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DOCUMENT
PO(2012)0294

To : Permanent Representatives (Council)
Heads of Mission of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
Ambassadors of countries of the Mediterranean Dialogue
Ambassadors of countries of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
Ambassadors of Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of
Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan

From : Deputy Secretary General

NATO LESSONS LEARNED POLICY FOR RELEASE TO PARTNERS

1. Please find attached the NATO Lessons Learned Policy that the Council has approved for release to partners. This Policy largely draws from the current NATO Lessons Learned Policy, which was approved in 2011.

2. In NATO, the Lessons Learned process is an essential component of an organizational culture and an operational doctrine committed to continuous improvement and development. Sharing the same process to capture lessons and learn from them will improve the exchange of information and experience between Allies and partners.

3. You are invited to make use of this policy for the purpose of contributing to the Lessons Learned process with the Alliance.

(signed) Alexander Vershbow

Annex

Original: English

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NATO LESSONS LEARNED POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. In today's 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 missions. Lessons Learned contribute to the successful reform and transformation of the Alliance. Lessons from all NATO activities, in addition to operations and exercises, which are captured and subjected to a procedure of identification, rectification and implementation, will lead to increased effectiveness, efficiency and sharing of best practice among NATO Allies and with partners.

BACKGROUND

2. The NATO Lessons Learned Policy¹ was approved in October 2008 with the aim of complementing the existing Bi-SC Directive 80-6 on Lessons Learned. The Bi-SC Directive was originally conceived as a tool to capture lessons at the strategic, operational and tactical level. Until the approval of the policy, the Lessons Learned process did not extend to the grand strategic, political-military level at NATO Headquarters, nor to individual Allies that could then share their lessons with others. It was precisely with the goal of filling such a void that the NATO Policy on Lessons Learned was approved by Council in 2008. With a view to make the policy more than just a complementing tool to the Bi-SC Directive, and with the aim of making it a product of wider applicability rather than just NATO Headquarters, and that it be shared with partners, the policy has been revised and further set out in the present document for release to partners.

NATO-WIDE LESSONS LEARNED POLICY

3. Lessons Learned (LL) from operations and exercises have implications for the conduct of current operations and the planning of future operations, as well as for capability development. Similarly, Lessons Learned from capability development through the whole life cycle should inform defence planning and current and future operations.

4. The Lessons Learned process is an essential component of an organisational culture and an operational doctrine committed to continuous improvement and development. Establishing and sustaining a robust NATO Lessons Learned capability and the associated means and tools to implement change is a visible indication of the willingness of the Alliance to adapt, develop and transform. An output oriented process

¹ PO(2011)0293

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should be viewed as a key enabler in implementing Alliance strategy and policies, and can contribute to the success of NATO.

5. For the Lessons Learned process to be effective, a constructive culture that avoids blame is important. Sharing lessons learned experiences and best practice is paramount, and this is the goal of an effective NATO lessons learned policy. In turn, this policy must attract senior management attention to ensure robust implementation. NATO bodies and nations, as well as partners, are encouraged to proactively share all kind of Lessons Learned products using the NATO Lessons Learned process and tools, as directed in this Policy.

6. This document derives from the overarching policy governing Lessons Learned NATO-wide. It describes:

- A. The Policy Objectives
- B. Applicability of the Policy
- C. Lines of development
- D. The NATO Lessons Learned process
- E. Roles and responsibilities for LL in NATO.
- F. Implementation and Resources

POLICY OBJECTIVES

7. The objectives of this NATO Lessons Learned Policy are to improve the effectiveness of political-military consultation and decision making, to facilitate the development of concepts and doctrine Alliance-wide, and contribute to the planning and conduct of current and future operations, along with capturing lessons at tactical level from ongoing operations. Further objectives are to enhance security, as well as Education, Training Exercise and Evaluation (ETEE) ² and experimentation, as well as managerial practices, including resource management, and public diplomacy thus supporting the continuing transformation of the Alliance.

8. This Policy also aims to ensure that Lessons Learned are fully taken into account in the areas of capability development and defence planning and to establish the basic principles underpinning an Alliance-wide approach to Lessons Learned in order to ensure transparency and a common understanding of its intent.

APPLICABILITY

9. This Policy is applicable Alliance-wide to include:

9.1. All NATO bodies, Agencies and staffs;

9.2. Allies, as well as Partners and other non-NATO nations contributing to NATO-led operations and missions or participating in NATO activities, who are encouraged to use this Policy as guidance and to contribute and exchange best practice and Lessons Learned in accordance with the Policy's intent; and

² MC-458/2 (released only to PfP).

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9.3. The exchange of best practice and Lessons Learned with other international organisations on the respective organisations' operations, training and exercises, including on interoperability standards, within NAC-agreed policy guidance and based on the principle of reciprocity. This exchange of best practice and Lessons Learned would also encompass processes and procedures associated with the interaction with other international organisations.

10. By their very nature, Lessons Learned can be sensitive. Therefore, they may not always be eligible for sharing outside NATO. In all cases, the release of NATO best practice and Lessons Learned to partners and/or non-NATO nations contributing to NATO-led operations and missions or participating in NATO activities, and to other international organisations, will need to comply with the applicable NATO security regulations and reflect the collective agreement of the Allies.

11. With regard to capability development, exchanges of Lessons Learned and best practice with the European Union (EU) should take place in the framework of the NATO-EU Capability Group, and through informal staff-to-staff dialogue.

12. The multinational or national Centres of Excellence (COEs) and training centres of NATO Allies and Partners also have the potential to be involved in the Lessons Learned process by conducting analysis projects of interest to NATO. Such a role may be carried out in conjunction with other analysis entities such as the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC).

LINES OF DEVELOPMENT

13. A NATO Lessons Learned policy requires focus and progress along six lines of development which constitute a nation's/organization's lessons learned capability:

- **Mindset.** NATO exhibits a learning culture and demonstrates a mindset where all personnel understand the value of lessons learned.
- **Process.** Accountability and responsibility ensure effective and efficient execution of the NATO lessons learned process.
- **Personnel and Training.** Staff officers and analysts at all levels should be equipped with, or be provided with access to, appropriate lessons learned knowledge, skills and abilities in order to be able to successfully carry out lessons learned processes in their respective area of expertise or competence.
- **Technology.** Technology and tools optimised to support lessons learned activities.
- **Standards.** Standards established and maintained to implement and execute lessons learned.
- **Dissemination and Retrieval.** Lessons Learned should be easily shared.

THE NATO-WIDE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS

14. A lessons learned process is a procedure for staffing observations arising from an activity and developing them into a lesson learned. The NATO lessons learned process combines two phases which, in turn, include a number of proven steps from lessons

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learned processes used by NATO and other organisations. The outline of this approach is as follows:

PHASE 1- Analysis

- a) Observation. An observation followed by an analysis requirement triggers the Lessons Learned process.
- b) Analysis. An understanding of improvement opportunities is developed through data collection and analysis. Remedial actions are recommended leading to Lessons Identified.
- c) Outcome: Lessons Identified. An observation for which a remedial action has been developed and an action body to carry out the remedial action is proposed.

PHASE 2 – Remedial Action

- d) Endorsement and Tasking. The Lesson Identified is endorsed at the appropriate level. An action body is identified and tasked to develop an action plan and take responsibility for the implementation.
- e) Implementation and Monitoring. The action body implements remedial action, monitored by the tasking authority.
- f) Validation. Validation may be necessary to determine if the original issue has been rectified by the remedial actions.
- g) Outcome: Lessons Learned. A Lesson Learned results from the implementation of a remedial action that produces an improved performance or increased capability. A Lesson Identified, once formally changed into a Lesson Learned, is recorded in the NATO Lessons Learned Database. When a Lesson Learned has been adopted, it becomes standard practice.

15. This approach provides guidance for all NATO commands and organisations to address issues, adopt practices and make improvements.

16. Dissemination of Lessons Learned should follow, as soon as the Remedial Action phase has been validated. However, notwithstanding the use, in principle, of this two-phase process, time-sensitive or critical operational lessons should be shared throughout an abbreviated lessons learned process.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. General

17. The overall responsibility for the promulgation and implementation of this Policy rests with the North Atlantic Council.

18. In order to ensure effective implementation of the Lessons Learned, senior leadership is necessary at all levels. The launching and execution of a Lessons Learned process is a command/senior management responsibility.

19. Each command and body within NATO will execute their part in the NATO Lessons Learned process in order to enhance NATO's best practices. In addition, each command and body should have their own internal lessons learned procedures to improve the conduct of their business. Commanders and/or senior management of all NATO organisations must provide lessons learned guidance, lessons learned training, and access to common Alliance tools to support execution of the NATO Lessons Learned process.

20. Regular interaction and close coordination are required vertically and horizontally across all divisions, branches, staffs and levels of command within NATO and with Allies in order to achieve the intent of this Policy and to capture and learn from lessons that transcend organisational boundaries and command levels. Partners are invited to cooperate at the relevant level in this process. In regard to exchanges of best practice and Lessons Learned with other international organisations, staffs and commands are encouraged to take such exchanges into account as part of their regular staff-to-staff contacts, subject to reciprocity and applicable security regulations.

B. Roles and Responsibilities at NATO Headquarters.

21. The Deputy Secretary General (DSG) and the Director General, International Military Staff (DG/IMS) have the lead for those lessons that apply to:

21.1. processes and procedures at NATO Headquarters;

They are also responsible for Lessons Learned regarding:

21.2. The interaction between NATO Headquarters, Allied capitals and the Strategic Commands, primarily, but not only, in the field of crisis management and operations;

21.3. Partners and other non-NATO countries contributing to NATO operations and missions;

21.4. The political/military and civil/military dimension of the Alliance defence planning;

21.5. NATO high level exercises; and,

21.6. NATO's public diplomacy.

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22. The Council, the Military Committee, and other NATO committees have the leading role in the endorsement of the Lessons Identified raised to the attention of Alliance strategic decision-making bodies and in the negotiation and addressing of the remedial actions, or guidance, as necessary. Where applicable, partners and other non-NATO nations contributing to NATO-led operations and missions or participating in NATO activities will be invited to participate in this process.

C. ACT Roles and Responsibilities.

23. Allied Command Transformation (ACT) has the lead for the overall NATO Lessons Learned process when dealing with those lessons that are addressed and resolved at the Strategic Command level and below and is supported by Allied Command Operations (ACO) in the planning and execution of this task.

24. The Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC) is a part of the NATO Command Structure and is subordinate to HQ SACT. It provides analysis support to operations, training, exercises and experimentation and maintains the NATO Lessons Learned Database (LLDb), a tool to facilitate the Lessons Learned process. Subject to the agreement of HQ SACT on a case by case basis, and within current means and capabilities, the JALLC is available to assist in the management and dissemination of Lessons Learned NATO-wide, to provide advice on its implementation, and to facilitate the sharing of Lessons Learned also with Partners when applicable.

D. ACO Roles and Responsibilities.

25. Allied Command Operations (ACO) has the lead for the overall output of the NATO Lessons Learned process for the planning and execution of operations and military exercises. ACO is the main provider of Lessons Learned from operations, thus being a key contributor to the NATO Lessons Learned Database. In the analysis, planning and execution of this task ACO is supported by both ACT and the JALLC.

26. ACO holds the responsibility to ensure that operational commands execute Lessons Learned processes in alignment with the extant Policy.

E. Other NATO bodies

27. All NATO bodies, Agencies and staffs are best positioned, and to a large extent are already able, to make observations and identify lessons in their respective areas of competence. NATO bodies, Agencies and staffs are directed to follow the process set out in this Policy to generate Lessons Learned and rely on the JALLC NATO Lessons Learned Database in order to ensure consistency, transparency and interoperability.

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IMPLEMENTATION

28. In regard to operations and exercises, Periodic Mission Reviews (PMRs) and regular briefings and reports by NATO Commanders, as well as specific reports prepared by the JALLC, provide vehicles for raising Lessons Identified and Lessons Learned to the attention of Alliance strategic decision-making bodies such as the Council, the Military Committee, other NATO committees, and, where necessary, for seeking guidance or action. Crisis Management Exercise (CMX) and strategic military post-exercise reports provide an additional vehicle to explore Lessons Learned in the field of political and military crisis-management, including consultation, planning and decision-making for operations.

29. In accordance with the intent of this Policy, Strategic Commanders have the responsibility to ensure that Lessons Identified in the PMRs and JALLC reports are properly reflected, among others, in their submissions to the NATO Defence Planning Process. Similarly, NATO committees and other bodies and individual nations that wish to submit Lessons Identified will ensure that those lessons that are applicable are also addressed through the NATO Defence Planning Process. The Strategic Commanders and chairmen of relevant NATO committees will ensure that Lessons Learned are an integral part of their business and that their staffs are familiar with the intent and the content of this Policy.

30. In accordance with this policy and subject to specific guidance at every level, commanders/senior managers may establish relationships with lessons learned organisations outside of the NATO organisational structure. Conversely, organisations desiring to implement lessons learned in accordance with this Policy may submit lessons learned products of common interest to the NATO LLDb, request specific analysis support via an analysis requirement, provide Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to support integrated deployable analysis teams, and request support to develop lessons learned capability.

RESOURCES

31. This Policy will be implemented within current resources, accrediting appropriate authorities and responsibilities to current staff.

REVIEW

32. This Policy will be reviewed periodically under the authority of the Deputy Secretary General and updated as necessary before being submitted to the Council for approval.

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