an exercise that was not captured through the NATO lessons learned process. According to the NATO Exercise Budget User Group meeting minutes from March 2014, Joint Force Command Brunssum documented its experiences with the budgeting of the Steadfast Jazz 2013 exercise and the use of national reimbursement funds. This group tasked the command to write a lessons learned paper on its budgeting experience. The status of this task is unknown. The IBAN reviewed the final exercise report for this exercise and found no mention of budgeting.

### **3. Lessons are disseminated but information sharing is too limited**

NATO commands are disseminating some information on lessons from major exercises through both formal and informal channels, but the IBAN found information sharing on NATO's two central lessons learned portals to be limited.

#### **3.1 NATO commands disseminate some information**

##### **NATO Lessons Learned Portal**

3.1.1 NATO commands are disseminating some information in alignment with NATO guidance. According to the NATO Lessons Learned Policy, the 'sharing [of] lessons learned experiences and best practices is paramount.' Annex S of the collective training and exercise directive further states that greater information sharing requires 'encouraging easy and open sharing of information about the variety of issues, problems and successes that members of the [Exercise and Training] community have experienced' and 'enhancing the connectivity' amongst all those community members. The lessons learned directive also states that lesson sharing is based on publishing one's own lessons for others to exploit, and receiving others' lessons for one's own exploitation. To encourage lessons sharing, NATO developed several methods of disseminating information, including the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

3.1.2 This Lessons Learned Portal is the primary tool by which NATO bodies can share lessons and best practices from exercises. This portal resides on both classified and unclassified networks to enable a larger pool of stakeholders to share information, including non-government organisations and partner nations. The portal's digital library has 1,297 individual files stored on the classified network and 349 files stored on the unclassified network, as of 1 October 2015.

3.1.3 These files include lessons identified, best practices, procedures, reports and other documents. The NATO Lessons Learned Portal also contains a list of contacts and relevant web portals, and a tracking area where individuals can record observations and lessons identified and manage them through the lessons learned process. As of 1

October 2015, there were 84 opened lessons and observations active in the tracking area that were not counted among the 1,297 files mentioned above.

3.1.4 The NATO Lessons Learned Portal is also a platform for information sharing and collaboration for communities of interests, which are groups that collaborate to address specific interests. For example, there is a community focusing on civilian casualties and another focusing on cyber defence. The portal also has information on centres of excellence, which are nationally or multinationally sponsored entities offering expertise and experience on a variety of topics.

### **Additional sharing of lessons from exercises**

3.1.5 In addition to the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre created the Exercise, Training, Reporting and Analysis (EXTRA) Portal for NATO's exercise and training community. The EXTRA Portal has been operational since 2014. This portal is intended, among other things, to provide a central platform to share lessons and best practices related to training and exercises specifically. It contains exercise planning documents and reports, as well as a database of lessons separate from the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. It has a built in feature which can transfer lessons from the EXTRA Portal to the NATO Lessons Learned Portal if deemed necessary.

3.1.6 Additionally, HQ SACT and JALLC organise an annual lessons learned conference and convene periodic videoconferences of lessons learned specialists to promote the lessons learned process, provide training and share information. Information on lessons and best practices is often shared between lessons learned officers and exercise planners during the exercise planning process, according to the exercise and lessons learned personnel that we interviewed from the various NATO commands.

## **3.2 Information sharing on lessons is too limited**

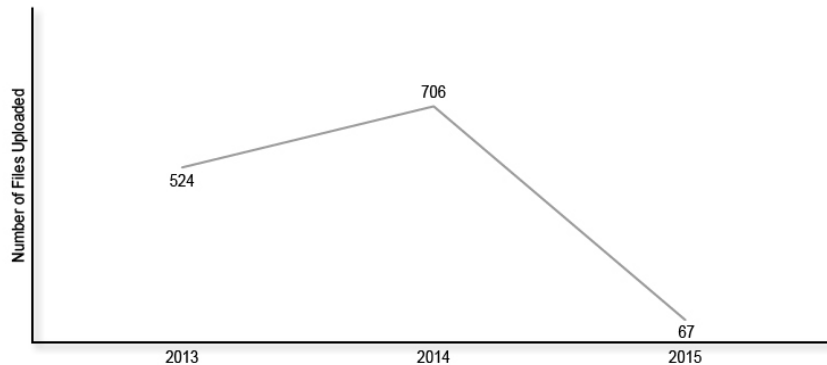
### **Accuracy and validity of information and amount of information sharing**

3.2.1 Although some lessons are shared, the IBAN found that the accuracy and amount of information sharing on lessons from NATO exercises among the commands is too limited. Specifically, our analysis of data from the two central portals identified inconsistencies and limitations in terms of the accuracy, validity, and completeness of the information, and the level of participation in information sharing.

3.2.2 To determine accuracy the IBAN examined the data stored in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal to identify the relevancy of the files uploaded; that is, how many lessons and reports with lessons contained analyses that may be informative to NATO personnel versus other forms of documentation. We randomly selected files to assess the accuracy and reliability of the data. Based on guidance in the NATO lessons learned Handbook and the lessons learned directive (Bi-SC DIR 80-006), we expected to see an abundance of formally documented lessons identified and lessons learned in the portal, which we did observe as shown in Table 6. However, as stated in paragraph 2.2.2, due to the delays in reporting deliverables, the NATO Lessons Learned Portal does not have the most current lessons information from the 2014 major exercises.

3.2.3 The IBAN found that there were considerably fewer uploads in 2015 than in 2014 and 2013 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Number of Files Uploaded onto the NATO Lessons Learned Portal's Main Library by Year (2013-2015)



Source: IBAN analysis of NATO Lessons Learned Portal data

3.2.4 According to JALLC officials, many of the files uploaded in 2013 and 2014 were from older lessons learned databases and were used to populate the newer NATO Lessons Learned Portal. For example, lessons from a 2008 Steadfast exercise were found in the files uploaded in 2014. It may be useful to use 2015 as a baseline for future assessments of the frequency of uploads onto the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

3.2.5 Additionally, we found instances of mislabelling or different file naming conventions that affect the accuracy and validity of the data. For instance, we found two lessons identified that should have been labelled as lessons learned. These inconsistencies affect the ability of users to search and find information, which diminishes the utility of the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

### Only higher level command lessons shared

3.2.6 Further, we observed that the degree of information sharing differed by participants in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and EXTRA Portal. As shown in Table 6, the majority of the files were uploaded by the higher-level commands and the JALLC. The single service commands and the NATO Force Structure units we examined were not as well represented in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, but some of the single service commands have been uploading lessons information through the EXTRA Portal.

**Table 6: Files uploaded by type and command found in the classified NATO Lessons Learned Portal since 2013 (as of 1 October 2015)\***

NATO Commands	Lessons Identified	Lessons Learned	Reports Containing Lessons Identified and Lessons Learned Best Practices	Other File Types	Total
Strategic Commands	26	14	23	26	<b>89</b>
Joint Force Commands	170	48	4	8	<b>230</b>
Single service commands	1	0	12	9	<b>22</b>
Three NATO Force Structure units**	4	0	0	1	<b>5</b>
Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre	368	17	1	65	<b>451</b>
Other entities	200	12	142	146	<b>500</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>1,297</b>

Source: IBAN analysis of NATO Lessons Learned Portal data.

\*This table shows data from the NATO Lessons Learned Portal's main library. Filters were used to identify specific folders by originator and file type. Due to the recent NATO Command Structure reforms, some files originating from reorganised commands may not be included in the table. Also, for the Joint Force Commands, two categories within the originator filter were used (current and prior to 2012).

\*\*For this analysis, we limited the number of NATO Force Structure units to three commands that participated in the 2013 to 2015 Trident exercises.

3.2.7 Additionally, we found that NATO commands were not consistently sharing complete information from exercises. According to the lessons learned directive, the NATO lessons learned capability is not focused only on sharing lessons, but on sharing all kinds of information that can help improve NATO capabilities and procedures. However, the IBAN found that commands were not including all their lessons in the lessons identified list for the exercises reviewed. The commands were not sharing information deemed internal (information that did not require outside intervention to be resolved) and not relevant for other stakeholders. For example, the Joint Warfare Centre does not routinely report its internal lessons from exercises in the lessons identified list or the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. Commands such as Allied Land Command, Allied Maritime Command and Joint Force Command Brunssum are also limiting which of their observations and internal lessons are included in the lessons learned reporting deliverables and this portal.

### 3.3 Challenges to information sharing

The IBAN found two general reasons why the sharing of lessons learned information is impeded: (1) a lack of precise guidance on what information to share, and (2) varying use of technology.

#### Lack of precise guidance

3.3.1 According to the lessons learned directive, information sharing is not limited to lessons, but should include 'sharing all kind[s] of information that can be useful for improving NATO capabilities and procedures.'" However, we did not find in this directive or the collective training and exercise directive any further specification on what

information that commands should provide other than lessons, or which specific exercises should be reported on through the two central portals.

3.3.2 This lack of precise guidance allows for a greater range of interpretations on what information from exercises should be shared (if such information is shared at all), including its form and content. For example, according to some lessons learned officers and exercise planners the IBAN interviewed, NATO commands generally prefer to limit sharing of information by excluding those lessons and observations deemed internal or not applicable to others from the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. They explained that it would not be worth the effort to share all observations from an exercise, because it would be time consuming to enter that information into the portal and most observations tend to be trivial or incorrect, or could be addressed without the need for outside intervention. However, by filtering the data, commands are reducing the amount of information available to other commands, limiting the potential for performance improvement. Further, this practice seems to run counter to the information sharing goal as stated in the lessons learned directive.

3.3.3 Officials from one joint force command said that they initially believed that only those lessons that required external intervention should be shared, but after discussing the issue during a JALLC-sponsored event, they planned to share internal lessons along with external lessons for an upcoming exercise. In contrast, the majority of commands the IBAN met with did not share internal lessons from the major exercises we examined.

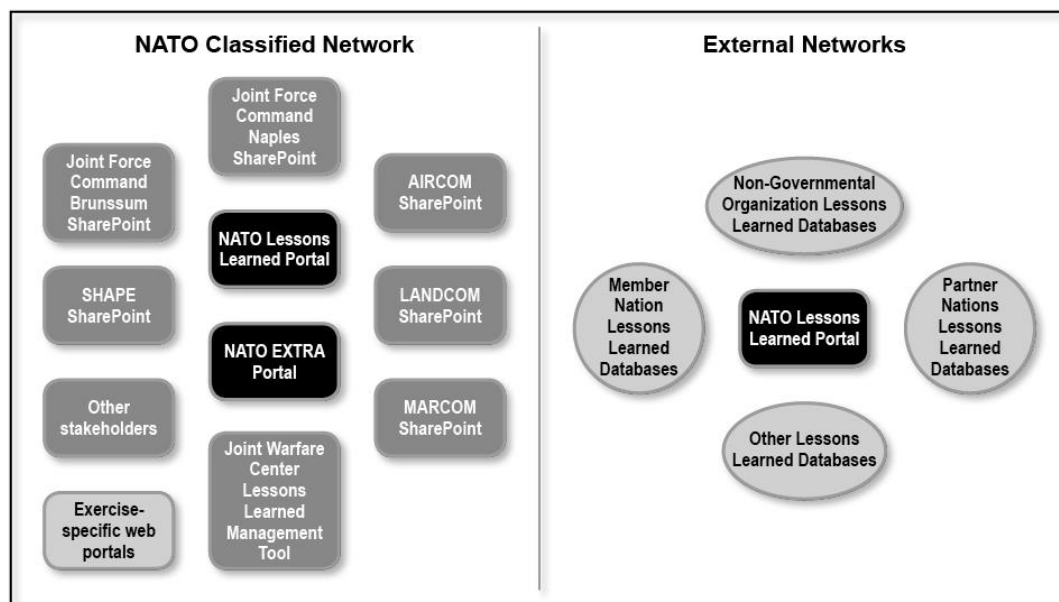
3.3.4 Furthermore, we found that NATO commands were not consistently uploading lessons from the smaller, less complex exercises in the NATO Military Training and Exercise Programme to the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. For example, Steadfast Jazz 2013 documents have been uploaded into both the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and the EXTRA Portal, but not the other Steadfast series of exercises, such as Steadfast Flow. According to NATO command officials, some of these exercises were not planned using the collective training and exercise directive milestones and deliverables, so no formal lessons learned products were required.

## **Use of technology**

3.3.5 In addition, most of the lessons learned officials we interviewed cited technology as an obstacle to information sharing. The primary challenge stems from the difficulty of sharing information across a web of disjointed information systems used to manage the lessons learned process in NATO, all of which have similar, if not duplicative, functions. NATO has two centralised lessons learned systems (the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and EXTRA Portal), but each command also has its own independent lessons learned systems (see Figure 6). Most commands use SharePoint for their lessons learned databases, but some commands prefer to use other systems to manage their lessons information. For example, the Joint Warfare Centre uses a specialised management system called the Lessons Learned Management Tool, which is different from the SharePoint platform and the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. Also, some commands that we met with prefer to use software called Tasker Tracker to monitor remedial actions and other tasks associated with the lessons learned process. In addition, there are a number

of lessons learned systems that are outside of NATO's classified network, including the unclassified version of the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

Figure 6: The Various Lessons Learned Systems Associated with the NATO Lessons Learned Process



Source: IBAN analysis of NATO command documentation

3.3.6 None of these systems are designed to share information with one another automatically, though there may be links embedded in the portal that facilitates information exchange. As a result, command officials are required to manually enter the data into the NATO portals, which could require a significant amount of time and effort depending on the volume of information. Some files may have to be uploaded twice or more to ensure coverage in both the classified and unclassified networks.

### Existing lessons learned portals not utilized

3.3.7 Furthermore, the utility and roles of the two NATO portals is not clear to NATO command officials involved in NATO exercises. Although all the officials we met with were aware of the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, a number of officials mentioned that they were not as familiar with the EXTRA Portal. One exercise planner said that he thought the EXTRA Portal could be a very useful tool for planning exercises, but he did not learn about the portal until after he had already set up a SharePoint portal to manage and plan his exercise. Other exercise planners said that they knew about the EXTRA Portal but did not adopt it for their planning.

3.3.8 A number of lessons learned officials said that the two portals seem to be duplicative because they both could be used to store lessons learned information, but these systems are separate so files uploaded into one system would not necessarily be seen in the other. For example, a number of the single service commands have uploaded information on lessons onto the EXTRA portal, but this information was not found in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, as of September 2015. Working with these multiple



systems lead to duplicative efforts and an inefficient use of time and effort for lessons learned personnel. Training and exercise officials at HQ SACT were assessing the utility of the EXTRA Portal to determine its future use, as of October 2015. In addition, the lack of a unified system to manage the lessons learned as described in the paragraphs above may increase the risk of higher costs related to lessons learned efforts.

### **Data quality control not in place**

3.3.9 Lastly, we found a lack of data quality controls to ensure the data entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal is reliable and accurate. This is especially important when it comes to entering the metadata for uploaded files, which enables users to search and analyse files relevant to their needs. We found examples of inconsistent labelling of files within the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, as mentioned in paragraph 3.2.5. Also, there is no central authority that ensures lessons identified or lessons learned documents adhere to the JALLC-endorsed format to ensure completeness of information and quality.

3.3.10 Each command is expected to perform its own data quality check to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data it uploaded, because the administrator of the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, the JALLC, does not perform this task. JALLC officials, however, recognise that the lack of a standard metadata framework is a problem that is hindering information sharing. They planned to discuss the issue during an October 2015 working group meeting. Without sufficient assurance in the quality of the data in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, there is less incentive for users to use the system for its intended purpose.

## **4. Conclusion and recommendations**

### **4.1 Conclusion**

4.1.1 The IBAN found that NATO commands have not sufficiently implemented the NATO lessons learned process for military exercises and information sharing on lessons between the commands remains limited. As a result, the NATO lessons learned process for exercises is not efficiently or effectively contributing to enhancing the performance of NATO activities.

4.1.2 The NATO lessons learned process during exercises is not consistently implemented in accordance with guidance. NATO commands are identifying and learning some lessons from exercises and have made some changes to policies, standards, plans and the planning of future exercises as a result of those lessons. However, the majority of lessons identified are not formally learned or fully addressed by the NATO lessons learned process. The lessons learned deliverables are significantly delayed for all of the reviewed 2014 Trident exercises. Much of the challenge in completing the lessons learned process involves a lack of well-defined roles and responsibilities, clear guidance and senior leadership engagement.

4.1.3 Further, there is no centralised or systematic monitoring system to track whether all remedial actions identified during an exercise are implemented. As a result, the

remedial action phase lacks transparency and accountability, which makes it very difficult to assess the global effects of the NATO lessons learned process. Ownership of specific remedial action efforts is also lacking. Finally, there is no single party at the appropriate command level responsible for monitoring the implementation of the lessons learned process for each exercise.

4.1.4 The IBAN also found that some issues identified in exercises are not documented and adjudicated through the lessons learned process. This increases the risk that important lessons may not be retained or shared across the NATO organisation.

4.1.5 These shortfalls have been exacerbated by a lack of effective engagement by senior leadership at all levels within NATO. Without this engagement, NATO personnel involved in the lessons learned process may not fully implement the process as intended due to other priorities and considerations, resulting in potential missed opportunities for NATO to improve performance.

4.1.6 Further, NATO commands are disseminating some information on lessons from major exercises through both formal and informal channels, but the IBAN found information sharing on NATO's lessons learned portals to be too limited. Specifically, the IBAN found that the information stored in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and EXTRA Portal appear to be inconsistent and limited in terms of the accuracy of the lessons, the level of participation in sharing information and the validity and completeness of the information shared.

4.1.7 Due to the lack of precise guidance and technical challenges, we found that the information shared in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal varied considerably. By maintaining ambiguous guidance and not addressing these technical challenges, information sharing amongst the NATO commands will continue to be limited. As a result, these commands may risk missing opportunities to improve their performance and capabilities, potentially affecting their ability to respond to future crises.

4.1.8 Without more detailed guidance and stricter controls from engaged senior leadership, subordinate commands may not follow through on the remedial action phase of a given exercise and complete the lessons learned process. As a result, NATO's ability to incorporate and retain information that could improve its ability to meet its missions and adapt to a continuously changing security environment could be significantly compromised.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1:

To ensure better implementation of the lessons learned process when conducting exercises, the IBAN recommends that strategic commands increase timeliness, accountability and visibility of the process. Steps should include:

- a. The North Atlantic Council should take steps to ensure that the strategic commands identify a single party at the appropriate command level responsible for monitoring the implementation of the lessons learned process for each exercise and should define their role and responsibilities in guidance.
- b. The strategic commands should establish clear guidance on lessons learned reporting deliverables that support the differences in the sizes and complexity of NATO exercises, and lessons learned reporting lines that address the intercommand nature of exercises.
- c. The North Atlantic Council should take steps to ensure that the strategic commands take actions that encourage greater leadership engagement on implementing the lessons learned process at all command levels, develop indicators to measure the performance of the NATO lessons learned process and provide this information to senior leadership through the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's annual guidance on NATO education, training, exercise and evaluation (SAGE) or other equivalent document.
- d. The strategic commands should ensure that subordinate commands are including observations or lessons from internal performance assessments or other analytical activities into their lessons learned processes.

### Recommendation 2:

To better institutionalise lessons from exercises and make this knowledge readily available NATO-wide, the IBAN recommends that sharing of this information be enhanced. The IBAN recommends the following:

- a. The strategic commands should revise lessons learned guidance that provides more detailed instructions and criteria to subordinate commands on what lessons are relevant to share, from which exercises, and what other types of information should be provided.
- b. The strategic commands, in conjunction with stakeholders, should consider consolidating or eliminating redundant lessons learned databases. These considerations should include cost effectiveness.
- c. The strategic commands, in coordination with the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre and other stakeholders, should take steps to ensure a common framework is in place to ensure the accuracy and quality of data entered in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

## **SHAPE and HQ SACT formal comments and IBAN position**

We requested formal and factual comments from SHAPE and HQ SACT. We reproduce the full text of the formal comments received in Appendix 4. We note the actions which SHAPE and HQ SACT describes in the comments provided for this report which have taken place after the end date of the field work of this performance audit. We encourage Council to direct SHAPE and HQ SACT and their subsidiary bodies to fulfill their responsibilities implementing the lessons learned process in order to improve lessons learned from exercises through this report's recommendations.

### **SHAPE formal comments**

SHAPE states in its comments that SHAPE concur with the recommendations made in the report and will be incorporating them in the current or future strands of work to improve the lessons learned process in close coordination with HQ SACT.

### **HQ SACT formal comments**

HQ SACT states in its final comments that the recommendations will maximize effects of the new exercise reporting and lessons identified process developed by NATO Command Structure subject matter experts.

In its formal comments (comment 1.a. and 1.c.2), HQ SACT provides further aspects to the recommendation concerning a single party responsible for the implementation of the lessons learned process for each exercise. The Board maintains the recommendation, but has made some revisions to the language to reflect the points raised by HQ SACT. The Board understands the intercommand nature of lessons learned from exercises and the NATO command structure chain of command; however, the Board's opinion is that the strategic commands bear the overall responsibility to ensure that the lessons learned process is implemented sufficiently.

In its formal comments (comment 1.b), HQ SACT also addresses the Board's observation that the majority of the lessons identified reported from exercises are not sufficiently learned. The Board maintains that the lessons learned policy is not fully adhered to, that the low number of reported lessons learned is significant, and sharing of knowledge across NATO is therefore limited.

The Board notes the remaining HQ SACT formal comments provided. The Board has not incorporated or taken a Board position on these since the provided comments does not question the facts in the report or overlap to the Board positions provided above in section 5.4 and 5.5.

## Abbreviations

ACO	Allied Command Operations
ACT	Allied Command Transformation
EXTRA Portal	Exercise, Training, Reporting, and Analysis Portal
FER	Final Exercise Report
HQ SACT	Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation
JALLC	Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre
JFC	Joint Force Command
LI	Lesson Identified
LIAP	Lessons Identified Action Plan
LIL	Lessons Identified List
LL	Lesson Learned
OCE	Officer Conducting the Exercise
ODE	Officer Directing the Exercise
OSE	Officer Scheduling the Exercise
RAR	Remedial Action Report
SAGE	Supreme Allied Commander Europe's annual guidance on NATO education, training, exercise and evaluation
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

## Criteria

1. NATO Wide Lessons Learned Policy
2. BI-Strategic Command Directive 080-006 – Lessons Learned
3. Bi-Strategic Command Directive 075-003 – Collective Training and Exercises
4. The *NATO Lessons Learned Handbook*:
  - Key Elements of LL Capability: 1. Structure, 2. Process, and 3. Tools
  - Critical Success Factors: 1. Leadership, Mindset, Information Sharing, and Stakeholder Involvement

## NATO Lessons Learned Process

The lessons learned process for any NATO command or body combines two phases, analysis and remedial action, each with a number of steps.

1. **Analysis:** This phase involves determining lessons identified and developing recommendations to address them.
  - a. Observation: An observation is a problem that has been identified and documented. Any stakeholder in a given organisation can submit an observation to his or her chain of command for remediation.
  - b. Analysis: An analysis of the observation is performed to determine the root cause of the problem, a recommended course of action and a recommended action body to implement the recommendation. Some commands may not have the capacity to perform the necessary analysis, at which point, the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre may be requested by the command to perform the analysis on their behalf.
  - c. Lessons identified: The output of the analysis is referred to as the lesson identified, which includes the information described above.
2. **Remedial action:** This phase involves addressing the lessons identified and the outcome of the lessons learned process.
  - a. Endorsement and tasking: The appropriate authority is provided the written documentation of the lessons identified and can choose whether or not to endorse it for further action. Once endorsed, the authority is responsible for tasking out the lessons identified to the appropriate action body.
  - b. Implementation and monitoring: The designated action body then prepares an action plan with timelines and milestones, implements remedial actions and documents the change and resultant impact. Action bodies report the progress in implementing the action plan to the tasking authority.
  - c. Validation: When necessary, the tasking authority, in coordination with the action bodies and the originator of the observation, verify that the issue is remedied or that the change provided the desired result.
  - d. Lesson learned: The output of this phase is referred to as a lesson learned.
  - e. Dissemination: The lesson learned, and any associated mitigations or changes as a result of this process, is shared with the appropriate stakeholders through the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, direct communication with the stakeholders, or through open forums, conferences and other events

## SHAPE and HQ SACT formal comments

### SHAPE Formal comments

a. As overall comment, SHAPE is aware that the Lessons Learned (LL) process could be improved and is already working with HQ SACT in this direction. We agree that the conclusions and recommendations of the report are worthy of further study and analysis and will be taken into account in the diverse strands of work already in place for improving the system.

b. At the Wales Summit in 2014, NATO agreed on the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) to ensure the Alliance is ready to respond swiftly and firmly to new security challenges. The development and implementation of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) has been the main effort of SHAPE since this Summit. As a consequence, the number of exercises has been increased at the same time that new LL policy and new tools were implemented.

c. The Lessons Learned process takes time at the strategic level of command. The Lessons Identified at this level of command should be carefully analysed, implemented and validated before being considered as learned.

d. In the report context, Strategic Commands (SCs) have different sources of learning lessons, either from operations and/or from exercises. The period of focus for the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) study has seen the change of posture of NATO after more than ten years of emphasis on Out of Area (OOA) operations. Now the LL process is refocusing more on exercises.

e. The LL process is also affected by the Bi-SC NATO structure. SCs are working on delineation of responsibilities. ACT has overall responsibility for the LL process and likewise LL from exercises. ACO is responsible for LL from operations. Still, SHAPE is providing requirements and guidance for collective training and exercises through the SACEUR's Annual Guidance on Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation (SAGE). Some overlap and friction is an expected consequence of this complex arrangement.

f. The IBAN report will be additionally supporting in the efforts to achieve LL process improvements, and the main stakeholders in the process have already reached roughly the same conclusions. As a token, the main topic of the last LL Conference in Lisbon can be mentioned: "Closing the loop: The lessons learned capability in support of NATO transformation".

g. With regard to the report section title 2.6 'Lack of effective leadership', this title is misleading and does not accurately reflect the following paragraphs. SHAPE recommends the title change to 'LL Process Leadership Challenges'.

h. With respect to IBAN conclusion 4.1.1, the SCs are still in the process of fully implementing a relative new Lessons Learned Process. Although the NATO policy dates back to 2011, the process as it is now is the result of the 2013 NCS reorganization and the same is applicable to the Bi-SC policy regarding Lessons Learned. Furthermore, the main tools used for storing, sharing and implementing the LL process, the NATO LL Portal and the NATO EXTRA Portal, are operational since 2014. Therefore, the IBAN audit was conducted against an ongoing process that still requires more time to be fully institutionalized.



- i. As regards IBAN conclusion 4.1.3, this has already been identified by the SCs and process to institutionalize the NATO LL Portal to be used as the centralised system for monitoring the LL process has already started. The forthcoming NATO Information Portal will probably take the place in the near future as a repository for NATO knowledge, including the LL.
- j. With reference to IBAN conclusion 4.1.5, the Command Group at SHAPE is totally engaged in the LL process, sharing its effort with the manifold other processes that are currently ongoing to implement the NATO political guidance.
- k. We concur with the recommendations made in the report and will be incorporating them in the current or future strands of work to improve the Lessons Learned process in close coordination with ACT.

## HQ SACT formal comments

1. HQ SACT wishes to provide some further aspects on the following topics of the audit:
  - a. Recommendation for a single accountable party responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the Lessons Learned (LL) process for each exercise.
    - (1) NATO LL Policy (Reference B) states that "In order to ensure effective implementation of the Lessons Learned, senior leadership is necessary at all levels. The launching and execution of a Lessons Learned process is a command/senior management responsibility. Each command and body within NATO will execute their part in the NATO Lessons Learned process in order to enhance NATO's best practices".
    - (2) Each Commander has the responsibility to act as the Tasking Authority within his area of responsibility, thereby ensuring that received LI is decided on (noted or approved) and those approved be followed until being learned. This principle provides for commitment to and ownership of the lessons.
    - (3) Most of the LI that are vetted by stakeholder Commanders during an exercise are operations related while the rest are exercise structure related. It is important that each LI is addressed to the appropriate Tasking Authority that is responsible for that domain. That would ensure a complete background for making an informed decision on the LI and the appropriate command relationship over the proper Action Body to allow the ownership of the remedial action implementation. Eventually, the defined chain of command is to be used for the handling of lessons as for all other work..<sup>1</sup>
    - (4) The institutionalization or integration of the LL work as a part of everyone's work is a more efficient use of manpower than establishing a single body. Exercise is only a single part of all the Lessons to consider, therefore, a single body may be necessary for all types of lessons coming from different areas and not only for specific lessons coming out of exercises, if this principle is to be used.
    - (5) If this recommendation is to be followed, further analysis will be required in order to identify the structure, the required resources, as well as the command authority over all Tasking Authorities and Action Bodies that will be needed for the designated body to complete its mission.

<sup>1</sup> The NATO LL Policy states that "In order to ensure effective implementation of the Lessons Learned, senior leadership is necessary at all levels. The launching and execution of a Lessons Learned process is a command/senior management responsibility. Each command and body within NATO will execute their part in the NATO Lessons Learned process in order to enhance NATO's best practices."

b. Observation that the majority of the LI are not sufficiently learned.

(1) It needs to be highlighted that the low percentage of validated LL is a fact across all domains of Lessons Identified and not exclusively out of exercises, although after the reduction of the alliance's operational footage, the majority of the lessons are stemming out of exercises.

(2) Within the report it seems not clear, that throughout the individual levels of responsibility the NATO LL process already takes place. If, within the individual Commanders responsibility the remedial action can be authorised and implemented this Lessons might never come to the next higher levels awareness but nevertheless, the lessons are learned.

(3) The discussion should be refocused on why NATO lessons, in general, are not efficiently and effectively pursued by Tasking Authorities as depicted in the NLLP. The audit presents many factors that contribute to this discussion such as HQ manning with LL staff officers, continuity of process due to military personnel rotations, HQ workload, and HQ priorities. HQ SACT believes that establishing a long lasting civilian position in each LL cell, would be a performance multiplier and create the potential to solve the problem.

(4) An accurate overview of lessons learning can only be achieved by the universal use of the NATO Lessons Learned Portal (NLLP) by all Commands. This has to be further enhanced by a much stronger leadership engagement in order to impose the use of the NLLP. Towards that end the new process of exercise reporting and handling LI out of exercise will contribute by providing clear guidance on the use of NLLP.

c. Observation that the roles and responsibilities are not well defined and remedial action lacks clear guidance and tracking.

(1) The audit's observations regarding unclear guidance on Lessons by the Bi-SC 075-003 are valid. The most important consideration is that the process is currently external to the general NATO Lessons Learned process.

(2) As depicted in the audit, the exercise is an ad hoc organization of finite command relationships, which do not outlive the lessons learned process. The Lesson Identified Action Plan (LIAP), as described by the directive, gives to the OSE an implied mission of a tasking authority, although it cannot be ensured that has the required Command authority over the proper Action Body for each Lesson Identified, even within the finite timeframe of the exercise process.

(3) This discrepancy between responsibility and authority can only be solved by addressing each LI to the appropriate Tasking Authority, which is the-principle of the general Lessons Learned process. The core of the NC WS proposal for the

revision of the process addresses this via time, accountability, and traceability regardless of exercise structure or the nature of the lesson.

d. Observation that not all LI are included in the reporting process.

(1) An LI is vetted by the Command after a valid Observation has been staffed within the HQ's internal lessons learned process. The concept of Lessons relates to issues that have a wider impact both in time and/or to other Commands and does not refer to non-systemic failures.

(2) As a consequence of the above mentioned nature of the lessons, Commanders are encouraged to share the LIs through the established reporting processes and tools for the possible benefit of other Commands, but it ultimately rests with each Commander to decide upon the relevance of an LI outside his HQ, especially when referring to NFS HQs that also have variations in structure and functions.

(3) Commanders can focus the collection of observations and drive the LI production during any activity, especially during exercises. This is an aspect that will be highlighted under the revised process

e. The use of NATO Lessons Learned Portal (NLLP) and NATO EXTRA Portal (NXP)

(1) The NLLP tool has been in use for three years and is far from ideal but is being improved on a continuous basis. The use of the tool is expected to increase as the tool is improved.

(2) To facilitate the single point principal, the NLLP has to be the single "track and share" tool for lessons, while the NXP will be the central information sharing tool for EXTRA planning. This distinction is clear within the revised exercise reporting and handling of LI in exercises and will be depicted in the new BI-SC DIR 075-003.

(3) ACT will continue to develop the tools for enhanced performance and provide guidance for their use. Currently, ACT/JALLC together with NCIA is in the initiating phase of integrating the processes reflected in the NLLP and NXP within the NATO Information Portal (NIP) thus preparing the tool for the future.