

# Meeting Future Military Challenges to NATO



Italian Carabinieri  
arriving in Ploce, Croatia.

408<sup>th</sup> Intelligence Group (Andrew F. Robinson)

By WESLEY K. CLARK

It has been almost a decade since the Berlin Wall collapsed under the weight of an ideology which was at odds with the human spirit. With the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and demise of Soviet military power, the imminent threat of a conventional attack of the scale and breadth that the Alliance faced for its first forty years vanished. Strategic warning of such an attack had been

measured in days; we now have the luxury of addressing far lesser challenges in terms of months or years. Of equal if not greater importance is the universal recognition of the bankruptcy of the ideology that drove the threat. Thus the means and will that menaced the West have been swept onto the rubbish heap of history. NATO should be proud of its victory in the Cold War, a triumph that produced no real losers—only winners.

As we celebrate that accomplishment, we must prepare for the formidable challenges of the next century.

**General Wesley K. Clark, USA, is Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command; he previously served as Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command.**

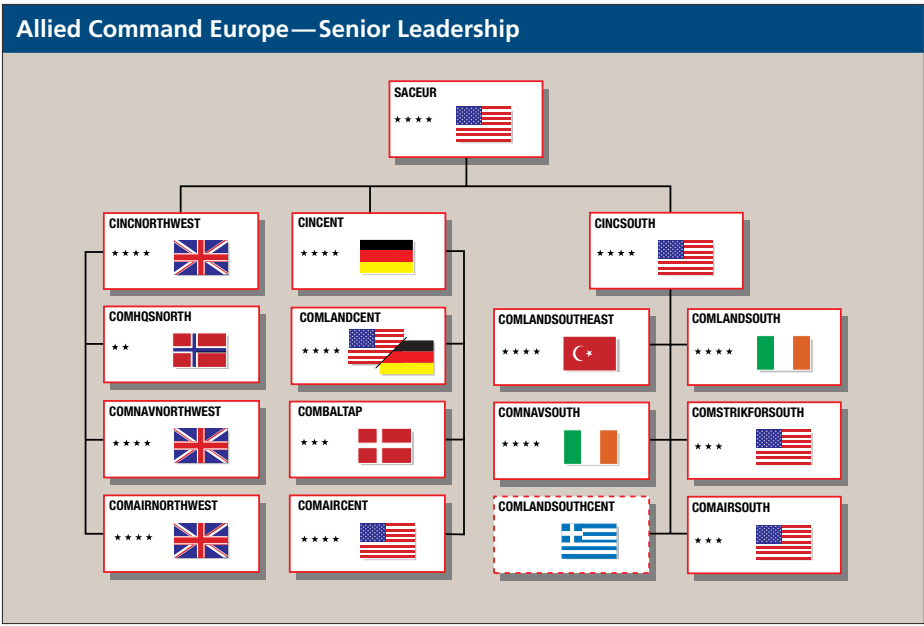
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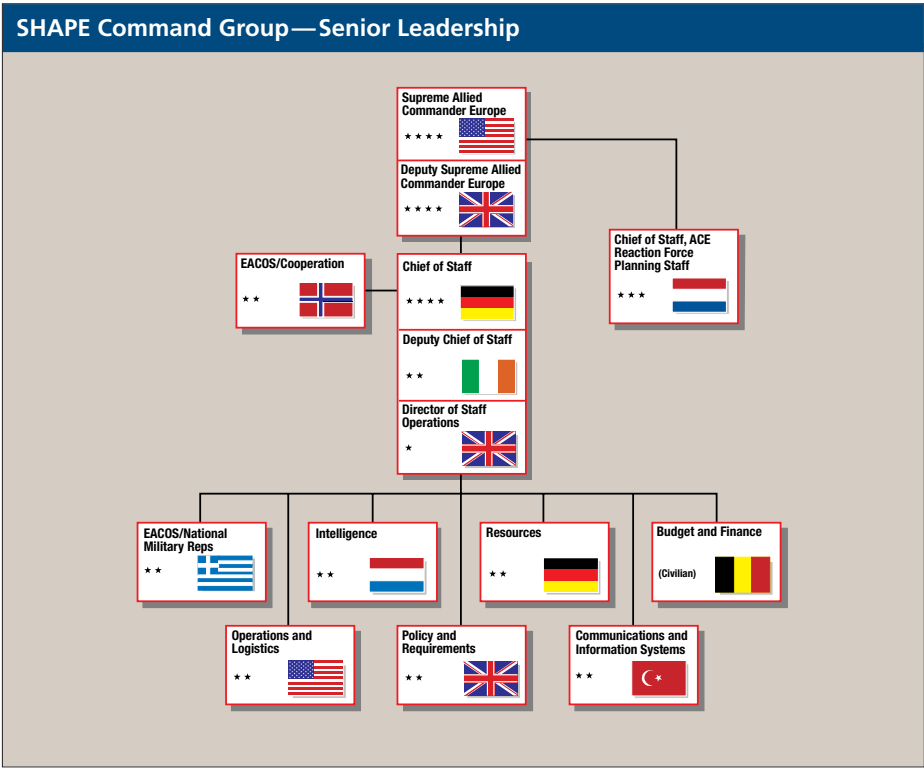
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Allied Command Europe—Senior Leadership



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southwest, and the other astride the southern littoral of the Mediterranean through the Middle East, with their nexus in the Balkans. In the East, the end of the Cold War unleashed national hatreds long deadened under heavy-handed repression. Historic flashpoints reigned in the Balkans, along the perimeter of the former Soviet Union, and in potentially aggressive states in both North Africa and the Middle East. We continue to confront transnational threats such as uncontrollable migrant flows and organized crime. Corruption, black market smuggling, and terrorism have assisted traffickers in weapons of mass destruction, causing the dangers of nuclear, chemical, and biological destruction to reemerge as a great concern. These dangers stem from instability in the absence of democratic institutions and free market economies.

Practical Responses

Over the last decade NATO has responded to a new security environment by undergoing substantive change, both internally and externally. A new Strategic Concept has been formulated and will be refined at the Washington Summit. New relationships with the militaries of Russia and Ukraine have been implemented. The NATO military structure has been significantly modified—a wave of restructuring, downsizing, multinationalizing, and reshaping of its forces. Transition to a new command structure is beginning, and formation of more flexible military headquarters such as the combined joint task force (CJTF) is well underway.

The new security environment has also led to another practical response to regional security challenges: NATO and neighboring nations have come together in the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program. Common threats have encouraged former members of the Warsaw Pact to join NATO in developing a firm basis for democratic and economic reform. In this process PFP has succeeded in more ways than originally envisioned. Military engagement and exercises led to cooperation at higher levels. Initiatives such as

While they are less imminent threats to Western survival, they nevertheless pose a fundamental danger because of their insidious mechanisms, intrinsic complexity, and intractability to resolution. Besting them will test the will

and instruments of the Alliance to a degree that will rival and in some respects exceed that posed by the Warsaw Pact. Two broad arcs of crisis have emerged since the Iron Curtain parted, one extending from the North Cape through the oil-rich Caucasus to the

CJTF enable partner nations to join in peace-support operations, filling important roles alongside NATO nations.

Recent peace support experience has taught us important lessons with broad application to future contingencies, to include those derived from Article 5. On the most fundamental level it has freed us of the blinders of the Cold War and engendered a cultural reorientation. In the Balkans we have seen the utility of conventional military power relative to other instruments of power and have undergone a reinitiation in the Clausewitzian canon on the role of politics in military affairs.

**operations in the Balkans have focused attention on the post-hostilities phase of a conflict**

During the Cold War, the response to a massive Warsaw Pact onslaught would have been overwhelmingly one of arms. At the theater level and below operations would have been driven almost exclusively by military considerations and our focus would not have extended beyond the cessation of hostilities. The operational environment in the Balkans today—as will be true of most future contingencies—is essentially different. It is complex. Multiple instruments of influence and power are wielded by a broad spectrum of national, multinational, and transnational actors often in competition with one another and sometimes in the pursuit of ill-defined or contrary ends. While military power remains a significant element in the complex equation of conflict resolution, success is more often the product of a complementary admixture of multiple means employed with mutually amplifying consequences. Operations in the Balkans have focused attention on the post-hostilities phase of a conflict, “beyond the horizon of victory.” As Basil Liddell-Hart observed, inattention to this period has all too frequently led the strategists of this century to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Operations are and will be permeated by political considerations, often down to the lowest tactical level. The actions of small units and individuals will frequently have far-reaching effects.



German SFOR vehicle in Pale, Republic of Srpska.

1st Combat Camera Squadron (Lance Cheung)



Secretary Cohen and General Clark at SFOR headquarters.

DOD (R.D. Ward)

Operations at this stage demand unparalleled skill and judgment on the part of all soldiers, from commanders to squad members. Individually, we must discriminate between persuading and forcing, insisting and doing, presence and action. Institutionally, we must adjust educational and training programs to meet the demands of this new environment.

**A Balkan Focus**

As an organization we must fill key capability gaps. It is critical to enhance our ability to interface with a broad range of international organizations and civil bodies. Of equal importance is a robust capability to operate—effectively engage—beyond the traditional bounds of conventional op-

erations, most significantly in the ill-defined and politically sensitive void between routine law enforcement and the lower end of operations. In addition to profiling the contributions of special operations forces, this role necessitates creating specialized new organizational structures and puts a premium on developing nonlethal means. In Bosnia, a specialized brigade-sized organization, the Carabinieri-inspired multinational specialized unit (MSU), has performed superbly and shown the way ahead for NATO.

While non-Article 5 operations, especially peace support, will consume much energy in the next century, the deterrent effect of military force, to include nuclear weapons, must also remain an inalienable component of the Strategic Concept. Mediation and compromise will not always deter conflict, nor will moral, diplomatic, or economic suasion always be adequate to remove underlying causes. Some antagonists will underestimate NATO resolve and resort to “the final judgment

Romanian officer receiving training, Cooperative Osprey '98.



of kings." The Alliance must thus retain its warfighting capabilities. Force must remain a feasible choice even if it is our last choice.

Our experience in the Balkans has been particularly instructive in this regard. Again the political imperative emerges: application of force will be measured against a standard that stretches the envelope of what is technically possible—with little room for error. Strikes must enjoy near perfect precision and target effect and be virtually free of collateral damage and friendly casualties. The implications for force planning are clear: precision attack with all-weather, survivable systems (land, sea, air) will define NATO operational capabilities in the next century. It is sobering to note that over the last decade we witnessed a growing technological gradient rather than a convergence of national capabilities. If it widens, this gap will be troubling for Alliance unity in crisis.

The Balkans engagement has revealed key shortcomings in force structure. Foremost is the need for an Alliance air-ground surveillance system to complement our existing aerial surveillance capability. This will be an important component of allied information dominance. The requirement to enhance capabilities at the civil-military interface—from liaison with civil and nongovernmental organizations to new structures such as MSU—is also clear. The importance of special operations forces will also increase.

The Balkans experience has placed a premium on reaction forces. As the initial deployment to Bosnia and planning for Kosovo have repeatedly revealed—recently with respect to a possible peace implementation force—the capability to introduce capable ground



U-2 at Aviano air base, Italy.

forces into a crisis situation in a timely manner leaves much to be desired. To deter, force need only be reasonably available. Its use in the future, however, includes a critical temporal element: it must be readily on hand when a political decision to commit it is made. NATO posture currently reflects an unhealthy reliance on airpower for rapid action. But airpower alone can be an uncertain and inadequate instrument. We urgently need to strengthen



Marines in Norway for Battle Griffin '99.

2. Maine Division, Combat Camera (Jacob A. Fuller)

our ground reaction forces. The commitment of ground troops in the immediate aftermath of air and maritime actions remains as a poignant signal of national resolve.

Our reaction force headquarters deserves and must receive greater attention. In addition to rapidly completing work on the CJTF initiative, we must recognize what it represents and consider formalizing the sequence of deployments—accepting rather than jousting with the tyranny of time. In another ground deployment to the Balkans, for example, we would likely lead with our most ready outfit, Allied Command Europe Mobile Force-Land, followed by Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC). In an extended operation, a CJTF (once it is tailored and manned) would then take the reins as early as feasible, allowing us to reconstitute our reaction capability. If this is necessarily the headquarters flow, let's recognize and exercise it.

### Beyond the Horizon

While the near-term focus must remain on the Balkan situation, where NATO must succeed to remain credible, we should ask if it is prudent to look beyond that horizon and consider reaction force requirements for the next century. From my perspective, a

### a second, Mediterranean-based ARRC would provide for a more balanced strategic readiness posture

second, Mediterranean-based ARRC makes strategic sense. It would provide for a more balanced strategic readiness posture, provide an opportunity for the maturation of the European Security and Defense Initiative (ESDI), and fill the reaction headquarters gap that

necessarily occurs as currently structured. This second reaction corps would also relieve the high training and operational pressure on the existing ARRC and would offer a structure to facilitate training and foster the interoperability of Southern Region-based reaction forces.

We must follow through vigorously in the full integration of the three accession states into the integrated military structure. We have made enormous progress, but experience teaches us that reaching full integration—from top to bottom, from air-defense to logistics, from territorial defense to more complex force projection missions—can require a decade of sustained work. The Alliance will leverage technology through the interoperability affirmation program, a rigorous, multifaceted, computer-driven training package, to accelerate this process.



Spanish aircraft taking off from *Principe de Asturias* during Strong Resolve '98.

U.S. Navy (David Stiney)

The interoperability of staffs and units remains a major challenge. As stated previously, our post-Cold War experience teaches us that multinationalism is being driven to ever-lower tactical echelons—witness the multinational divisions, brigades, and battalions in the Stabilization Force. Interoperability, once trumpeted as a future goal, is now an operational imperative. It confronts us in Bosnia and throughout the Southern Region where NATO is currently focused on Kosovo. We will exploit technology to help close this gap: the Allied Command Europe Command and Staff Training Program will meld a cadre of expert trainers with computer simulation to create a flexible training resource, tailorable to the specific needs of each headquarters. We expect this program to be operational before the turn of the century.

We must look to communications as well. Essential to the ability to maintain information dominance, communications connectivity has not kept up with the pace of tactical multinationalism. If mercantilism precludes us from procuring like systems, we must at least field compatible ones. It will not be possible to counter the challenges of interoperability with technology alone. We must sustain our focus on both converging procedures and continuously validating capabilities through demanding exercises. National traditions must give way to multinational requirements.

### Convergence

In the Balkans, NATO forces stand shoulder-to-shoulder with a broad range of partners. That crucible has demonstrated the enormous success of the initial Alliance investment in PFP. We must strengthen this program. In its first phase, it was an exciting experiment, nothing more than an exercise designed to break down barriers to communications and ease tensions between former adversaries. A second phase took us beyond low-level exercises to the creation of interoperability objectives for partner forces to help target their efforts and our assistance, and more substantial exercises designed to help assess progress.

Now there is an opportunity to move to a third phase, with the goal of the convergence of military capabilities, to the degree that partners will become fully interoperable with allied forces. In this vein we might seek to combine interoperability objectives to make something akin to NATO force goals and establish a force planning program for PFP analogous to that of the Alliance. We could form multinational partner units—with or without member nation participation—designed to fill specific niches in non-Article 5 needs. The multinational specialized unit currently deployed in Bosnia, to which both members and nonmembers have contributed

forces—sets a standard in this regard. The Alliance must include capable partners in larger-scale exercises and develop structures to strengthen partner proficiency in a broader array of missions.

Finally, all member nations must protect their military competence from continuing cuts in structures and budgets. The peace dividend has been granted. Defense spending is at historic lows and is continuing to decline in many capitals. Compared to the 1980s, outlays by NATO members as a percentage of gross domestic product have fallen by half. Manpower has been reduced by 30 percent, land forces by 50 percent, naval forces by 40 percent, and air forces by 30 percent. The United States has redeployed 70 percent of its forces in Europe since the beginning of the 1990s. These developments were necessary and correct. But in looking to the future, we must cope with dangerous challenges and adapt our institutions in a budgetary environment in which there is little or no margin for error. It is time to halt this trend. We must have adequate and stable resourcing over time. Our forces require adequate training, structure, and investment. As already stated, they must stay abreast of advances in technology.

The bedrock of our security rests on the transformation of NATO military structures and capabilities and, more crucially, on the men and women in uniform. It is our responsibility to train them appropriately, order them in effective organizations, and equip them to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The application of force will be required. As Sir Michael Howard noted a decade ago, “We have, for better or worse, not reached a state of social development when the soldier will find no opportunity to exercise his profession, or when warrior values have become obsolete.” He was certainly proven right during the first decade of the post-Cold War era. We must assume that he will be proven right for decades to come and prepare accordingly.

JFQ