



# TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY WARFARE

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NATO  
REVIEW

# A NEW ERA FOR NATO INTELLIGENCE

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Today, NATO faces the most complex and unpredictable security situation since the end of the Cold War — a more assertive Russia, cyber and hybrid threats, crisis and instability across the Middle East and North Africa, and a continued terrorist threat. In response to this dynamic threat environment, Allies are fundamentally adapting how NATO produces and delivers intelligence in support of decision-making.

The most significant reform came in 2017, when the Alliance established a new Joint Intelligence and Security Division (JISD) at NATO Headquarters. As the very first Assistant Secretary General for this new division and the overall strategic leader for intelligence, my task was to develop the vision, establish a professional workforce, and initiate a broad series of reforms to improve the quality and utility of intelligence provided to NATO's most senior political and military leaders. This effort included working closely with other NATO intelligence leaders, most notably SHAPE J2 (the intelligence directorate at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, or Allied Command Operations).

The overarching goal was to make intelligence as relevant as possible for our customers. Our intelligence needed to be high quality,

focused on leadership priorities, and delivered at the right time to the right audience. The Secretary General has been consistently clear that intelligence support at NATO Headquarters must enhance situational awareness and inform policy making.

To achieve this, assessments needed to be brought as close as possible to the North Atlantic Council, the Military Committee and the Alliance's senior leadership.

The establishment of the JISD also marked the creation of NATO's first-ever joint civilian and military division at the Headquarters. Bringing together the previously separate civilian and military intelligence staffs was no small task. At the time, some people worried that the professional cultures and approaches to intelligence would clash. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Fusing the



separate intelligence units allowed us to deliver coherent intelligence assessments, increase efficiency, avoid duplication of effort, and draw upon the strengths that both civilian and military organisations brought to the table, while fostering a new culture of cooperation. More importantly, it positioned the JISD to contend effectively with the hybrid, cyber and terrorist threats increasingly confronting NATO Allies, boosting our capabilities to analyse these cross-cutting issues.

To ensure that the JISD helps to prepare the ground for Allied decision-making, we have worked to better align our focus areas and timing with leadership schedules, meetings, and missions. The true power of Allied intelligence is that it provides a common frame of reference for decision-making, thus underpinning Allied solidarity. Difficult as this may sound, in my experience there are far fewer fundamental disagreements than might be expected. Indeed, some very important North Atlantic Council decisions could only have been taken on the basis of an intelligence picture shared by all Allies. This is true for NATO's response to Russia's breach of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty as well as for the expulsion by Allies of over 150 undeclared Russian intelligence officers, fol-



**ABOVE:** An isometric illustration of the operational/multi-domain environment.

lowing Moscow's attempt to kill former Russian agent Sergei Skripal with a nerve agent in the United Kingdom in March 2018 (a British citizen, Dawn Sturgess, later died after exposure to the substance).

We also supplemented longer-term strategic assessments with more current situational awareness. Based on the deep knowledge and expertise of our analysts, we are now able to provide rapid initial assessments to customers. New internal formats for intelligence sharing at NATO Headquarters, such as the senior stakeholders' meetings, have dramatically increased the frequency and responsiveness of intelligence support to senior leaders. Never before has intelligence been more present and relevant to NATO decision-making.

As the strategic leader for intelligence, my responsibilities involve looking beyond the JISD. The "NATO intelligence enterprise" goes far beyond NATO Headquarters and encompasses a multiplicity of critical functions across

the two Strategic Commands. Due to the "organic" growth of many such functions without a common masterplan, overall coherence is an issue. Allies agreed that a common approach would improve intelligence sharing, coordinate production, enhance indications and warning, and improve management and governance.

In close cooperation with Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT), we began to jointly identify, prioritise and implement a set of key reform projects. Over the years, we have developed a trusted working relationship across institutional boundaries.

In particular, close partnership with ACO enabled major progress on warning and alerting, where we made special efforts to develop a more efficient architecture, improving the coherence of mechanisms and addressing gaps. The new system is more effectively tailored to today's complex threat environment and we are currently working with Allies to



Photo by Christian Valverde, MARCOM





NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) remotely piloted aircraft flies from Palmdale Air Base, California, United States, to the AGS Main Operating Base in Sigonella, Sicily, Italy on November 20-21, 2019. The NATO AGS RQ-4D aircraft is the first of five aircraft developed for NATO's AGS programme. Photo courtesy of Northrop Grumman (photographer: Alan Radecki; camera plane pilots: Reed Estrada, Stephen Kay)

ensure that it functions as intended in an actual crisis. Production is now coordinated on a regular basis between Headquarters and the Strategic Commands. Again, we are cutting duplication, streamlining our efforts and providing a more coherent intelligence picture for our leaders.

Behind the scenes a host of enabling functions are critical to the managing, sharing and processing of intelligence. Only when the management of technical functions have been fully optimised and properly staffed will NATO intelligence reach its true potential.

To prevent leaks and the exploitation of vulnerabilities by adversaries, security is indispensable for Allies. Security enables trust, and trust enables intelligence sharing. It was wise to include the NATO Office of Security (NOS) in the Joint Division. Having both the intelligence and the security functions under one roof allows for daily interaction between them. Among many other important functions performed by NOS, it now closely monitors, vets and contributes to all intelligence reforms.

To maximise our potential, we are expanding our capabilities. Additional open

source intelligence, using data collected from publicly available sources, will be employed to support accurate and timely analysis. We are currently boosting our existing capabilities to search the huge data reservoirs of the Web. To stay ahead of the curve, this will need to be aided by advanced analytics and Artificial Intelligence. Another new capability, the Alliance Ground Surveillance system — consisting of remotely piloted aircraft, ground and support segments — will provide all-weather, persistent wide-area terrestrial and maritime surveillance in near real-time, improving in-theatre situational awareness.

To better share and process intelligence at NATO, we are also fundamentally overhauling the technical base and interoperability of our IT systems and data management.

Almost three years after standing up the Division, civilian-military intelligence cooperation across NATO is now standard practice. We are progressing towards a common work culture, and assessments are more coherent, and are provided faster. The demand for high-quality intelligence is higher than ever and has become more relevant in policy and decision-

making. Nevertheless, some challenges remain. Reform efforts will need to be deepened. Cultures still differ. The military, with a focus on planning and operations, is typically more inclined to the "need to share". Some civilian intelligence organisations adopt a much more restrictive approach to their information, emphasising the "need to know". Such deeply ingrained traditions are hard to overcome.

Security threats are a moving target. The Alliance will need to stay abreast of new developments and track these at the speed of relevance. Russia and China are both investing heavily in their conventional forces, while developing and showcasing advanced new nuclear weapons and missile systems. Both are heavily engaged in the pursuit of emerging and disruptive technologies that could have far-reaching implications for the Allies. Hybrid and cyber threats have become the new normal. Other countries and non-state actors are also developing new capabilities. The importance of intelligence at NATO will only increase in the years to come. †

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