

# NEW BEGINNINGS



The New NATO Structure  
and its Implications for  
Air Command and Control





## The “Peace Divided”

Last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the North Atlantic Alliance; an era which saw the beginnings of NATO against the backdrop of the Berlin Airlift, the long tensions of the Cold War, and finally, the break up of the Soviet Union with the dramatic collapse of the Iron Curtain. For 50 years collective defence was the bedrock of our alliance and the clearly identifiable monolithic threat from the East put our daily operations and doctrine into sharp focus. This was a demanding, but in retrospect, a relatively predictable and stable state.

Paradoxically, the new strategic environment has brought with it extensive change and a dispersed, multifaceted threat; the anticipated “peace dividend” of widespread stability that so many had expected from the removal of the Iron Curtain is not readily apparent. The dawning of the new millennium finds the world amid increased turmoil and instability and therefore sees us as NATO partners with great responsibilities for international stabilisation.

### ***NEW STRUCTURE***

In response to our changing environment, just one year after the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, the North Atlantic Alliance in Europe moved from 3 to 2 regions on the 3rd of March this year – Region North and Region South, divided by the Alps. The number of NATO Headquarters fell from over 60 to just 20 as we created a leaner structure more focused on the changed threat and better able to rapidly respond to the more diverse responsibilities demanded of the Alliance today. This change has chiefly affected Northern Europe which was formed by the amalgamation of the old AFCENT and AFNORTHWEST to form the new AFNORTH. The regional air headquarters, HQ AIRNORTH, is located at Ramstein in southern Germany.

This article will look at how the new, leaner, more flexible structure of AIRNORTH will better cope with the great challenges that the new millennium will give us, in terms of a closer Air Command and Control (C2) relationship, an Air Policing Structure across the whole of the Northern Region, and enhanced flexibility and deployability.



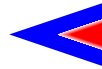
## **CLOSER COMMAND AND CONTROL**

The Combined Air Operations Centres, CAOCs, (which total 5 in the new structure, together with one deployable CAOC) are the execution arm of COMAIRNORTH, the Regional Air Commander, and are responsible for the daily tasking, control and assessment of air missions from the flying bases across the region. One critical aspect of the new NATO structure is that CAOCs have, for the first time, become permanent detachments of HQ AIRNORTH. This direct link to the staffs directing them, both in peacetime and times of crisis, will ensure that the CAOCs are more focused as an execution system and ready to act rapidly. This offers us the opportunity to perfect a leading principle of airpower: centralised control, decentralised execution. HQ AIRNORTH will centrally control air power region-wide, whilst the CAOCs will execute in a decentralised manner in accordance with the operational objectives set.

An important step in developing flexible, focused and reactive CAOCs has been the standardisation of their manning and structure. By ensuring that all CAOCs, no matter what their peacetime responsibilities, are structured and manned to a NATO-wide common standard, we create a “plug and play” structure which allows individual CAOCs to seamlessly receive or provide augmentation or support from outside.

*The dawning of the new millennium finds the world amid increased turmoil and instability...*





Manning standardisation also allows for the CAOCs, their staffs and augmentees to train in depth to a NATO common standard. All CAOCs and CAOC personnel, from Reitan in Norway to Eskesihir in Turkey, will operate to the same CAOC operating guide. Common standards, structure, manning and training across NATO will mean CAOCs will be capable of rapidly expanding or augmenting other CAOCs, secure in the knowledge that they are intimately familiar with their common duties and tasks and are established to tactically command air assets wherever required.



### **AIR POLICING**

The air policing picture across the Northern Region has changed greatly in recent years; firstly, with the accession of Poland and the Czech Republic and secondly with the amalgamation of the old AFCENT and AFNORTHWEST AORs in the new NATO structure. Nevertheless, we have successfully created a stable Recognised Air Picture (RAP) across the entire Region, with the promise of many more advances in capabilities imminent. Already we see Polish and Czech units under the tactical control of the multinationally manned CAOC 2 in Kalkar and CAOC 4 in Mestetten respectively, with secure horizontal and vertical communications connectivity.

Cross Border Air Policing has been extremely successful between Germany and the Benelux countries; the expansion of this process will continue, as we progress towards seamless, borderless region-wide

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interoperability for all our CAOCs and fighter aircraft. Key in the advancement of this goal will be the adoption of Region-wide common readiness states and the maximum possible standardisation of weapons loads.

This will enable us to utilise our assets with total flexibility as we police the skies across the whole of the Region, from Northern Norway to Southern Germany.



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### **ENHANCED FLEXIBILITY AND DEPLOYABILITY**

Key within Northern Region Air C2 developments, is the extensive work being undertaken in the area of the Joint Forces Air Component Command (JFACC). The JFACC is the Air Component of the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), which would be set up and deployed wherever required to fulfil NATO duties. HQ AIRNORTH is the centre of expertise for the NATO JFACC concept and has been the spearhead of the development of NATO JFACC doctrine and procedures for higher approval. Currently, we are identifying and defining individual positions within the JFACC and are training individuals accordingly. The core manpower for a JFACC would come from key staff within HQ AIRNORTH, augmented by trained external personnel depending on the nature of the operation and the required size of the JFACC.



This powerful JFACC capability would deploy with an integral execution arm, an Air Operations Centre (AOC). The AOC would comprise elements of CAOC 2 at Kalkar together with the USAF 32nd Air Operations Group based in Ramstein as well as augmentees from other CAOCs and nations. Well equipped, trained, exercised and evaluated, the AIRNORTH JFACC represents a formidable Air C2 capability – light and lean, ready and able to deploy within hours to command air power worldwide.

## ***NEW AIR FOR A NEW EUROPE***

The first bold steps towards a leaner, more flexible structure have been taken. Poland and the Czech Republic are well on the way to being fully integrated into the new AIRNORTH structure, which encompasses the old AORs of the Northwest and Central Regions. As NATO in Europe adopts its new, 2-region structure it will be better equipped to face the changed threat of the new millennium. The closer, more pro-active relationship with our execution arms, the CAOCs, will ensure our readiness to act decisively in the future. The continued development of our air policing system will provide seamless, harmonised security throughout the whole Northern Region. The progression of the JFACC concept, together with the dedicated training and resourcing of a JFACC here at Ramstein, promises a formidable capability ready to command air power wherever and whenever required. There are doubtless many refinements yet to be made on this bold journey, but together with our new member nations, we have set the foundations for rapid and meaningful progress. Our new Air C2 structure will give us the opportunity to ensure that NATO seizes its chance to adopt its role as a peacemaker, a peacekeeper and a major international influence for stability.

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