

## The Evolution of NATO's Command Structure, 1951-2009

by

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When the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 raised fears that Europe could be the next target of Communist aggression, the leaders of the North Atlantic Alliance - which was then slightly more than one year old - took a look at their ability to deter such aggression and did not like what they saw. In addition to major shortages of manpower and equipment, the Alliance lacked the vital military element of command and control because there was neither a headquarters structure nor an overall commander. During the next twelve months the leaders of the Alliance carried out a series of measures that transformed what had thus far been mainly a loosely-structured political alliance into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with an elaborate political and military structure.

One very important first step in the establishment of a military command structure for NATO was the North Atlantic Council's selection of General Dwight D. Eisenhower as the first Supreme Allied Commander Europe in December 1950. After General Eisenhower arrived in Paris in January 1951, he and the other members of the multinational SHAPE Planning Group immediately began to devise a structure for the new Allied Command Europe. They quickly established a basic command philosophy that divided Allied Command Europe into three regions: the North, containing Scandinavia, the North Sea and the Baltic; the Center, with Western Europe, and the South, covering Italy and the Mediterranean (Greece and Turkey were not yet members of NATO). As for the organizational structure, General Eisenhower's initial concept was to give each region an overall Commander-in-Chief (CINC). Underneath the CINCs there would be separate Land, Air and Naval Commanders for each region.<sup>1</sup> This concept made great sense militarily, but its implementation soon encountered major political problems in two of the three regions.

The exception was the Northern Region, where General Eisenhower and the SHAPE Planning Group were able to implement their concept without any major difficulties. They viewed this region as one in which naval and air actions would predominate. Actions on land would take place in two separate areas (Norway and Denmark) that were not mutually supporting because they were separated by water, so the planners soon decided to create separate land headquarters for each area. As a result, the command structure for Allied

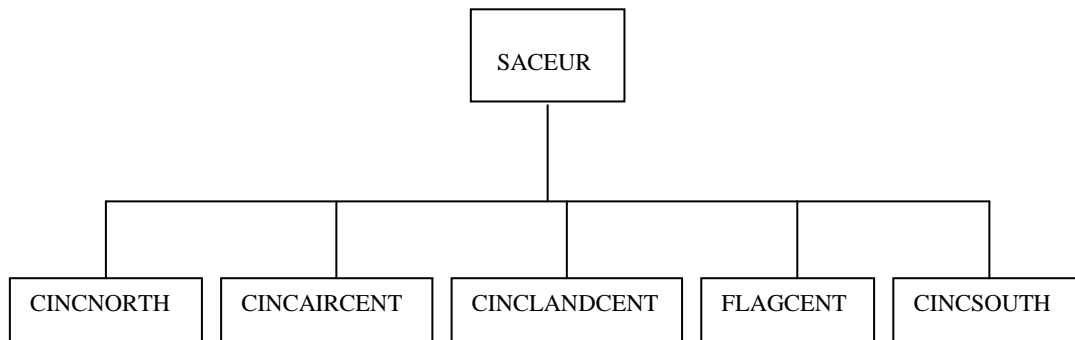
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<sup>1</sup> In discussing NATO command structures it is important to note the difference in titles between a command, its commander, and sometimes even the headquarters itself. Generally speaking the command and the headquarters have had the same name (with the abbreviation "HQ" added in the latter case), while the title of the commander depended on the level of his command. Until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a major subordinate commander reporting directly to SACEUR was designated as a Commander-in-Chief (CINC), and all lower level commanders were simply designated as Commanders. Thus the former regional command Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT) was commanded by CINCENT, whose headquarters was known as HQ AFCENT. One of AFCENT's subordinate commands was Allied Land Forces Central Europe (LANDCENT), whose commander was known as COMLANDCENT and the headquarters as HQ LANDCENT. The one exception to this rule was Allied Command Europe itself, whose commander is SACEUR and whose headquarters is called SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe). After the US abolished the title of CINC in its command structure in 2002, NATO followed suit and since then the former CINCs have simply been called Commanders.

Forces Northern Europe (AFNORTH) consisted of an overall Commander-in-Chief (CINCNORTH) with four subordinate commands: Allied Air Forces Northern Europe (AIRNORTH), Allied Naval Forces Northern Europe (NAVNORTH), Allied Land Forces Norway (LANDNORWAY), and Allied Land Forces Denmark (LANDDENMARK).

Devising command arrangements in the vital Central Region, which contained the bulk of NATO's forces, proved to be much more complicated. General Eisenhower considered naming an overall CINC there as well but soon realized it would be difficult to find an arrangement that would satisfy all three major powers with forces in the Center - the United States, United Kingdom and France - because they had strongly differing views on the proper relationship of air and ground power. Drawing upon his World War II experience, Eisenhower decided to retain overall control himself and did not appoint a CINC for the Central Region. Instead there would be three separate CINCs (CINC Allied Air Forces Central Europe, CINC Allied Land Forces Central Europe and Flag Officer Central Europe), all reporting directly to SACEUR along with the commanders of the Northern and Southern Regions, CINCNORTH and CINCSOUTH (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Major ACE Commanders, 1951-1952**



In establishing subordinate headquarters to the three CINCs in the Central Region, Eisenhower and the SHAPE staff relied heavily upon existing national headquarters in order to save time and expense. Thus the two subordinate ground commands of Allied Land Forces Central Region (LANDCENT) - namely the Northern Army Group (NORTHAG) and the Central Army Group (CENTAG) - were based upon the headquarters and personnel of the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) and the US Army Europe (USAREUR) respectively. Similarly for the air forces in the Central Region, SHAPE established two Allied Tactical Air Forces (ATAFs) in order to take advantage of the United States' and United Kingdom's existing command and control organizations in their respective former zones of occupation. Thus the RAF's 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Air Force was combined with Belgian and Dutch elements to become the 2<sup>nd</sup> ATAF, while, the US 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division was converted into the 12<sup>th</sup> (US) Air Force and at the same time combined with the French 1<sup>er</sup> Division Aérienne to become the 4<sup>th</sup> ATAF. All four of these subordinate headquarters in the Central Region remained primarily national in composition until the late 1950s, when they were reorganized as fully integrated allied headquarters.

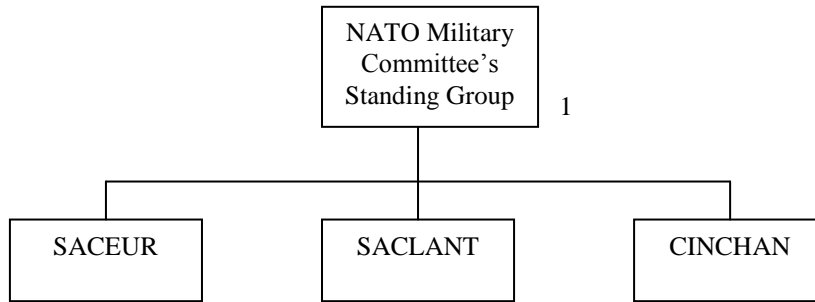
## NATO UNCLASSIFIED

As for the Southern Region, Lord Ismay, the Alliance's first Secretary General, provided a classic example of British understatement when he wrote in his history of the first five years of NATO that "the problem of command in the Southern Region was more difficult to resolve." Trying to devise a command structure that would be acceptable to all of the nations in the Southern Region was a task that took two years and resulted in a NATO command structure for the Mediterranean that made sense only if viewed in political rather than military terms. Some of the problems did not even involve Southern Region issues. Thus when General Eisenhower attempted to name an overall Commander-in-Chief for Allied Forces Southern Region (AFSOUTH) in the spring of 1951, his plans became embroiled in a much larger controversy that was not of his making, a quarrel between the United States and the United Kingdom over command of the Atlantic Ocean (the proposed Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic - SACLANT - post). When news leaked out in February 1951 that NATO would soon name a US Admiral to be SACLANT, thus giving both Supreme Allied Commander positions to US officers, a storm of controversy arose in the United Kingdom, led by opposition leader Winston Churchill. The UK government quickly withdrew its consent to the SACLANT appointment, causing it to be delayed for almost a year, and even the appointment of a US Admiral as Commander-in-Chief Southern Europe (CINCSOUTH) was delayed until June 1951, two months after the command arrangements for the Northern and Central Regions were put into place.

The initial command arrangements for AFSOUTH consisted of the classic division into land, sea, and air headquarters desired by General Eisenhower: Allied Land Forces Southern Europe (LANDSOUTH), Allied Naval Forces Southern Europe (NAVSOUTH), and Allied Air Forces Southern Europe (AIRSOUTH). All of these headquarters were located in Italy. In 1952, after Greece and Turkey joined the Alliance, their geographic distance from the LANDSOUTH headquarters as well as some political disagreements over which nation should be the overall commander for the two nations' ground forces, led to the establishment of a second land headquarters - Allied Land Forces Southeastern Europe (LANDSOUTHEAST) - in Izmir, Turkey, under a US Army General.

As part of the compromises that broke the deadlock over the SACLANT appointment, a third major NATO headquarters reporting directly to the Standing Group (the executive body of the Military Committee) came into existence in February 1952. Allied Command Channel (ACCHAN) was responsible for the sea areas around the English Channel, which was vital for Allied shipping approaching Europe. This area had been controlled by the UK CINC Portsmouth since 1949 under arrangements instituted by the Western Union, and the new NATO post of Commander-in-Chief Channel (CINCHAN) took over these responsibilities while reporting to the Standing Group through a political body known as the Channel Committee, with representatives from the four countries bordering the area. Although known as a CINC rather than a Supreme Allied Commander, CINCHAN was subordinate neither to SACEUR nor SACLANT and his post was subsequently recognized as being one of the three Major NATO Commanders together with SACEUR and SACLANT (see Table 2). Thus the English Channel area was not part of ACE at this time.

**Table 2**  
**Major NATO Commanders, 1952-1991**



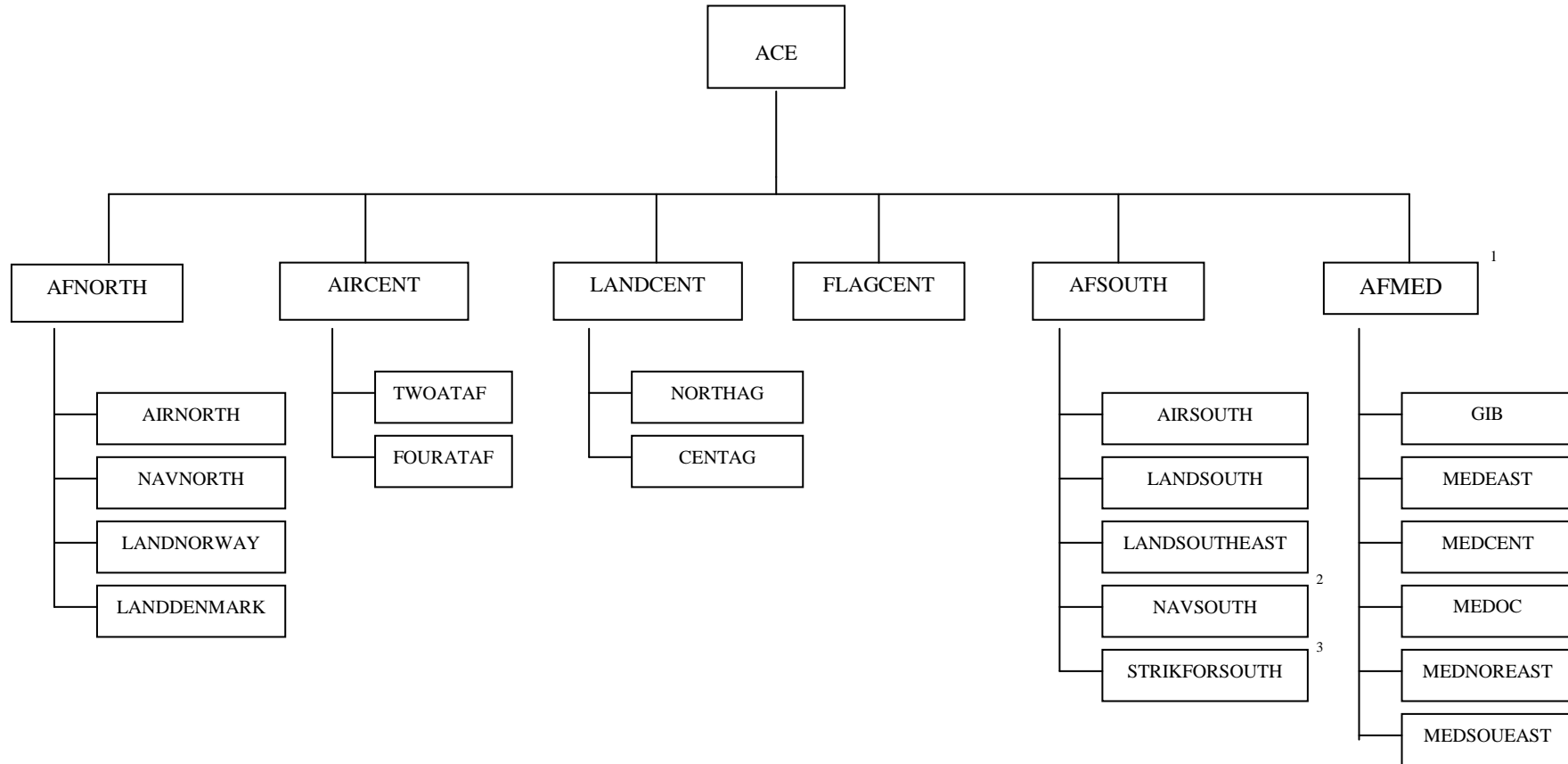

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<sup>1</sup> The Standing Group – made up of representatives from France, the United States, and the United Kingdom - was abolished during the major reform of 1967 that resulted from France’s departure from the Integrated Military Command Structure.

Meanwhile the dispute over naval commands in the Mediterranean was continuing, with the United Kingdom called for the establishment of a Supreme Allied Commander for the Mediterranean - a “SACMED” - with this post to be held by a British Admiral. The United States and CINCSOUTH (US Admiral Robert Carney) argued strongly that any new naval command in the Mediterranean belonged underneath AFSOUTH. These opposing views were two levels of command apart, and it is amazing that it took almost two years for a compromise to be reached that was exactly in-between the two proposals. In March 1953 NATO created a new headquarters for Allied Forces Mediterranean (AFMED) under British Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten of Burma. The new position was neither the equal of SACEUR and SACLANT, as had been desired by the United Kingdom, nor the subordinate of CINCSOUTH, as had been proposed by the United States, but the subordinate of SACEUR and the equal of CINCSOUTH, with the title of CINCAFMED. When the new headquarters was established, NAVSOUTH was disestablished and all of its forces transferred to AFMED with the exception of the US Sixth Fleet, which the United States wished to keep under an American chain of command. As a result, a new headquarters, Naval Striking and Support Forces Southern Europe (STRIKFORSOUTH) came into existence under CINCSOUTH to serve as the NATO command and control headquarters for the Sixth Fleet.

The result of all these compromises that were needed to get the command structure up and running was an unwieldy structure with a very large span of control for SACEUR (see Table 3). Instead of the three joint-service headquarters for North, Center, and South that had been envisioned by General Eisenhower, there were now six Commanders-in-Chief all reporting to General Matthew B. Ridgway, who had succeed Eisenhower as SACEUR in May 1952, and four of the six were single-service commands. While he could do nothing about the political compromise that had resulted in the proliferation of naval commands in the Mediterranean, General Ridgway did act quickly to simplify command in the Central Region. In August 1953 he established a single Commander-in-Chief (CINCENT) for the region with subordinate Land, Air and Naval Commanders (COMLANDCENT, COMAIRCENT, and COMNAVCENT respectively). Now the number of Major Subordinate Commanders in ACE was down to four (see Table 4).

**Table 3**  
**Initial ACE Structure, 1951-1953**

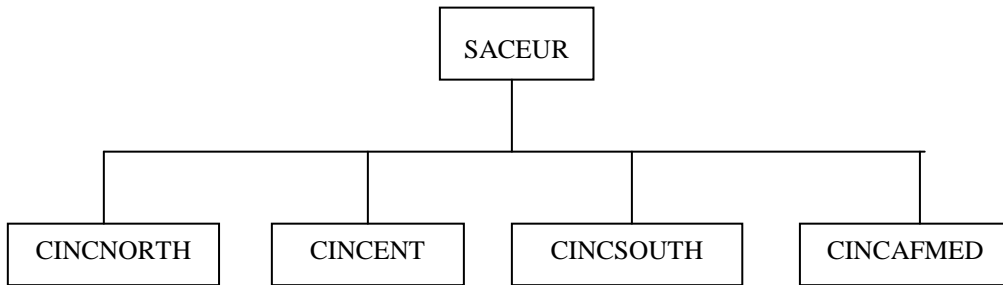


<sup>1</sup> Established in March 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Disestablished in March 1953 when AFMED came into existence.

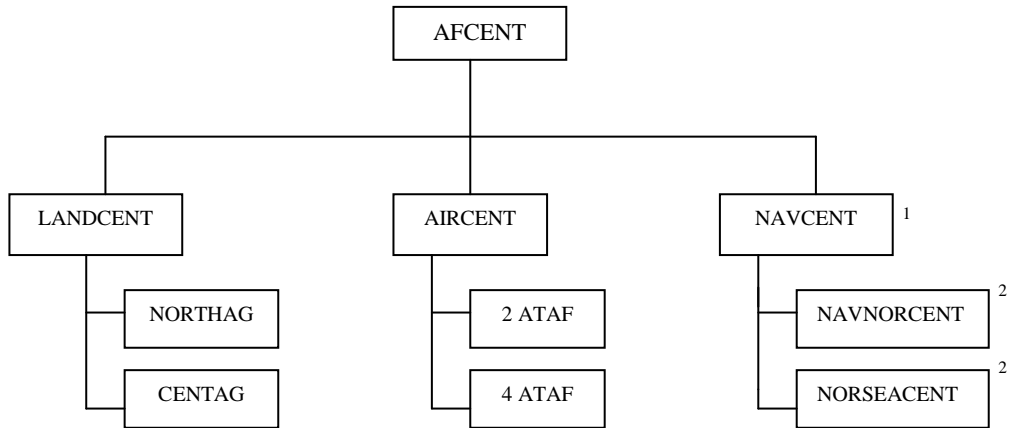
<sup>3</sup> Established in March 1953 after NAVSOUTH was disestablished.

**Table 4**  
**Major Subordinate Commanders in ACE, 1953-1967**



The next challenge for Allied Command Europe was the integration of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Germany, after it joined the Alliance in 1955 and began to create an army, navy, and air force. This issue quickly became tied in with a boundary dispute between AFNORTH and AFCENT, because the northernmost portion of Germany (Schleswig-Holstein) had been transferred to the Northern Region during the early 1950s due to the fact that at that time the only troops stationed there were from Denmark and Norway. The new German Armed Forces objected to the boundary line running through their country, and the French CINCENT also called for Schleswig-Holstein to be returned to his command area. In 1958 CINCENT went even further, arguing that the entire Danish peninsula and its Baltic approaches were natural extensions of the Central Region and should therefore belong to AFCENT. While recognizing the military logic behind such proposals, SACEUR Lauris Norstad believed that the Scandinavian nations should not be separated, and he therefore rejected CINCENT's requests to change the command boundary. In doing so he was not merely thinking in terms of retaining the status quo. General Norstad viewed Denmark, Schleswig-Holstein and the Baltic Straits as a strategic entity and he therefore wished to create a new, integrated command for the Baltic region. At first he called for a naval command to cover the entire Baltic area (NAVBALT), with the newly created German naval forces to be integrated under this headquarters. But when his proposal ran into political difficulties, he had to resort to an interim solution for integrating German naval units into the NATO command structure. In 1956 he therefore created two small headquarters - Allied Naval Forces Northern Area Central Europe (NAVNORCENT) and Allied Naval Forces North Sea Sub Area (NORSEACENT) - under Allied Naval Forces Central Europe to command German naval forces in the Baltic and North Seas respectively. Thereafter the Central Region remained unchanged until France's withdrawal from the integrated military command structure in 1966 (see Table 5).

**Table 5**  
**The Central Region, 1953-1966**

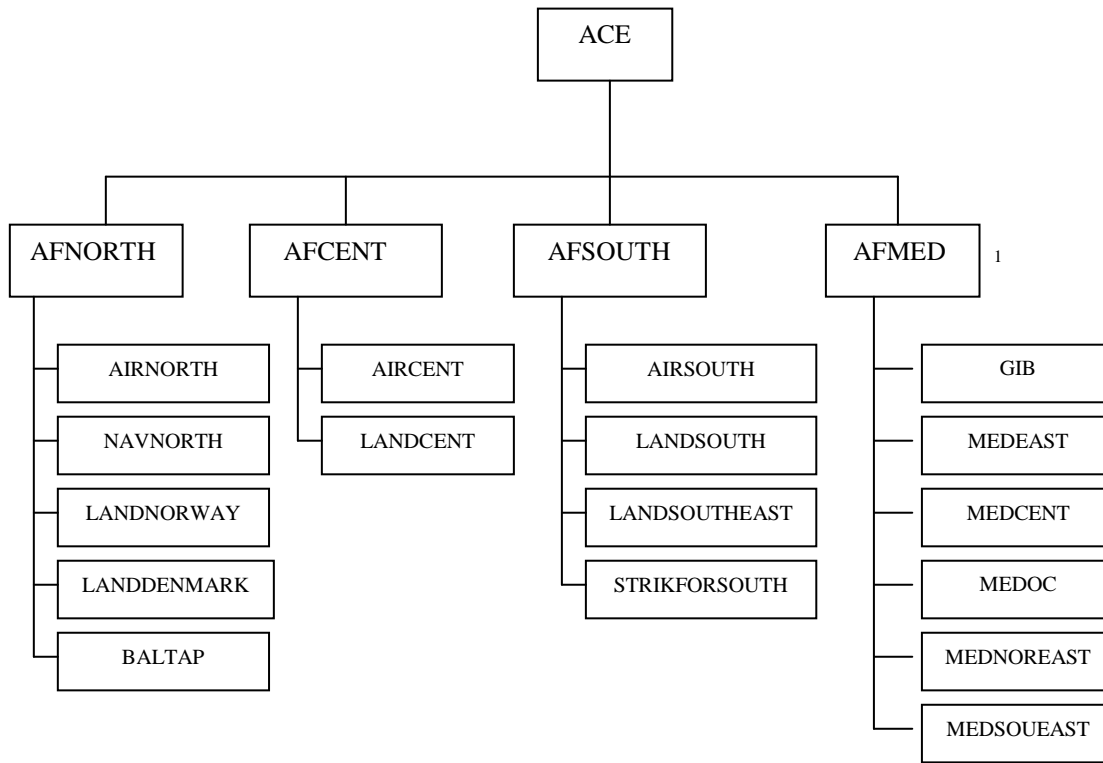


<sup>1</sup> Disestablished in 1962.

<sup>2</sup> Established in 1956; disestablished in 1962.

Still hoping to achieve a unified approach for the Baltic area, SACEUR Norstad adopted a more ambitious proposal by AFNORTH in 1958 to create a tri-service command that would integrate Danish and German land forces in Jutland and naval forces in the Baltic approaches. Once initial Danish reluctance to the proposal was overcome, the establishment of Allied Forces Baltic Approaches (BALTAP) was approved in December 1961 and activation of the new headquarters followed in July 1962. The headquarters' commander (COMBALTAP) was a subordinate of CINCNORTH, and the post was held on a rotating basis by Denmark and Germany. With German naval forces now falling under COMBALTAP, there was no longer any need for the small headquarters of Allied Naval Forces Central Europe and its two subordinate commands, and they were disestablished in 1962. As a result of the changes in 1962 - the creation of Headquarters BALTAP and the elimination of NAVCENT, ACE now had the structure shown in Table 6 (following page) since AFSOUTH and AFMED had remained unchanged.

**Table 6**  
**Allied Command Europe, 1962-1967**



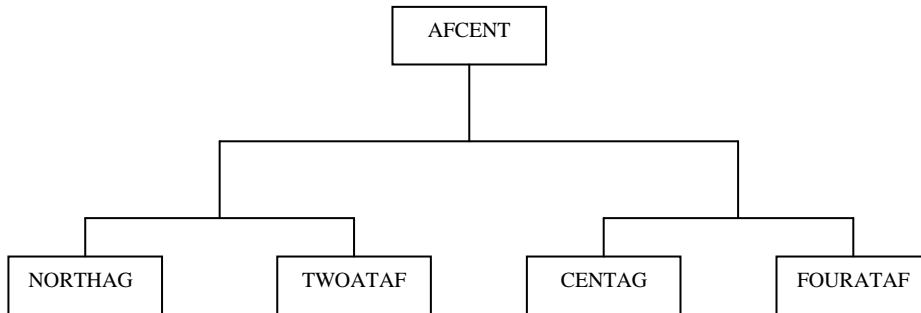
Major Reorganization in 1966-67

The next major changes in the command structure for Allied Command Europe were the result of France’s 1966 decision to withdraw from the NATO Integrated Military Command Structure. SHAPE had already been studying the problem of the proliferation of headquarters within ACE, particularly in the Central Region, and with the French withdrawal from ACE making reorganization necessary, SACEUR Lyman L. Lemnitzer decided to cut out an entire echelon of command by eliminating LANDCENT and AIRCENT and incorporating their functions into the overall Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT) headquarters. As a result of this reorganization in November 1966, the Army Groups and Allied Tactical Air Forces reported directly to AFCENT but were paired together (NORTHAG with TWOATAF, CENTAG with FOURATAF) to ensure proper support (see Table 7).

<sup>1</sup> The subordinate commands of AFMED were all naval commands and had the following names: Gibraltar (later known as Gibraltar-Mediterranean or “GIBMED”), Eastern Mediterranean, Central Mediterranean, Western Mediterranean (which used the French term “Méditerranée Occidentale”), Northeast Mediterranean, and Southeast Mediterranean.

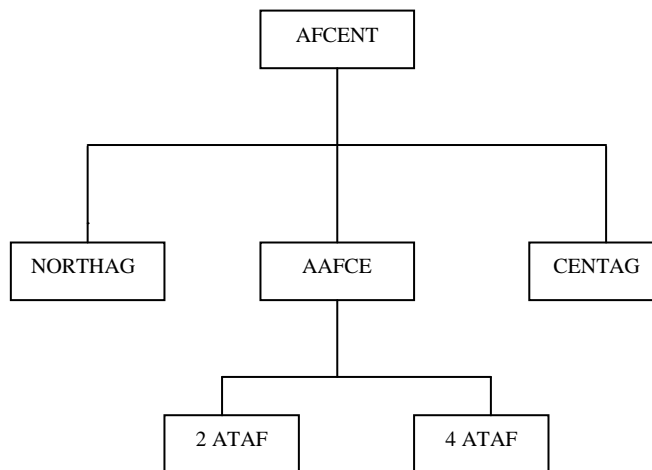


**Table 7  
Command in the Central Region, 1966-1974**



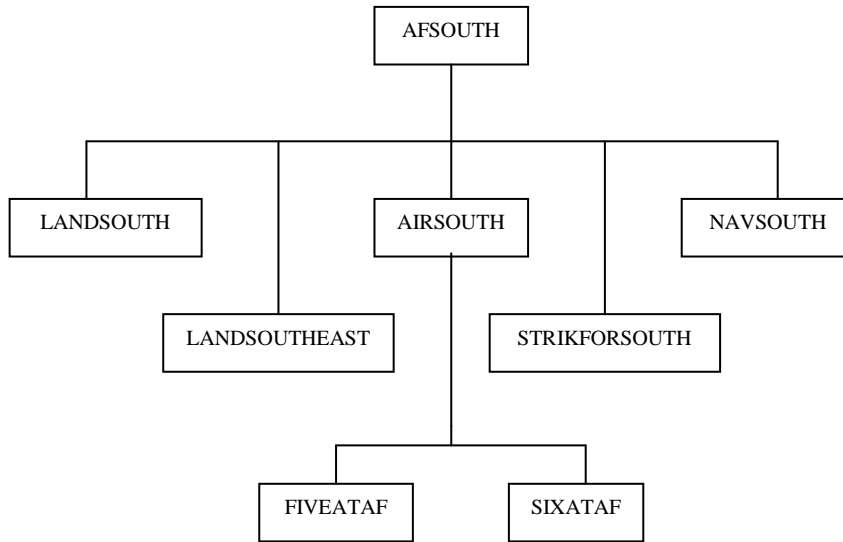
The Central Region's new command structure did not prove entirely satisfactory, however. Problems with the lack of centralised control of ACE's air assets led in 1974 to the re-establishment of Allied Air Forces Central Europe as a major subordinate command of AFCENT (with a new acronym - AAFCE - instead of the old AIRCENT), as can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8  
Command in the Central Region, 1974-1994**



Command arrangements in the Mediterranean area were never completely satisfactory because of overlapping boundaries and responsibilities between AFMED and AFSOUTH. The position of AFMED had already become tenuous in 1964, after Malta - the location of its headquarters - became independent of Britain, which meant that AFMED was not located on NATO territory. France's withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structure in 1966 provided the final excuse for a complete reorganization of the command structure in the Mediterranean (see Table 89). AFMED disappeared in June 1967, and its functions and subordinate headquarters were taken over by a new headquarters, Allied Naval Forces Southern Europe (NAVSOUTH), under the command of an Italian admiral. NAVSOUTH initially remained in AFMED's facilities in Malta but moved to Naples in 1971.

**Table 9**  
**Major Headquarters in the Southern Region, 1967-1999**

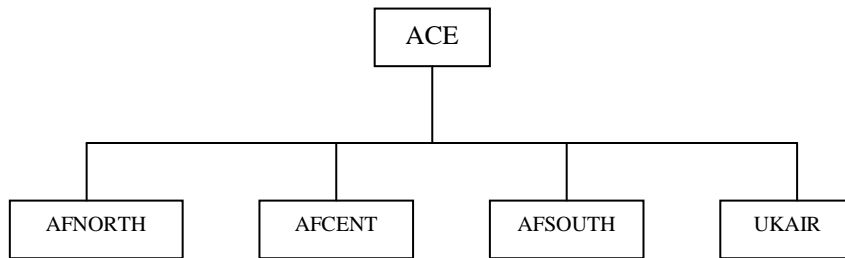


The new command structure established for the Southern Region in 1967 remained fundamentally unchanged for the next three decades. When Greece rejoined the integrated military command structure in 1980 after having withdrawn in 1974, one key point in the Reintegration Agreement signed at that time was the establishment in the future of two new NATO headquarters to be located in Greece: Allied Land Forces South Central Europe (LANDSOUTHCENT) and an additional Allied Tactical Air Force - Seventh ATAF - that would be subordinate to AIRSOUTH along with the existing Fifth and Sixth ATAFs in Italy and Turkey respectively. However, political disagreements in the region prevented the implementation of these proposals. As a result, the command structure of the Southern Region remained unchanged far longer than in any of the other regions; obtaining consensus for any changes was simply too difficult.

In April 1975 a fourth Major Subordinate Command was added to ACE, the Headquarters, United Kingdom NATO Air Forces (UKAIR). The first step toward the integration of major portions of the Royal Air Force into the NATO command structure had come in May 1961, when the Commander of the RAF's Fighter Command took on a NATO hat as commander of the newly-created United Kingdom Air Defence Region. Later that decade the RAF's Fighter and Bomber Commands merged to form RAF Strike Command. After the United Kingdom announced a substantial increase in the numbers of its aircraft committed to NATO in 1974, SHAPE quickly prepared a plan for a new command and control organization based upon the headquarters of RAF Strike Command. Following approval by the Defence Planning Committee, Headquarters UKAIR came into existence.

The ACE command structure shown in Table 10 remained in effect for almost two decades and even survived the end of the Cold War by five years.

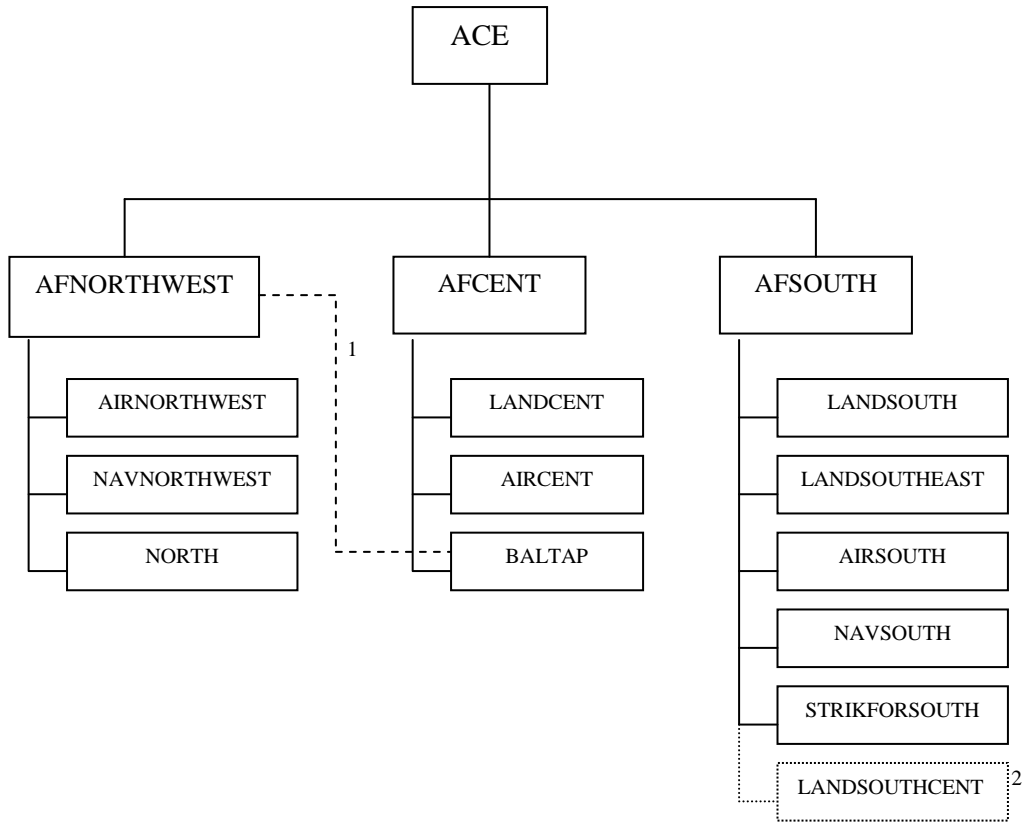
**Table 10**  
**Major Subordinate Commands of ACE, 1975-1994**



Frequent Reorganization since the end of the Cold War

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a decade of extensive change in the NATO military command structure, particularly in Allied Command Europe. In December 1991 NATO Defence Ministers decided to reduce the number of Major NATO Commands from three to two, thus eliminating Allied Command Channel; they also decided to reorganize the remaining two commands. Among the most important changes within Allied Command Europe was the creation of a new Major Subordinate Command known as Allied Forces Northwest Europe, to be based in High Wycombe, United Kingdom. In addition to the functions previously held by AFNORTH, the new headquarters took over many of the functions of the Channel Command and Headquarters UKAIR. After two years of planning and preparation for the changeover, these headquarters closed on 30 June 1994 and Headquarters AFNORTHWEST was activated on the following day. In the Central Region CINCENT finally achieved a goal originally set forth by his predecessor in the late 1950s, as in 1994 responsibility for land and air operations in Denmark switched from AFNORTH to AFCENT as the result of BALTAP becoming a subordinate of CINCENT. However, one consequence of the difficult quadrilateral political negotiations that preceded this change was that COMBALTAP would continue to report to CINCNORTHWEST for maritime matters, making BALTAP the only subordinate headquarters in ACE with two separate command chains (see Table 10). Not shown on this chart of the main headquarters is a new headquarters that also came into existence in 1994, the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps or ARRC. This headquarters commands a number of units that can be assigned to ACE for use in a crisis situation, including the ACE Mobile Force (Land), which had been established as a small crisis response force in the early 1960s. The 1994 reorganization also called for the establishment of LANDSOUTHCENT and the Seventh ATAF (a subordinate of AIRSOUTH) in Greece, but implementation of this part of the structure was delayed by political disagreements in the region.

**Table 10**  
**ACE Command Structure, 1994-1999**



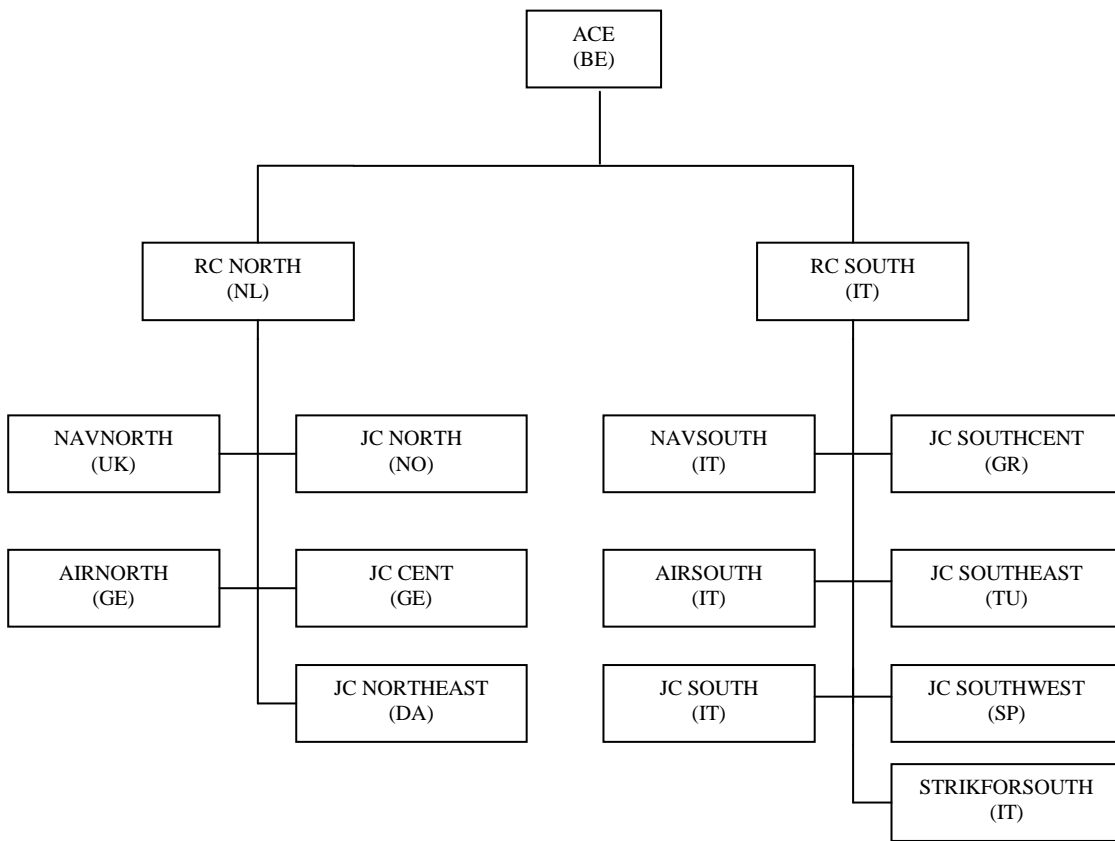
<sup>1</sup> Reporting chain for maritime matters only.

<sup>2</sup> Although approved as part of the new command structure, this new land headquarters to be located in Greece was not activated at that time because of political disagreements within the Southern Region; the same situation applied to another headquarters to be located in Greece, the 7<sup>th</sup> Allied Tactical Air Force, a proposed subordinate headquarters of AIRSOUTH.

Just as the new organisational structure was taking effect, NATO began to consider additional ways to organise its military structure as the result of the 1994 Brussels Summit decision to adapt Alliance structures to the changed international situation. In 1995 NATO began a Long Term Study to examine post-Cold War strategy and structure; this resulted in recommendations for new, streamlined command structure in 1996. The key features involved the retention of the two Major NATO Commands for Europe and the Atlantic, henceforth to be known as Strategic Commands, and also the reduction of the number of Major Subordinate Commands (henceforth to be known as Regional Commands) in ACE to just two, Regional Command North Europe and Regional Command South Europe. This change was designed to reflect the shifting focus of the Alliance away from the Cold War emphasis on threats from the East in the area north of the Alps to a more balanced approach giving equal emphasis to the South and the new risks in that area. The North Atlantic Council approved these recommendations in 1997. Activation of the new RC SOUTH occurred in September 1999, and in March 2000 Headquarters AFNORTHWEST closed and the new RC NORTH was activated. The headquarters of the two Regional Commands were known as RHQ (Regional Headquarters) SOUTH and RHQ NORTH respectively. Each of the Regional Commands retained its traditional region-wide commands for air and naval

forces while adding a number of Joint Commands (JCs) as subordinates in place of the single-service Land commands of the past, thus reflecting the increased emphasis on joint operations. The headquarters of the new Joint Commands were known as Joint Headquarters (JHQ). Another new feature of the post-1999 command structure was the creation of a number of Combined Air Operations Centres (CAOCs) as subordinates of AIRNORTH and AIRSOUTH. Table 11 shows this command structure of ACE and the locations of the headquarters; not shown are two small planning staffs - the Combined Joint Planning Staff and the Reaction Force (Air) Staff - and the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps.

**Table 11**  
**ACE Command Structure, 1999-2003**  
 (with the locations of the headquarters)

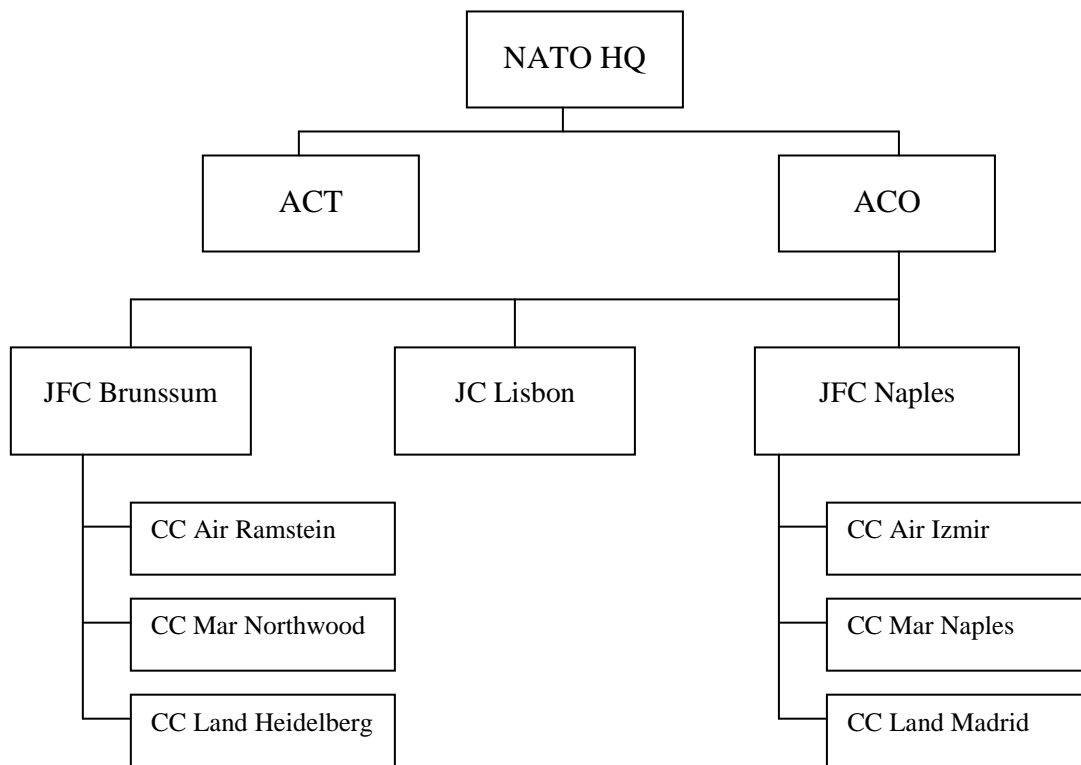


While the new headquarters were in the process of being activated, four more nations became full participants in Allied Command Europe. Spain (a member of the Alliance since 1980) joined the integrated military command structure in January 1999, and two months later the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland became the newest members of the Alliance and also participants in the integrated military command structure at the same time.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 and NATO's invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, new pressures arose to once again reform NATO's command structure, even though it had just been reorganised only a few years previously. After the United States announced major changes to its own command structure in 2002 and indicated that it might no longer be interested in maintaining command of Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT), the European allies became concerned about the possibility of a loosening of US ties to NATO if there were no longer any US-led NATO

headquarters within the United States. As a result, NATO Defence Ministers agreed a radical change to the NATO Command Structure on 12 June 2003 (see Table 12). Henceforth all operational matters would be the responsibility of Allied Command Operations (the new name for Allied Command Europe), while a completely new headquarters, Allied Command Transformation (ACT), was established at Norfolk, Virginia (the old SACLANT location) with the mission of promoting and overseeing the continuing transformation of the Alliance's forces and capabilities. As a first step in the new reorganisation, HQ ACLANT was deactivated on 19 June 2003 and replaced by HQ ACT. Then on 29 July 2003 Allied Command Europe was renamed Allied Command Operations (ACO). For historical, legal and financial reasons, ACO's supreme commander and headquarters retained the traditional titles of SACEUR and SHAPE rather than becoming SACO and SHACO. Unlike HQ ACLANT, SHAPE had not changed its primary mission but had simply expanded its area of operations and responsibility.

**Table 12**  
**NATO Command Structure, 2004 to Present**



As part of this reorganisation, the number of headquarters was reduced from 20 to 11, and the number of CAOCs went from 10 to 6. Previously there had been seven operational-level headquarters in the command structure (RC NORTH and RC SOUTH under ACE; RHQ EASTLANT, RHQ SOUTHLANT, RHQ WESTLANT, STRIKFLTLANT, and SUBACLANT under ACLANT), but under the new command structure only three such headquarters remained: Joint Force Commands (JFCs) North and South and Joint Headquarters West. These three operational level headquarters were subsequently renamed after their geographical locations and became JFC Brunssum, JFC Naples, and Joint Command Lisbon.

A similar reduction took place at the component/tactical level, with 11 former such headquarters (AIRNORTH, NAV NORTH, JC CENTRE, JC NORTHEAST, JC NORTH, AIR SOUTH, NAV SOUTH, JC SOUTH, JC SOUTH CENTRE, JC SOUTHEAST, JC SOUTHWEST) plus 10 CAOCs being replaced by 6 Component Commands (CC LAND Heidelberg, CC Air Ramstein, CC MAR Northwood, CC Land Madrid, CC Air Izmir, CC MAR Naples) plus 4 CAOCs and 2 DCAOCs (Deployable CAOCs). In 2008 the number of CAOCs was again reduced by 2.

Other efforts by SHAPE in recent years to reduce the number of headquarters by eliminating unneeded component commands and thus achieve in this manner the manpower cuts mandated by the nations have proven unsuccessful, due to national desires to retain a NATO headquarters on their territory, even if the SHAPE thinks the headquarters is no longer needed. As a result, SHAPE has been forced to result to “salami slicing” of all headquarters during each manpower review, continually reducing their effectiveness, while having to retain headquarters for which there is no longer a military requirement.

### Conclusions

Since its creation in 1951 the NATO Command Structure has undergone many reorganizations, with the greatest number occurring since the end of the Cold War. The pace of such reorganizations has continued to increase during the past decade, with new command structure reviews seemingly starting almost before the ink has dried on the previous ones, as nations seek to adapt the command structure to NATO’s changing role while also saving scarce resources. Since these pressures are likely to continue in the future, there is no likelihood that the pressures for command structure reform and manpower reduction will abate. Given the many factors that must be taken into account during such command structure reviews – the need for military efficiency, concerns about budgetary implications, the desires of nations to have a NATO headquarters on their territory, and differing national views on all of these issues, it is natural that the solutions that achieve consensus among all of the member nations may not always be the ideal military solutions, but the primacy of political concerns over military efficiency has been recognized from the very beginnings of the Alliance. Thus at the height of the controversies over command arrangements for the Southern Region in 1952, the first Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, wrote, “The basic decision on command in this general area should be reached on a governmental level. Thereafter we will develop a structure which we will make work regardless of the apparent difficulties and national or service sentiments.” This sound advice has been followed by all of General Eisenhower’s successors.