



NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL
CONSEIL DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

7 April 2025

**DOCUMENT
PO(2025)0086-AS1**

**IBAN FOLLOW UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE LESSONS LEARNED
PROCESS FOR NATO MILITARY EXERCISES**

ACTION SHEET

On 7 April 2025, under the silence procedure, the Council noted the RPPB report at annex to PO(2025)0086 and approved its conclusions, noted the IBAN Follow Up Performance Audit Report enclosed to PO(2025)0086 and agreed to the public disclosure of this RPPB report and of the IBAN Follow Up Performance Audit Report.

(Signed) Mark RUTTE
Secretary General

NOTE: This Action Sheet is part of, and shall be attached to PO(2025)0086.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED





NATO UNCLASSIFIED

31 March 2025

DOCUMENT
PO(2025)0086
Silence Procedure ends:
7 Apr 2025 – 17.30

To: Permanent Representatives (Council)

From: Secretary General

**IBAN FOLLOW UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE LESSONS LEARNED
PROCESS FOR NATO MILITARY EXERCISES**

1. I attach the Resource Policy and Planning Board (RPPB) report on the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) Follow Up Performance Audit Report on the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises.
2. I do not consider this matter requires discussion in Council. **Therefore, unless I hear to the contrary by 17.30 on Monday, 7 April 2025**, I shall assume the Council noted the RPPB report and approved its conclusions, noted the IBAN Follow Up Performance Audit Report and agreed to the public disclosure of this RPPB report and of the IBAN Follow Up Performance Audit Report.

(Signed) Mark RUTTE

1 Annex
1 Enclosure

Original: English

NATO UNCLASSIFIED



**IBAN FOLLOW UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE LESSONS LEARNED
PROCESS FOR NATO MILITARY EXERCISES****Report by the Resource Policy and Planning Board**

References:

- A. IBA-AR(2023)0002 IBAN Follow Up Performance Audit Report on the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises
- B. C-M(2017)0045 IBAN Performance Audit Report on the need to improve the effectiveness of the lessons learned process for NATO exercises

INTRODUCTION

1. With Reference A, the International Board of Auditors (IBAN) submitted a Follow Up Performance Audit Report on the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises.
2. In accordance with agreed procedure, the Resource Policy and Planning Board (RPPB) is requested to provide advice to the Council.

AIM

3. This report highlights key aspects as discussed by Allies during the RPPB meeting on 5 December 2024. The aim is to enable the RPPB to reflect on strategic issues or concerns stemming from the subject IBAN Follow Up Performance Audit Report and to recommend courses of action to Council as applicable, which have the potential to improve transparency, accountability and consistency.

BACKGROUND

4. IBAN conducted a follow up audit on the recommendations it made in a 2016 report on the need to improve the effectiveness of the lessons learned process for NATO military exercises (reference B).
5. The three key stakeholders in the lessons learned process in NATO military exercises are: International Military Staff (IMS), Allied Command Operations (ACO) / Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) / Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (HQ ACT).
6. In their formal comments, in general, ACO, ACT and IMS agreed with IBAN's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

DISCUSSION

7. The RPPB welcomes the IBAN report, its findings and recommendations, as well as the Strategic Commands' progress made in implementing four out of seven recommendations from the 2016 audit report (Reference B).

8. However, the RPPB is concerned about the limited progress in implementing the remaining three IBAN recommendations from its 2016 audit report. These include the lack of sufficient progress the Strategic Commands made ensuring that subordinate commands are including observations or lessons from NATO Military exercises into their lessons learned processes, lack of sufficient progress in identifying a single party responsible for monitoring the implementation of the lessons learned process for each exercise, and establishing a common framework to ensure accuracy and quality of data entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

9. In their formal comments provided at the meeting, the Strategic Commands highlighted the progress to date since the Follow Up Performance Audit conducted by the IBAN in 2023.

10. One of these changes relates to how the Strategic Commands are managing Lessons Identified. The revision of the Bi-SC Directive 075-003 Collective Training and Exercises in September 2023 has introduced considerable improvements regarding Lessons Learned (LL) responsibilities and coordination.

11. The NATO LL Capability Improvement Roadmap 2021-2025 has introduced significant changes on how to manage observations in NATO and how to process them to become Lessons Identified and ultimately LL. The Strategic Commands highlighted that these changes have led to significant improvements in the LL Capability.

12. In terms of IBAN's recommendation to identify a single party at the appropriate command level responsible for monitoring the implementation of the LL process, ACT clarified that the roles, responsibilities and authorities of the LL Steering Board, Steering Group and Working Group are stated in the LL Roadmap. The LL Steering Board approves the LL Roadmap Implementation Report to the MC. In addition, the Bi-SC Directive 008-006 on LL (published in 2018) will be revised and updated in 2025 following the revision of the NATO LL policy, which is in the Council Operations and Exercise Committee agenda for spring 2025.

13. Regarding the third recommendation on which limited progress has been made, the Strategic Commands recognized that quality and accuracy of data collected remains a challenge especially considering the large number of stakeholders involved in the LL process. The Strategic Commands highlighted that leadership involvement and the correct mind-set, defined as foundations of the LL Capability within the Bi-SC Directive 080-006 are key to institutionalize and integrate LL as part of everyone's work.

14. In this context, the RPPB notes the efforts undertaken by the Strategic Commands and understands the challenges related to implementing IBAN's 2016 recommendations. However, the RPPB recommends that the Strategic Commands continue their work and take all necessary actions to fully address the remaining three recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS

15. The IBAN's Follow up Performance Audit Report on the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises identified that the Strategic Commands made progress

implementing four out of seven recommendations and made limited progress implementing the remaining three recommendations.

16. The RPPB recognises and supports the progress made, while highlighting that further actions are required to fully address the three remaining recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. The Resource Policy and Planning Board invites Council to:

17.1. note this report and the IBAN Performance Audit Report in Appendix 1;

17.2. approve the conclusions outlined in paragraphs 15 and 16;

17.3. agree to the public disclosure of this report and the IBAN Performance Audit Report in line with the provisions of PO(2015)0052.



International Board of Auditors for NATO
Collège international des auditeurs externes de l'OTAN

Brussels - Belgium



NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-A(2023)0019
26 April 2023

To: Secretary General
Attn: Director of the Private Office

Cc: NATO Permanent Representatives
General Christopher G. Cavoli, Supreme Allied Commander Europe
General Philippe Lavigne, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation
Lieutenant General Janusz Adamczak, Director General, International Military Staff
Mr Javier Amador Carrasco Pena, Financial Controller, Allied Command Operations
Mr David Dart, Head, Internal Audit Office, Allied Command Operations
Mr Nicholas Garland, Financial Controller, Allied Command Transformation
Mr Thor Andreas Nielsen, Command Auditor, Allied Command Transformation
Mr Rui Miguel Mendes Da Silva, Financial Controller, International Military Staff
Chair, Resource Policy and Planning Board
Resource Policy and Planning Board representatives, NATO delegations
Private Office Registry

Subject: ***International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) Follow Up Performance Audit Report on the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises – IBA-AR(2023)0002***

IBAN submits herewith its approved Performance Audit Report with a Summary Note for distribution to the Council.

Yours sincerely,

Daniela Morgante
Chair

Attachment: As stated above.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

-1-

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

**Summary Note for Council
by the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN)
on the Follow Up Performance Audit on the Lessons Learned Process for NATO
Military Exercises**

Background

IBAN decided to conduct a follow up on recommendations it made in a 2016 report on the need to improve the effectiveness of the lessons learned process for NATO military exercises (C-M(2017)0045). Since 2016, military exercises have remained an integral part of NATO's deterrence and defence posture.

Military exercises are an essential requirement to maintain Alliance readiness levels and improve interoperability. The importance of exercises has increased over the years as Allied leaders made a number of key decisions to bolster NATO's readiness, responsiveness and reinforcement in response to the evolving security environment.

The NATO lessons learned process in exercises is an integral part of bolstering NATO readiness as it provides a way for NATO forces to share and apply what they learn to improve current and future exercises, operations and capabilities. If efficient and effective, the lessons learned process could help to ensure the Alliance is continuously learning from exercises and ready to respond to current and future security challenges.

Audit objectives

International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions performance audit standards (ISSAI 3000) require follow up, as appropriate, to assess and report on whether audited entities have adequately addressed problems and remedied underlying situations identified in previous audits after a reasonable period. As such, one of IBAN's annual key performance indicators is to conduct at least one follow up audit on the implementation of past performance audit recommendations.

Based on a systematic assessment of past performance audits conducted from 2015 to the present, IBAN selected this audit topic. IBAN conducted the audit in accordance with Article 14 of its charter. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the extent to which NATO took actions in addressing the IBAN recommendations included in the 2016 audit report; and
2. To determine the current status and assess progress made since 2016 on the lessons learned process for NATO exercises in the NATO bodies selected for the 2016 audit report.

Audit findings

IBAN made seven recommendations in its 2016 audit report. Of these seven recommendations, the strategic commands made progress implementing four and limited

progress implementing three. The table below summarises the status of implementing the seven recommendations.

2016 recommendations	Current status
1) Establish clear guidance on lessons learned reporting deliverables that support the differences in the sizes and complexity of NATO exercises and lessons learned reporting lines that address the inter-command nature of exercises.	Progress
2) Encourage greater leadership engagement on implementing the lessons learned process at all command levels, develop indicators to measure the performance of the NATO lessons learned process and provide this information to senior leadership.	
3) Revise lessons learned guidance to provide more detailed instructions and criteria to subordinate commands on what lessons are relevant to share, from which exercises, and what other types of information should be provided.	
4) Consider consolidating or eliminating redundant lessons learned databases. These considerations should include cost effectiveness.	
5) Identify a single party at the appropriate command level responsible for monitoring the implementation of the lessons learned process for each exercise and define their role and responsibilities in guidance.	Limited progress
6) Ensure that subordinate commands are including observations or lessons from internal performance assessments or other analytical activities into their lessons learned processes.	
7) Ensure a common framework is in place to ensure the accuracy and quality of data entered in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.	

Source: IBAN.

Though the strategic commands made progress, IBAN found a lack of a feedback process that connects operational and tactical lessons learned from NATO military exercises to Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) strategic level guidance on education, training, exercises and evaluation. In addition, the strategic commands lack a common data quality assurance framework to ensure the accuracy and quality of lessons entered in the primary tool used to measure performance, which is the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

This lack of a feedback process and common data quality assurance framework means the senior-most leaders of Allied Command Operations and Allied Command Transformation are not receiving performance information that could be used to continuously improve NATO military education, training, exercises and evaluation strategy. This strategy is the main guidance by which the NATO command structure uses to determine whether it is meeting SACEUR priorities and overall NATO readiness and force structure objectives. Without a continuous process fed by quality performance information, the strategic commands cannot comprehensively assess whether the immense effort put into collecting operational and tactical lessons in exercises are worthwhile and improving the NATO command structure's ability to learn from and adapt to current and future security challenges.

Recommendations

To continue progress in addressing IBAN's 2016 recommendations on the lessons learned process for NATO military exercises, IBAN recommends that Council tasks the strategic commands, in coordination with appropriate stakeholders, to:

- 1) Clarify in bi-strategic governance documents (e.g., policies, directives, terms of reference and other lessons learned and collective training and exercise guidance) the roles, responsibilities and authorities of the Lessons Learned Steering Board, Steering Group and Working Group. This should include a defined feedback process to ensure that observations are progressing into lessons identified and lessons learned and that lessons are appropriately tasked and full adjudicated through the NATO lessons learned process across all the commands participating in major exercises;
- 2) Develop a data quality assurance framework aligned with existing NATO-wide data management policies and appropriate international good practices and integrate this framework into mandatory lessons learned training courses and NATO Lessons Learned Toolset development efforts; and
- 3) Include within the Collective Training & Exercise Directive (CT&ED) a lessons learned annex with clear performance measures that are part of a feedback process that connect SACEUR's focus areas to lessons learned collection plan objectives in exercises to assist future JALLC analyses, CT&ED and SGE development.

All tasking decisions by Council should clearly identify those responsible to take action and set deadlines for the delivery of the expected outcomes.

In their formal comments, the International Military Staff (IMS), the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and the Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (HQ ACT) agreed with the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in our report. IBAN considers that the recommendations will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

12 April 2023

INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF AUDITORS FOR NATO

**FOLLOW UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT ON THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR
NATO MILITARY EXERCISES
FINAL REPORT**

DECLASSIFIED - PUBLICLY DISCLOSED - PDN(2025)0029 - DÉCLASSIFIÉ - MIS EN LECTURE PUBLIQUE

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page N°

Contents

1.	BACKGROUND	6
1.1	Overview	6
1.2	Audit objectives	13
1.3	Audit scope and methodology	14
2.	NATO STRATEGIC COMMANDS MADE PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING FOUR OUT OF SEVEN IBAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS IN NATO MILITARY EXERCISES	15
3.	NATO STRATEGIC COMMANDS MADE LIMITED PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING THREE OUT OF SEVEN IBAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR NATO MILITARY EXERCISES	20
4.	THE STRATEGIC COMMANDS LACK A FEEDBACK PROCESS TO CONNECT LESSONS LEARNED FROM MILITARY EXERCISES TO SACEUR STRATEGIC GUIDANCE	25
5.	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	29
5.1	Conclusion	29
5.2	Recommendations	30
6.	COMMENTS RECEIVED AND THE IBAN'S POSITION	30

Appendices

1.	NATO Lessons Learned Process in Exercises, Time Frames and Deliverables ...	32
2.	NATO Lessons Learned Process in 2016 versus 2022	33
3.	ACO and ACT Transfer of Collective Training and Exercises Programme Roles and Responsibilities	35
4.	ACO, ACT and IMS Formal Comments on the Performance Audit Report	36
5.	Abbreviations	46

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions performance audit standards (ISSAI 3000) require follow up, as appropriate, to assess and report on whether audited entities have adequately addressed problems and remedied underlying situations identified in previous audits after a reasonable period. One of IBAN's annual key performance indicators is to conduct at least one follow up audit on the implementation of past performance audit recommendations. Based on a systematic assessment of past performance audits conducted from 2015 to the present, IBAN decided to conduct a follow up on recommendations it made in a 2016 report on the need to improve the effectiveness of the lessons learned process for NATO military exercises (IBA-AR(2015)40 and C-M(2017)0045)).

1.1.2 Since IBAN issued this report in 2016, military exercises have remained an integral part of NATO's deterrence and defence posture. Military exercises are an essential requirement to maintain Alliance readiness levels and improve interoperability. The importance of exercises has increased over the years as Allied leaders made a number of key decisions to bolster NATO's readiness, responsiveness and reinforcement in response to the evolving security environment.

1.1.3 Specifically, Allied leaders at the Warsaw Summit in 2016 established a forward presence in the northeast and southeast of the Alliance in response to increased instability and insecurity along NATO's periphery. At the 2018 Brussels Summit, NATO leaders launched a readiness initiative to enhance the Alliance's rapid-response capability. As recently as the 2022 Madrid Summit, the Alliance agreed to a new NATO Force Model that, when fully implemented, will provide over 300,000 troops at high readiness.

1.1.4 The NATO lessons learned process in exercises is an integral part of bolstering NATO readiness as it provides a way for NATO forces to share and apply what they learn to improve current and future exercises, operations and capabilities. If efficient and effective, the lessons learned process could help to ensure the Alliance is continuously learning from exercises and ready to respond to current and future security challenges.

Key stakeholders in lessons learned process for NATO military exercises

1.1.5 Three key stakeholders are part of the lessons learned process in NATO military exercises. Table 1 below describes these key stakeholders and the divisions, branches and subordinate organisations.

Table 1 – Key stakeholders in NATO lessons learned process for military exercises

Stakeholders	Divisions/Branches/Subordinate Organisations
International Military Staff (IMS)	- Operations and Planning division: - Training and Exercise branch

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

Allied Command Operations (ACO) / Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE)	- SHAPE Office of the Chief of Staff - SHAPE J7 Division, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff: - Policy and Lessons Learned branch - Collective Training and Exercise branch - ACO subordinate commands/headquarters: - Joint Force Command Brunssum - Joint Force Command Naples - Air Command - Land Command - Maritime Command
Allied Command Transformation (ACT) / Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (HQ SACT)	- Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Joint Force Development: - Joint Doctrine and Lessons Learned branch - Training and Exercises branch - ACT subordinate organisations: - Joint Analysis Lessons Learned Centre - Joint Force Training Centre - Joint Warfare Centre

Source: NATO documentation.

Note: We excluded Joint Force Command Norfolk, because it was not in the scope of the 2016 IBAN report.

Main policies and directives in lessons learned process for NATO military exercises

1.1.6 There are NATO policies and directives that emphasise the importance of learning lessons from exercises. Table 2 below describes the main policies and directives for the NATO lessons learned process in military exercises.

Table 2 – Main policies and directives for NATO lessons learned process in military exercises

Policies and directives on NATO lessons learned process and military exercises	
2011 NATO Lessons Learned Policy (MCM-0021-2011)	"The lessons learned process is an essential component of an organisational culture and an operational doctrine committed to continuous improvement and development." (Paragraph 4)
2014 NATO Education, Training, Exercise, and Evaluation Policy (MC 0458/3)	"A critical aspect to all NATO [education, training, exercise, and evaluation] activities is the requirement to capture and incorporate Lessons Identified in order that they become Lessons Learned." (Paragraph 21)
2018 Bi-Strategic Command Directive 080-006, Lessons Learned (SH/PLANS/J7/PLL/OR/18-318588) or (5000/TSC-FET-0 100/TT-171029/Ser: NU0122)	"In an uncertain and continuously changing security environment, learning lessons to improve is an essential part of being credible, capable and adaptive in warfighting and warfare development." (Paragraph 1)

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

2020 Bi-Strategic Command Directive 075-003, Collective Training & Exercise Directive – Working Draft (SH/SDP/J7/TRX/19-003203 (INV)) or (ACT/JFD/TREX/TT-1437 /SER:NU 0527)	“Lessons from exercises serve to improve operational capability and improve future exercises. The NATO Lessons Learned (LL) Process as provided in Bi-SC Directive 080-006 ‘Lessons Learned’ is to be an integrated part of all exercise activities throughout all stages and phases of the Exercise Process (EP).” (Annex S, paragraph 1)
--	--

Source: NATO documentation.

Key terms and definitions used in lessons learned process for NATO military training and exercises

1.1.7 Finally, table 3 below includes key terms and definitions used to describe the lessons learned process in NATO military exercises. See also appendix 1 that includes a figure illustrating the lessons learned process in exercises that uses these key terms and includes deliverables and time frames.

Table 3 – Key terms and definitions for lessons learned process in NATO exercises

An Action Body (AB) is the organisation or staff tasked by the tasking authority to implement an assigned recommendation or a remedial action from a lesson identified. This body sets up an action plan and reports to the tasking authority.
A Best Practice (BP) is a technique, process or methodology contributing to an improved performance. It is considered as a “best way of operating” in a particular domain.
An Exercise Specification (EXSPEC) is promulgated by the Officer Scheduling the Exercise (OSE) and specifies the exercise aims, exercise objectives, and the exercise design including the level, type and form of the exercise, the exercise location, setting and scenario, host nation(s), participation requirement and the designation of the Officer Commanding the Exercise (OCE) as well as the Officer Directing the Exercise (ODE) and any required coordinating instructions.
An Exercise Plan (EXPLAN) is issued by the OCE and provides detailed instructions to exercise participants and supporting commands, centres, agencies or other activities for the preparation, conduct, support, evaluation and reporting of the exercise. It establishes requirements, responsibilities and the schedule of activities for the provision of training events and activities, scenario modules, simulation support, real-life support, communications, information management, exercise control, and exercise analyses and reports.
A lessons collection plan , in this context, is a simple or detailed plan for who, when, where and how lessons are collected for priority or focus areas. It is conceived ahead of an activity as an integrated part of the general planning to enable active and focused collection of lessons. It is not mandatory and can be part of an EXSPEC or EXPLAN.
A Lesson Identified (LI) is when the observation has been analysed, the root cause established, a remedial action defined and the tasking authority identified.
A Lessons Identified List (LIL) is a list of key observations and lessons identified from the exercise. It is completed by a suggestion of action bodies for recommended actions. It is the OCE who produces the LIL with the support of other exercise stakeholders.
A Lesson Learned (LL) is a LI for which a remedial action was approved and implemented.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

The NATO Lessons Learned Portal (NLLP) is the information sharing platform of NATO's observations, LI and LL. It is the centralized hub for lessons learned related information, which includes lessons from all NATO activities.
An Observation is a comment based on something heard, seen or noticed that was identified and documented as an issue for improvement or a potential best practice.
The Officer Conducting the Exercise (OCE) is responsible for planning, executing, and reporting of the exercise results according to OSE direction. The OCE can also be a Commander from the TA. When the OCE is not the TA Commander, some tasks and responsibilities may be delegated to the TA and shall be reflected in the EXSPEC.
The Officer Directing the Exercise (ODE) may be designated by the OSE and supports the OCE during the detailed planning and overall execution of the exercise with a view to achieving the conditions which allow the achievement of the exercise aims, exercise objectives, and training objectives.
The Officer Scheduling the Exercise (OSE) schedules the exercise; oversees the exercise planning and execution; ensures that it is adequately resourced; meets the stated requirements; and validates the exercise results. The OSE may also serve as OCE and/or the Commander of the Primary Training Audience.
The Originating Authority (OA) is the body responsible for endorsing the LI. The OA is to forward the LI to the tasking authority through the chain of command.
The Tasking Authority (TA) is the entity responsible for the implementation phase. It decides on recommendations and remedial actions, commit resources and appoint/task one or more AB. The TA gives feedback to the OA of its decisions. The TA is responsible for the coordination, implementation and tracking from a LI to a LL. It must control that the approved LI is uploaded in the NLLP and updates the LI to LL when implemented.
The Training Audience (TA) is a collective of the primary training audience (i.e., those headquarters/commands/participants/units identified as the main beneficiaries of the training) and the secondary training audience (i.e., those headquarters/commands/participants/units, whose participation in the exercise is identified as necessary and/or suitable to assist in achieving the exercise aims, exercise objectives, and training objectives).

Source: Bi-Strategic Command Directive 075-003, Collective Training & Exercise Directive – Working Draft, 28 January 2020.

Changes to the lessons learned process and NATO collective training and exercise

1.1.8 Several changes occurred to the lessons learned process and bi-strategic command roles and responsibilities over collective training and exercises since IBAN issued its report in 2016. The primary changes in the lessons learned process between 2016 and 2022 include a more focused approach at the beginning of the process with a lessons collection plan, a clearer focus on specific outputs and a more specific focus on usage of the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. In addition, the stage names and their lengths changed with an emphasis on the analytical part of the process. Appendix 2 contains figures showing the lessons learned process in 2016 versus 2022.

1.1.9 There were also significant changes to the bi-strategic command roles and responsibilities over collective training and exercises since IBAN published its report in 2016. As of October 2018, due to NATO Command Structure Adaptation, the responsibility for the collective training and exercise programme transferred from ACT/HQ SACT to ACO/SHAPE. Appendix 3 provides details from Bi-Strategic Command Directive 075-003, Collective

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

Training & Exercise Directive – Working Draft, 28 January 2020 on the roles and responsibilities that were to completely shift between ACO and ACT by 01 January 2021. However, the two NATO strategic commands continue to clarify and update existing lessons learned and exercise policies, directives and standard operating procedures to reflect this transfer.

1.1.10 In general, the management and requirements of collective training and exercises did not change and are set by the commander of ACO, who is the Supreme Allied Commander Allied Powers Europe (SACEUR). However, some responsibilities shifted from HQ SACT to SHAPE, including planning and lessons learned coordination for the NATO Military Training and Exercise Programme (MTEP). The MTEP aims at developing, scheduling, synchronising and publishing NATO exercises and nationally declared exercises. The MTEP includes an average of 75 NATO-organised exercises, financed by SHAPE, per year for a period of five years¹. HQ SACT maintains responsibility for direction, guidance and venue coordination for the integration of experimentation activities and collective training support. HQ SACT does not have a direct role in the lessons learned process for NATO military exercises other than through managing its internal lessons learned process during an exercise and reviewing and approving JALLC's annual programme of work.

1.1.11 Since January 2020, the exercise budget also transferred from ACT to ACO. IBAN reported that the budget authorisation under ACT increased from MEUR 10.1 in 2013 to MEUR 15.2 in 2016. The budget authorisation for exercises under ACO increased from MEUR 16.8 in 2020 to MEUR 20.6 in 2021 and then back down to MEUR 16.9 in 2022.

Bi-Strategic Command establishment of lessons learned action plan, roadmap and a governance structure programme

1.1.12 In 2017, ACO and ACT developed a NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan, in part, to respond proactively to IBAN's 2016 report recommendations and growing concerns on the effectiveness of the NATO Lessons Learned Policy implementation at all levels, including exercises. This action plan aimed to improve and sustain the effectiveness of NATO lessons learned capabilities along four lines of effort:

- Lessons learned governance,
- Rebalancing the role of the Joint Analysis And Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC),
- NATO Lessons Learned Portal as the single tool and
- Lessons learned cultural adaptations.

1.1.13 The action plan included 14 tasks/functions and 56 activities/actions divided into short term (2017), medium term (2018) and long-term (2019) time frames. The action plan also identified a lead and supporting implementation body/headquarter for each action with output measures.

¹ 91 exercises if we include the NATO Force Structure Exercises.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

1.1.14 In 2020, ACO and ACT released the NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan 2017-2019 Final Report, which cited significant results across the NATO command structure in improving the effectiveness of NATO Lessons Learned Policy implementation. These results included establishment of a bi-strategic command lessons learned governance structure, activation of a single NATO lessons learned portal with more than 3,000 uploaded items and greater focus from JALLC in supporting exercises, operations and NATO command structure headquarters in the lessons learned process.

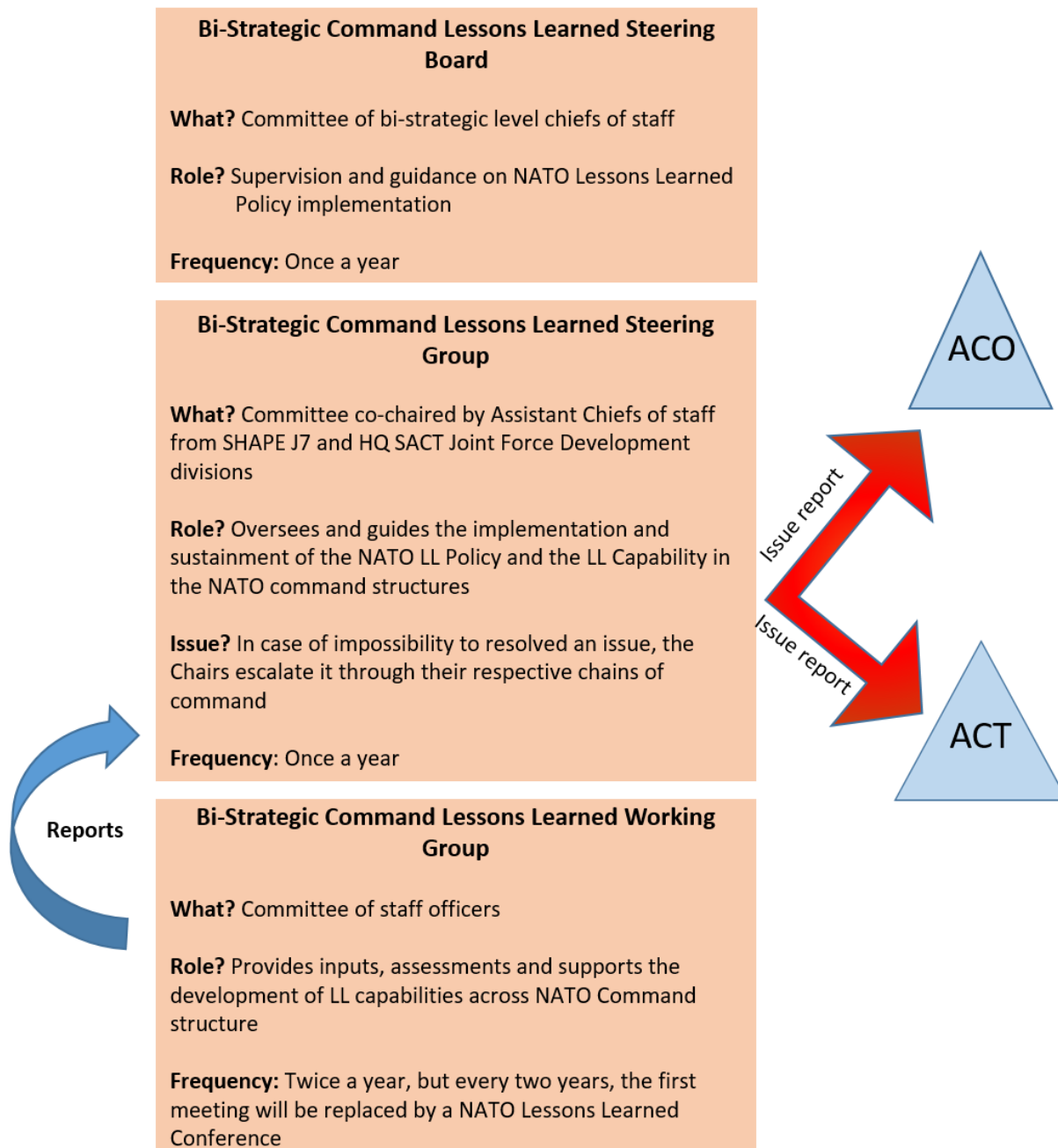
1.1.15 However, the final report also identified gaps that prevented the bi-strategic commands from fully implementing the NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan. To respond to these gaps and address recurring tasks, ACO and ACT recommended replacing the NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan with the NATO Lessons Learned Capability Improvement Roadmap 2021-2025. This follow-on roadmap includes four lines of effort:

- Expanding lessons learned governance structure beyond the strategic commands to include NATO Headquarters,
- Improving Bi-Strategic Command lessons learned management and battle rhythm,
- Focussing on lessons learned collection and exploitation and
- Pursuing lessons learned capability innovation.

1.1.16 Each line of effort includes activities with a lead/coordinator identified, milestones and objectives that describe desired outputs/outcomes.

1.1.17 To monitor implementation of the NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan and follow-on NATO Lessons Learned Capability Improvement Roadmap, ACO and ACT established a multi-level governance structure consisting of three bodies (see figure 1 for governance structure, reporting lines and meeting frequency).

Figure 1 –Bi-Strategic lessons learned governance structure, reporting lines and meeting frequency



Source: IBAN analysis based on NATO documentation and interviews.

- Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Board – The lead Chief of Staff-level body responsible for supervision and guidance on NATO Lessons Learned Policy implementation at the strategic level.
- Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Group – The body responsible for oversight and guidance of the implementation and sustainment of the NATO Lessons Learned Policy and the lessons learned capability in the NATO

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

command structure. The Steering Group is co-chaired by the Assistant Chiefs of Staff from SHAPE J7 and HQ SACT Joint Force Development divisions. When the Steering Board cannot resolve an issue, the co-chairmen are to elevate the issue through their respective chains of command.

- Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Working Group – The Lessons Learned Staff Officer level body responsible for providing inputs, assessments and other support as needed on the development of lessons learned capabilities across the NATO command structure. The Working Group reports to the Steering Group.

1.1.18 Based on tasks in the NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan and NATO Lessons Learned Capability Improvement Roadmap, JALLC developed two concept documents to provide a common understanding on the purpose and types of lessons learned analysis it can provide in support of NATO institutional learning. The JALLC Analysis Concept includes an annex that describes three types of analysis that the NATO command structure can request from JALLC for exercises and operations. The table below summarises the three types of JALLC analysis.

Table 4 – Summary of analysis types offered by JALLC

Analysis type	Description
NATO Lessons Learned Portal Content Analysis	- Summarise lessons and information contained in the portal on requested topics to support planning or lessons identification. - Analyse trends from across all of the lessons submitted to the portal by all of the participating NATO command structure headquarters in relation to an exercise or operation, which may be indicative of key/overarching lessons or a requirement for follow on analysis.
Short Term Analysis	- Attend specific parts of an exercise or operation and collect independent data from direct observations and interviews. - Produce high-level report that identifies systemic, high-level issues with strategic implications that a NATO command structure headquarters' senior leaders can use to plan for future exercise iterations or operational activities.
Joint Analysis	- Attend specific parts of an exercise or operation gathering data for a specific joint analysis project. - Collocate with an analysis/evaluation team, exercise control or lessons learned branch, but JALLC analysts will have their own independent objectives to fulfil. - Produce systematic and in-depth study of a complex issue involving multiple entities in order to support enduring systemic improvements at the operational and strategic levels.

Source: JALLC Analysis Concept, December 2021

1.2 Audit objectives

1.2.1 IBAN assessed NATO strategic commands' implementation of recommendations from its 2016 performance audit on the lessons learned process for NATO exercises. The objectives for this follow up performance audit were:

1. To determine the extent to which NATO took actions in addressing the IBAN recommendations included in the 2016 audit report; and
2. To determine the current status and assess progress made since 2016 on the lessons learned process for NATO exercises in the NATO bodies selected for the 2016 audit report.

1.3 Audit scope and methodology

1.3.1 The audit scope includes information gathered from the date IBAN published its previous performance audit report in March 2016 until February 2023. The audit team reviewed and analysed official documentation and conducted interviews with relevant senior leaders and experts on the lessons learned process in NATO exercises from the NATO entities described in table 1. Specifically, the audit team sent questionnaires to auditees regarding two key efforts related to IBAN's recommendations: (1) the NATO Lessons Learned Optimization Action Plan 2017-2019 and (2) the NATO Lessons Learned Capability Improvement Roadmap 2021-2025 and mapped each of its recommendations to one or more of the tasks described in these documents.

1.3.2 The audit team also reviewed the main lessons learned policies and directives described in table 2 and assessed these against those used in IBAN's 2016 report to describe the primary changes since 2016. The audit team reviewed reports from major joint exercises held from 2018 to 2021, annual lessons learned capability reports issued by subordinate commands of HQ SACT and SHAPE, Bi-Strategic Command lessons learned governance progress reports and meeting minutes, the JALLC Lessons Learned Handbook and other NATO lessons learned documentation. Based on responses to questionnaires and document review, the audit team interviewed senior officials to clarify its interpretation of responses and documentation. Finally, the audit team applied a rating scale to assess the extent to which the strategic commands implemented IBAN's 2016 recommendations as seen below in table 6.

Table 5 – Rating scale used to assess strategic command implementation of IBAN's 2016 recommendations

Fully addressed:	Recommendation/finding closed.
In Progress:	Significant work performed, but work remains to fully address recommendation/finding.
Limited progress:	Some actions taken, but limited results obtained.
No progress:	Nothing done to address the recommendation/finding.

Source: IBAN.

2. NATO STRATEGIC COMMANDS MADE PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING FOUR OUT OF SEVEN IBAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS IN NATO MILITARY EXERCISES

2.1 IBAN found the strategic commands made progress implementing four out of seven recommendations made in its 2016 audit report on the lessons learned process in NATO exercises. Table 7 below summarises this progress.

Table 6 – IBAN 2016 recommendations summary of progress

Recommendations	IBAN assessment
1) The strategic commands should establish clear guidance on lessons learned reporting deliverables that support the differences in the sizes and complexity of NATO exercises and lessons learned reporting lines that address the inter-command nature of exercises.	- Clearer guidance on reporting deliverables and cross-command tasking authority of lessons in exercises in bi-strategic command directives on lessons learned and collective training and exercises. - Delays updating key policies and directives related to lessons learned in NATO exercises, but revisions are in progress.
2) The North Atlantic Council should take steps to ensure the strategic commands take actions that encourage greater leadership engagement on implementing the lessons learned process at all command levels, develop indicators to measure the performance of the NATO lessons learned process and provide this information to senior leadership through the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's annual guidance on NATO education, training, exercise and evaluation (SAGE) or other equivalent document.	- Greater leadership engagement through Bi-Strategic Command Steering Board, Steering Group and Working Group with annual reporting on lessons learned performance measures gathered from across the NATO command structure and reporting twice a year on analysis of lessons learned information and trends in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. - NATO lessons learned capability performance reported annually to Bi-Strategic Command Steering Board and for first time to Chief of Staff-level Bi-Strategic Command Steering Board meeting in December 2021.
3) The strategic commands should revise lessons learned guidance to provide more detailed instructions and criteria to subordinate commands on what lessons are relevant to share, from which exercises, and what other types of information should be provided.	- Bi-Strategic directives on lessons learned and collective training and exercises suggest developing a lessons collection plan based on Commander's guidance and priorities and are an integrated part of exercise specifications and exercise plans in recent major joint exercises. - Bi-Strategic directives can still be more precise on what information should be shared, and the inclusion of a lessons learned collection plan in exercises is not mandatory.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

4) The strategic commands, in conjunction with stakeholders, should consider consolidating or eliminating redundant lessons learned databases. These considerations should include cost effectiveness.	- According to documents and interviews with officials, redundant lessons learned databases have been eliminated, and the NATO Lessons Learned Portal is the single tool for data collection. - There are still other information sharing and collection platforms used throughout the NATO command structure to gather and filter observations before entering them into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.
---	---

Source: IBAN analysis of NATO documentation.

The strategic commands made progress establishing clearer guidance on lessons learned reporting deliverables and cross-command tasking authority of lessons in exercises

2.2 The strategic commands made progress implementing IBAN's recommendation to establish clear guidance on lessons learned reporting deliverables that support the differences in the sizes and complexity of NATO exercises and lessons learned reporting lines that address the inter-command nature of exercises. In 2016, IBAN reported that the 2013 collective training and exercise directive required the officer scheduling the exercise to release a lessons identified action plan, but the directive did not specify a time frame for delivery or the process for following up on remedial actions after the remedial action report was issued. In addition, IBAN reported that the directive provided incomplete guidance on the content of the lessons identified action plan and did not specify the identification of the tasking authority who would direct the action body to implement the remedial action.

2.3 Since 2016, the strategic commands updated the collective training and exercise directive in 2020. The directive still does not include detailed guidance on the content of the lessons identified action plan or process for following up on remedial actions. However, the directive does provide a diagram of the lessons identified/lessons learned process in collective training and exercises that shows the delivery of the lessons identified action plan somewhere between 15 and 30 days after the end of the exercise. In addition, the directive describes the process for tasking authority assignment and decision making between commands.

2.4 According to the 2020 collective training and exercise directive, when a command headquarters endorses a lesson identified, the headquarters enters this into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, and the command headquarters becomes the originating authority. If the lesson identified is internal, then it will be forwarded internally to the tasking authority resulting in the headquarters being both the originating authority and the tasking authority. If the originating authority thinks the lesson identified should have an external tasking authority (i.e., outside of its chain of command), the originating authority sends a signed letter to the Chief of Staff of the external headquarters that the originating authority thinks should become the tasking authority. Once the external headquarters receives the letter, the letter goes through the chain of command, which will decide either to "note" or approve the proposed remedial action/recommendation and enters the decision in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. If noted, the external headquarters takes no further action. If approved, the external headquarters becomes the tasking authority and tasks an action body to develop an action plan to implement the remedial action and reports this in the NATO Lessons

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

Learned Portal. Once the action plan is implemented, the action body informs the tasking authority, which may include validation. Then the tasking authority reports in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal that the lesson identified has been turned into a lesson learned.

2.5 Though the strategic commands made progress in establishing clearer guidance, there have been significant delays in updating higher-level policies related to the lessons learned process in NATO exercises. Specifically, the NATO Lessons Learned Policy and NATO Education, Training, Exercises, and Evaluation Policy had not been updated since 2011 and 2014 respectively. This meant NATO's overarching policies related to the lessons learned process in exercises did not align with updated bi-strategic directives and did not include important changes, such as the transfer of the exercises and training programme from ACT to ACO. However, the Military Committee in collaboration with the strategic commands recently revised and provided comments to these two major policies. The Military Committee signed the final NATO Education, Training, Exercise and Evaluation Policy and forwarded it to Council for notation in January 2023. In February 2023, the Military Committee provided its advice to Council on the NATO Lessons Learned Policy review. According to officials, the goal is to have the NATO Lessons Learned Policy finalised sometime in 2023.

The strategic commands made significant progress taking actions to encourage greater leadership engagement and measuring performance

2.6 In 2016, IBAN reported that there was no mechanism or report within NATO that provided visibility on the status of lessons from NATO exercises or that could be used to assess the performance of the NATO lessons learned process. In addition, IBAN found there was no centralised monitoring and follow-up on remedial actions on lessons identified from exercises or follow-up orders to provide status updates on remedial actions or lessons from higher level command.

2.7 Since 2016, the strategic commands established a bi-strategic command lessons learned governance structure to manage implementation of the NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan and NATO Lessons Learned Capability Improvement Roadmap. Though the action plan and roadmap included tasks to improve the overall NATO lessons learned process and capabilities, IBAN identified tasks that led to positive progress related to its recommendation on greater leadership engagement in the lessons learned process for NATO exercises.

2.8 Specifically, the strategic commands established a mechanism where the Strategic Commanders regularly receives performance reports on the overall NATO command structure lessons learned capability, which includes information on exercises. Annex F of the 2018 Bi-Strategic Directive on Lessons Learned requires all headquarters in the NATO command structure to report on specific lessons learned capability objectives and performance measures annually to the Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Group. These objectives and performance measures are grouped around seven areas that the strategic commands and JALLC consider key elements of the NATO lessons learned capability: (1) Mindset; (2) Leadership; (3) Structure; (4) Process; (5) Tools; (6) Training; and (7) Information Sharing. There are also objectives and performance measures on joint analysis requirements.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

2.9 Within these annual lessons learned capability reports, each NATO command structure headquarters describes the exercises they participated in during the year along with summary tables that include the number of observations, lessons identified, best practices and lessons learned entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal or still in progress. According to SHAPE officials, these annual reports are one of the sources of information used to identify shortcomings in lessons learned capability implementation in ACO's subordinate commands. During Lessons Learned Weeks, JALLC uses the capability reports along with other information to provide progress reports to the Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Group. In addition, SHAPE officials stated that they meet with officials from ACO subordinate commands during Lessons Learned Weeks to discuss these capability reports and suitable ways to address challenges.

2.10 The Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Group also receives performance information from JALLC NATO Lessons Learned Portal Active Content Management reports at least once a year or when requested. As defined in the 2018 Bi-Strategic Directive Lessons Learned, NATO Lessons Learned Portal Active Content Management is a continuous activity that includes analysis and assessment of data and information. JALLC staff monitor and assess the conduct of the lessons learned process, reach out to Originating Authority, Tasking Authority and Action Body for coordination and advice as required, identify trends and strategic lessons, monitor lessons from major NATO events (exercises and operations), and push information to relevant authorities. As a result, these Active Content Management reports help senior leadership to monitor the progression of items within the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and highlight items on key topics of interest based on JALLC's annual programme of work, NATO operations, missions, activities and major NATO exercises.

2.11 Though the Assistant Chief of Staff-level Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Group receives reports on NATO command structure lessons learned capability performance at least once a year or when requested, IBAN found that there was no formal mechanism established to engage the Chiefs of Staff from the strategic commands until 2021. The strategic commands met formally for the first time at the Chief of Staff level in December 2021 to assess the status of the NATO lessons learned capability, Bi-Strategic Command lessons learned initiatives and the NATO Lessons Learned Capability Improvement Roadmap. According to the record of decisions taken at this first meeting, the aim was to have the Bi-Strategic Lessons Learned Steering Board be the lead governance body responsible for providing strategic level supervision and guidance on NATO Lessons Learned Policy implementation. As such, ACO and ACT Chiefs of Staff agreed to a revised lessons learned governance battle rhythm where they would receive updates on key lessons and approve strategic priority areas for lessons learned collection and joint analysis requirements on an annual basis. Though the steering board is a recently established governing body, IBAN sees this as a positive step toward greater leadership engagement and measuring performance of the lessons learned process overall, including exercises. However, it will take several more iterations of this new governance arrangement to determine if it affects the lessons learned process in exercises.

The strategic commands made progress providing more detailed instructions and criteria on what lessons to share

2.12 The strategic commands made progress implementing IBAN's recommendation to provide more detailed instructions and criteria on what relevant lessons to share, from which exercises, and what other types of information should be provided. For example, the bi-strategic directives on lessons learned and collective training and exercises suggest developing a lessons collection plan based on Commander's guidance and priorities and are an integrated part of exercise specifications (EXSPECS) and exercise plans (EXPLANS) in recent major joint exercises.

2.13 In addition, the collective training and exercise directive has an annex dedicated to the lessons learned in collective training and exercises with a figure that provides time frames for the lessons learned deliverables. The directive also suggests that the Officer Scheduling the Exercise, Officer Commanding the Exercise, Officer Directing the Exercise and Training Audiences develop a lessons learned collection plan and define procedures for collecting and uploading lessons from exercise participants that do not have access to the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. The lessons learned collection plan can be simple as a list of priorities or focus areas based on Commander's guidance or more comprehensive as an integrated part of an EXSPEC or EXPLAN. However, the collective training and exercise directive does not make it mandatory to develop a lessons learned collection plan or define procedures for collecting and uploading lessons from exercise participants that do not have access to the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. Nevertheless, SHAPE officials stated that they made lessons learned collection plans mandatory in recent exercises, such as Steadfast Jupiter 2021. Efforts are also underway to more clearly define what to include in a lessons learned collection plan based on lessons learned priority areas defined by the Chief of Staff-level Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Board.

The strategic commands made progress consolidating or eliminating redundant lessons learned databases

2.14 The strategic commands made progress implementing IBAN's recommendation to consolidate or eliminate redundant lessons learned databases. According to the January 2021 NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan final report, the strategic commands eliminated redundant databases and made the NATO Lessons Learned Portal the single tool for data collection. Further, the strategic commands updated the lessons learned and collective training and exercises directives to include extra emphasis on entering lessons into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal at every phase of the lessons learned process during an exercise.

2.15 However, IBAN found that several NATO command structure headquarters continue to use other tools to store and share lessons learned data, such as Microsoft Excel, SharePoint and internal command tasker tracker systems. According to officials, this is due to the number of observations collected during an exercise, which can be voluminous, duplicative, irrelevant or not of good quality. Therefore, command headquarters use these other information collection and sharing tools to upload and filter observations so that final and higher quality ones can be entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. However, this process creates an additional burden on lessons learned portal managers who are

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

responsible for entering observations that have been entered into a separate information collection and sharing tool into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. The strategic commands recognised this technology gap, and ACT is in the process of developing an interim observation collection tool to help bridge this gap. Further, the strategic commands agreed to user requirements in 2020 to develop a new NATO Lessons Learned Toolset that will replace the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and integrate observations collection and filtering into the new toolset.

Conclusion

2.16 The strategic commands have made progress implementing four out of seven of IBAN's 2016 recommendations that include greater leadership engagement and a bi-strategic command lessons learned governance structure to continue improving the overall NATO lessons learned capability. The NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan and follow-on NATO Lessons Learned Capability Improvement Roadmap demonstrate the strategic commands' intent to address IBAN's 2016 recommendations. IBAN recognises and supports these efforts.

3. NATO STRATEGIC COMMANDS MADE LIMITED PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING THREE OUT OF SEVEN IBAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR NATO MILITARY EXERCISES

3.1 Overall, IBAN found the strategic commands made limited progress implementing three out of seven IBAN recommendations. Table 8 below summarises IBAN's assessment on the limited progress the strategic commands made in implementing these three recommendations.

Table 7 – IBAN 2016 recommendations summary of limited progress

Recommendation	IBAN assessment
5) The North Atlantic Council should take steps to ensure that the strategic commands identify a single party at the appropriate command level responsible for monitoring the implementation of the lessons learned process for each exercise and define their role and responsibilities in guidance.	- No single party designated in guidance at the appropriate command level responsible and accountable for ensuring lessons identified are appropriately tasked and fully adjudicated through the lessons learned process across all commands participating in exercises. - Tasking authority challenges still remain and result in lessons stagnating, noted without need for further consideration, or kept internal and not shared outside of commands.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

6) The strategic commands should ensure that subordinate commands are including observations or lessons from internal performance assessments or other analytical activities into their lessons learned processes.	- Based on a survey, four out of six subordinate commands mentioned in IBAN's 2016 report stated they continue to use analyses, assessment and reporting teams to collect performance information for their Chiefs of Staff for major exercises. However, these commands also stated they are inputting observations or lessons from these activities into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. - No one at the strategic commands proactively and regularly ensures that subordinate commands are including observations or lessons from internal performance assessments or other analytical activities into their lessons learned processes.
7) The strategic commands, in coordination with the Joint Analysis And Lessons Learned Centre and other stakeholders, should take steps to ensure a common framework is in place to ensure the accuracy and quality of data entered in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.	- Lessons learned trainings and handbook provide guidance on drafting quality observations, but there are still quality issues with data in the NATO Lesson Learned Portal. - No common framework developed to ensure accuracy and quality of data entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

Source: IBAN analysis of NATO documentation.

The strategic commands made limited progress identifying a single party responsible for monitoring the implementation of the lessons learned process for each exercise

3.2 In 2016, IBAN found no single party designated in guidance at the appropriate command level responsible and accountable for ensuring lessons identified were appropriately tasked and fully adjudicated through the lessons learned process across all commands participating in exercises. As of February 2023, IBAN found there is still no central authority designated in guidance to address this issue.

3.3 In theory, the Chief of Staff-level Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Board would have sufficient authority to ensure that lessons identified from exercises are fully adjudicated through the NATO lessons learned process across all commands participating in an exercise. However, the steering board's terms of reference does not clearly designate the steering board as the single party responsible for enforcing adherence to the lessons learned process in exercises. In addition, the steering board met for the first time in December 2021 where JALLC reported that 1,309 observations in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal had not progressed for over a year. These observations were across the NATO command structure, and the steering board agreed that JALLC should further investigate the importance of these observations with their originating authorities as part of JALLC's 2022 programme of work. JALLC is following up with these originating authorities to discuss reasons for stagnation and ways JALLC can provide support. However, there is no central authority yet designated in guidance to ensure these 1,309 observations progress into lessons identified and become lessons learned.

3.4 Overall, the bi-strategic command lessons learned governance structure was established to monitor implementation of the entire NATO lessons learned capability as a

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

whole and not only exercises. Though IBAN recognises this as progress, the strategic commands are not fully utilising the centralised authority of the new lessons learned steering board and defining its role and responsibilities to ensure lessons identified from exercises are fully adjudicated through the NATO lessons learned process across all commands participating in exercises. Officials did not state that upcoming revisions to the lessons learned directive and other guidance would define the Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Board roles, responsibilities and authorities to ensure stagnating observations progress into lessons identified and become lessons learned after major exercises.

3.5 IBAN finds this lack of a single party designated in guidance at the appropriate command level to be one of the central challenges to fully addressing all of IBAN's 2016 recommendations. Without this single party, there is no one centrally held responsible and accountable for ensuring lessons identified are appropriately tasked and fully adjudicated through the lessons learned process across all commands participating in exercises. As a result, headquarters across the NATO command structure continue to conduct the lessons learned process in exercises separately with no one with centralised authority to connect these silos.

The strategic commands made limited progress ensuring that subordinate commands are including observations or lessons from internal performance assessments or other analytical activities into their lessons learned processes

3.6 The strategic commands made limited progress implementing IBAN's recommendation to ensure that subordinate commands are including observations or lessons from internal performance assessments or other analytical activities into their lessons learned processes. In 2016, IBAN reported that there were analytical activities occurring in the subordinate commands with observations and lessons that were not being included into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. IBAN found that some commands had alternative internal performance reviews and reporting that were concurrent to their lessons learned process during exercises. The IBAN identified the following teams producing lessons that were not entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal:

3.6.1 Joint Force Command Naples used internal performance teams to collect performance information for the Chief of Staff.

3.6.2 Joint Force Command Brunssum used an analyses, assessment and reporting team to collect performance information for the Chief of Staff.

3.6.3 Single service commands used observation and training teams to collect performance information for the Chief of Staff.

3.6.4 Joint Warfare Centre produced certain reports detailing lessons not included in any specific lessons learned programme.

3.7 IBAN asked these same subordinate commands if they are now including observations or lessons from internal performance assessments or other analytical activities into their lessons learned processes. Four out of six subordinate commands stated that they

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

continue to use analyses, assessment and reporting teams to collect performance information for their Chiefs of Staff for major exercises and enter their observations or lessons from these activities into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. Though subordinate commands stated they are including lessons from their analytical activities into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, IBAN found this was not due to proactive management or regular engagement from the strategic commands. Officials from the strategic commands did not find it their responsibility to proactively and regularly ensure that subordinate commands are including observations and lessons from these activities into their lessons learned processes.

3.8 In their interpretation of the collective training and exercises directive, officials from one of the strategic commands thought that information collected from internal performance assessments and other analytical activities were not likely related to the lessons learned process in NATO exercises. Despite the progress made in the subordinate commands, IBAN did not find a single party or office at the appropriate level within the strategic commands that proactively and regularly ensures that subordinate commands are including observations or lessons from these analytical activities into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal.

The strategic commands made limited progress establishing a common framework to ensure accuracy and quality of data entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal

3.9 In 2016, IBAN reported there was a lack of data quality controls to ensure the data entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal was reliable and accurate. In addition, IBAN found no central authority that ensured lessons identified or lessons learned documents adhered to the JALLC-endorsed format to ensure completeness of information and quality. This resulted in instances of mislabelling or different file naming conventions that affected the accuracy and validity of the data and the ability of users to search and find information.

3.10 Officials from the strategic commands stated that they address the accuracy and quality of data entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal from exercises through training, guidance and JALLC support. During an exercise, each command headquarters has a lessons learned working group that includes Lessons Learned Staff Officers, Lessons Learned Points of Contact and designated Local NATO Lessons Learned Portal Managers. These lessons learned personnel attend mandatory training that provide instruction on how to enter accurate and quality information into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. In addition, JALLC Advisory and Mobile Training Teams provide numerous in-person trainings throughout the NATO command structure every year that include how to draft quality observations and lessons. Each command headquarters has a lessons learned working group during an exercise that reviews all observations to ensure that only those that are complete and mature progress along the lessons learned process. According to officials, the goal of this review process is to produce lessons identified that are more relevant, higher quality and become better lessons learned. The officials also stated that exercise participants use the JALLC-authored NATO Lessons Learned Handbook, which provides guidance and checklists on how to draft quality observations that are mature enough to progress along the NATO lessons learned process.

3.11 However, the NATO Lessons Learned Handbook is not mandatory to follow and some trained personnel perform lessons learned responsibilities as a secondary duty. For

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

example, some staff officers may be appointed as Lessons Learned Points of Contact, but only as a secondary duty that is not included in their official post descriptions. This limits the availability and commitment of Lessons Learned Points of Contact, according to officials. Further, officials stated that a Lessons Learned Point of Contact may not even participate in the exercise resulting in his or her training and expertise missing from the working group and thus unutilised. Finally, JALLC provides advisory and training support, but does not have the authority to compel exercise participants to adhere to the NATO Lessons Learned Handbook to ensure accuracy and quality of information entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. JALLC sends analysts to different command headquarters to support as many exercises as possible and follows up with originating authorities to correct data it sees put into the portal incorrectly. However, JALLC resources are limited to 50 peacetime establishment posts to pursue a programme of work that includes providing advisory and mobile training teams; organising and executing lessons learned weeks and conferences; and conducting a number of portal content, short-term and joint analyses for the strategic commands each year. IBAN reviewed Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Board and Steering Group meeting minutes and JALLC Programme of Work documents from 2018 to 2022 and found no mention of developing a common framework to improve the accuracy and quality of data in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. Further, the 2020 document on strategic command user requirements for a new NATO Lessons Learned Toolset that will replace the portal contains statements about benefits of quality assurance but no details about how this quality assurance will be achieved.

3.12 As a result, data quality and accuracy issues continue to appear in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. Since 2018, JALLC reports on NATO Lessons Learned Portal Active Content Management consistently mention data quality and accuracy issues. The lessons learned data entry process continues to be a bottom-up activity that occurs in silos from each command headquarters during short periods within an exercise. According to a JALLC report on exercise Trident Juncture 2018, tight time frames outlined in the collective training and exercises directive (within 15 days of the After Action Review) had a negative impact on the quality of observations generated during the exercise.

3.13 Though the strategic commands are taking actions through lessons learned trainings, guidance and JALLC support, these activities are not part of a common framework to ensure that data entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal and future NATO Lessons Learned Toolset are accurate and of quality. Other international organisations like the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have detailed guidance on how to apply a common data quality framework in statistical and analytical activities. Further, there are internationally recognised data quality frameworks, such as the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 8000 series, which are available for NATO to adapt and apply as appropriate. However, IBAN found that the strategic commands are not taking steps to develop similar frameworks to ensure the accuracy and quality of data entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal or the new NATO Lessons Learned Toolset that the strategic commands are developing to replace the portal.

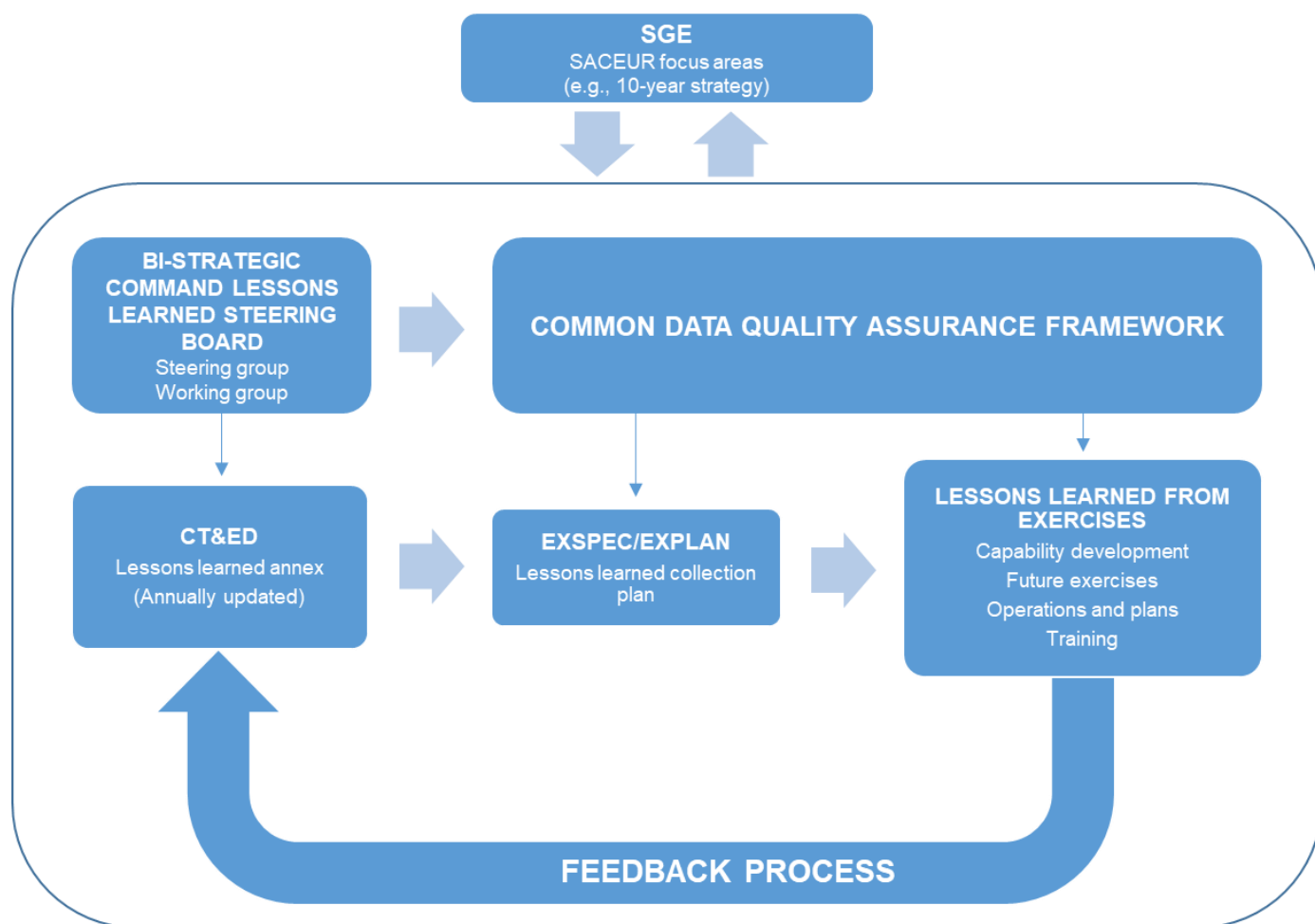
Conclusion

3.14 IBAN finds the strategic commands made limited progress in addressing three recommendations, namely the one on clearly identifying a single party responsible for ensuring that the lessons identified from exercises are appropriately tasked and fully adjudicated through the NATO lessons learned process across all the commands participating in the exercise. The strategic commands already developed a robust lessons learned governance structure with a steering board, steering group and working group where this IBAN recommendation could be incorporated. IBAN continues to see the effects that this lack of top-level direction, guidance and oversight has had, particularly in each headquarters within the NATO command structure that continue to implement their lessons learned processes during exercises in silos. Though this may seem appropriate at a tactical level, it also means there could be operational or strategic lessons that are trapped within these silos that are not being shared and result in lost learning opportunities.

4. THE STRATEGIC COMMANDS LACK A FEEDBACK PROCESS TO CONNECT LESSONS LEARNED FROM MILITARY EXERCISES TO SACEUR STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

4.1 IBAN found the strategic commands lack a feedback process that connects operational and tactical lessons learned from NATO military exercises to SACEUR's strategic level guidance on education, training, exercises and evaluation. Specifically, this process would be part of a system in which some or all of the system's outputs are fed back as inputs for future use. If led by a single party with defined roles, responsibilities, authority and a common data quality assurance framework, this process could provide valuable feedback to senior leadership and continuously strengthen not only the lessons learned process in exercises but NATO's overall strategy for education, training, exercises and evaluation. Figure 2 shows how such a feedback process and data quality assurance framework could look like for lessons learned in NATO military exercises with the Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Board as the single party.

Figure 2 – Lessons learned in NATO exercises feedback process



Source: IBAN analysis of NATO documentation.

There is no feedback process connecting lessons learned from NATO military exercises to SACEUR guidance on education, training, exercises and evaluation

4.2 In March 2022, SHAPE approved and issued revised guidance related to collective training and exercises. After 2023, the annual guidance issued by SACEUR (SAGE) will no longer exist, but will become three separate documents:

4.2.1 SACEUR's Guidance on Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation (SGE) – a document that provide SACEUR's strategic mission, intent and guidance on education, training, exercises and evaluation with a 10-year horizon,

4.2.2 Collective Training and Exercise Directive (CT&ED) – an annually issued document to supplement the SGE and provide further direction and guidance for collective training and exercises and

4.2.3 eRepository – a digital database to underpin the SGE and the annual CT&ED with important management information that is reviewed and updated as and when supporting information evolves.

4.3 SHAPE officials stated they are working on an interim CT&ED with the aim of issuing it by spring 2023. Officials are also developing a lessons learned annex to incorporate into the eRepository that contains more specifics about the types of lessons to include in an EXSPEC and EXPLAN. To support these efforts, SHAPE requested JALLC to assess key lessons from selected exercises against SACEUR's strategic priorities.

4.4 In recent exercises STEADFAST JUPITER 2021 and Steadfast Bonus 2022, the lessons learned collection plans in the EXSPECs and EXPLANs were based on SACEUR priorities that were in the SAGE and are now in the SGE, but were written in a very broad manner. Since every exercise is different, SHAPE officials stated it is important to have an exercise's lessons learned collection plan based on strategic lessons learned priority areas and the specific requirements for each exercise. According to SHAPE officials, the eRepository will include the lessons learned annex with more specific guidance on what types of lessons to collect based on lessons learned strategic priority areas. The intent of the lessons learned annex is to help the Officer Scheduling the Exercise develop the lessons learned collection plan in the EXSPEC and the Officer Conducting the Exercise develop a further detailed lessons learned collection plan in the EXPLAN. Subsequently, this would provide a solid foundation for subcommand training audiences to develop their own more specific lesson learned collection plans that focus on what observations to collect, prioritise and draft during the exercise, which would all have a direct relationship with SACEUR's strategic priorities. These observations would then be filtered and refined into relevant lessons identified and more beneficial lessons learned for the strategic commands.

4.5 However, the SGE, CT&ED and eRepository process is still very new, and it is unclear if the lessons learned annex in the eRepository would include performance measures to define the types of lessons to collect based on lessons learned strategic priority areas. According to its terms of reference, the Chief of Staff level Bi-Strategic Lessons Learned Steering Board will provide lessons learned strategic priorities. However, the Bi-Strategic Lessons Learned Steering Board met for the first time in December 2021, and IBAN did not find documentation or reports showing that a formal feedback process with performance measures existed before this meeting to connect lessons from exercises to strategic level direction and guidance. If the strategic commands had a feedback process with performance measures that aligned with lessons learned strategic priority areas and SGE priorities, then there would be a direct connection between operational and tactical lessons learned in exercises to strategic level direction and guidance. Without performance measures in a formal feedback process, there is no baseline against which to assess trends or progress of lessons learned in exercises over time. As a result, the strategic commands cannot comprehensively assess whether lessons from exercises are improving the education, training, exercises and evaluation programme and ultimately whether NATO commands are meeting NATO readiness and force structure objectives efficiently and effectively.

4.6 Based on analysis of major exercise reports and data in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal from 2018 through 2021, IBAN found there are still problems with submitting lessons and data quality. Though command headquarters are putting more lessons into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, JALLC's analysis relies heavily on staff submitting and updating lessons and ensuring that the lessons submitted are accurate and of high quality. In 2016, IBAN reviewed lessons identified in reporting deliverables from major exercises in 2013 and

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

2014 and found that, of the 142 lessons identified, only three lessons were formally recognised as being learned in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. In 2021, JALLC reported on selected exercises in 2019 and 2020 and found that, of the 152 lessons identified, 85 became formally recognised as lessons learned in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, which is a significant improvement.

4.7 Though the number of lessons entered into the portal increased, there are still problems that IBAN reported on in 2016 that continue to affect the submission of lessons and quality of data entered into the portal over the years since. For example:

4.7.1 A JALLC report on Trident Juncture 2018 noted that observations, lessons and best practices from senior mentor products, senior officials post exercise discussions and other non-NATO exercise participants were not being entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. In addition, the quality and relevance of observations, lessons and best practices entered into the portal were poor, because they were either not objective or missing sufficient detail to be processed further.

4.7.2 A 2021 JALLC report on selected exercises in 2019 and 2020 stated that certain key operational lessons from a final exercise report of a major joint exercise conducted in 2020 were not entered into the NATO Lessons Learned Portal. In the same report, JALLC noted quality issues with the lessons entered into the portal, including excessive use of acronyms and colloquial language that could be misinterpreted.

4.7.3 As of February 2023, IBAN found lessons identified and lessons learned in the NATO Lessons Learned Portal for a major exercise conducted in 2021, but no copy of the final exercise report. According to the Bi-Strategic Command Directive 075-003 on collective training and exercises, the final exercise report should be delivered no later than 75 days after the end of the exercise. In this same 2021 major exercise, IBAN found a lesson regarding the existence of disjointed information gathering tools that resulted in duplicative manual processes, stove piping of data and limited information sharing, which were issues IBAN reported on in 2016.

4.8 Therefore, IBAN assesses that, without sufficient and quality information to support a formal feedback process, the strategic commands also do not receive the performance information needed to comprehensively assess whether lessons from exercises are improving the education, training, exercises and evaluation programme and ultimately whether NATO commands are meeting NATO readiness and force structure objectives efficiently and effectively.

4.9 By not submitting lessons and entering lessons of lesser quality into the portal, the NATO command structure may not share and learn from these experiences, which could lead to similar problems during current and future military operations. Therefore, a defined feedback process led by a centralised authority that utilises a common data quality assurance framework can connect SACEUR's focus areas with lessons learned from exercises to support JALLC analyses and CT&ED and SGE development. In addition, the strategic commands would be better able to connect and demonstrate how the lessons learned process in exercises leads to improvements in NATO operational readiness and meeting force structure objectives and requirements.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

Conclusion

4.10 The strategic commands lack a feedback process connecting the operational and tactical lessons learned in exercises to strategic level guidance. Combined with a solid data quality assurance framework, the senior-most levels of ACO and ACT could receive valuable performance information that not only improves the quality of NATO military education, training, exercises and evaluation strategy but also overall NATO readiness and force structure objectives. Ultimately, without this feedback process, the strategic commands do not have the performance information necessary to fully assess whether their efforts are improving the NATO lessons learned process in exercises or the NATO command structure lessons learned capability writ large.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 IBAN recognises and supports that the strategic commands have made significant progress implementing four out of seven of IBAN's 2016 recommendations. The bi-strategic command lessons learned governance and reporting structure alongside both NATO Lessons Learned Optimisation Action Plan and follow-on NATO Lessons Learned Capability Improvement Roadmap demonstrate the strategic commands' commitment to addressing IBAN's 2016 recommendations.

5.1.2 However, the strategic commands made limited progress in clearly identifying a single party responsible for ensuring that the lessons identified from exercises are appropriately tasked and fully adjudicated through the NATO lessons learned process across all the commands participating in the exercise. IBAN sees this lack of consistent senior bi-strategic direction, guidance and oversight affecting the NATO command structure's overall ability to implement IBAN's 2016 recommendations. Absent a single party with appropriate monitoring and enforcement authority, the NATO command structure headquarters continue to operate their lessons learned processes in silos without fully sharing key lessons that could make NATO a more efficient, effective and continuously learning institution.

5.1.3 In addition, the lack of a NATO exercises lessons learned feedback process and common data quality assurance framework means the senior-most leaders of ACO and ACT are not receiving performance information that could be used to continuously improve NATO military education, training, exercises and evaluation strategy. This strategy is important as it is the primary means by which the NATO command structure assesses whether it is meeting SACEUR priorities and overall NATO readiness and force structure objectives. Without sufficient and quality lessons learned performance information, the strategic commands cannot assess whether the immense effort put into collecting operational and tactical lessons in exercises are worthwhile and improving the NATO command structure's ability to learn from and adapt to current and future security challenges.

5.1.4 Finally, the new Chief of Staff-level Bi-Strategic Command Lessons Learned Steering Board provides the strategic commands with the authority, forum and opportunity

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

IBA-AR(2023)0002

to increase transparency, accountability and data quality in the lessons learned process for exercises. In addition, IBAN sees that current revisions to policies and guidance related to the NATO lessons learned process in exercises provide an opportunity to strengthen the connection between the operational and tactical level lessons learned in exercises with strategic level guidance.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 To continue progress in addressing IBAN's 2016 recommendations on the lessons learned process for NATO military exercises, IBAN recommends that Council tasks the strategic commands, in coordination with appropriate stakeholders, to:

- 1) Clarify in bi-strategic governance documents (e.g., policies, directives, terms of reference and other lessons learned and collective training and exercise guidance) the roles, responsibilities and authorities of the Lessons Learned Steering Board, Steering Group and Working Group. This should include a defined feedback process to ensure that observations are progressing into lessons identified and lessons learned and that lessons are appropriately tasked and full adjudicated through the NATO lessons learned process across all the commands participating in major exercises;
- 2) Develop a data quality assurance framework aligned with existing NATO-wide data management policies and appropriate international good practices and integrate this framework into mandatory lessons learned training courses and NATO Lessons Learned Toolset development efforts; and
- 3) Include within the CT&ED a lessons learned annex with clear performance measures that are part of a feedback process that connect SACEUR's focus areas to lessons learned collection plan objectives in exercises to assist future JALLC analyses, CT&ED and SGE development.

All tasking decisions by Council should clearly identify those responsible to take action and set deadlines for the delivery of the expected outcomes.

6. COMMENTS RECEIVED AND THE IBAN'S POSITION**ACO, ACT and IMS comments**

6.1. We received formal comments from ACO, ACT, and the IMS. The full text is reproduced in Appendix 4.

6.2. In general, they agree with our findings, conclusions and recommendations. In addition, ACO, ACT, and the IMS provided factual comments that we incorporated into the report, as appropriate.

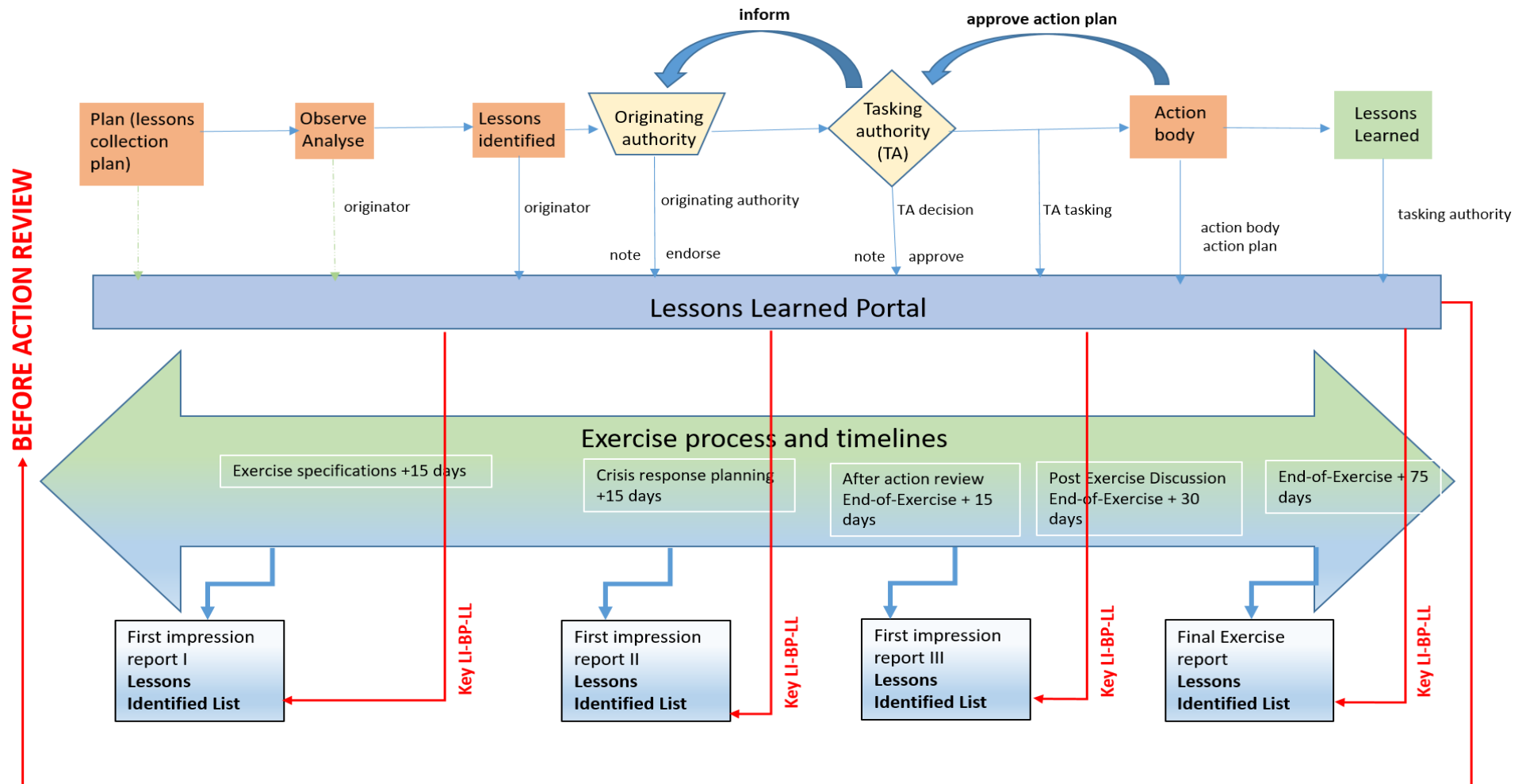
IBAN's Position

6.3. While IBAN appreciates and recognizes these formal comments, we maintain the position that our recommendations will help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises. In particular, IBAN understands the challenges related to implementing our original recommendation for identifying a single party responsible for ensuring that the lessons identified from exercises are appropriately tasked and fully adjudicated through the NATO lessons learned process across all the commands participating in the exercise. However, IBAN still considers that creating a single party coordinating the lessons learned process is the best way to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the whole process.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 1
IBA-AR(2023)0002

NATO LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS IN EXERCISES, TIMEFRAMES AND DELIVERABLES



Source: Bi-Strategic Command Directive 075-003, Collective Training & Exercise Directive – Working Draft, 28 January 2020.

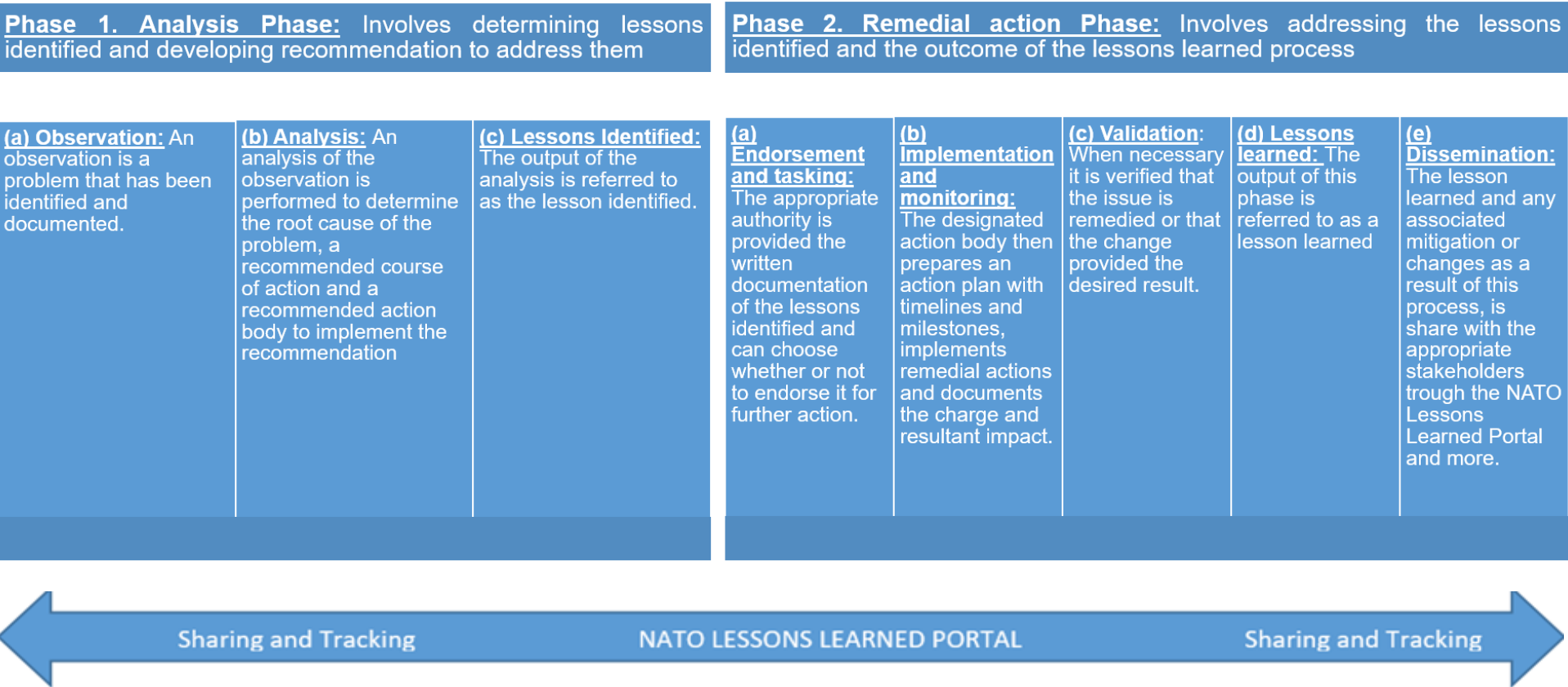
NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 2
IBA-AR(2023)0002

NATO LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS IN 2016 VERSUS 2022

NATO lessons learned process (2016)



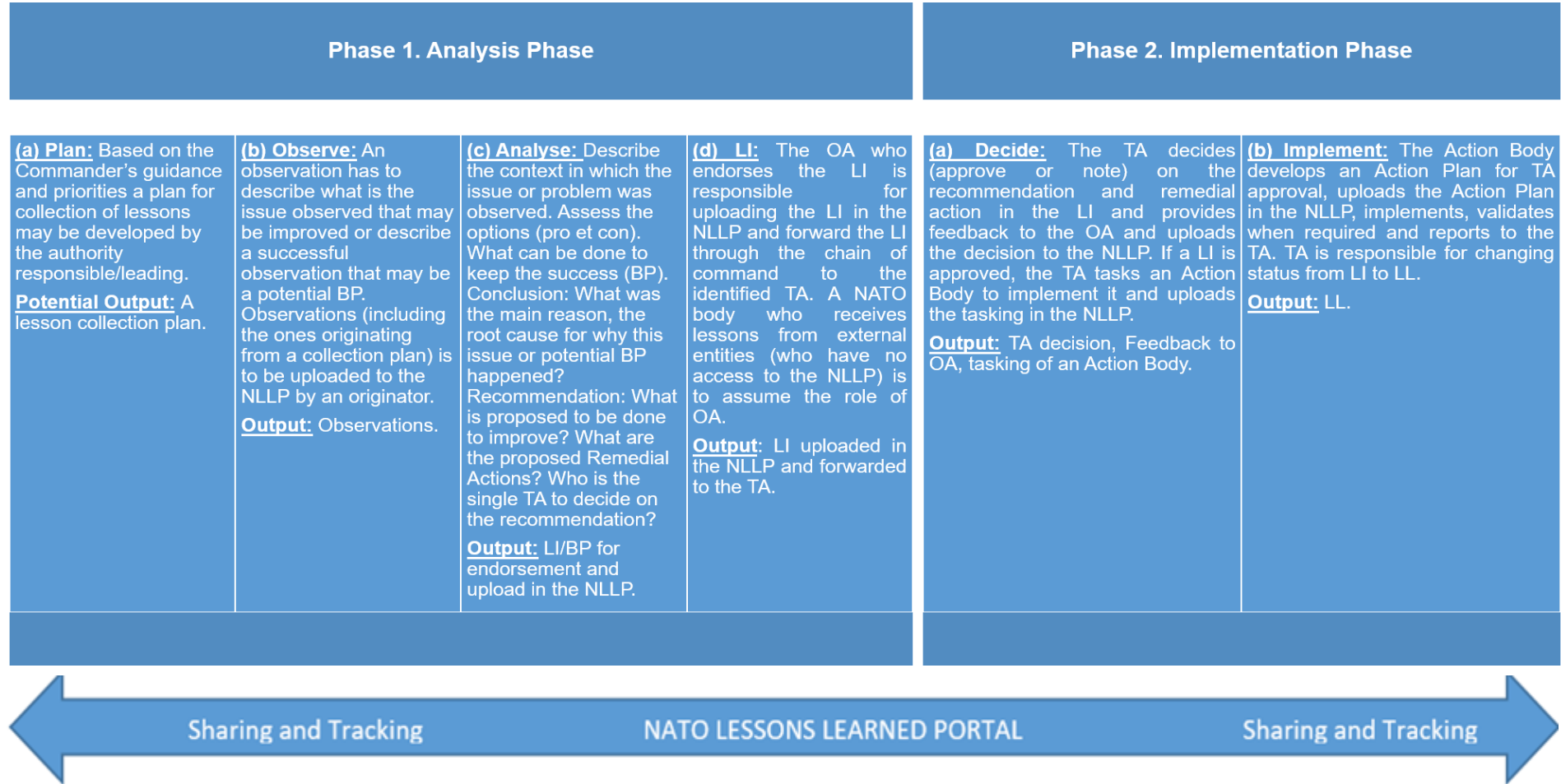
Source: Bi-Strategic Command Directive 080-006, Lessons Learned, 10 July 2013.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 2
IBA-AR(2023)0002

NATO lessons learned process (2022)



Source: Bi-Strategic Command Directive 080-006, Lessons Learned, 23 February 2018.

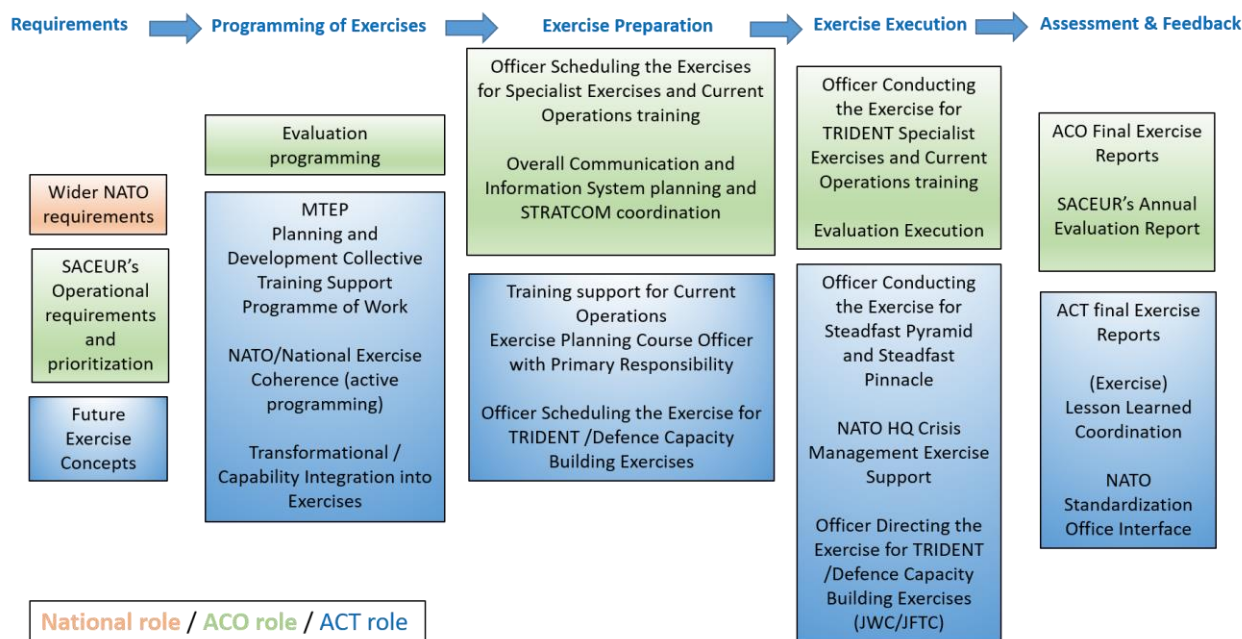
NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

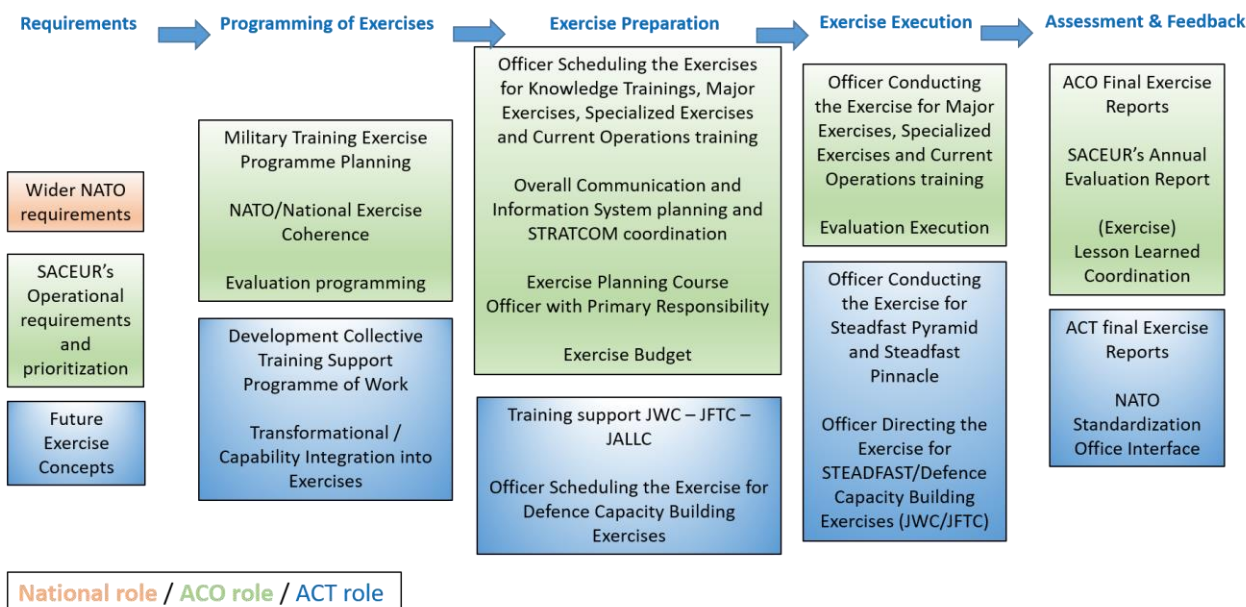
APPENDIX 3
IBA-AR(2023)0002

ACO AND ACT TRANSFER OF COLLECTIVE TRAINING AND EXERCISES PROGRAMME ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities between ACO and ACT before
October 2018



Roles and responsibilities between ACO and ACT by January
2021



Source: Bi-Strategic Command Directive 075-003, Collective Training & Exercise Directive – Working Draft, 28 January 2020.

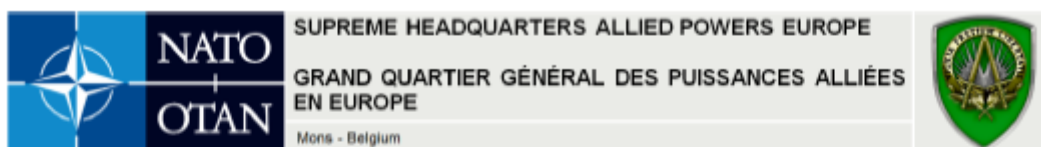
NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002

**Allied Command Operations (ACO) Formal Comments
on the Performance Audit Report**

NATO UNCLASSIFIED



SH/PLANS/J7/FPR/JR/23-013370

27 February 2023

TO: See Distribution

SUBJECT: **SHAPE FORMAL COMMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF AUDITORS FOR NATO DRAFT FOLLOW-UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR NATO MILITARY EXERCISES**

REFERENCES: A. C-M(2017)0045-AS1, IBAN Performance Audit Report on the Need to Improve the Effectiveness of the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Exercises, dated 14 September 2017.
B. IBA-A(2023)0005, International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) draft Follow-Up Performance Audit Report on the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises – IBA-AR(2023)0002, dated 03 February 2023.
C. PO(2011)0293-AS1, NATO Lessons Learned Policy, dated 09 September 2011.
D. SH/PLANS/J7/PLL/OR/18-318588, Bi-SC Directive 080-006 Lessons Learned, dated 23 February 2018.

1. In response to the request at Reference B for SHAPE formal comments to the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) draft Follow-Up Performance Audit Report on the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises, please find at Enclosure 1 the aforementioned comments in order to be included in the final report issued to the North Atlantic Council.

2. The SHAPE point of contact for this matter is [REDACTED]

FOR THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, EUROPE:

Original signed

Hubert Cottureau
Lieutenant General, FRA Army
Vice Chief of Staff

ENCLOSURE:

1. SHAPE Formal Comments to the International Board of Auditors for NATO Draft Follow-Up Performance Audit Report.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

DISTRIBUTION:

External:

Action:

IBAN

Information:

HQ SACT
JFCBS
JFCNP
AIRCOM
LANDCOM
MARCOM

Internal:

Action:

Information:

SACEUR
DSACEUR
COS
VCOS
AIA
SIA
OPS
PLANS
SUPPORT
CYBER
PD
MGT
J10 STRATCOM
OSO
FINAC

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE 1 TO
SH/PLANS/J7/FPJR/23-013370
DATED 27 FEB 23**SHAPE FORMAL COMMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF AUDITORS FOR
NATO DRAFT FOLLOW-UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT**

1. As overall comment, since the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) released the Special Report to the NAC on the need to improve the effectiveness of the Lessons Learned (LL) Process for NATO Exercises in 2016, relevant changes have been implemented in accordance with the NATO LL Optimization Action Plan 2017-2019 (NLLOAP) and subsequently with the NATO LL Capability Improvement Roadmap 2021-2025 (LL Roadmap), still in progress. These changes have led to significant improvements in the LL Capability, but despite this, there are still important challenges, such as those described in this Report, for which the Strategic Commands (SCs) are taking actions through the LL Roadmap.
2. The SCs are addressing some of the IBAN's recommendations through the revision of different Directives which requires extended periods of time. The current review of the NATO LL Policy (Reference C) has paused the revision of capstone LL Directives (i.e. Bi-SC Directive 080-006 Lessons Learned (Reference D) and ACO Directive 080-001 Lessons Learned) since it is considered fundamental that those Directives echo NATO LL Policy. Similarly, the ongoing revision of the Bi-SC Directive 075-003 Collective Training and Exercises will introduce considerable improvements regarding LL responsibilities and coordination, both issues reflected in the IBAN draft report.
3. SHAPE wishes to provide some further comments on the following topics:
 - a. Identification of a single party responsible for monitoring the implementation of the LL process for each exercise.
 - (1) Both the NATO LL Policy and the Bi-SC Directive 080-006 clearly state what the Commander's responsibilities are in terms of establishing and sustaining a LL capability in their own organization and executing the NATO LL Process. In addition, the roles of the different authorities involved in the LL process are also specified as well as the necessary mechanism to address each Lesson Identified (LI) to the appropriate Tasking Authority¹. Bi-SC Directive 075-003 also provides specific guidance on lessons sharing, not only through the NATO LL Portal (NLLP) but also through the different exercise reports (i.e. First Impression Reports and Final Exercise Reports).
 - (2) SHAPE agrees that the SCs need to improve the monitoring of the implementation of the LL process and also the proactive coordination of the collection and analysis of key observations/LI. However, it is considered that this coordination and monitoring role should not replace the inherent responsibility of the Commander to ensure the effective implementation of the LL process and therefore to grow as a learning organization (i.e. LI are turned into LL).

¹ According to the Bi-SC Directive 080-006, the Tasking Authority is responsible for the coordination, implementation and the tracking from a LI to a LL.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

(3) The SCs are partially addressing this issue through the Bi-SC Directive 075-003 revision which is providing the venue to update and optimize the LL structure and requirements in Exercises. In this regard, a unified Bi-SC Capability Integration work strand is under development aiming at enhancing the coordination, collection and sharing of major cross-cutting and pan-HQ findings and recommendations across NATO Command Structure (NCS). This will enable the Officer Scheduling the Exercise (OSE) and Officer Conducting the Exercise (OCE) to better coordinate the different LL efforts and ensure key LI, i.e. those related to SACT and SACEUR's Strategic Priority Areas, are appropriately analysed and adjudicated. Such responsibilities will be included in the aforementioned Directive. Capability Integration activity will be further developed and tested during Exercise STEADFAST JUPITER 2023.

(4) LL Steering Board (LLSB), as the collective body responsible for supervision and guidance on NATO LL Policy implementation at the strategic level, is not considered as the most appropriate party to ensure that LI are fully adjudicated across all commands, but to monitor the overall progress of lessons from exercises and operations, in order to identify and address any shortcomings in the implementation of the LL Process. Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC) Active Content Management capability is to be leveraged in this regard.

b. Inclusion of observations or lessons from internal performance assessments or other analytical activities by the subordinate commands into their LL processes.

(1) According to the IBAN 2016 Audit Report (Reference A), these internal teams were working to enhance the conduct of exercises and rapidly deal with problems identified in an exercise. The role is similar to the Observer/Training teams defined in the Bi-SC Directive 075-003, who are responsible for observing content delivery and Training Audience (TA) performance in order to inform the exercise delivery, and to support TA progression and therefore the information collected is unlikely to be related to LL. If these or other teams are required to support the collection of Observations for LL purposes, this will be done in coordination with LL Sections and therefore, the inclusion of such observations in the LL process is guaranteed. Indeed, this is acknowledged in this report.

(2) It is up to each Commander to decide how best to conduct the collection of observations and to provide Direction and Guidance (D&G) through internal Directives and/or Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) accordingly. In this regard, the potential use of predefined teams in support of LL collection is not a common practice in all subordinate commands, they are specific for each HQ / Centre in response to their own requirements and in some cases the main task is not LL-related.

c. Common framework to ensure accuracy and quality of data entered into the NATO LL Portal.

(1) Quality and accuracy of data collected remains a challenge especially considering the large number of stakeholders involved in the LL process (i.e. Subject Matter Experts (SME), LL Points of Contact (LLPoC), LL Staff Officers (LLSO) and leadership at different levels). It should be noted that leadership involvement and mindset, defined as foundations of the LL Capability within

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

the Bi-SC Directive 080-006, are key to institutionalize and integrate LL as part of everyone's work. Although the SCs are taking actions through the three work strands mentioned in the report: training, guidance and tools, SHAPE agrees that IBAN's recommendations are worthy of further study and analysis and the conclusions are to be incorporated into the LL Roadmap.

(2) LLPoC and LLSO perform a key role in the overall process since they are responsible for conducting the analysis of observations and subsequent refinement. LLPoC is a double-hatted task, and this entails significant constraints in terms of availability and involvement. In addition, HQ workforce with LLSO and continuity in these positions are also factors to be considered.

d. Lack of a feedback process that connects LL from exercises to SACEUR's strategic level guidance.

(1) SHAPE concurs that more detailed LL guidance is required in terms of connecting Strategic Priority Areas, once approved by the LLSB, to LL Collection Plans, at all levels. A new milestone has been included in the LL Roadmap to identify and establish a mechanism not only to provide further guidance on priorities, but also on coordination of all LL efforts within the Exercise.

(2) As mentioned earlier, the Bi-SC Directive 075-003 revision is providing the opportunity to update LL requirements in exercises, in particular within the Capability Integration activity. Early involvement of LLSOs in the Exercise Process (EP) along with the approved Strategic Priority Areas and Collective Training and Exercises (CT&E) Directive guidance will allow to provide the necessary level of detail required to effectively collect lessons that really matter. Furthermore, the Bi-SC Directive 075-003 incorporates a new Stage 0 within the EP in which lessons from previous exercises are presented to inform the development of the current exercise, closing the loop and facilitating the exploitation of lessons.

(3) The JALLC is annually tasked to provide a report on lessons from Major Joint Exercises (MJX) conducted the previous years in order to inform the CT&E Directive development. The main conclusions and recommendations of this report are included within the eRepository² which is one of the three pillars of the new Education, Training, Exercise and Evaluation (ETEE) construct along with SACEUR's Guidance for ETEE (SGE) and the annual CT&E Directives. Due to the nature of the annual CT&E Directives which provides strategic Direction & Guidance 3-5 years ahead intended to be a concise and succinct document, it is considered that the appropriate mechanism to provide LL guidance is through exercise documents such as Exercise Specification (EXSPEC) and Exercise Plan (EXPLAN) specific to each exercise so the required level of granularity can be provided.

(4) Additionally, the JALLC also produces an annual report to provide the LLSB with a high level overview of trends and issues with military-strategic relevance evident in key NATO LL products. It should be noted that the

² The purpose of the eRepository is to provide an enduring reservoir (data base) to support planning and conduct of the Collective Training and Exercises. In addition, the eRepository contains an overview and overall requirements for NATO's Major Joint Exercises.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

Strategic Priority Areas respond to operational requirements, strategic context and Commander's priorities. Therefore, key lessons trends can support and provide feedback but not necessarily determine the definition of these priorities.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002

Allied Command Transformation (ACT) Formal Comments on the Performance Audit Report

NATO UNCLASSIFIED
Releasable to Finland and Sweden



HQ Supreme Allied Commander Transformation
Office of the Chief of Staff

Norfolk, Virginia | USA



ACT/JFD/LL/TT-6687/SER:NU:1522

TO: See Distribution

SUBJECT: **HQ SACT FORMAL COMMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF AUDITORS FOR NATO FOLLOW UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR NATO MILITARY EXERCISES**

REFERENCE: IBA-A(2023)0005, International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) draft Follow Up Performance Audit Report on the Lessons Learned Process for NATO Military Exercises – IBA-AR(2023)0002, dated 03 February 2023.

DATE: 03 March 2023

1. On 3 February 2023, The International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN) published a draft follow up performance audit report on the lessons learned process for NATO military exercises. The IBAN requested a consolidated response from HQ SACT incorporating feedback from ACT subordinate commands.
2. Enclosure 1 provides HQ SACT's consolidated comments, the HQ SACT point of contact for this matter is [REDACTED]

FOR THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER TRANSFORMATION:

Guy Robinson CB OBE
Vice Admiral, GBR N
Chief of Staff

ENCLOSURE:

1. HQ SACT formal comments on the IBAN follow up performance audit report on the lessons learned process for NATO military exercises.

1
NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002

NATO UNCLASSIFIED
Releasable to Finland and Sweden

DISTRIBUTION:

External:

Action: IBAN

Information

SHAPE

Internal:

Action:

DCOS JFD

ACOS JFD

Information:

SACT

JWC

JFTC

JALLC

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002NATO UNCLASSIFIED
Releasable to Finland and SwedenENCLOSURE 1 TO
ACT/JFD/LL/TT-6687/SER:NU:1587
DATED 03 MAR 2023**HQ SACT FORMAL COMMENTS ON THE IBAN FOLLOW UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR NATO MILITARY EXERCISES.**

1. Regarding the Strategic Commands identifying a single party responsible for monitoring of the lessons learned process for each exercise:

a. The execution of a Lessons Learned process is a Command responsibility. Each Commander has the role of acting as the Tasking Authority, thereby ensuring that Lessons Identified (LIs) are noted or approved. Those approved are actioned until being learned; this places the Commander as the responsible party.

b. The JALLC conducts Active Content Management (ACM) and provides support to NATO commands in the process of actioning stagnated LIs within the NLLP. This should not detract from the premise that Lessons Learned (LL) is a Command responsibility and it is the role of Commanders within the NATO organization to follow the LL process.

2. Regarding the Lessons Learned Steering Board (LLSB) ensuring that LIs from exercises are fully adjudicated through the NATO LL process across all commands participating in Exercises: the LLSB is updated on the progress of submissions to the NLLP. The JALLC was tasked at the 2021 LLSB to follow up on those stagnating submissions. The LLSB is in place to monitor the implementation of the LL process. It is not the appropriate body to manage and direct the individual commands on the progress of submissions from exercises.

3. Regarding the feedback loop (Figure 2 of Reference A): HQ SACT request that the feedback loop described in 'Figure 2' is proposed as a suggestion rather than a solution. It is difficult to see how this feedback loop would work in practice. Current work regarding Capability Integration as described in Bi-SC Directive 075-003 (under revision) is a proposed means by which to turn lessons from exercises into strategic guidance. This will be trialled in Ex STEADFAST JUPITER 23.

4. Regarding policy alterations: three key documents (MC 458, NATO LL Policy and BiSC Directive 075-003) are all under staffing or close to completely revised. The recommendations within the report in paras 1.1.9 / 2.5 and 4.2 could be included in the revision of these documents. HQ SACT proposes that there is a note within the report that the recommendations are implemented into the revision of these key documents.

5. Regarding the implementation of the IBAN Recommendations: in order to ensure that the IBAN recommendations are addressed coherently alongside the extant actions contained within the NATO LL Capability Roadmap, HQ SACT requests that any IBAN recommendations that are endorsed by the NAC are added to the NATO LL Roadmap. As well as ensuring coherency, this will also provide a single plan for NATO LL improvements, which already has the benefit of NAC oversight through the Annual LL Capability Roadmap Implementation Progress Report.

1

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 4
IBA-AR(2023)0002

International Military Staff (IMS) Formal Comments on the Performance Audit Report

NATO UNCLASSIFIED



International Military Staff
Etat-Major Militaire International
Brussels - Belgium



THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

LE DIRECTOR GENERAL

13 February 2023

DGIMS-BUS-0013-2023

Amipal Manchanda
Board Member, International Board of Auditors for NATO
1110 Brussels, Belgium

IBA-A(2023)0005, INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF AUDITORS FOR NATO (IBAN) DRAFT FOLLOW UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS FOR NATO MILITARY EXERCISES – IBA-AR(2023)0002, 3 FEB 23

1. I received your office's email on 3 Feb 23, with the draft report identified in the subject line, and note that it requested factual and formal comments by 17 Feb 23.
2. I appreciate the IBAN's efforts and I am pleased to provide the following comments:
 - a. Factual comment – MC 458/4 Final NATO Education, Training, Exercise and Evaluation Policy was signed on 3 Jan 23 and is awaiting NAC notation.
 - b. Formal comments - The IMS acknowledges the IBAN Follow-Up Performance Audit Report and its findings. The IMS notes the following findings:
 - (1) That the SCs made progress implementing four out of seven IBAN recommendations and that the SCs made limited progress implementing three out of seven recommendations.
 - (2) That the BI-SC lack a feedback process to connect Lessons Learned from Exercises to SACEUR Strategic Guidance.
3. Should there be any questions related to the comments, I am pleased to inform you that [REDACTED] will be happy to provide support.

Janusz Adamczak

13 February 2023 at 18:10

Janusz Adamczak
Lieutenant General, Polish Army
Director General
International Military Staff

Copy to: IMS SDL CG, IMS O&P.

Originating Office: O&P

Action Officers: [REDACTED]

Taxonomy: Operations and Exercises (OPE) - OPE - Evaluation and Lessons Learned

North Atlantic Treaty Organization – Organisation du Traité de l'Atlantique Nord – B-1110 Bruxelles - Belgique

NATO UNCLASSIFIED



NATO UNCLASSIFIED

Abbreviations

ACO	Allied Command Operations
ACT	Allied Command Transformation
AB	Action Body
BP	Best Practice
CT&ED	Collective Training and Exercise Directive
EUR	Euro
EXPLAN	Exercise plan
EXSPEC	Exercise specification
HQ SACT	Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation
IBAN	International Board of Auditors for NATO
IMS	International Military Staff
JALLC	Joint Analysis Lessons Learned Centre
LI	Lesson Identified
LIL	Lessons Identified List
LL	Lesson Learned
MEUR	Millions Euro
MTEP	NATO Military Training and Exercise Programme
NLLP	NATO Lessons Learned Portal
OCE	Officer Conducting the Exercise
ODE	Officer Directing the Exercise
OA	Originating Authority
TA	Tasking Authority (or Training Audience, depending on context)
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

APPENDIX 5
IBA-AR(2023)0002

SAGE	SACEUR's Annual Guidance on Education, Training, Exercise and Evaluation
SGE	SACEUR's Guidance on Education, Training, Exercise and Evaluation
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

DECLASSIFIED - PUBLICLY DISCLOSED - PDN(2025)0029 - DÉCLASSIFIÉ - MIS EN LECTURE PUBLIQUE

NATO UNCLASSIFIED