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**COUNTER IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**

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1- Background

In 2014 the first Strategic Plan (2014-2018) of the NATO C-IED Centre of Excellence (COE) was issued. There were five main goals that corresponded with the IED threat environment at that specific moment after four years of the accreditation of the Centre. The Strategic Plan has not been updated in any moment as it's supposed to happen with Strategic Plans for specific periods. Since that time has passed it is necessary for the Strategic Plan for the period 2014-2018 to be updated.

The current worldwide situation in relationship to IEDs has changed but the IED threat has not gone away, it has only evolved. How C-IED activities are perceived by different Nations in NATO and NATO's priorities in relationship to C-IED activities have a deep impact on the solutions that could be provided by an organization such as the NATO C-IED COE and also in the activities to be carried out to reach them.

As an answer to C-IED needs at the time, the C-IED COE 2014-2018 Strategic Plan was appropriate. But times have changed and the C-IED COE, and its staff, must be able to identify the future questions about IED threats and how to adapt C-IED within NATO to meet the evolving needs of the Alliance and our Nations. This must be the main aim of the Strategic Plan 2020-2024.

2- Scope of the strategic plan

The NATO C-IED COE Strategic Plan 2020-2024 is intended to provide an overarching description of the efforts of the COE as an organization, a common view to its Subject Matter Expertise (SMEs) and Participating Nations in order to orient the decision processes related to its assigned tasks. It will provide broad goals that the COE will accomplish in the next five years. This document, besides being an internal document will support the decisions made by C-IED COE Steering Committee (SC) and their implementation.

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C-IED CoE Director

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C-IED COE Strategic Plan 2020-2024

ANALYSIS OF GOALS OF PREVIOUS STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2018

After analyzing the five goals of the previous Strategic Plan of the C-IED COE, relevant comments are made about them, because they will be the reasons why new goals have been identified.

1. Establish the C-IED COE as the training and education subject matter experts for C-IED activities.

It remains valid, but makes it appear that the C-IED COE is, or should be, responsible for “any” C-IED activity. First and foremost C-IED is a National responsibility. The C-IED COE has to provide added value to what NATO, especially the C-IED COE Participating Nations, is already doing or should be doing. The C-IED COE as stated in the NATO COEs Concept should not duplicate activities. The analysis of this goal since September 2018, and highlighted during the C-IED Annual Discipline Conference 2019 resulted in guidance to “identify what types of Courses are necessary, identify what the role of the C-IED COE should be in those courses and prioritize T3 activities over Training Activities”.

2. Establish the C-IED COE as the lessons learned (LLs) coordinator for C-IED related activities.

This goal has not been accomplished yet and as stated in the Director’s Guidance of 2019, it’s a priority of the Centre. But here are some reasons that justify this existing gap from a long time ago. Lessons Learned coordination needs data to be coordinated. In this case the majority of Lessons Learned obtained from Areas of Operations (AOOs) by National structures or from HQ’s in missions abroad are insufficiently shared and processed as it is usually done in international organizations. In addition, LLs cells in HQs are often only focused on observations, but not on the actions to be taken after the observation become a LL. The role of Centres of Excellences in relationship to LLs in NATO is to provide observations and provide analysis and assessment of a remedial action from observations, made by the COE or not. The C-IED COE has always been open to participate in any LLs process, such as it was in May 2013 at the Joint Allied Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC), Lisbon, “Attack the Networks/Counter Threat Networks AtN/CTN analysis and definition”. Since then, the C-IED COE has been only requested to create LLs supporting, if not doing, the tasks of other specific NATO bodies; however, the C-IED COE has its own tasks. It was not by chance the statement that Director did during the 2018 SC meeting as invited, “C-IED COE has not to be a personnel solution for personnel manning problems of other organizations”. It’s a simple question of avoiding duplications and proper use of C-IED COE personnel and budget. This statement has had two main consequences in the C-IED COE in relationship to LLs. First, to define in a better way the role of the C-IED COE in NATO exercises, providing to Exercise Directors (EXDIR) and Exercise Controllers (EXCON) of exercises the C-IED COE’s observations for the design, content and execution of C-IED activities in exercises. Second, to try to find the data for lessons learned processes where it can be better provided, in Areas of Operations. The most fruitful data collection periods that the C-IED COE has had have been after direct contacts with different responsible missions,

such as in Afghanistan (2011) and Iraq (2016-18). Now Mali is a very important IED location for analysis. That's the reason why a visit to Mali should be conducted, improving the NATO LLs capabilities through getting recent observations and providing C-IED COE analysis.

3. Establish the C-IED COE as an organization capable of establishing relationships with organizations to exchange information to support Attack the Network (ATN) and Counter Threat Network (CTN) operations.

This goal has been fully accomplished from the C-IED COE. It's not so clear what the perceptions and efforts are from different Nations in NATO about Attack the Networks and Counter Threat Networks operations. The first analysis of the goal provides a question instead of an answer. What is the role of the NATO C-IED COE in relationship to AtN/CTN? The C-IED COE is not going to operate in a tactical way in any scenario, unless C-IED COE personnel are deployed in AOOs under the guidelines of our Participating Nations. However, the Libyan scenario prospective (January 2011), conducted three weeks before the riots in Libya and one hundred percent correct after several years, the relationship of increasing Channel of Suez taxes and prices with periodic increase of piracy in Horn of Africa (October 2012) and the planning process of Counter Threat Networks for getting the Networks Hyper-disruption supporting the targeting cell in Afghanistan (January 2013) are three clear examples of C-IED COE providing added value to allied activities. So, the goal is not to be able to establish relationships but establish relationships to do something new or for doing something better.

4. Become one of the focal points for the generation of modern defense and military capabilities, technologies, and knowledge related to C-IED.

This goal could be considered accomplished because technology is continually evolving and the C-IED COE maintains its own important and relevant activities in this field. This is something included in our C-IED COE Program of Work (POW) within the inclusion of the biennial Technology Workshop (TECH WS). The C-IED COE can be a supporter and coordinator, but very limited as a generator according to current real capabilities and the structure of the Centre. However, EFP (USA & C-IED COE), Explosive Suicide Vests (DEU, ESP & C-IED COE), SAFEDRONE (ESP & C-IED COE) and PRINSE-APC (POR, ESP & C-IED COE) projects are some examples of generating information about materials, equipment and disrupting technologies. These are good measures of effectiveness of the accomplishment for this goal.

5. Achieve a robust capacity to communicate and exchange IED and C-IED information with other organizations.

This goal has been accomplished, but as stated by the Director in the 2019 SC, "if the C-IED COE wants to be really valuable for costumers, the exchange of information has a relevant component and the timeliness of information deliverance is more important than the deep analysis of information. The more skilled SMEs the C-IED COE has, the faster and better the analysis will be. The balance of opportunity of information and the security of information is always positive if not of the highest quality under best skilled SMEs." Knowledge sharing is essential to maintain the high quality of the reports and assessments; therefore it should not only be kept but even improved upon for the following period.

ASSUMPTIONS FOR WRITING THE C-IED COE STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2024

- NATO Command Structure (NCS) re-organization, NCS Adaptation, will affect the C-IED COE manning.
- Due to the current situation in Middle East and SAHEL and the return of Foreign Fighters to Nations of origin, the C-IED activities and interest will be increased.
- AtN/CTN activities will continue to be theoretically known but not practically implemented in NATO.
- IED information and technology proliferation will increase through internet.
- Homemade explosive precursors will continue to be globally available.

GOALS FOR STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2024

We must keep in mind that C-IED is the integration of OPS and INTEL skills through the combination of the three pillars. They are all linked and can't be dissociated from each other.

But if DtD and PtF pillars seem to be quite well understood and in good way to be completely implemented, some progress must be done in AtN pillar and his links with the two others. For this reason and in the context of looking at the future IED threat environment, the new external and internal C-IED COE goals for the period 2020-2024 are:

External Goals:

- 1. The activities requested of the C-IED COE by NATO Bodies are adapted to the C-IED COE mission and real capacities and the answers are always "costumers oriented"**

This shall be reached by:

- a. Assuring that requests from NATO bodies are known by the coordinating body in NATO of C-IED COE activity, Allied Command Transformation (ACT). Almost 50% of C-IED COE activities carried out in 2018 and 2019 for NATO bodies were not entered in the TRANSNET tool for Requests for Support (RFS), therefore there is no ability for the coordinating body to alleviate duplicity and overlap of requests. For example, during November/December 2019 three different RFS from three different NATO bodies about support to the African Union were received in the C-IED COE but none of these NATO bodies knew about any of the other requests about the same subject to the C-IED COE. This only creates "noise" to the work in the C-IED COE and causes difficulties to manage any task and even to make appropriate decisions.
- b. Issuing as much as possible C-IED COE products to the C-IED Community of Interest (Col), including references to previous C-IED COE products or on-going projects in relationship to those products.
In the last C-IED COE report to the C-IED Col some references to other C-IED COE products were made and several members of the C-IED Col have asked for them. This has been a way to show what we did to support others, where they were not aware of. This could represent opportunities for collaboration or open new lines of work.

- c. Saying “no” to what is clearly “not” a C-IED COE activity or priority.

The current situation in the C-IED COE is: we are doing a lot, perhaps too much, but we don't always know if it is in accordance to what we should be doing. The role of all C-IED COE members is to work on what the SC has decided and the role of the C-IED COE is to work efficiently according those decisions. Unfortunately, the manning of the C-IED COE is not complete. It is increasing, but the SMEs are limited and RFS from NATO/EU/UN and other International Organizations are so many that prioritizations for all activities within the C-IED COE are necessary. Each and every activity needs its own planning, rehearsal, execution and debriefing/analysis process. That said, in the decision process of activities to be carried out in the Centre factors such as areas of interest, level of activity (Strategic/Operational/Tactical), Organization that requests the support and costs/per diems are always kept in mind, because those are factors which Participating Nations have established in the Direction and Guidance from the SC, as well as in the decision papers after SC meetings. Any activity where the C-IED COE participates, must define clearly the role of the C-IED COE SMEs.

- 2. Make Attack the Networks / Counter Threat Networks the main effort for the C-IED COE because they are the main effort in the C-IED fight, and work to make it understood in NATO, independently of what doctrinal pillar a C-IED COE Branch participates or acts.**

This shall be reached by:

- a. Prioritizing the Networks intelligence activities.

This does not mean forget that all C-IED doctrinal pillars are relevant and necessary, but the “left” of the boom is the priority. The Human Network Analysis in Support to Targeting (HNAT) Concept in NATO was born in the C-IED COE. The concept has evolved in a way that has not provided a clear definition of what it is, what its real value is, and what associated activities are needed to carry out HNAT as an operational concept. The Evolution of C-IED in NATO requires the need for C-IED trained personnel and structures within organizations, and nowadays these are the most important tools against any networked threat, regardless whether they utilize IEDs or not, it's a simple question of efficiency and not duplications of assets. Analysis systems, tools, and movements of networked threats are the same, never mind the tools that they use as weapon of choice. This needs a clear understanding of the role that the Intelligence plays in all three pillars or better said, Attack the Networks activities in relationship to C-IED. Intelligence is present in the three pillars, the three pillars are focused in attacking the networks and it's not possible attack the networks without the concurrence of the other two pillars Defeat the device and Prepare the Force.

During the last meeting of COEs related to INTEL activities, it was a surprise to the responsible INTEL Chief in IMS at NATO HQ that the C-IED COE is already working in eight of the fourteen Lines of Operations of the NATO INTEL Action Plan and that six of them are included in the eight priorities of the Action Plan. This should have been a confirmation of COE activities in support of the IMS, but not a surprise. Unfortunately, it was both.

- b. Prioritizing the Interagency activities for the C-IED COE in those Defense Capacity Building (DCB) activities where the C-IED COE participates.

In those Nations where the C-IED COE has carried out DCB activities the meaning of C-IED is always the same, "C-IED is the same as EOD". Unfortunately this is not only the case in those nations, but also in several NATO Nations. This conceptual problem makes those C-IED personnel to focus their activities only on the defensive posture of C-IED. AtN/CTN is the offensive posture against IED Networks and the only way that will have very important and long lasting effects against the threat networks, but impossible to be carried out without the concurrence of the other two pillars. Interagency activities in DCB projects are where those decisions makers can be influenced in order to change their minds for a more offensive or proactive posture against networks that use IEDs.

- c. Participating in any NATO activity or initiative and generating C-IED COE tasks that support the implementation of AtN/CTN concepts such as HNAT.

It's quite difficult to identify AtN/CTN activities because they are the coordination of activities of different C-IED enablers or networks targeting activities that NATO is not carrying out now, but NATO Nations are. If costumers are not able to identify products that support AtN/CTN activities the importance of them will disappear. Part of the problem is the misunderstanding of the concept of the doctrinal pillars, and identifying narrowly defined activities within those pillars, but not identifying the desired influence of those activities against the networks that use IEDs. This is a problem that can be solved by influencing the correct understanding of C-IED in any NATO environment or activities with external partners.

3. Increase the participation of additional Nations in the C-IED COE.

This shall be reached by:

- a. Amplifying the dissemination of C-IED COE products to the widest extent possible within security regulations.

Despite some activities being well known there is still a great disparity between what the C-IED COE is doing and what type of activities and products that we provide. As mentioned by a SC representative at the 2019 SC, "what we do and the type of activities that we are developing, are not really known in comparison with what other COEs do." This goes for both the level of relationships and capacity to influence external partners. Although we are not trying to make any comparison to other COEs, because every COE is completely different, it is necessary to look at how we can extend the knowledge and understanding of the C-IED COE activities and products. A perfect example came during the COE Marketplace hosted by ACT at NATO HQ in July 2019. It was a surprise for many the type and number of activities that we execute. When more nations have opportunities to collaborate and both provide and receive benefits of collaboration, it will make it easier to increase the common interest for the C-IED COE as an organization.

- b. Providing support to C-IED activities of NATO Nations and providing specific and tangible services to those Nations.

The Canadian exercise Ardent Defender has been a very beneficial experience for the C-IED COE. It's not the only reason for the Canadian intent to join the C-IED COE, but as Canada has seen the valuable work of our SMEs in their exercises that have provided added value to their exercise in new lines of development of it such as Technical Exploitation, DCB and Education activities in the exercise scenario; they better understand the benefit for their nation and their Armed Forces to be a participating nation in the CIED COE. This type of opportunity can be increased for other potential partners as well.

- c. Facilitating the direct relationships and communications with interested Nations by offering to them the flexibility enough to decide the profile of Job Description that they could be interested to cover.

This is not easy but the job descriptions, when updated, as it will be explained in subsequent paragraphs, can be used as a tool for attracting other potential Participating Nations. Let's give them what they need, accommodate the "chair" to the shape that they would really like to be provided while also covering SMEs' gaps existing in the Centre. This will require the support of the C-IED COE SC.

4. The NATO C-IED COE becomes a reference partner in highest level of NATO decision making process in relationship to C-IED.

This shall be reached by:

- a. Providing direct, accurate, opportune and rigorous assessments to the highest NATO decision makers.

For long time there has been a continuous discussion about how some NATO bodies or Strategic Commands can utilize the COEs in the best way. This has created the sense that the coordinating Command is the Commander of the Centres. The RFIs/RFSs process has a specific procedure that is not always followed. The meetings with INTEL Representatives of NATO HQ in relationship with INTEL activities and the NATO INTEL Academy project or the Assessment about the IED Threat made for the NATO IMS have been clear examples of efficient coordination of activities when direct contacts are done. To avoid misunderstandings since September 2019 we report any received, accepted and accomplished RFI/RFS, if the POW and SC's decision permitted, from any NATO body outside the TRANSNET RFS tool to the responsible coordination persons in ACT. Our obligation is to report about our activities to the coordination body and we are doing it, but when interlocutors are burdens for our work, we should avoid the interlocutors.

- b. Providing the most accurate technical support as C-IED SMEs in all forums where the C-IED COE participates.

In early 2019 the first Technical Exploitation meeting was a real example where the serious objections and concerns to the process presented by the C-IED COE participant, besides the initial agreement of the rest of attendees, were taken in account to avoid later organizational and functional frictions that that proposal could create. The proposal itself supports and accelerates the Technical Exploitation projects but does not disturb the rest of the NATO initiatives. This is an example of

how relevant the technical support of C-IED COE can facilitate the NATO initiatives in the field of C-IED.

The NATO C-IED COE continues providing SME support to NATO Science and Technology Organization (STO) Research Task Groups (SET-238, SCI-298, and SCI-321) and also the European research program Horizon 2020 research projects (ENTRAP, EXERTER) in related with the C-IED field.

- c. Facilitating the role of SNRs of the C-IED COE as direct assessors to their SC representative when exploring National postures in relationship to NATO C-IED initiatives.

The experience and knowledge of the C-IED COE SMEs is a valuable tool for Participating Nations in order to make decisions. The C-IED COE posture is always one for any C-IED issue of its POW but logical National differences are present. This view of what is happening in different IEDs environments and what other National postures about any C-IED issue in NATO are can support national decision makers to make their own decisions. The C-IED COE's role is not to provide a national posture but at least let others know what our Participating Nations think about the same issues.

Internal Goal:

- 5. Adapt the C-IED COE internal branch structures to current IED threats and have them update seats for different contributing Nations to be used after their tours in the C-IED COE.**

This shall be reached by:

- a. Identifying what Job Descriptions should be modified in order to increase the tasks where the Centre needs more SMEs, proposing the creation or modification of them to SC members.

This will need the updating of all Job Descriptions and agreement of those Nations that are already occupying those seats. The process began in November 2018, but the lack of the appropriate personnel has delayed the task. In any case, as mentioned before, the revision of Job Descriptions is an opportunity to re-adapt the tasks of C-IED COE to the evolving IED Threat reality, to prioritize the real needs of Participating Nations and a way to respect National interests of those Nations. Additional, as mentioned in 3.c it is a way to facilitate the increase of Participating Nations.

- b. Using any external Education & Training opportunity to improve the knowledge and skills of C-IED COE SMEs in order to generate more accurate and valuable C-IED COE products but looking forward to their later activities in their countries of origins. Spanish National Police and Guardia Civil have offered some of their own C-IED/EOD related Courses to the C-IED COE, not only for Spaniards but also for the international COE personnel if their Spanish Language skills are sufficient to actively participate. National priorities have to be respected and after a C-IED COE SME

returns to his/her National position it is beneficial for both the Centre and the Nations, if he/she has increased his/her knowledge and has gained experience in this by using the knowledge during his/her assignment in the Centre. It could be considered as a middle term investment for a long term production in their countries of origin.

- c. Increasing the role of SNRs within the Centre as real interlocutors with their Nations, in order to frankly express their national interests, national restrictions permitted, in order to provide to Participating Nations the correct support that they expect of a Centre in which they are represented.

One of the priorities of the Director since September 2018 has been to make the C-IED COE SMEs understand that the Centre is their COE and prioritizing any RFI/RFS of any of our Contributing Nations is their responsibility. Various representatives of different C-IED COE Participating Nations have paid official and/or private visits to their National comrades for issues regarding C-IED. This is a good sign of proper use of a multinational organization and highlights the importance the participating nations place on the role of the C-IED COE and their contribution to it.

MAJOR RISKS FOR C-IED COE STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2024

- Identifying the current small figures of IED casualties in AOOs as a probe of unnecessary C-IED capability.
- The misconception of what doctrinal pillar structure really means.
- The wrong mindset in NATO of "C-IED is the same as EOD" and not the integration of INTEL and OPS to avoid the use of IEDs and/or mitigate their effects, independently of the type of activity are carried out.

MAJOR OPPORTUNITY FOR C-IED COE STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2024

- NATO Nations recognize the possibility of using C-IED personnel and assets to fight any networked threat.