

	NATO	INTERNATIONAL STAFF PRIVATE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
	OTAN	SECRETARIAT INTERNATIONAL CABINET DU SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL

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To : Permanent Representatives (Council)
From : Secretary General
Subject : **NATO Strategic Communications Policy**

As a basis for our discussion on the NATO Policy on Strategic Communications at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council on 16 September 1990 please find attached a draft policy paper which I have coordinated with CMC, SACEUR and SACT.


Anders Fogh Rasmussen

Annex

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NATO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**General:**

1. Today's information environment, characterized by a 24/7 news cycle, the rise of social networking sites, and the interconnectedness of audiences in and beyond NATO nations territory, directly affects how NATO actions are perceived by key audiences. That perception is always relevant to, and can have a direct effect on the success of NATO operations and policies. NATO must use various channels, including the traditional media, internet-based media and public engagement, to build awareness, understanding, and support for its decisions and operations. This requires a coherent institutional approach, coordination of effort with NATO nations and between all relevant actors, and consistency with agreed NATO policies, procedures and principles.
2. An effective strategic communications policy therefore requires clear definitions of a) the main aims of NATO strategic communications; b) the key principles guiding NATO strategic communications; c) interrelationships between the various information disciplines within NATO (Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs (civilian), Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations); and d) the roles and authorities of the actors within NATO with communications responsibilities.
3. The Strasbourg / Kehl Summit declaration states that "it is increasingly important that the Alliance communicates in an appropriate, timely, accurate and responsive manner on its evolving roles, objectives and missions. Strategic communications are an integral part of our efforts to achieve the Alliance's political and military objectives".

Definitions:

4. NATO Strategic Communications: the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations, as appropriate – in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims.
5. Public Diplomacy: NATO civilian communications and outreach efforts responsible for promoting awareness of and building understanding and support for NATO's policies, operations and activities, in complement to the national efforts of Allies.

6. **Public Affairs (civilian):** NATO civilian engagement through the media to inform the public of NATO policies, operations and activities in a timely, accurate, responsive, and proactive manner.
7. **Military Public Affairs:** is responsible for promoting NATO's military aims and objectives to audiences in order to enhance awareness and understanding of military aspects of the Alliance. This includes planning and conducting media relations, internal communications, and community relations.
8. **Info Ops:** NATO military advice and co-ordination of military information activities in order to create desired effects on the will, understanding, and capabilities of adversaries and other NA-approved parties in support of Alliance operations, missions and objectives.
9. **PsyOps:** Planned psychological activities using methods of communications and other means directed to approved audiences in order to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, affecting the achievement of political and military objectives.

Aim:

10. NATO strategic communications aim, as appropriate to circumstances and theatres, to:
 - a. Contribute positively and directly in achieving the successful implementation of NATO operations, missions, and activities by incorporating strategic communications planning into all operational and policy planning;
 - b. Build, in close and lasting coordination with NATO nations, public awareness, understanding, and support for specific NATO policies, operations, and other activities in all relevant audiences; and
 - c. Contribute to general public awareness and understanding of NATO as part of a broader and on-going public diplomacy effort.

Key principles:

1. NATO strategic communications should adhere to the following principles:
 - a. consistency of message across all levels of command
 - b. active engagement in the information environment, including social media, with an emphasis on speed and responsiveness, according to agreed guidelines (see below)

- c. accuracy and clarity
- d. effectiveness that is, as clearly as possible, clearly defined, measured and reviewed
- e. multiplicity of efforts and maximum reach, engaging all of NATO communications capabilities and all available communications platforms to strengthen the dissemination of consistent messages
- f. soliciting public views and adapting efforts as necessary

Roles and Authorities:

2. **NAC:** The North Atlantic Council provides overall guidance and direction to NATO strategic communications efforts, as well as mission-specific strategic and political guidance for NATO information activities.
3. **SG:** The Secretary General provides specific direction and guidance on strategic communications to all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands. The Secretary General is the principal spokesperson for the Alliance.
4. **MC:** The Military Committee provides overall policy for NATO military PA, IO and PsyOps, in accordance with political direction and decisions, and consensus military advice to the NAC on strategic communication issues.
5. **CMC:** The Chairman of the Military Committee is the principal military spokesperson for the Alliance on all military issues.
6. **SACEUR:** SACEUR provides direction and guidance on strategic communications within ACO, which includes military PAO, Info Ops and Psy Ops, in accordance with the overall strategic communications direction from the NATO HQ. SACEUR is the principal military spokesperson for current Alliance operations.
7. **SACT:** SACT provides direction and guidance on strategic communications within ACT, provides strategic communications concept and capability development, in accordance with the overall strategic communications direction from the NATO HQ, and in close coordination with ACO. SACT is the principal military spokesperson on NATO transformation.
8. **ASG PDD:** The Assistant Secretary General for the Public Diplomacy Division oversees the coordination of all strategic communications activities across all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands, and also directs all public diplomacy activities (except press and media, which are directed by the NATO Spokesperson on behalf of the SG).

9. NATO Spokesperson: The NATO Spokesperson, on behalf of the SG, provides day-to-day direction of all Headquarters media activities, including messaging, and offers guidance to military PA to ensure that all NATO messages and communications are consistent with political direction and decisions.
10. IMS Public Affairs Advisor: IMS PAA provides spokespersonship for the MC, supports the MC, its Chairman, and the director IMS on strategic communications issues. He facilitates interaction and coordination between the two Strategic Commands, the MC, and the PDD on military PA and strategic communications issues.
11. IMS Information Operations: the IMS Operation Division is responsible for MC policy on Information Operations and PsyOps, and facilitates cooperation between NATO's two Strategic Commands and the MC on Information Operations and PsyOps issues.
12. SHAPE Chief StratCom: SHAPE Chief StratCom is responsible to SACEUR for the development and integration of strategic communications plans in support of NATO current operations and ACO activities, in accordance with the overall strategic communications direction from NATO HQ; for the coordination of military PA, Info Ops and Psy Ops outputs in support of those plans and outputs; for overseeing the execution of the plans, in coordination with NATO HQ and subordinate ACO HQs.
13. SHAPE Chief PAO: under SACEUR's direction, SHAPE Chief PAO directs, plans, and executes strategic level military PA in support of NATO current operations and ACO activities, in accordance with the overall strategic communications direction from NATO HQ.
14. SACT Chief PAO: under SACT's direction, SACT Chief PAO directs, plans and executes strategic level military PA in support of ACT activities, in accordance with the overall strategic communications direction from NATO HQ.

Relationships:

15. The following relationships will guide all levels of command to ensure compliance and coherence with the overall direction of strategic communications set by NATO HQ:
 - a. The NAC and SG direct all NATO strategic communications, civilian and military.

- b. ASG PDD is responsible for overall coordination of NATO strategic communications, civilian and military, within the overall direction set by the NAC and the Secretary General. Within NATO HQ, ASG PDD directs all NATO PDD activities (except press and media, which remain under the Spokesperson's direction) to ensure coherence with, and maximum effectiveness of, NATO's strategic communications efforts. The ASG PDD is responsible for establishing and chairing a standing body that brings together the relevant elements of the information community, including SHAPE, SACT and the IMS, as well as representatives from other NATO divisions responsible for operations, planning, and partnerships. On behalf of the NAC, ASG PDD will provide guidance to, and oversee coordination of MC/IMS, SHAPE and SACT strategic communications.
 - c. SHAPE StratCom and SACT Chief PIO will ensure coherence with the overall NATO strategic communications effort in their area of responsibility.
 - d. NATO strategic communications aim, principles and considerations must be integrated in the work of both the IS and IMS, guided by policy and planning decisions, in order to provide timely and effective input to the planning and conduct of operations and activities.
 - e. Under leadership of ACT, strategic communications capability development, including training, must be closely coordinated with NATO HQ and ACO.
16. MC policies relevant to information disciplines (MC 457/1 Public Affairs, MC 422/3 Information Operations, MC 402/1 PsyOps) remain extant.

Social Media

17. The following guidelines will apply to the use of social media by all NATO civilian and military staff, including all NATO personnel deployed on NATO operations :
- a. The use of social media is permitted for all NATO military and civilian staff.
 - b. Social media can be used to discuss and portray the profession and day-day activities of NATO civilian and military staff
 - c. NATO civilian and military staff should not, however, use social media in ways that:

- i. **Compromise operational and / or organisational security, or put the safety of anyone at risk**
- ii. **Reveal confidential discussions, or compromise ongoing negotiations**
- iii. **Comment on the policies of the Alliance and of NATO nations as they relate to security issues**
- iv. **Violate the national laws of the country of origin of the staff member**

18. Violation of these guidelines by personnel under NATO authority will be subject to appropriate sanction.

Resources

19. NATO will devote the necessary resources to achieve effective strategic communications. Allies will ensure the provision of those resources and the necessary budgetary flexibility to deploy them as required.