

NATO Special Forces Case Study

Effective Force Generation, Training and Deployment of SOF Teams Using the Industry-Leading Defence Capability Optimisation Solution



Challenges

NATO, an alliance for collective defence, has 28 member states with its Operational Headquarters at Mons, Belgium. NATO Special Operations Forces HQ (NSHQ) formed as a result of the NATO SOF Transformation Initiative coordinates all SOF planning, training, and force generation within NATO. Embedded in their strategic thinking is the need to spearhead operational change and innovation against asymmetric threats. Since 1998, NATO and its SOF have become more closely engaged in Crisis Response Operations. Recent deployments in the Balkans and Afghanistan have drawn heavily on the special skills practised by SOF, particularly in the areas of special reconnaissance, surveillance, and military training assistance to indigenous forces.

Strategic success in NATO's non-Article V operations is underpinned by mentoring and military assistance programmes. Although there will always be a place for kinetic effect, in simple terms 'meeting the indigenous population needs' is a critical element in countering an insurgency. Historically SOF have been composed of specialists, with a typical team comprising a linguist, a signaller, a medic, and a demolitions expert. Today this degree of specialisation is being taken to greater levels as the need for civil and military training assistance grows. Many of the skills required are still vested in a few individuals, therefore their selection, management and deployment require detailed planning.



Solution

Through a long-term relationship with NATO and a range of worldwide defence organisations, Allocate gained a high-level understanding of the NSHQ requirements and as a result was contracted to provide a Software Application in an NSHQ project known as the SOF Analysis & Planning System (SAPS), using a configured version of Allocate Solutions. It supports NSHQ in the planning, training, and generation of SOF units and the generation of staff augmentation to the appropriate levels of readiness to meet current and future operational requirements.



"I wanted to tell you that your team has done a remarkable job and we are extremely pleased. Frankly speaking... I think we now have a valuable mechanism to project combat power"

**Col Stu Bradin,
US Army,
Chief of Staff NATO
Special Operations Forces Headquarters**

Outcomes

Increasing the pool of SOF specialists requires a continual training programme that is flexible enough to accommodate the changing nature of operations and the increasingly sophisticated tasks being faced by NATO SOF. In this respect one of the facilities offered by Allocate Solutions is a fully automated means of identifying the shortfalls, proposing the remedial action, allocating resources, and then recording the results. NSHQ has assumed responsibility for the critical task of improving the range of trained personnel by identifying relevant national SOF courses and ensuring a timely, prioritised, and equitable allocation of vacancies available to Allies. Once trained, the SOF specialists are task organised into bespoke teams incorporating all the necessary skills to achieve the mission. Then, drawing on information provided by nations, NSHQ staff using Allocate Solutions conduct the predictive force generation in an equitable, auditable, and efficient manner, having completed a full risk analysis of the consequences. Once committed, the sustainment of SOF teams and their subsequent rotations is also managed by Allocate Solutions. The SAPS Project ensures that only

the most effective teams are assigned to operations. NATO Allies can have confidence that the management of their SOF when assigned to NATO will be fair and effective.

DART

In rolling out the project several additional factors were taken into account, the first being the challenge for SOF soldiers filing detailed operational reports, especially during high tempo operations in harsh environments and when English may not be their first language. Secondly, there was the need to automate the 'Lessons Identified' process. The solution was to re-use the operational reports for a range of post operational activities. Furthermore, automating the routine aspects of the 'Lessons Identified' process, allows the operators and trainers to focus on high priority lessons. Consequently, a component, called DART, was developed, and swiftly deployed to Afghanistan. Essentially operational reports are generated through a pre-formatted user interface assisting their rapid and uniform completion – a boon for active war fighters who no longer need to master Microsoft's more subtle features. These reports are linked automatically to participants and their competences, pre-deployment training and operational outcomes. Sophisticated tools facilitate data research, identification of trends or patterns and guide remedial action because operational data is collected in a format suitable for computer processing. Data is recorded with its context intact and consequently is presented for clear interpretation, adhering to doctrine, and used for both a quick view and, if required, detailed analysis.

Future

Allocate Solutions gives the NSHQ a means to coordinate operational missions, exercises and training courses for NATO SOF and Non-NATO SOF. Furthermore, the SAPS Project provides the ability to analyse and evaluate the current status of SOF troop contributing nations and use is information to make better informed and therefore more effective decisions on preparation and mission assignment. As NSHQ identifies extended uses for Allocate Solutions, this is matched by the ability of Allocate's development team to meet those aspirations and thereby keep NSHQ at the forefront of capability management and accelerated decision making.

NHSQ staff have commented that the adoption of Allocate solutions has:

- Significantly improved the training process
- Facilitated force generation
- Enhanced operational efficiency
- Improved equitable and predictive international burden sharing
- Contributed to the improvement of staff processes

