

Transcript Interview Lieutenant General (LGEN) Karl-Heinz Viereck, 13th FEB 2013

The NATO Joint Force Trainer, Lieutenant General (LGEN) Karl-Heinz Viereck, visited the CIMIC Centre of Excellence during the Change of Command ceremony on February 13th 2013.

The CCOE asked for an interview to get first hand information on the latest developments in the evolution of NATO Education & Training and the role of the Centers of Excellence therein. Below you will find [some of the statements given by LGEN Viereck](#) and the link to the full transcript of the interview.

Captain Marian Corbe:

General Viereck, could you please share your general ideas on the transformation of NATO Education & Training (E&T)?

LGEN Viereck:

I am the NATO Joint Force Trainer (JFT) and what we are doing right now is in principle an evolution of the existing assembly. If we did a revolution, we would lose something we cannot afford, training issues and knowledge for the people that are still fighting in crises and war. What we did was an evolution – we brought a new structure into the relatively unstructured Education & Training (E&T) landscape.

The new structure consists of three big parts that I call the “global programming”: structure and responsibilities, followed by “standards” and then “execution”. First of all, since last year, ACT has the authority, the management function for all of education and training, including the exercises, which previously belonged to SHAPE. That means, we can look at the whole E&T landscape in a holistic way – from the e-learning course to the ‘big, fat’ exercises with 20.000 people on the ground. It allows us to structure E&T in an effective, more efficient and especially affordable manner. We streamline everything nicely so that it fits together.

In that past, everybody wanted a course. Today, we rely on a structured process with clear cut responsibilities, starting with somebody who is passionate on the specific requirement. Besides SACEUR’s annual guidance and the long term rotation plan for the exercises we need passionate people, who tell me what we need. In addition, we created and defined the position of Department Head (DH) – somebody, who translates the requirements into E&T.

We must not start with building a course! We rather need to formulate a strategic training plan and operationalize it in a “Training Requirements Analysis” (TRA) – a proper top-down approach. The details are then made up in the so called “Training Needs Analysis” (TNA), which is translated in a structured process so that everybody knows where to go. The new thing we are doing here, is applying international educational standards of the Bologna process, which is basics for everybody who has been to university. But for NATO that has never been the case.

Capt Corbe: . The process you just outlined is subsumed with the term ‘smart defence’ in the media. Do you see problems between this approach and the different national interests?

LGEN Viereck: We have three big projects in NATO: one is the Connected Forces Initiative, meaning we have to do training better and gather from what we experienced in the past, in order not to lose it in times, where we do not have these big operations. Secondly Smart Defence, which means nothing else than fixing your sovereign national goals in a different affordable way. The nations are still in the power seat, but they work together with other nations on a bi- or multinational solution, allowing them to meet their goals in a less expensive way. The question is: have we not been smart in the last 40 years? I think, at least I was not stupid in the last 40 years, so don't tell me we are smart now: we just have to think differently. My key statement is that with decreasing personnel and budget you have to change something. That also has a good side, because you have to find a damn different solution. The key observation right now, when we look at that Connected Forces Initiative and E&T, is that NATO cannot make it alone with its level of ambition. So the nations play a much bigger role in achieving NATO's level of ambition. Obviously we have to incorporate the nations a lot more. A Centre of Excellence (COE) is the best example: it bears a NATO flag, is a NATO entity of some sort, but only a multinational institution that is accredited by NATO. That is the link between the Nations and NATO. I can only say that I, JFT, gain immensely from the COEs. They play a major role in the NATO E&T landscape. Even more I can assure you that without the CIMIC COE supporting ACT's efforts on fixing the E&T landscape, I wouldn't have made it.

Capt Corbe: Sir, you are already focusing on the role of the COEs. The COEs are still facing some problems regarding the sharing of responsibilities, the connection and coordination between the different COEs. What can ACT do to improve this?

LGEN Viereck: First of all, ACT is the authority to accredit the COEs. I can speak only for my JFT E&T issues, but I will not make it without the COEs, because I see the benefit in them. A place, where the nations' experts are sitting together and trying to cope with a certain issue. So what can ACT do? I think it can coordinate in a better way, we could spread the information better, using the internet and being more transparent. In the past you didn't even receive the directive for exercises (Bi-SC Directive 75-3), because everything was classified. We changed that. Most of the documents we (JFT) are working with are releasable to the public – otherwise I would never reach you. There you see that NATO can do something and does something to open up and involve the players more.

Furthermore, we now give more guidance in the field of education and training and I even call it brutal guidance: you are in or out! What do you want more? Listen to my guidance and become a pillar in the broad NATO training landscape and we will listen to you! You are automatically inside everything that belongs to E&T. That makes it a give-and-take thing, where the COEs can profit from ACT. To incorporate the centres in a valuable function we try to give them visibility & responsibility. Last but not least we try to harmonize & formalize more as well as building up capabilities. The CCOE is a perfect example for e-learning – other centres don't even know what this is. I also hope that the COEs that are as good as the CCOE, help other COEs and convince them that it is not too difficult to play a role in the E&T landscape.

Capt Corbe: Sir, that leads towards the question in regard of the role as DH. Other COEs are looking at the CCOE, but do you think that the DH-role remains a test case or becomes rather popular in the future?

LGEN Viereck: For me everybody who is interested in E&T sits in the same place without preferences. The focal point is that you have to raise your hand if you want to take responsibility. Being a DH means nothing else than taking responsibilities and translating the requirements into an E&T plan or

programme. This will then be accredited by ACT. The authority rests with the DH, so that he can set up and change the programme himself. My advantage out of this new design is that I don't have to go from a strategic HQ into tactical/execution business. The DH is right on the edge between strategic direction and execution. The COEs with the role as DH can be seen on the same level as national and international training facilities – there is no difference. Therefore, I see an increasingly important role for the DH and especially for the COEs, because there is a lot of investment in them with benefits for NATO and the sponsoring nations. If we can overcome the old-fashioned dinosaur approach of differentiating between NATO and national training, the borders are gone and we are on track. We try to achieve the best, affordable, efficient and effective training by whoever delivers! I see merit in the fact that the nations are sending their experts to the centres, which makes them so attractive. And if you ask me how the arena will look like in five years: it will be totally different from now. The mutual benefits I outlined will lead to an increase of COEs and those with the role of a DH.

The CCOE is a perfect example. The process was started when I first visited the CCOE four years ago – and is on-going ever since. It has paid off very well and became a long friendship. I was not even sure all the time whether the Director drove me or I drove him. It was somewhere in between, a beneficial competition to the best of global E&T.

Capt Corbe: Besides this very promising evolution during the last four years, where do you see major challenges, within the budget or the mind-set?

LGEN Viereck: I think the problem is not the budget. The key problem we are trying to overcome is the nations' unwillingness to "invest" more into E&T. I see the role of JFT not only in facilitating this process but also in finding new solutions. The nations should not build their own capabilities, rather use NATO's accredited structures. It needs to be an attractive and a good training. I see a growing interest in this type of training by the nations. The problem is in the heads of the people. First, everybody thinks NATO means automatically "classified" or "top secret". That is not true, you only need to protect your information and there are different ways today. The old-fashioned thinking is the problem. I hope that the nations will find more trust in ACT and what we are doing in E&T. In the past there was also a lack of oversight. That is why we went live on the internet with the Training Management System two weeks ago. You can look up what kind of training you need to do and only need a password if you want to do the training and sign up. You can reach NATO E&T through the World Wide Web: <http://www.e-NATO.net> and you are in.



Then it's like a Google search engine, where you can find everything you need. This creates a common global platform. The outreach is far beyond NATO with all our partner nations included. I am very positive on the way ahead, especially with the Connected Forces Initiative, which gives a certain drive.

Capt Corbe: What would be your dream of a NATO E&T landscape in 10-15 years?

LGEN Viereck: We now have the ideas to structure it and put responsibilities, where they belong: strategic, operational and tactical. We have the principles of the Bologna standard in it, which enables us to grant credit points to people trained by the military, which translates, what they did, into the civil education side and makes it usable for a bachelor or master's degree. That is what we need to do. The nations need to believe that our training is good enough to become their own standard. I foresee that we will be able to structure this and give the credit points. The nations will notice that this is a super job, because we are using the same quality assurance measures as they do in their countries. I see this happen in five years, but we have to work for it. For me that is seriously achievable. Another thing I see – but I wouldn't call it my dream, but just a matter of time – is the need for NATO, nations and other organizations to work closer together. In five years the training landscape will not only include 40 providers, we may have 80-100. As long as you have a clear structure, including responsibilities and quality, you can do the training, where it is the most affordable. What I want to state here is that we need a white piece of paper in the middle and start designing it for the longer term. Today we are doing this, because we grab the chances like Colonel Kasselmann did three years ago, when we discussed those ideas. We made a handshake and just started. I can assure you, dream or no dream, without him and the CCOE we would not be as far as we are today. I can dream and think a lot about guidance and directions, but if I do not find somebody, who proves that it is doable, it does not work. I am passionate on it, your Director was passionate as hell on it and the people working here are it, too. We achieved to show that we could not only think different, but were able to set up a new structure and successfully execute it.

Capt Corbe: General Viereck, thank you very much!