

ASPECTS OF NATO

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Command, Control and Communications

NATO strategic communications

In the early days of the Alliance, NATO's strategic communications were rudimentary and consisted of a series of point-to-point links using mainly national post-office (PTT) circuits. These were later supplemented by limited NATO-owned links using terrestrial line-of-sight microwave and Tropo-Scatter systems.

In the late 1960's, it became clear that a new approach was required to support the revised strategy of flexible response and the increased emphasis being placed upon crisis management. This, in turn, required a much wider exchange of information amongst NATO nations, and the ability of all the nations to consult together both in peace and in a crisis situation. In addition, better communications were needed to enable the highest political and military authorities of the Alliance to exercise command and control of NATO forces over a wide spectrum of possible contingency situations.

Accordingly, in 1966, plans were laid to provide direct communications between the NATO Headquarters and all the NATO capitals, as well as the three Major NATO Commanders. The move of the North Atlantic Council from Paris to its present Headquarters in Brussels provided the opportunity to establish a complex specially devised for crisis management within which a modern communications centre could be established. This centre became operational in 1969.

In order to provide better voice as well as telegraph communications, especially to the more distant NATO areas, it was agreed that NATO should have a satellite communications system. In March 1970, the first of NATO's own satellites became operational and later in the spring of the same year the first of the twelve large satellite ground terminals was brought into service.

The development of an effective communication system was required to facilitate political consultation in times of crisis and, if necessary, to allow the NATO military commanders to effectively exercise command and control over the forces assigned to them. To achieve this goal, a wide range of measures was required:

(a) The NATO Joint Communications-Electronics Committee (NJCEC)

In order to enable the North Atlantic Council and the Defence Planning Committee to discharge their overall responsibilities for coordinating civil and military activities in the field of Communications-Electronics, the NATO Joint Communications-Electronics Committee (NJCEC) was established in October

1969. This high-level Committee brings together senior national military and civil representatives of the members of the Alliance on a regular basis to develop the required advice in communications-electronics matters.

The NATO Integrated Communications System (NICS)

In March 1971, the North Atlantic Council agreed to establish the NATO Integrated Communications System (NICS) and to create a special NATO Agency, the NICS Management Agency (NICSMA), to be responsible for the planning and implementation of this new system.

The NICS concept is based on the development of a common user automatically switched grid network, employing sophisticated computer-driven switches for all forms of voice, telegraph and data traffic. The system is being implemented in two stages: Stage I, which involves the implementation of a series of standalone sub-systems to automate NATO's voice and telegraph communications; and Stage II, which will involve the geographical and technical expansion of these sub-systems and their melding together into a single fully integrated system. The implementation of Stage II will take place during the period 1984-1995.

The NICS is one of the largest commonly-funded infrastructure projects which the Alliance has ever undertaken. With the completion of Stage I, NATO will have a modern communications system equal to any other in the Western World. It will significantly improve the Alliance capability for crisis management and for the command and control of NATO forces in peace and war.

(b) The NATO Command, Control and Information System and Automatic Data Processing Committee (NCCDPC)

In October 1970, the North Atlantic Council established the NCCDPC to carry out the development activities related to a NATO Command, Control and Information System supported by automatic data processing. The activities of the Committee range from recommending policies concerning command, control and information and initiating the overall organisation for the NATO Command, Control and Information System, to identifying and defining those aspects which require standardisation. The NCCDPC reports to the North Atlantic Council or to the Military Committee¹ as appropriate.

(c) Command, Control and Air Defence

The special requirements for NATO's air defence, including the Early Warning System, the Air Defence Ground Environment and the Airborne Early Warning and Control System, are described in the chapter on air defence

¹ With respect to military CCIS/ADP matters.

(d) Tactical Systems

The provision of equipment for use in tactical command, control and communications systems is the prerogative of the individual nations of the Alliance, but a number of multinational bodies exist which are responsible to the Military Committee, the NCCDPC and the Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD), for the promotion of cooperation among the nations in achieving the standardisation or interoperability of such equipment. The bodies under the Military Committee and the NCCDPC are responsible for operational and procedural matters relevant to the achievement of standardisation or interoperability whilst technical matters, including cooperation in reasearch, development, production and procurement, are dealt with by the bodies under the CNAD.

(e) Civil Communications Planning Committee

In support of NATO Civil Emergency Planning Arrangements, the Civil Communications Planning Committee (CCPC), a subsidiary body of the Senior Civil Emergency Planning Committee (SCEPC), is responsible for the planning of civil communications, with a view to determining their suitability and continued use to meet the emergency, wartime and survival period requirements in the political, economic and military fields. The CCPC is also responsible for the provision of communications for the NATO Civil Wartime Agencies.

