



INTERNATIONAL MILITARY STAFF
ETAT-MAJOR MILITAIRE INTERNATIONAL



13 September 2012

IMSM-0379-2012

DIVISION DIRECTORS, IMS
HEADS OF INDEPENDENT OFFICES, IMS
DIRECTOR, NATO HEADQUARTERS C3 STAFF
DIRECTOR, NATO STANDARDIZATION AGENCY

NATO HEADQUARTERS LESSONS LEARNED IMPLEMENTING DIRECTIVE

Reference

A. MCM-0021-2011, NATO Lessons Learned Policy, 18 May 2011

1. Reference A directed that an Implementing Directive for Lessons Learned at NATO Headquarters should be developed, in order to clearly outline the procedures to be followed of any Lessons Learned process taking into account the specific working practices of NATO Headquarters.
2. This Implementing Directive has now been developed jointly by the IS and the IMS and is attached as Enclosure 1. The outlined procedures should be followed each time the Lessons Learned process is launched.
3. In order to better facilitate the Lessons Learned process, any observations and recommendations which are considered as potential Lessons Identified and may be then developed into Lessons Learned, should be discussed as an AOB issue during the IMS Executive Group (IEG) regular meetings. Additionally, the next iteration of IMSSOP-1 should reflect the LL process within the IMS.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bornemann".

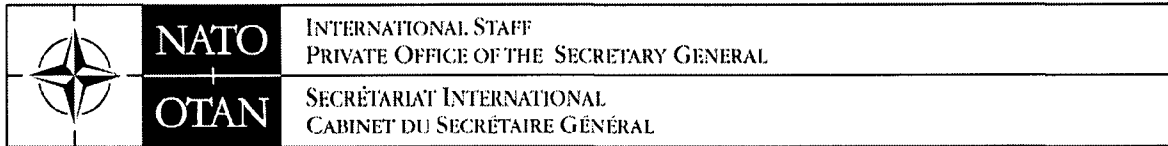
J. BORNEMANN
Lieutenant General, DEUAR
Director General
International Military Staff

Enclosure

1. DSG(2012)0309, NATO Headquarters Lessons Learned Implementing Directive, 09 Aug 2012

Copy To IS/OPS

Action Officers Col M Ridley, P&P (5672), Lt Col P Janusz, P&P (5679)



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9 August 2012

DSG(2012)0309

To: ASG/PASP
ASG/OPS
ASG/DPP
ASG/DI
ASG/ESC
ASG/PDD
Director, PPU
Director, NATO Office of Resources
Director, NATO Office of Security
Office of the Legal Advisor

Cc: Director General, International Military Staff

From: Deputy Secretary General

Subject: **NATO Headquarters Lessons Learned Implementing Directive**

1. As you will recall, a new NATO Lessons Learned Policy was approved last year under PO(2011)0293. The Policy directed that an Implementing Directive for Lessons Learned at NATO Headquarters be developed, in order to clearly outline the processes and procedures to be followed for any Lessons Learned process, taking into account the specific working practices of NATO Headquarters.

2. The NATO Headquarters Lessons Learned Implementing Directive has been developed jointly by the IS and the IMS and is attached at Annex. I recommend that the outlined procedure be followed each time a Lessons Learned process is launched at NATO Headquarters. I will look forward to receiving clear advice from divisions whether a lessons learnt process needs to be initiated and whether nations need to be involved, at Council or committee level.

(signed) Alexander Vershbow

1 Annex

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NATO Headquarters Lessons Learned Implementing Directive

Reference: PO(2011)0293

Purpose: This Directive establishes modalities for carrying out the Lessons Learned process at NATO Headquarters.

Applicability: This Directive is applicable at NATO Headquarters, Brussels.

Publication Updates: In accordance with the provisions of the NATO Lessons Learned policy at reference, this Directive will be revised periodically to capture evolving working practices and organizational changes at NATO Headquarters.

Proponent: The lead proponent for this Directive is the Deputy Secretary General. The Director General, International Military Staff is invited to provide similar guidance to the International Military Staff.

Background

1. In a rapidly changing security environment, the ability to identify and implement improvements quickly is of paramount importance to NATO's ability to undertake the full range of Alliance's missions. Lessons Learned (LL) contribute to the ongoing reform and constant transformation of the Alliance. Lessons from all NATO activities, in addition to operations and exercises, which are captured and subject to a procedure of identification, rectification and implementation, will lead to increased effectiveness, efficiency and sharing of best practice.

2. Continuous improvement of best practices occurs when individuals and organizations learn from their experiences and practical knowledge to avoid repeating mistakes. Transformation and improvement also occurs when good practices are shared within an organization and with other organizations, in the spirit of the Comprehensive Approach. Learning from operations, training, exercises and other activities facilitates improvement of working practices within NATO Headquarters.

Direction

3. Every division of the International Staff and the International Military Staff at NATO Headquarters should establish and support a Lessons Learned capability, as mandated in the NATO Lessons Learned Policy at reference.

Definition of constituent parts of a Lessons Learned Capability

4. A Lessons Learned capability provides managers (civilian and military) at all levels within NATO Headquarters with the process, tools and structure necessary to observe, capture, analyse and take remedial action on working practices and procedures in place at NATO Headquarters that need to be course corrected in order to achieve best practices within the organization, as well as to be able to share results of Lessons Learned with a view to improve working practices that are currently in place.

5. The key elements of a Lessons Learned capability are:

5.1 **Process:** a common, NATO Headquarters-wide process for developing Lessons Learned, including its implementation and sharing.

5.2 **Tools:** the use of IT tools that facilitate an effective process throughout all its various phases, including the sharing phase.

5.3 **Structure:** Staff officers at NATO Headquarters (both civilian and military) should familiarise themselves with the NATO Policy on Lessons Learned at reference and with this implementing directive in order to be able to successfully carry out a Lessons Learned process, on the understanding that each staff officer may be requested to become a Lessons Learned action officer in their own area of expertise when a LL process is launched.

5.4 **Leadership engagement:** the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) and the Director General, International Military Staff (DG IMS), respectively, retain within NATO Headquarters the authority to launch a Lessons Learned process.

5.5 **Information sharing:** a specific emphasis should be put on the “responsibility to share” LL through the existing tools (e.g. NATO Lessons Learned Portal).

5.6 **Stakeholder involvement:** include stakeholders affected by a problem or a procedure that impacts established working practices at NATO Headquarters.

5.7 **Mindset:** should be based on the desire to improve through Lessons Learned and through sharing Lessons.

The NATO Lessons Learned Process

General principles

6. The NATO Lessons Learned process provides a structured framework to capture and pass on practical experiences and acquired knowledge for the benefit of the Organization. The process, as outlined in the NATO Policy on Lessons Learned (at reference) paragraph 14, is a procedure for staffing observations arising from an activity and developing them into a Lesson Learned. The process combines two phases which in turn include a number of steps through which an observation, through analysis, is turned into a Lesson Identified and then, through the implementation of a remedial action, into a Lesson Learned. The process is scalable and can be implemented at all levels.

6.1 The graph below outlines the phases and steps of the NATO Lessons Learned process as it should be implemented at NATO Headquarters.

Senior Leadership Engagement

7. While observations act as the trigger for the Lessons Learned (LL) process, senior management guidance and tasking within NATO Headquarters is essential. To create an effective Lessons Learned capability, senior management should:

- 7.1 provide guidance and acknowledge critical areas for improvement;
- 7.2 engage in the Lessons Learned process at key steps to underpin the importance of the process;
- 7.3 place special emphasis on prioritising issues and validating implementation solutions;
- 7.4 support the value of Lessons Learned and of improving working practices through the provision of support and guidance to NATO middle management as well as promoting proactive sharing of valuable lessons learned across the NATO HQ and with individual nations, partners and other international organizations.

Sharing Throughout the Process

8. Lessons sharing is based on two processes: publishing one's own lesson for the Organization and others' benefit, and receiving others' lessons that may have a relevance for the organization. Sharing is not a one-way track; equally, it is a process that should be started as early as possible.

8.1 The key sharing tool for the NATO LL process is the NATO LL Portal, established and managed by the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC). NATO bodies are encouraged to use and to feed the NATO LL Portal for sharing purposes. All observations, issues, best practices, analysis reports, lessons identified and lessons learned should be documented and, with the validation of the appropriate authority, inserted into the NATO LL Portal.

The JALLC will maintain and update a list of POCs for all LL purposes. All NATO bodies should notify the JALLC of nominations and changes of LL POCs through IS/Ops and IMS/Ops, which are supposed to coordinate this across NATO HQ.

The NATO Lessons Learned Process

The Analysis Phase

9. The entire Lessons Learned process is triggered by the observation of an issue or a good practice worth sharing and formalising into a standard procedure, or several similar events that constitute a pattern. Analysis is aimed at determining the root cause of the issue observed, or at codifying the best practice among good practices for further use. Involving stakeholders in identifying problems and assisting in the analysis phase greatly increases the quality of the effort. The analysis phase is divided into three steps:

9.1 **Observe** an issue, a procedure or a good practice and document it. Issues can be observed at all levels and with varying degrees of understanding and supporting information. The originator of an observation must document it as required, and as outlined in the JALLC Lessons Learned Handbook: "Once gathered, observations should be reviewed to filter unsuitable observations....those that survive this initial process are deemed suitable for inclusion in the LL process and will need to be managed"¹.

9.2 **Analyse** the observation to understand its root cause, value and/or the best practice. Analysis can follow a prescribed series of analysis steps as outlined in Chapter 4 of the Lessons Learned Handbook. This step should conclude with an analysis report. Analysis should exploit in-house capability and expertise; when the analysis required is beyond the originator's capacity, analysis support may be requested from the JALLC, sending an analysis requirement to HQ SACT.

9.3 **Recommended Remedial Actions and Action Bodies** are to be identified by the Staff for those issues that do not need to be submitted to the attention of the Alliance strategic decision-making bodies, or, in case of issues that require submission to Alliance strategic decision-making bodies, are identified and validated by the North Atlantic Council and/or the Military Committee.

Note: At Annex is a guideline for Phase 1 of the LL Process

Lessons Identified

10. The output of the Analysis Phase is a Lesson Identified (LI). As an intermediate product, the lesson identified includes an understanding of the root cause of the issue or an identified best practice. The lesson identified also includes the recommended remedial action(s) to correct the issue or to apply the best practice, and the proposed action bodies to implement the remedial action. Once developed, the lesson identified should be presented to the originator to ensure concurrence with the analysis, the determined root cause of the issue or the best practice, and the proposed remedial action(s).

The Remedial Action Phase

11. This phase begins with a well documented Lesson Identified being brought to the attention of the appropriate authority able and responsible for dealing with it. Its associated remedial actions are then endorsed, tasked and implemented and, if necessary, validated resulting into a Lesson Learned. In essence, a Lesson Learned is a measurable and positive change produced from a documented practical experience and knowledge of an individual organization. The Remedial Action phase may be completed by one or more action bodies and may include remedial actions with varying degrees of cost, time and impact. This phase creates a Lesson Learned through three steps:

¹ The NATO Lessons Learned Handbook, Second Edition, September 2011 – Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre, p.18

11.1 **Task.** The appropriate authority (at NATO Headquarters, the North Atlantic Council) endorses those remedial actions that are achievable and affordable within the NATO Headquarters structure, commits resources to implement it as appropriate, and designate one or more action bodies (NATO Military Authorities and/or subordinate committees to the NAC, or staff bodies) to carry out the remedial action(s).

11.2 **Implement.** Action bodies designated by the NAC should prepare an Action Plan to implement remedial actions and document the change and resultant impact. Action bodies report the progress in implementing the action plan to the tasking authority.

11.3 **Validate.** When necessary, the action bodies, in coordination with the originators of the observation, verify that the issue has been remedied or that the change proposed provided the desired result.

12. **Lesson Learned.** The output of the Remedial Action phase is a Lesson Learned (LL). As a product, the Lesson Learned leads to improved performance or increased capability.

Dissemination

13. The changes generated by a Lesson Learned, such as changes in doctrines, procedures or new capabilities must be disseminated as widely as possible, so that improvement is quickly put into practice. Lessons Learned and their associated changes are proactively shared primarily through the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

Application of a Lesson Learned

14. The best added value of a lesson learned lies in its subsequent exploitation as input to improve future activities. Therefore, a special emphasis should be put on the application of lessons learned rather than on the mere collection of lessons.

15. NATO Headquarters should establish a process to incorporate lessons shared that are originated by other organizations, especially those that may be relevant and/or applicable also at NATO Headquarters.

Roles and Responsibilities at NATO Headquarters

Deputy Secretary General (DSG) and Director General, International Military Staff (DG IMS).

16. Initiating a Lessons Learned process is a senior management responsibility. Within NATO Headquarters, the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) and the Director General, International Military Staff (DG IMS) retain authority to task the execution of a Lessons Learned process to subordinate NATO Headquarters senior management.

17. The DSG and the DG IMS, individually or through the Council and the Military Committee, task their senior management (Assistant Secretaries General and Directors, International Military Staff), separately or jointly, depending on the subject, to execute a Lessons Learned process, as advised by item.

18. Related responsibilities of the DSG and the DG IMS are:

18.1 DSG and DG IMS should ensure that senior managers comply with this directive, in the execution of a Lessons Learned tasker, and execute the LL process;

18.2 DSG and DG IMS delegate to senior management (ASGs, Directors, heads of section and ultimately, action officers) within NATO Headquarters the execution of Phase 1 (Analysis) of the Lessons Learned process;

18.3 DSG and DG IMS validate recommendations on the remedial action and the action body identified to carry it out, before submission to the Council/MC.

IS Internal Working Practices

19. The LL process is triggered by a recommendation from the International Staff to the Deputy Secretary General to task relevant IS Divisions to carry out a Lessons Learned process on a specific issue, including anticipated resources implications. The recommendation will be included in the standard Action Memoranda that the International Staff routinely uses as the primary tool for correspondence between the International Staff and the Private Office of the Secretary General.

20. After evaluating the opportunity to follow the IS recommendations to initiate a LL process on a particular subject, the DSG formally tasks the Assistant Secretary General of the IS division responsible for that particular subject area to start the Lessons Learned process. In case the subject identified for Lessons Learned cross-cuts many IS Divisions, more than one ASG may be tasked. This notwithstanding, one ASG and by default one Division will be identified in the tasker issued by DSG as having a leading role in compiling the LL report. The DSG and DG IMS may jointly task specific Divisions of the IS and the IMS to provide a joint report on LL on a specific subject.

IMS Internal Working Practices

21. The Lessons Learned process is triggered by a documented observation, including a recommendation from the observing part of the International Military Staff to the Director General IMS, to task relevant IMS Divisions to carry out a Lessons Learned process on the documented issue. The documented observation must include a recommendation as to follow-on work processes: i.e. requirement for MCWGs, inter-staff cooperation, possible tasking of other authorities, resources implications etc. These documented observations should be presented to the DG IMS in the form of an IMS Staff Memorandum (IMSTAM).

22. DG IMS will evaluate the documented observation and decide if a Lessons Learned process should be initiated. If the recommendation is found relevant, DG IMS will

consequently task the IMS Director of the relevant IMS division responsible for that particular subject area to start the Lessons Learned process. If the recommendation included the possibility of involving many IMS Divisions, more than one IMS Director may be tasked. If the LL process will involve more than one Division, a lead division will be appointed. The DG IMS and at the same time the DSG may respectively engage appropriate Divisions of the IMS and the IS to provide a joint report on LL on a specific subject.

NATO Headquarters Senior Management and Action Officers

23. NATO Headquarters senior management (both civilian and military) execute a Lessons Learned process throughout all its various phases and steps. As both the International Staff and the International Military Staff do not foresee providing dedicated staff elements for lessons learned, each staff officer should be prepared to be assigned a Lessons Learned responsibility in his/her specific area of expertise.

24. In addition to this, it is desirable that each division of the International Staff and the International Military Staff trains at least one officer (A-grade) on the Lessons Learned process and methodology, thereby assisting action officers in carrying out the process and drafting Lessons Learned reports appropriately. This function may rest within Executive Officers in each Division.

25. ASG(s) in the International Staff and Directors of the International Military Staff receiving a tasker to produce a Lessons Learned report on a specific subject will identify and task the appropriate action officers within their respective divisions.

26. On receipt of a tasker, action officers of the IS and IMS are responsible for carrying out phase 1 of the process (i.e. observation, analysis and recommendation of the adequate remedial action) leading to the definition of a Lesson Identified (see diagram on page 2).

27. If the lesson pertains to a subject that needs to be brought to the attention of Alliance strategic decision-making bodies, the validation of the remedial action and the action body identified to carry it out would be provided by the Council or the Military Committee. Conversely, if the lesson identifies an issue pertaining to processes internal to the staff, or standard operating procedures, the remedial action(s) will be conducted at staff (IS/IMS jointly, if so required) level.

28. Once the lesson has been identified, and a remedial action is recommended by the action officer who has been in charge of observation and analysis, the Lesson Identified is brought to the attention of the Council and/or Military Committee for its validation in the form of a document staffed by the competent subordinate committees/working groups to the NAC/MC. Lessons Identified forwarded to the MC for their approval or endorsement will be presented through an IMS Working Memorandum covering the appropriate MC document. The Council and the MC would then, on the basis of that report, analyse and

endorse the remedial actions that are recommended in order to turn the Lesson Identified into a lesson learned, and task the appropriate action body (generally a subordinate committee to the NAC and/or the NMAs) to implement and share the result. Endorsement by the NAC or by the MC of the remedial action and the action body terminates Phase 1 of the Lessons Learned process

29. Phase 2 of the Lessons Learned Process can be initiated, if required, by DSG inviting relevant ASGs to submit Lessons Identified to the subordinate Committee to the Council for which they are responsible in order to implement the remedial action.

30. The action body(ies) tasked by the NAC/MC should then implement the recommendations at the appropriate level and, once agreed, they should be submitted to the Military Committee and Council for final approval before they can officially become Lessons Learned (end of Phase 2).

31. Endorsement by the MC and the approval by the NAC of a Lesson Learned ends the process, although it is then responsibility of the action officer to ensure dissemination and sharing of the lesson through the appropriate tools (e.g. NATO LL Portal).

Guidance for Phase 1 of the Lessons Learned Process

1. Observations.

In order to facilitate the process of evaluating the exercise, and to comply with NATO Lessons Learned policy, the following elements have to be used for every observation (in free text):

- a. **Observation**
- b. **Discussion**
- c. **Conclusion**
- d. **Recommendation**

2. Further guidance

Observation

A short factual statement to describe what happened and how that differed from expectations. This statement can be positive (i.e. something that was observed to work better than expected or a work around) or negative (i.e. something happened that should not have or something did not happen that should have). Details should be presented in the discussion paragraph. Observations should be restricted to single issues. Multiple issues should be divided into separate observations and cross referenced to each other in the discussion section.

NOTA BENE! Common errors include listing details better suited for the discussion, conclusion, or recommendation sections of the template, e.g. "Staff officers should work harder or including too little information, e.g. "Lesson 345 was not learned at all.

Discussion

The discussion explains how and why the observed issue differed from expectations. Reasons for success or failure and the circumstances surrounding the issue are discussed. The discussion amplifies the observation statement and answers the, "who, what, where, when, why and how," questions about the observation. It should explore all the apparent contributory factors, i.e. the analysis of the observed issue. It can include the history of the event, the context and the environment, and any actions taken to work around a problem should be explained in detail. If a problem could not be solved explain why.

NOTA BENE! Resist the temptation to repeat the observation. Be as concise as possible, but be sure to include all data/information you expect to be necessary for further analysis.

Conclusion

The conclusion is a summary statement of the lesson that has been learned from the experience and the investigation into the root cause(s) of the issues described in the observation and discussion. It is derived in a logical manner from the information contained in the observation and discussion.

NOTA BENE! Avoid too much detail, and make sure that the conclusion contains no new information. A common error is to make recommendations instead of sticking purely to conclusions about root cause(s). Ensure that the conclusion follows logically from the observation and the discussion: a good idea is to get someone else to read it and make sure they agree with your logic. Try starting off the conclusion with the phrase, "Therefore, we have learned that..."

Recommendation

The recommendation should outline the suggested Remedial Action (RA) by providing explicit advice on what must be done to repeat the success or to avoid and/or solve the problem. Identify exactly what needs to be changed -new or modified publications, procedures, procurement of new equipment, change of the force structure, revision of command relationships, improved training, etc. - and how this should be done. The recommendation should also propose a suitable Action Body (AB). The recommendation should follow logically from the conclusion so that if someone were to follow the recommendation, they would reap the benefit of the learning for themselves and their organization.

NOTA BENE! Common mistakes include rephrasing or repeating the observation or conclusion or any other paragraph. Also ensure that the recommendation follows directly from the conclusion.

3. Where possible, originators are requested to limit texts to the NATO Restricted level, identifying releasability limitations as required

PHASE 1

PHASE 2

