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NSD-S HUB NEWSLETTER

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"Development of peaceful and friendly relations.....promoting conditions of stability and well-being (Art.2 NATO Chart)"

Director's Foreword

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Brig. Gen. Ignazio LAX

New HUB Director's address to the Staff and Readers with its Mission and Vision for 2019

It is my honor and privilege to serve as the Director of the NATO Strategic Direction-South, as I assume responsibilities from Brigadier General ANGIUS. His commitment and service NATO and to the nation of Italy are greatly appreciated, and I wish him and his family all the best in their new assignment. In my short time as Director, I have met some outstanding professionals who work tirelessly in providing value-added information and assessments to various military, civilian, and non-governmental organizations. These professionals--both military and civilian--endeavor day-in and day-out to shed light on the distinctive nature of the Hub. During my turnover, it dawned on me that the Hub is truly a unique NATO tool that provides decision-makers with a deep-rooted understanding of North Africa, Pan Sahel and the Middle East--especially from the perspective and the rich history of those who reside in this dynamic region of the world. The Hub team under my leadership and guidance will continue to Connect, Consult, and Coordinate, especially as we attempt to enrich our overall collective understanding and challenges emanating from NATO's "South." I personally look forward to expanding our collaborative efforts, as we maintain our situational awareness through continuous understanding and assessments of the dynamics in the "South." NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub will remain committed to our goal to proactively predict and anticipate challenges, but we will always remain focused on identifying opportunities for the betterment of the citizens that reside in NATO's "South." I am fully confident that our military-civilian team will remain steadfast in our goal to provide value-added information, which will undoubtedly enhance NATO's overall knowledge of this incredibly energetic region of the globe. Although I have only been Director for only a few short weeks, the sense of enthusiasm exhibited by the Hub team makes me optimistic that 2019 will be an exceptionally busy year, but I am poised to seize the new year in our journey to chart new and exciting frontiers!

In default survival mode? Examining the dynamics of suicide attacks by violent extremist groups in Mali

An expert from Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KA IPTC) provides a unique viewpoint on extremist groups present in Mali

The current precarious security situation in Mali came about as a result of limited political control by the state in the North of Mali and the recurring demands by the Tuareg for a state of Azawad, which have fed into and been hijacked by violent extremist groups and other militant groups. The situation was also fueled and exacerbated by external imperatives, among which is the fall of Gaddafi regime in Libya and the attendant flow of arms in the northern part of Mali. After some six years of recurrent violence and criminal activities ranging from kidnapping for ransom, intimidations to targeted killings, the security situation in Mali appears to be taking a different turn. Violent extremist groups are now employing suicide attacks as part of their strategy. A look at the University of Chicago Suicide Attacks Database reveal that unlike the low incidents of suicide attacks before the 2012 Mali Crisis; between 2013 and 2016, the total number of deaths from suicide attacks were 53. The total deaths between 2017 and September 2018, however, far outnumber the deaths and injuries recorded in previous years. A disturbing aspect of this turn of events is its implications on the peace process that appears to be stumbling forward despite joint efforts of local, regional and international actors. Principally, these attacks have been targeted against MINUSMA peacekeeping forces; Malian army officers; French, Swedish and American forces, and other African forces that are supporting the peace process in the country. What accounts for the intensity of suicide attacks and to what end does the change serve? Violent extremist groups such as the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) who are operating in Mali have come under pressure from joint military efforts of Operation Barkhane and the Group of Five for the Sahel. These operations have resulted in the death of some militants as well as seizures of their military and non-military equipment. Some of the militants who were targeted by these joint operations were, however, able to blend into the local population while others fled to neighboring areas in order to regroup and perpetrate more audacious attacks. So what strategic ends could have influenced this high rate of suicide attacks? This piece argues that the violent extremist groups operating in Mali are primarily prompted by their desire to survive and pursue their strategic goals of imposing Sharia law and establishing a caliphate in their spheres of influence. This explains why some of these militant groups have claimed responsibility for a number of suicide attacks in Mali. In line with the strategic propaganda of the ISGS, for instance, these attacks have received global media coverage and have enhanced the group's international profile. More so, the ISGS and Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims have declared the institutions involved in fighting these militant groups as 'infidels' and legitimate targets of 'jihad'. This façade is intended to promote the image of the militant groups as vanguards fighting to defend the Muslim population and provide some degree of sympathy and legitimacy to the groups' 'jihad' across the Sahel and much further afield. The net benefits that accrue to the violent extremist groups from using suicide attacks as a façade to pursue their strategic goals include: (a) to attract support in the form of ideas, funds, logistics, fighters, protection from receptive audiences in their operational areas; (b) to elicit support from other radical Islamic groups; (c) to give intellectual weight to and legitimize their nefarious activities; and (d) to contribute to the resilience, adaptability, and survivability of the militant groups. To conclude, the desire to survive military pressure and pursue strategic political and economic goals have contributed to the high incidence of suicide attacks perpetrated by violent extremist groups operating in Mali



Violent Extremist Group fighter in Mali

HUB Activities & Engagements

Visit of the NATO Defense College NRCC 20 Course

36 course participants of the 20th NATO Regional Cooperation Course (NRCC) from the NATO Defense College (NDC) in Rome visited the JFC Naples and the NSD-S HUB from 29th to 30th October. The visiting party was led by the head of the Academic Operations Division of the NDC, B.Gen.David PINCET. Amongst the visiting audience were Diplomats, Staff Officers and Generals from various non-NATO countries. During the visit, subject matter experts from different staff entities provided briefs, which highlighted the spectrum of tasks and responsibilities inherent at Allied Joint Force Command, Naples and the NSD-S HUB. During the visit, the visitors participated in a Question and Answer session, as well as a Roundtable meeting that shed light on the activities surrounding the NATO Military Partnership branch, including the various functions of the NSD-S HUB. The NRCC is focused on relevant aspects of the security environment within NATO's area of interest as it pertains to the Mediterranean Sea and the nations which comprise the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The overarching goal for the participants of this course was to gain a comprehensive understanding of NATO's security strategy, as well as to exchange perspectives and perceptions with partner nations. The NRCC students were primarily comprised of members of the military and diplomatic corps of the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD-Dialogue) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) NATO partner countries.



Attendees from NATO Defense College Regional Cooperation Course 20 visiting the NSD-S HUB

ACO CMI/CIMIC Conference

The NSD-S-HUB participated in the ACO Civil-Military Interaction / Civil-Military Cooperation (CMI/CIMIC) Community (SHAPE, JFCBS, JFCNP and) visit to Geneva, Switzerland from 8 to 11 October 2018. During this visit, the Hub team met with key civil actors and various international organizations. This annual event is how NATO contributes to the Comprehensive Approach (CA) methodology, which focuses on facilitating greater cooperation and collaboration with key global developmental and humanitarian organizations. During the conference, the ACO community met with representatives from various United Nations agencies, as well as a number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Meeting with various global organizations was an ideal opportunity to promote the unique features of the Hub (as a non-kinetic, Article 2 tool for NATO), as well as to expand our network of contacts throughout the international community.



The CIMIC Centre of Excellence HQ

Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) TechNet Europe 18

From 06-08 November, former NSD-S HUB Director, Brig.Gen. ANGIUS, attended the TechNet Europe Conference in Sorrento, Italy. TechNet is the second largest AFCEA annual event in Europe, organized in collaboration with the Italian chapters of AFCEA (Rome and Naples), and under the patronage of Italian Ministry of Defense.

The Sorrento conference was a platform for representatives from across Europe's elite academic and industrial institutions to meet with members of NATO to discuss the current global challenges, especially in the realm of Maritime Awareness. The conference highlighted current regulatory, institutional and international cooperative frameworks. Moreover, the conference provided in-depth understanding on the various the operational tools currently deployed, and the prospects of future technological solutions. A key take-away from the conference was the need for greater information exchange. These include maritime surveillance data, advanced sensor technologies, inter-agency data analysis, and greater dialogue and coherence between regional nations and their respective NGO partners.



The NSD-S HUB Director attending the AFCEA Conference in Sorrento (Italy)

ROME MED Dialogues Forum 2018

MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUES is the annual high-level initiative promoted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and ISPI (Italian Institute for International Political Studies) in Rome. The event aims at drafting a "positive agenda" for the Mediterranean. It calls for stimulating debate and promoting new ideas, rethinking traditional approaches and addressing shared challenges at both the regional and the international level. Rome MED builds upon four pillars: Shared Prosperity, Shared Security, Migration, and Civil Society and Culture. Debates on these topics are intended to complement analyses of current challenges by stimulating new ideas and suggestions that support economic cooperation, overcome regional rivalries and conflicts, and ensure that adequate incentives for sustainable development are set in motion.

The overarching goal for the Hub's participation was to explore new and unique ways of viewing MENA's challenges, especially from a broader political and diplomatic perspective. The Hub team gained interesting insight on how some actors within the international community view the various subjects of mutual concern, which fall clearly within the Hub's Area of Interest (AOI).



Strategic Foresight Analysis workshop in Budapest (2018)

From 06-08 November, 2018, NSD-S Hub representatives attended the Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA) workshop in Budapest, Hungary.

The aim of SFA is to identify trends that will shape the future global strategic context, and derive implications for the Trans-Atlantic Alliance out to 2035 and beyond.

The SFA is currently in the initial phase of the ongoing Long-Term Military Transformation (LTMT) efforts at Allied Command Transformation (ACT). The LTMT establishes the intellectual foundation for a follow-on report called the Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO).

Together, the SFA and FFAO are designed to improve the Alliance's long-term outlook in terms of shedding insight on the future security environment. The SFA and FFAO will ultimately support NATO's Defense Planning Process (NDPP), which will include other NATO and national processes that will support a strategic assessment on long-term trends. The FFAO will look into the interaction of trends, try to identify instability factors, and then develops military implications to address the most complex challenges.

Building on the discussions at previous SFA workshops organized in the spring of 2018 in Cadiz, Spain, the aim of this workshop in Budapest was to continue on the theme of the Regional Perspective: North Africa, Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Arctic/High North.

The participants of the Budapest workshop also observed a demonstration on how the application of data science can directly improve the capacity and efficiency of forecasting; displaying the various technologies currently available to improve foresight methodologies.

The Hub's attendance at this workshop directly contributed to our increased awareness and understanding of regional dynamics. Furthermore, it exposed the Hub members to emerging technology trends, and provided an ideal venue to strengthen our relationship with the SFA team. Hub team also met with a number of representatives from various international organizations who were unaware of the existence of the Hub, as NATO's non-kinetic tool focused on the "South."

Of note, the Hub's participation in both 2018 SFA workshops (Spring and Winter editions) emphasized the bi-strategic character of the NSD-S Hub, which is intended to contribute equally to ACT and ACO activities and initiatives.



ACT Strategic Foresight Analysis Forum

Opportunity to demonstrate the application of data science to improve the efficiency and increase the capacity of foresight methodology

NATO Secretary General visit to NSD-S HUB

The NSD-S HUB was honored by the NATO Secretary General Mr. Jens STONTEBERG visit payed last 23 November. Welcomed by Admiral James FOGGO, Commander of JFC Naples, and Brig. Gen. LAX, HUB Director, the Secretary General was briefed on the HUB activities and performance during the last 12 months and met the Staff.

He had also the opportunity to attend one NSD-S HUB Webinars with Three Stones where he shared some of our approach to help better predict and prevent instability. The discussion highlighted the innovative platform to engage African community leaders; build relationships and trust; and enable faster information/communication exchange from the localized context.

