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17 June 2011

DOCUMENT

C-M(2011)0043

Silence procedure ends:

28 Jun 2011 18:00

NATO RECORDS POLICY

Note by the Deputy Secretary General

1. Since 1949, the Alliance has been creating and managing records, initially in paper format, and gradually moving towards electronic formats. The evolving nature of the Alliance, the increasing complexity of NATO business activities and the rapid improvements in information technology demand a more sophisticated and coherent approach to records management throughout the Organization. Successful management and preservation of NATO records will ensure the continued ability of the Organization and NATO nations to understand, learn from and account for Alliance actions.

2. Over the past two years, the NATO Archives have seen an increase in requests from NATO nations, partners, the Command Structure and agencies seeking advice on the management of their records, particularly those in non-traditional formats, e.g. electronic, video, e-mails, and chat.

3. Of particular significance have been requests for guidance from ISAF and from ISAF troop contributors on the ways to ensure that relevant information would not be lost during significant posture changes in Afghanistan. As recently as 12 January 2011, a request for guidance was received from Kabul related to information management in the context of the closing of a Provincial Reconstruction Team. In addition, there have been recent enquiries from NATO Agencies and staff groups which are seized with the issue of closing Agencies and transferring programmes.

4. At the Archives Committee workshop in December 2009, the Committee members expressed concern about the *ad hoc* nature of NATO's records management approach, citing among others concerns in relation to ISAF. Several participants noted the importance of ensuring that appropriate records are preserved and available to assist in responding to investigations into allegations concerning NATO's detainee policy, and expressed concern at the risk of inappropriate destruction of records in the absence of a policy defining which records should be preserved. This resulted in a tasking from the NATO Archives Committee, to the NATO Archives, to develop the NATO Records Policy and supporting directives. This tasking was subsequently expanded to include a directive pertaining to the handling of records in the event of the closure of a NATO body.

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5. The attached NATO Records Policy (NRP) has been approved by the Archives Committee and noted by the Military Committee and other information management stakeholders: the Security Committee (AC/35) and the Consultation, Command and Control (C3) Board (AC/322). The Policy provides the basic principles and requirements for the management of NATO records in all formats. The NRP is largely based on the international standard ISO 15489 for records management, and will be supported by two directives concerning the management of records generated on operational deployment and the handling of records in the event of closure of a NATO civil or military body. These directives are currently being developed by the Archives Committee.

6. Once approved by the Council, the policy will apply in all NATO civil and military bodies to records created and/or received by NATO in the conduct of its missions.

7. In line with other NATO policies related to information management, it is recommended that the records policy be disclosed to the public following its approval.

8. The Council is invited to:

- approve the NATO Records Policy;
- mandate its implementation by all NATO civil and military bodies, under the coordination of the NATO Archivist;
- authorize the public disclosure of this policy.

9. Unless I hear to the contrary by **18:00 hrs on Tuesday, 28 June 2011** I will take it that the Council has agreed to the actions in the paragraph above.

(signed) Claudio Bisogniero

Annex

Original: English

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NATO Records Policy

Introduction

1. For the purposes of this Policy, a NATO record is defined as information created, received, and/or maintained as evidence and information by NATO, in pursuance of legal obligations, NATO missions or in the transaction of business¹. In short NATO records officially document the actions and decisions of the Organization.

2. A NATO record is therefore NATO information and as such is managed in accordance with the NATO Information Management Policy (NIMP) and related policies². However, the unique nature of records as documentation of NATO decisions and actions necessitates adoption of an additional records-specific policy to complement the NIMP and related policies. The NATO Records Policy (NRP) provides the basic principles and requirements for the management of NATO records.

3. To support the continuing conduct of NATO missions, and to provide accountability, information originators, owners and custodians shall create and maintain authentic, reliable, complete and usable records. To that effect, information owners and custodians shall, in accordance with relevant NATO policies, develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive records management programme that encompasses all stages in the records life-cycle.

4. The NATO Records Policy is approved by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and is authorised for public disclosure, along with its supporting directives.

5. The Policy will be supported by implementing directives on the management of records within NATO, including a directive on managing records related to NATO operations and a directive on the handling of records when a NATO body, programme or project is closed or terminated.

Objective

6. This document establishes a framework to ensure that NATO records are handled effectively, efficiently and securely in order to serve the interests of NATO.

¹ This definition appropriates the term “record” as outlined in the International Standard ISO 15489 on Information and Documentation – Records Management to include a NATO context. It is meant to include records generated by NATO and records received by NATO from external bodies. As defined in the NIMP a NATO mission is inclusive of all NATO business. This includes NATO operations, projects, programmes, contracts and other related tasks.

² C-M(2007)0118 NATO Information Management Policy (NIMP) and C-M(2008)0113 The Primary Directive on Information Management. Other relevant information management policies are: C-M(2008)0116 Policy on the Public Disclosure of NATO Information, C-M(2009)0021 Policy on the Retention and Disposition of NATO Information, C-M(2002)60 The Management of Non-Classified NATO Information and C-M(2002)49 Security within NATO.

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Scope

7. This Policy applies to all records created and/or received by NATO in the conduct of its missions³. It addresses the complete life-cycle of NATO records through their three main stages: active, semi-active and inactive⁴. Active NATO records that no longer have immediate administrative, operational and/or technical utility become semi-active, and are retained for a specific period of time in order to meet financial and other business responsibilities. After all business needs are met, NATO records are considered to be inactive. Their final disposition is based on their identification as having permanent value (transferred to and preserved by the NATO Archives) or temporary value (destroyed in compliance with NATO policies)⁵.

Goals

8. This document defines the policy and basic principles governing the creation and management of authentic, reliable, complete and usable records, capable of supporting business functions and activities for as long as they are required.

9. The key goals of creating and keeping records are⁶:

- (a) to document decisions, actions and operations;
- (b) to provide accountability
- (c) to facilitate planning and decision making and support policy formation;
- (d) to protect the interests of the Organization,
- (e) to preserve the organisational memory.

Policy and Principles

10. In keeping with the policy and objectives stated above, the creation and management of records shall adhere to the following principles:

11. Ownership and custodianship.

- (a) All NATO records, regardless of form, medium or classification level, are the property of the Organization and are subject to the provisions of articles VI and VII of the Ottawa Agreement and/or of article XIII of the Paris Protocol⁷;

³ As defined in the NIMP: "Missions include NATO operations, projects, programmes, contracts and other related tasks."

⁴ The life-cycle terminology used in the context of this Policy differs from the terms used in the NATO Information Life-cycle (C-M(2008)0113). The life cycle approaches are however consistent.

⁵ C-M(2009)0021, C-M(2002)60 and C-M(2002)49.

⁶ See also the NIMP paragraph 4 (C-M(2007)0118) for related goals for records creation and recordkeeping.

⁷ Agreement on the Status of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, National Representatives and International Staff signed in Ottawa, Canada; 20 September 1951: "The premises of the Organization shall be inviolable. Its property and assets,

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- (b) Records originating from nations and international organisations while conducting a NATO mission and provided to NATO shall be maintained by NATO in accordance with this Policy⁸; and,
- (c) Records originating by nations and international organisations in the context of a NATO mission, but not provided to NATO, remain the property of the originators and shall be managed in accordance with their relevant regulations, taking into account as appropriate the requirements of the NATO Security Policy.
- (d) Heads of NATO Civil and Military Bodies and Commanders of NATO Operations shall have custodianship of all active and semi-active records of their respective organisation. Inactive NATO records transferred to the NATO Archives fall under the custodianship and responsibility of the NATO Archivist; and,
- (e) Any document received by NATO from an external originator and maintained as evidence or information shall fall under the custodianship of NATO.

12. Access to national information. NATO can request access to national records or records generated by external organisations related to NATO missions.

13. Authenticity and integrity of records. To ensure the authenticity and integrity of NATO records, information owners and custodians shall develop, implement and document procedures which effectively control the creation, receipt, transmission, maintenance, use and disposition of records to ensure that records are protected against unauthorized addition, deletion or alteration.

14. Preservation and accessibility. Persons identified in paragraph 11(d) shall ensure that NATO records are protected and safely stored and kept readable as long as needed and required by the Policy on Retention and Disposition of NATO Information. This applies to records in all formats.

15. Usability and completeness. A usable record is one that can be located, presented and interpreted. NATO records shall be sufficient in content, context and structure to reconstruct the relevant activities, decisions and transactions that they document. A NATO record shall be persistently linked to, or associated with, its metadata. The metadata should carry the information needed for an understanding of the record and the transactions that created and used them. It should be possible to

wheresoever located and by whomsoever held, shall be immune from search, requisition, confiscation, expropriation, or any other form of interference." (Article VI); "The archives of the Organization and all documents belonging to it or held by it shall be inviolable" (Article VII).

Protocol on the Status of the International Military Headquarters set up pursuant to the North Atlantic Treaty signed in Paris, August 1952: "The archives and other official documents of an Allied Headquarters kept in premises used by those Headquarters or in possession of any properly authorised member of the Headquarters shall be inviolable, unless the Headquarters has waived its immunity" (Article XIII).

⁸ The originators of these records shall retain their rights regarding the downgrading, release and public disclosure of the information in accordance with the applicable NATO policies.

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identify a record within the context of broader business activities and functions. The metadata should make it possible to retrieve the record, to preserve and manage the record, and to understand and maintain the relationships among records.

16. Retention. NATO records have either permanent or temporary value. Records of permanent value need to be kept in perpetuity, and when no longer needed for the conduct of NATO missions, these records shall be transferred to the NATO Archives. Records of temporary value may be securely destroyed in accordance with the Policy on Retention and Disposition of NATO Information and its associated retention schedules⁹.

17. Release. NATO records may be released to non-NATO nations and international organisations in accordance with the applicable provisions of the NATO Security Policy and the Policy on the Management of Non-classified NATO Information¹⁰.

18. Disclosure. In support of transparency NATO records may be disclosed to the Public in response to a specific request or if they have been approved for public disclosure following systematic review in accordance with the Policy on the Public Disclosure of NATO Information.

Roles and responsibilities

Generic roles

19. Originators, information owners and custodians shall consider and manage NATO records as a corporate resource. It is the responsibility of all individuals working directly for NATO or in support of NATO's missions to create and maintain records which will adequately document the operations and business activities in which they take part and to ensure that the records which they create are authentic, reliable, complete, usable, and safely kept.

Specific roles

20. Archives Committee. The Archives Committee, on behalf of the North Atlantic Council, is responsible for:

- (a) ensuring the implementation and proposing any necessary or appropriate modification or extension of the NATO Records Policy;
- (b) ensuring, through its members, that their respective national authorities remain aware of the importance of and concrete requirements for the proper management of NATO records;
- (c) reporting at least once a year to the Council on the status and implementation of NATO's Records programme; and

⁹ C-M(2009)0021 Policy on the Retention and Disposition of NATO Information

¹⁰ C-M(2002)60 The Management of Non-Classified NATO Information and C-M(2002)49 Security within NATO.

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making recommendations as appropriate with regard to the management and preservation of NATO records.

21. NATO Archivist. On behalf of the Archives Committee, the NATO Archivist is responsible for:

- (a) developing, revising, approving, implementing and monitoring directives, procedures, records schedules and systems regarding the management and preservation of NATO records¹¹.
- (b) providing guidance to and co-ordinating with the NATO civil and military bodies (specifically the archivists or staff with records management responsibilities) on records matters, systems and programmes;
- (c) developing, implementing and monitoring records training programmes for information managers (including records managers) and archivists of NATO civil and military bodies;
- (d) raising awareness of the importance of NATO records and their accurate management, storage and disposition; and
- (e) reporting regularly to the Archives Committee on the status of the NATO Records policy.

22. Heads of NATO Civil and Military Bodies and Commanders of NATO Operations. Within their organisations, Heads of NATO Civil and Military Bodies and Commanders of NATO Operations are responsible for:

- (a) ensuring that this Policy, related policies and supporting directives are complied with and the availability of resources to permit such compliance;
- (b) co-ordinating with the NATO Archivist on the retention and disposition of records in accordance with established policies and procedures; and
- (c) liaising/coordinating with the NATO Archivist to ensure the safe transfer or disposition of the records of a closing entity.
- (d) reporting regularly to the NATO Archivist on the status and implementation of the NATO Records Policy in their respective bodies.

23. Archivists or other positions with information management responsibilities.

Within their organisations, Archivists or other positions with information responsibilities are responsible for:

- (a) establishing and implementing the records management programmes and systems necessary to ensure the creation, management, secure usage, safe storage, protection, and disposition of NATO records for their organisation in accordance with the applicable NATO policies on information and records;
- (b) identifying and putting in place special procedures for the safeguarding of vital NATO records to ensure business continuity in the case of a disaster;
- (c) co-ordinating with their management to ensure that records still needed for current business are transferred to the successor body or higher body in the event of the closure of a NATO body or mission; and

¹¹ C-M(2009)0021

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- (d) co-ordinating with their management and the NATO Archivist to ensure that inactive records of permanent value are transferred to the NATO Archives in the event of the closure of a NATO body or mission.

Definitions

Accountability

Principles that individuals, organizations, and the community are responsible for their actions and may be required to explain them to others. (Source: ISO 15489-1 Records Management)

Authentic record

A record that can be proven to be what it purports to be, that has been created or sent by the person purported to have created or sent it, and to have been created or sent at the time purported. (Source: ISO 15489-1 Records Management)

Custodianship

Custodianship in the context of this Policy refers to the responsibility of physical care, safe-keeping and control of the NATO records. This also includes the responsibility to develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive records programme that encompasses all stages in the records life-cycle.

Disposition

The appraisal of information to determine its long-term value and the subsequent actions (archiving or destruction) when the information is no longer needed for the conduct of the current business (Source: C-M(2007)0118).

Information custodian

The nation or organisation which receives information and makes it visible and is responsible to the information owner for the agreed level of safe-keeping and availability of information (Source: C-M(2007)0118).

Information owner

The nation or organisation which creates and maintains content, defines access rules, negotiates and agrees to release constraints, establishes disposition instructions, and is the authority for the life-cycle of the information (Source: C-M(2007)0118).

Metadata

Structured information that describes, explains, locates, and otherwise makes it easier to retrieve, use and understand an information resource. Metadata facilitates the association of records within the context of broader business activities and functions.

NATO

The term "NATO" denotes the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the bodies governed either by the Agreement on the Status of the North Atlantic Treaty

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Organization, National Representatives and International Staff, signed in Ottawa on 20th September, 1951 or by the Protocol on the status of the International Military Headquarters set up pursuant to the North Atlantic Treaty signed in Paris on 28th August, 1952 (Source: C-M(2007)0118).

NATO Archives

The service mandated, under the authority of the NATO Archivist, to identify, preserve and provide access to NATO information of permanent value, produced or received by the Organisation in the course of its activities or by its staff members in the performance of their duties, irrespective of date, form and storage medium. The NATO Archives is currently based at NATO HQ (Source: C-M(2009)0021).

NATO Record

Information created, received, and/or maintained as evidence and information by NATO, in pursuance of legal obligations, NATO missions or in the transaction of business. NATO records officially document the actions and decisions of the Organization.

Originator

The nation or international organisation under whose authority the information has been produced or introduced into NATO (Source: C-M(2007)0118).

Preservation

Processes and operations involved in ensuring the technical and intellectual survival of authentic records through time.

Records

Information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by NATO, in pursuance of legal obligations, NATO missions or in the transaction of business (based on the records definition in ISO 15489-1 Records Management).

Records management

Records management (also referred to as recordkeeping) is a field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of an information about business activities and transactions in the forms of records (Source: ISO 15489-1 Records Management).

Records management system

An information management system which captures, manages and provides access to records through time (Source: ISO 15489-1 Records Management).

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Transfer

Moving records from one location to another. When transferring records at the end of their life-cycle to the NATO Archives the custody and responsibility for these records is passed on to the NATO Archivist. (Source: ISO 15489-1 Records Management).