

ACO perspective on NNEC

Headline from an international newspaper dated 18 September 2009: “Conflicts and Taliban-led insurgency have claimed over 357 international troops so far this year in war-torn Afghanistan.”

Although we are only 260 days into 2009, we have lost nearly 3 people for every 2 days. This is the reality for NATO troops in Afghanistan. We face a difficult challenge and we are working very hard to eradicate our losses. But perhaps we can work smarter.

Warfare has changed. The days of two forces fighting toe to toe are gone. Today’s battles are scattered, sudden and rarely involve a protracted engagement. Asymmetric warfare is built on surprise, stealth, patience and ruthlessness. To counter such a threat is extremely difficult and involves a lot of thinking. Effective thinking relies on accurate information which is presented in a way that provides a coherent picture. All of this information must be available in order to be used. This is the premise on which NATO Network Enabled Capability (NNEC) is being developed. NNEC is intended to enable information exchange may be used to paint an up to date picture of the conflict at any level, from tactical to strategic, so that our war-fighters can fully grasp the current operational picture.

Although the idea is not new, the realization of the idea will revolutionize the way we fight our conflicts. With near instantaneous reporting of events, we have to make the best decision every time or we endanger our strategic objectives. One tactical error can result in years of strategic setbacks. This is the nature of modern warfare. Information is a weapon.

Our challenge is difficult to say the least. Take any one NATO country and evaluate how well they share information between their own national services. At best, the answer is probably that there is room for improvement. Now multiply that by 28 nations in the alliance and add all the other nations within the coalition and the problem takes on a different significance with monumental challenges.

That is precisely the challenge ACO and ACT NNEC teams are currently working to solve today. At ACO, we have stood up an NNEC integrated project team with the aim of coordinating the efforts of NNEC development and quicker delivery of systems and procedures to our NATO forces, where ever they may be. To facilitate this, a monthly NNEC IPT meeting is held at SHAPE, Belgium which brings together all the organizations and agencies currently working NNEC related issues.

If you feel like you have something to contribute to this group, please do not hesitate to contact anyone on the IPT below. We are:

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I look forward to working with you!