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ORGANISATION DU TRAITÉ DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD**

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SUBJECT: **NATO NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (NCO) BI-STRATEGIC
COMMAND STRATEGY AND NCO GUIDELINES**

DATE: 15 September 2017

REFERENCE: SH/DOM/SWM/10-270697, 1000 TSC GXX 0200/TT-6327/Ser:NU, NATO Non-Commissioned Officer Bi-SC Strategy and Recommended Non-Commissioned Officer Guidelines, dated 13 October 2010.

1. Time and time again, the professional Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Corps has proven to be the unwavering force in the execution of NATO's mission across the Alliance and beyond. Our present environment requires it, and our future environment demands it, therefore, the need to constantly re-evaluate and advance the skills, knowledge and abilities of the NCO Corps could not be more critical.

2. On 13 October 2010, former Supreme Allied Commander Operations, Admiral James Stavridis, and former Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, General Stephane Abrial jointly signed the first and only NATO NCO Bi-SC Strategy and Recommended NCO Guidelines. The purpose, as outlined in Reference, was to address key assumptions and implications, define capability gaps and provide recommendations. This framework was designed to address the anticipated increased demand on NCOs in multinational operations, prepare the multinational NCO with a common understanding of NCO guidelines for greater interoperability, and address the NCO's increasingly essential role in executing the professional development of their forces.

3. The enclosed NATO NCO Bi-SC Strategy and NCO Guidelines delivers the Alliance's next iteration of expectations of the NCO Corps. It focuses on a more methodical means of creating the best prepared NCO; to be in the right place, at the right time, every time, based on a SMART approach and new measures of effectiveness. This will ensure the NCO's advancement remains congruent with the Strategic Commander's intent. In addition, the strategy and guidelines provide willing Partner nations a blueprint to emulate and reinforce the interoperability of the NCO Corps.

4. We are interested in the execution of this document and encourage your support at all levels to embrace it, as we continue to adjust to the strategic environment and shape our connected forces.



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5. Points of contact remain the Allied Command Operations and Allied Command Transformation, Command Senior Enlisted Leaders.



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ANNEX:

A. NATO NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER BI-SC STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES

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NATO NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (NCO) Bi-STRATEGIC COMMAND STRATEGY AND NCO GUIDELINES

1. **Introduction.** The NATO NCO is widely acknowledged as the “Backbone” of the Armed Forces, therefore he/she must continue to operate and transform effectively to meet today and tomorrow’s challenges, in order to ensure NATO remains both a ready and responsive interoperable force. This document is the second NATO NCO Bi-SC Strategy and NCO Guidelines and will replace the signed inaugural document, dated 10 October 2010.

2. **Scope.** The strategic landscape has changed drastically over the past few years and the focus on systematically advancing human capital¹ has never been more crucial, especially for NCOs² (Other Ranks), which makes up between 75 to 80 percent of NATO’s military force. Today, the time-honoured tradition of teaching the NCO what to think, versus how to think, limits their full intellectual capability within the Alliance, as it adapts to an ever-increasing complex strategic environment. Additionally, this document applies an ambitious approach and methodical focus on goals, objectives, strategies, common tactics and the measures of effectiveness, in order to advance a seamless alignment with the Alliance’s strategic direction.

3. NCO Corps Strategy within the Alliance

a. Goals: (The “what” in “general” terms)

(1) Broadly affects three primary focus areas; Human Capital, Professional Development and Partnerships in order to maximize the effectiveness, efficiency, interoperability, and readiness of the NCO Corps within NATO and NATO Command/Force Structure.

(2) Applies SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) and holistic approaches at all levels of NCO functionality, as it pertains to operations, exercises, education, training, partnerships and utilization. This is crucial in defining and closing all known capability gaps.

b. Objectives: (The “what” in “specific” terms)

(1) Codify measurable and documented reporting within policies, programs, working groups, seminars, workshops, professional development institutions and mobile training teams to ensure results remain congruent with SACEUR/SACT direction. The means, must be correlated to the skills, knowledge and abilities of today and tomorrow’s NCO requirements.

(2) Greater emphasis must be placed on language training and proficiency to meet the required standards specific within the Peacetime Establishment/Crisis

¹ Human Capital is defined as preparing the best-prepared NCO to be in the right place, at the right time, every time based on their knowledge, talents, skills, abilities, experience, intelligence, training, and judgment.

² Standard Guidance (STANAG) 2116 refers to the NCO as OR5-9, but for the purpose of this document, the term NCO will refer to Other Ranks 1-9.

Establishment (PE/CE) Job Descriptions (JD). This will expand the quantity of diverse NCOs and promote advancing the best-qualified NCO, to the right place, at the right time.

(3) Proper national selection of the most qualified NCOs is essential for service at the strategic and subordinate-level headquarters, NATO Force Structure elements, and NATO-led operations and activities, whereby PE/CE JDs cite and align the national NCO ranks and skills sets. This will meet essential education requirements for all NCO positions, which is crucial for ensuring readiness levels.

(4) Due to the complexities of tomorrow's challenges, the need to continuously identify and optimize opportunities for critical, creative and forward-thinking NCO is paramount. This will provide greater inclusion and expertise into the operational and transformational needs of today/tomorrow's military. This is necessary to confront the unprecedented rate of advances in technology and support high-tech solutions at every level.

c. **Strategy: (The "How" in "General" terms)**

(1) Promote and empower National, NATO Command Structure (NCS) and NATO Force Structure (NFS)³ CSEL positions as primary and permanent leadership positions, and designate all other duties as ancillary to ensure appropriate emphasis and oversight of this strategy are executed.

(2) Promote and empower a Command Team⁴ concept at all levels, within National and NATO leadership levels, to demonstrate unity and determination of the Officer/NCO relationship. This enables critical thinking and unbiased communications, in order to provide an NCO perspective in the decision-making processes and execute direct communications up, down and across the Command and Control spectrum.

(3) Promote and empower National, NCS/NFS Senior Staff NCOs⁵, such as Directorate, Division, and Branch Senior NCOs as primary and permanent staff positions within the staff elements to ensure full inclusion of all staff assigned NCOs and provide necessary professional development to staff members in order to accomplish the assigned tasks.

³ Reference MC-0324/3 and MC-0586/1

⁴ Command Team is a professional, loyal-based partnership between the Commander and Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL/SEL) on all levels of command. For the purpose of this document, Command Teams are part of the Command and Control structure from platoon level organizations to the strategic command level. While the commander holds the official authority over a unit, SEL/CSELS directly support the commander's intent, priorities and given tasks by the authority given by the Commander. SELC/SEL ensures mission clarity to all unit members and provides the commander with direct feedback from the forces on all tasks.

⁵ Senior NCOs (SNCO) within the staff elements are responsible to provide required professional development to all Staff NCOs and ensure proficiency and professionalism. SNCOs provide staff element leaders with clear and concise inputs on work processes and standardization. He/she also provides the link between staff elements and SEL/CSEL to ensure information flows, is timely and accurate actions are in support of the organization.

(4) Develop, promote and empower NCO leadership positions (NCO support channels⁶) on all levels of Command, from the lowest tactical to the highest strategic levels, to ensure support to the chain of command, exchange of information, reporting, advising, implementation and execution of command policies and directives.

(5) NCS/NFS must promote and employ a talent management strategy into the PE/CE infrastructure that provides intellectual and professional capability utilization of all staff assigned NCOs. In addition, they must monitor the talent management process by continuously monitoring assigned positions and updating NCO JDs. This will safeguard the Human Capital focus, as captured in paragraph 3.a.1 and ensure it is strictly enforced.

(6) Create greater emphasis on National and NATO professional development education and training institutions by educating the “why” along with the “what” into the scope of NCO responsibilities. This will reinforce educating the NCO Corps on how to think, versus what to think, which ultimately will overcome previously addressed implications and experience disparities.

(7) Utilize National Senior Enlisted Leaders and NATO CSEL Working Group to ascertain new approaches, new methods and new solutions to elevate human capital, professional development, readiness and partnership advances with Allies and Partners.

d. **Tactics:** (The “How” in “Specific” terms of **Measuring Effectiveness**)

(1) Conduct annual assessments, led by the NATO CSEL Working Group, based on the National and NCS/NFS Element inputs, and provide an annual report card to all stakeholders in order to address all gaps and implications for NCS/NFS and Nations to consider. The NATO CSEL Working Group monitors, addresses and advances NATO and Partner Nations enlisted professional requirements. The working group’s ultimate goal is to make collective recommendations supporting the professional knowledge, skills, and attributes for enlisted personnel, in order to foster greater development, interoperability and transformation. These attributes enable NATO and Partner Nations to develop and function collectively in a multinational environment.

(2) Cite and quantify Human Capital, Professional Development and Partnership assessments and indicators, which tie directly to the Strategic Commander’s Direction.

(3) Encourage nations and task NCS/NFS to develop, utilize, collect and analyse self-assessments, critiques and surveys from national professional development seminars, senior enlisted seminars, symposiums, NATO and Partner academic institutions and workshops, training and exercises and NATO-led operations and activities. The outcome is to evaluate anecdotal and empirical data to measure tactical, operational and strategic advances of National and

⁶ NCO Support Channels executes established policies, directives and orders, standardizes performance, executes and provides guidance on training and education, ensures professional behaviour and conduct of forces. Additionally, NCO Support Channels must understand the Commander’s Intent in order to be able to issue effective implementing instructions throughout the forces.

NATO NCO Corps. The NATO CSEL Working Group will serve as the conduit for this forcing function.

(4) NCS/NFS and Nations must promote, encourage and support full utilization of the available NATO School and Swiss Armed Forces NCO leadership and job specific courses to ensure required training and education standards are met.

(5) Promote, encourage and support the utilization of the NCO Professional Military Education Reference Curriculum to serve as a “non-specific” national baseline to ensure NCO fundamentals are never lost in translation.

(6) Encourage and support the active role of National and NCS/NFS Senior Enlisted Leaders in directly supporting the Defence Education Enhancement Program. The objective should focus on obtaining national availability and expertise, ensuring Partner Nation education opportunities mirror the direction of the NATO NCO Corps.

NATO NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (NCO) GUIDELINES

1. **Aim.** To enhance NATO operational effectiveness and interoperability by establishing common guidelines for NATO NCOs, which align with the Strategy throughout the NATO Alliance.
2. **Vision.** A professional, competent, resilient and capably responsible NCO Corps that is adaptive to face new challenges, social dynamics and technological advances; will be empowered to:
 - a. Execute duties and responsibilities in support of NATO Commanders.
 - b. Fulfil mission requirements at tactical, operational and strategic-levels, depending upon the NCO's education, training and experience.
 - c. Capitalize on the strengths of the multinational NCO's intellect to optimize the operational and transformational success of the alliance.
3. **Definition of NATO NCO Corps.** The NATO NCO is a professionally educated, trained and disciplined leader, who serves as the "backbone" of any military. The NATO NCO is committed to excellence and exemplifies a high degree of military competency, as defined in the 2013 Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Military Education Reference Curriculum. The complexity of the global landscape and rapid rate of change necessitates greater application from the NCO. This is pivotal to advancing a greater technical, operational and strategic outcome in order to successfully meet the increasing demands of an uncertain environment.
4. **NATO Rank Indicators – Guidelines for OR-1 through OR-9.** These rank indicators, as defined by STANAG 2116, are based on the NATO NCO structure and demonstrate the continual accumulation of leadership skills throughout the course of an NCO's professional development and advancement. As NCOs are promoted, they build on the leadership and management demonstrated in their former ranks, meanwhile assuming more responsibility and exercising greater direct and indirect leadership expertise.
 - a. **OR-1 through OR-3.** These are the basic entry ranks into the military structure. Personnel are expected to uphold national standards of conduct and follow the orders of supervisors and regulations. Note: National promotion systems vary, therefore, it is imperative to measure the military member's time-in-grade, time-in-service, age and maturity to ensure this entry level is challenged accordingly.
 - b. **OR-4.** The first level of leadership within the NATO NCO ranks. Is responsible for the good order and discipline, training, personal appearance and general welfare of their subordinate personnel.
 - c. **OR-5.** The OR-5 is the level of leadership with the greatest impact on subordinate ranks. Practices leadership-by-example, demonstrating personal compliance with standards while enforcing those standards in order to ensure the good order and discipline, training, personal appearance and general welfare of subordinate personnel. Unquestionably competent to execute tasks correctly, exercise leadership, care for assigned personnel and support mission accomplishment.
 - d. **OR-6.** This is the first of the NATO Senior NCO ranks. The OR-6 is usually assigned in positions requiring increased responsibilities. The OR-6 is responsible for

more subordinates and more equipment, and uses greater experience and leadership to shape his/her sphere of influence under all circumstances. It is important to note, some NATO Nations recognize OR-7 as their first SNCO rank.

e. **OR-7:** The OR-7 is empowered and considered a key element within the command structure. They focus their increased experience and leadership skills toward collective mission accomplishment and are responsible for the effective management of larger numbers of personnel and equipment. At this level, Senior NCOs are expected to be able to provide sound advice to their leadership.

f. **OR-8:** Uses enhanced leadership skills and broad experience to successfully implement planning and management for collective mission accomplishment. Advises unit/element and higher commanders and mentors subordinates, coordinates and supervises training. Monitors unit effectiveness and upholds standards.

g. **OR-9:** The most experienced SNCO within the NATO NCO structure. Uses enhanced leadership skills and broad experience in a greater capacity to successfully implement planning and management for collective mission accomplishment. Advises staff element, instructs and mentors subordinates, and coordinates and supervises training. Monitors unit effectiveness and upholds standards. Additionally, monitors unit morale and welfare, Other Ranks professional development and upholds standards. The OR-9 serves as role model for all NCOs/ORs, as well as junior officers and is an advisor within a higher headquarters.

h. **OR-9 as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader:** This key senior enlisted leader, at the pinnacle of the NCO Ranks, serves as a senior advisor to the commander and the staff element leadership. This SNCO makes recommendations to the commander on all matters pertaining to the Other Ranks. He or she ensures compliance with policies, adherence to standards and performance, conduct and effective training and maintenance of discipline within the organization. This SNCO oversees the professional development of all Other Ranks. He or she serves at the highest level and provides oversight at the tactical, operational and strategic-level, supporting the commander's intent. That said, this position should not be a secondary position, which could jeopardize the integrity of the Command Team concept.