

NATO Lessons Learned Conference 2018

The NATO Lessons Learned Conference, which was first convened in 2003 has since evolved into an important, regular event for NATO Lessons community. This year saw yet another evolution of this event as the format of the Conference changed from a seminar/briefing based one, to the new format which saw Participants working actively in syndicates with JALLC staff and Subject Matter Experts (SME) to analyse Conference theme related topics in more depth and make recommendations for a way ahead for NATO. This year the Conference themes were:

- Interoperability and information Exchange of Lessons within NATO and with Partners, including International Organizations, Governmental Organizations, and Nongovernmental Organizations; and
- NATO Lessons Learned Optimization Action Plan (NLLOAP) assessment and adaptation.

Conference: Key Takeaways

Highlights

Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), General Denis Mercier, opened the Conference by video stressing that enhanced interoperability will make sharing lessons easier, and that machine learning, artificial intelligence, and other emerging disruptive technologies will assist the analysis of data in the future. SACT was followed by General Mario Barreto, the JALLC's Commander, who noted that, *"...the NATO Lessons community must also ensure true interoperability in the lessons learned context, to provide the right processes, tools, structures and training that enable and encourage—and not hinder—the exchange and sharing of information, knowledge, experience, lessons, and best practices."*

SMEs then briefed the audience on their syndicate's topics which covered the three dimension of Interoperability—The Human, the Technical, and the Procedural dimensions—, and the NLLOAP assessment and adaptation. Participants worked with JALLC staff and SMEs in their respective syndicates throughout the duration of the Conference to analyse their respective topic in depth and develop some key findings and recommendations for further consideration. In addition to the syndicate work, the Participants were offered a series of SME lectures during the second day of the Conference in order to further broaden understanding and awareness of the Conference themes.

The syndicate outcomes were presented by the syndicate representatives on the final day of the conference along with some overall key conclusions which you can read more about in the Conference Report which will be published later this Spring.



“the NATO Lessons community must also ensure true interoperability in the lessons learned context”



Conference Statistics

Attendance: 138

Entities: 76

(Incl: IS, IMS, NFS, COEs, IOs, MODs)

Total Nations Represented:
31, 5 of which were Partners



Interoperability: Human Dimension Syndicate

During the syndicate work, a combination of divergent and convergent thinking techniques allowed the syndicate to explore the human dimension of interoperability in sharing information and lessons. Through facilitated brainstorming and discussion, the 26 syndicate members identified the universe of enablers and barriers to information sharing that are human-related and then conducted deep dives into individual issues to identify potential root causes of the barriers and enablers and in some cases, solutions. The active participation of all syndicate members, complemented by subject matter expertise from a behavioural analyst, succeeded in identifying a number of issues and potential solutions to take forward.

Outcomes: *There is a need for understanding the education and training requirements that can better promote a culture that values Lessons Learned (LL) and for identifying how and when the human need for feedback can be reflected in the NATO LL process and relevant technology. As such further analysis into these potential requirements and their implementation may be required.*

Interoperability: Technical Dimension Syndicate

This syndicate aimed to provide participants with a framework to discuss constituent elements of existing and future technical solutions, as part of NATO's LL Capability, and their alignment with the NATO LL Community's requirements in order to support the effective and efficient development, implementation, and utilization of a technical LL solution successfully serving both day-to-day and long-term needs of the Alliance in its efforts to be a learning, innovation organization. Concerned by their assessment that the current NATO LL Portal (NLLP) does not always deliver the right lessons to the right users at the right time, the technical dimension syndicate participants identified seven generic user requirements as a baseline for further analysis of the development, implementation and utilisation of the New Lessons Learned Tool (NLLT). Namely they called for the NLLT (1) to provide accessible, exploitable, and shareable information, (2) link LL and Strategic Management processes, (3) be integrated into the wider NATO IT architecture, (4) improve the Lessons community's interaction, (5) ensure continuous feedback for users, (6) provide a deployable LL capability, and (7) offer an intuitive design. Although syndicate discussions substantiated each of these generic user requirements in terms of their content many aspects demand further consideration.



Outcome: *In order to generate consolidated, detailed NLLT user requirements the technical dimension syndicate participants recommend the JALLC be tasked with an in-depth analysis founded on a comprehensive, validated data base. Syndicate participants called for such a study to encompass the identification of user requirements within the higher-level assessment of the NLLT's purpose and to be reflective of the human and procedural dimensions of interoperability with the scope of NATO's LL capability.*



Interoperability: Procedural Dimension Syndicate

Participants for this syndicate were asked to provide an example of a procedural-related barrier or enabler to sharing information and/or lessons. The 32 syndicate participants came up with a total of 19 barriers and 17 enablers that were narrowed down to a list of top 3 barriers (Over-classification, need for more manpower for LL related functions, and lack of internal or national procedures for Info sharing) and three enablers (a STANAG and a generic LL SOP, NLLP training, and pushing LL into the planning process). The contribution of all participants combined with the focused guidance from the SME and facilitators resulted in concrete recommendations for the identified root causes for barriers or actions to institutionalize the enablers in order to improve NATO's interoperability of LL from a procedural dimension point of view, with Allies, Partners and Non-NATO Entities.



Outcomes: *Syndicate outcomes refer to the need to establish a clear requirement for the development of common standards (LL STANAG) and/or interoperable procedures for the LL process (LL SOP). As the main barriers was identified over-classification, lack of NATO internal or national procedures for information sharing, and need for more manpower for LL related functions.*

NLLOAP Assessment and Adaptation

The syndicate that looked at the assessment and adaptation of the NLLOAP was divided into four sessions – Enhancement of NATO LL Governance, Cultural Adaptations, a new balance of the JALLC role, and the NATO LL Portal (Portal) improvement, mirroring the four Lines of Effort of the NLLOAP. Participants first focused on the identified gap between NATO HQ and other NATO Command Structure HQs in terms of the NATO LL Process. Participants agreed that there is a misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities in different parts of the NATO LL Process. The syndicate then shifted focus towards Cultural Adaptation and finally participants discussed the role of the JALLC and how the NATO Lessons Learned Portal (the Portal) is functioning. Regarding the latter, there was an overwhelming agreement that the Portal is a good start as an improve LL tool, but there is work to be done. In addition, Participants posed questions on the JALLC's role in the NATO LL Process and the value it adds to the Alliance's transformation. The final session of the syndicate addressed NLLOAP as a key document: its coordination, stakeholders, leadership, visibility, area of responsibility, and concluded with Participants sharing lessons and experience in this field. The variety in the Participants' background and their experience added to the quality of syndicate's final outcomes.

Outcome: *There is a need to ensure stakeholder involvement and improved collaboration for developing and implementing the next version of the NLLOAP.*





NLLC2018

JALLC

Phone: +351 21 771 7007/8/9
Fax: +351 21 771 7098
E-mail: jallc@jallc.nato.int
www.jallc.nato.int
Visit the Portal: <https://nllp.jallc.nato.int>

Avenida Tenente Martins
1500-589 Lisbon
Portugal

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