

Warfare Development: Making NATO Better — Now and Tomorrow

In the rapidly changing global security environment, ensuring NATO's operational relevance and readiness has become critical. The Joint Warfare Centre upholds its responsibility to keep warfare development at the forefront of its activities.

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The world's military history is replete with the failures of splendid military forces unable to adapt to changing strategic and operational environments and new technological advances. Perhaps now, more than ever, the NATO Alliance requires a deliberate and permanent effort to ensure that conceptual developments are translated into tangible initiatives tested and implemented at the operational level.

A Key Driver of Change

The Joint Warfare Centre's (JWC) motto says it all: "Training NATO. Advancing Doctrine. Integrating Concepts." From its inception, the JWC was organized to ensure that conceptual developments and new doctrines were tested and validated throughout the exercise process. Indeed, training and warfare development are inextricably linked to the transformational role the JWC has within NATO. The Centre's world-class exercises are renowned for their realism, providing the perfect platform for testing new concepts and ideas, and for implementing new doctrines at the operational level of war.

Warfare development at the JWC is thus defined as "all the actions taken to educate, train, and develop NATO commanders and staff, whilst implementing doctrine, facilitating experimentation, and highlighting lessons learned".

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Warfare development considerations are included throughout the JWC's 20-month exercise process. It starts with identifying the challenges of operational-level headquarters and the best practices in solving those challenges. Moreover, new operational concepts developed by the Allied nations are incorporated into the Centre's exercise planning activities. Using the exercises to host their experiments, the Operational Experimentation Branch at Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (HQ SACT) also feeds the exercises with new concepts and capabilities. The final step is for the nations to validate doctrinal documents, present them to the training audience headquarters, fine-tune them to fit the exercises, and, finally, implement them for official use. This cycle mobilizes not only the JWC's Transformation Delivery Division, but all members of the programme, as well as external stakeholders and experts, such as NATO centres of excellence, member and partner nations' academia, and doctrinal research centres. All of this makes the JWC-directed exercises the petri dish of transformation for the Alliance.

BELOW

The JWC situation centre during Exercise STEADFAST JUPITER-JACKAL 2020

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A New Strategic Impulse

Following emerging threats over the past decade, NATO adjusted its focus from crisis management back to the challenges of facing a large and capable opponent. The NATO Military Strategy document of 2017 clearly sets the path for renewed efforts to enable the Alliance to wage high-intensity warfare in the Euro-Atlantic area against potential peer or near-peer adversaries.

Over the following years, both NATO strategic commands, Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT), translated this orientation into relevant strategic concepts. ACO's Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) aimed at optimizing the employment of forces. The ACT-led NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC), meanwhile, focused on the development of NATO's military instrument of power (MloP) for the next 20 years. More specifically, the goal of the NWCC is to shape the warfare development trajectory and to inform the development of the Alliance's MloP, while ensuring its effectiveness and employability by SACEUR in order to maintain the military edge.

These new concepts together bring more emphasis on warfare development as part of the Alliance's operational-level training. The JWC Transformation Delivery Division's efforts have been in operationalizing strategic-level concepts. All this led the JWC to identify four central tenets to improve collective decision-making:

1. How to think better and understand faster the operational problems during planning and execution of military training and operations, through new planning methodologies to even better fit the complex and ambiguous environment we are faced with;

ABOVE

Left: The JWC's Advisory Team during Exercise STEADFAST JUPITER-JACKAL 2020

Right: The author, Colonel Jean-Michel Millet

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2. How to ensure NATO forces fight better through a better joint integration of all domains, including the relatively new cyberspace and space, and by increasingly empowering the JWC's Advisory Team to support training audiences and enforce lessons learned;
3. How to improve NATO resilience at the operational level by finding novel ways to incorporate resilience into training;
4. How to improve the value of training by ensuring NATO Command and Force Structure Headquarters are learning by employing more innovative training tools, such as wargaming.

ABOVE

The JWC's Advisory Team in Italy during Exercise STEADFAST JACKAL 2021

In what marks a new era for NATO, the ability to adapt and react quickly to dynamic operational environments is critical. Thanks to the warfare development initiatives, the JWC has a central role in bridging the gap between conceptual advances and NATO readiness. ✦



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