The 98th AC/135 Main Group meeting was hosted by Norway in Oslo on 9-11 November 2010. Directors from NATO and Sponsored Tier 2 nations gathered at the Oslo hotel, known for hosting the Nobel Peace Prize winners.

The new NATO Strategic Concept adopted at the Lisbon Summit lays out NATO's vision for the Alliance for the next decade: able to defend its members against the full range of threats, capable of managing even the most challenging crises and better able to work with other organisations and nations to promote international stability. In order to bring its mission in line with the new concept, AC/135 intends to develop a new vision and objectives for the AC/135 Strategy Map, which will be announced at AC/135's 100th meeting in November 2011.

The Directors reviewed AC/135 funding methodology to address arising economic concerns, and considered measures to sustain funding for further development of NATO Codification in support of NATO and Partner countries. Options under consideration are the introduction of a service fee and the inclusion of access to NABS for all sponsored countries as part of their annual fee.

The worrying number of codification requests (LSAs) rejected for lack of adequate technical data has served as a reminder to Directors that defence procurement agencies must be encouraged to ensure that the codification contract clause is included in all defence contracts. In future, LSAs lacking supporting technical documentation will be promptly rejected. A novel approach is being developed to facilitate the codification process by having characteristics data prepared and submitted by the requesting country.

NATO Response Force exercises have pointed to a constant need for more interoperability, an area where codification plays important role. A Belgium-led "Tiger Team" has been working on developing links between Reportable Item Codes (RICs) and NATO Stock Numbers (NSNs). However, its work will need to focus on the cost effectiveness of such links, and more feedback from operational bodies such as SHAPE and ACT will be essential to complete this project.

AC/135 has set a new target of 95% Approved Item Names for all countries from 2011. The aim is to minimize the use of Non-Approved Item Names, thereby reducing the maintenance efforts required. A working group led by New Zealand has been established to consider introducing additional quality metrics to measure AC/135's performance.

AC/135 underscored the value of inputs and expertise from codification software vendors and is considering the best way to have them attend AC/135 fora more frequently. The NCS Modernisation Working Group has completed the majority of its tasks, and remaining IT issues will be handed over to a future "codification IT user group forum".

Spain proposed that SCAGE codes should no longer be assigned to entities from non-NATO and Tier 1 countries and that, instead, uniform NCAGE codes should be used for all entities. As a result of the consensus in favour of this proposal, AC/135 Panel A has been tasked to assess the technical implications and quantify the data involved.

In response to an emerging requirement in the area of warehouse management, volumetric data from Australia and USA will be gradually intro-
duced into Segment W and published on NMCRLplus.

The AC/135 Sponsorship Programme now covers 33 non-NATO nations, the United Arab Emirates having recently joined. Japan has officially applied for sponsorship and Mongolia will be invited to attend the partnership meeting in 2011. Armenia and Jordan are considering applying for sponsorship. The Malaysian Armed Forces Cataloguing Authority has successfully completed Tier 2 sponsorship data exchange testing. Malaysia will be considered a Tier 2 country from 1st January 2011. AC/135 congratulated Malaysia on this milestone achievement. The first NSNs assigned by India have been published on NMCRLplus.

The NATO Automated Business System (NABS) serves as paperless office for AC/135. In order to keep up with IT standards, NABS will migrate to a SharePoint platform in April 2011. NABS users are invited to attend the training session organised at NAMSA on 14th March 2011.

R&D – Codification at Source

Phase 3 of the Smart STEP Codification project (SSC3) has proved that ISO 8000 compliance greatly improves the ability to generate Type 1 codification from the outset. The project has also proved that ISO 22745 transactions are effective and reduce the amount of work required to complete Segments V and C on a codification record. For the UK, the average codification time is 10 minutes using ISO 22745 vs. 50 minutes using traditional methods.

In order to capitalize on SSC3 findings and to perform more trials on the practical uses of eOTD services, AC/135 will become a "Chartered Member" of ECCMA for the next 12 months. ISO 22745 "ontology-to-ontology" transactions have yet to be tested, but in order to do so, two ontologies must first be "translated". The translation process requires stringent management and controls to ensure that all transactions can be processed automatically regardless of the origins of the ontologies. In layman's terms, this is like a French speaker and an English speaker being able to fully understand each other when each is speaking his own language.

AC/135 has endorsed continuation of the Codification at Source project. The next step will focus on publishing mappings between the AC/135 ontology and any other eOTD ontology via the eOTD Master Data Ontology Manager (MDOM) Gateway Service. The final results of this trial will be presented at the 100th Main Group Meeting.

NMCRL

The NATO Master Catalogue of References for Logistics (NMCRL) will be enhanced in 2011 as a result of a number of projects: reverse links from NCAGE to cancelled NCAGEs, enhanced links to World Customs Organisation customs codes, development of web services (initial phase) through the implementation of a Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) and batch searches on references and producer/vendor names. A major project is to commence at NAMSA to develop a NACOMS platform for assembling and processing all codification data. A new DVD-ROM version of NMCRLplus is to be launched in February 2011.

The 11th Codification Forum events in 2011 will include major conferences in Europe, South America, the Middle East and the Pacific area. The forum will focus on sustaining momentum in terms of defence and industry awareness of the benefits of NATO Codification. The key event will be the 100th AC/135 Main Group meeting to be held on 8 November 2011 at NATO Headquarters, followed by a codification forum on 9-10 November in Bruges (Belgium). AC/135 invites all NATO, Sponsored and Partner nations to attend its 100th meeting.

Did you know...
The first formal meeting of AC/135, formerly named “the Panel on the Codification of Equipment” was held on 27-30 May 1958. It was held in Paris in the auditorium of the Palais de Chaillot. The main purpose of the meeting was to determine methods for assigning stock numbers to NATO Standard Items and to establish working procedures.