2011

Promoting stability and security through building integrity and effective partnerships

Abrial, Stephane
Monterey, California, Naval Postgraduate School

http://hdl.handle.net/10945/34112
Admiral Quast, Ambassadors, Generals, Admirals, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to offer my own personal welcome to each of you here today. As representatives of nations and organisations, many of you have travelled long distances to take part in this Building Integrity Conference, organised jointly, as you know, by NATO and the Naval Postgraduate School in its capacity as the Partnership for Peace Training and Education Center.

May I also take this opportunity to pass on warm greetings to all participants from Ambassador Dirk Brengelmann, NATO’s Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy. He is particularly disappointed that he is unable to be with us on this occasion, but I am honoured to extend his welcome to you as well.

I would like to express my appreciation to Admiral Oliver, President of the Naval Postgraduate School and to Dr. Ferrari, the Executive Vice President and Provost, for hosting this important, timely and politically relevant Conference. The staff at the Naval Postgraduate School, and particularly the USPTC Program Office, together with NATO staff in Brussels and Norfolk, have done an outstanding job in organising a conference that fully reflects the NATO vision outlined in the Lisbon Summit Declaration in November 2010 and our new Strategic Concept.

As you all know, the Building Integrity initiative was launched by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council as a means to “help nations reduce corruption risk in their defence establishments”. On behalf of NATO, I would like to pay tribute to Norway, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom for their leadership in the implementation of this initiative, and to commend all the Allies and Partners who have supported its development since its launch in 2007.

I trust that this conference will allow us to take stock of Building Integrity and to chart the way for its future. At Allied Command Transformation, we are well positioned to support that goal. As the Alliance’s leading agent for change, we are closely involved in concept and policy development, capability development and training across the spectrum of the Alliance’s mission and activities. With that in
mind, I would like to focus my remarks today on what the military can bring to Building Integrity – but also on how building integrity and promoting accountability can help bring about the secure environments that our militaries strive to achieve wherever they are engaged.

At the previous Conference, which met here in Monterey two years ago to the day, my predecessor General Mattis had the opportunity to emphasize the importance that building integrity has for us in NATO. To use a military term, I would argue that it is a key enabler for all of our work. It is, of course, of the utmost importance that all our military forces be held to the highest standards of probity and honesty. That is part of the military code of honor in all our Nations, and at a more concrete level it is an important component of our armed forces’ training – more on that crucial aspect later. But it is also high time, in my opinion, that building integrity, strengthening transparency, increasing accountability and reducing corruption risks all be fully taken into account in the military’s mission, and first of all in our planning and conduct. I commend the work that is being conducted to that end by our colleagues at Allied Command Operations.

This move is part of a wider recognition that if they want to succeed in a lasting way, military commanders increasingly need to take into account aspects that, not long ago, would have been deemed outside of the scope of purely military action. This does not mean taking up activities that are and must be, by nature, conducted by civilian authorities. But it does imply that the military can and should bring its contribution to the common purpose of building integrity.

I would like to argue today that the Building Integrity initiative has been and should continue to be one of the main vehicles for such a military contribution, since its key characteristics make it simply invaluable. As we say in France, if this initiative did not exist, it would need to be invented.

The first of these features is that this is essentially a true partnership tool, designed and implemented in a cooperative way. It is, as I said, an initiative of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and takes advantage of its framework, tools and
procedures. This gives it, in my view, a degree of relevance and effectiveness that would be impossible to reach otherwise. In a nutshell, Building Integrity is not about NATO giving lessons to everyone else on how to combat corruption. It is about partners coming together, on an equal footing, to devise concrete ways to advance transparency and accountability and reduce the risk of corruption in defence establishments.

NATO Partner countries and NATO member Nations alike have made use of some of these concrete tools, such as the self-assessment survey and the associated peer review. What better proof is there that this is not about NATO pointing its finger at non-NATO countries, but a cooperative endeavour in which everyone stands to learn from best practices and to fill awareness gaps? As I am sure Ms. Labelle will tell us, fighting corruption is a very complex endeavour, which requires a wide array of tools and of different perspectives. Building Integrity brings just that to the table, once again, in a true partnership setting.

It does so in an even more fundamental way than by just bringing together NATO member and partner Nations. The Building Integrity initiative has integrated from the outset a wide array of organizations, prominent among which are our co-hosts today, the Naval Postgraduate School, and of course Transparency International. But I was struck, while reading the stocktaking reports on this initiative, by the wide array of “implementing partners”, ranging from the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces to Partnership for Peace Training Centers and non-profit foundations such as the Peace Dividend Trust. The perspectives and very concrete help provided by all these implementing partners are obviously invaluable and once again drive home the point that we are stronger when we are cooperative – a point fully endorsed in NATO’s new Strategic Concept.

For its part, Allied Command Transformation has fully embraced this spirit of partnership, both in its support for Building Integrity and in its broader work to help make the comprehensive approach operational – one of my key priorities.
This begins in the area of training, a particularly crucial one if we are to instil the necessary mindset and to disseminate the best practices in the area of transparency and accountability. Allied Command Transformation has completely overhauled its education and training system in order to allow for the provision of more efficient and more abundant opportunities provided by and available to partners.

As part of this effort, we have reviewed the accreditation procedure for our courses in order to allow more openness. As a result, we are now in a position to accredit and to incorporate in our training curricula, any course, even developed by non-NATO entities, that responds to the needs of NATO, its members and its partners. And I am pleased to highlight that one of the first courses accredited through this new procedure is the Building Integrity course developed in cooperation with Transparency International.

This is important on several levels: first, internally for the Alliance, it is a formidable tool for procuring training in a resource-smart way – not an insignificant feature in times of budgetary pressure. But more importantly, it allows us to incorporate the best expertise and the most relevant perspectives on this issue, as I was saying earlier. Allied Command Transformation takes great pride in these exciting developments and we will assist in the implementation and further improvement of this course.

It is my hope that the ACT-led working group that will meet this afternoon on “Development of Building Integrity Guidance and Doctrine for Training and Education” will enable all stakeholders to refine their requirements and to chart a clear way ahead, particularly on the issue of whether further conceptual work is required.

But our training efforts need to go farther than that. If Building Integrity is to be a truly operational tool, it needs to find its full place at the core of training, and by that I mean also our efforts to train indigenous forces. Only then can we build the lasting peace that is the ultimate goal of all our operations.
NATO’s training mission in Afghanistan is a good example of this. Its core mandate is to transform the Afghan National Police from a security force to a rule of law force, with a particular emphasis on integrity. This kind of institution building obviously involves a considerable commitment in terms of manpower and resources. And it can only be effective if anti-corruption strategies and practices are properly taught and implemented, the aim being, of course, to support the Afghan authorities in taking the lead of their own institution-building capacities.

This brings me to Phase Two of the Building Integrity initiative, with its renewed focus on Afghanistan and enhanced tool kit. This is, in a way, a shift in gear for the initiative, but certainly a necessary one. I said earlier that integrity-related issues need to be factored in from the planning phase in military operations. That is, obviously, not always easy, and it takes a detailed knowledge of a society’s usages and actors to implement effectively an anti-corruption strategy for defence establishments, and even more for a whole country.

Indeed, if we want our efforts in building integrity in defence establishments to be effective in a theater such as Afghanistan, we should not see them in isolation from wider anti-corruption efforts led by an effective partnership between the international community and the authorities of the host nation. This means, obviously, applying a genuine comprehensive approach in devising these programs and mechanisms. I have shown at length how this has been done for the Building Integrity initiative. We need the same approach, at a higher level, for all anti-corruption efforts.

One implication of this is that we, the international community, should get better at coordinating our aid and our approaches to host nation governments. We need to put in place procurement processes that promote local ownership, accountability and transparency. NATO’s studies on the Economic Footprint of ISAF and the setting up of the Afghan First policy as a direct result of those studies are obviously steps in the right direction. Extending this kind of initiatives to the broader international community engagement would seem the logical next step.
I very much look forward to hearing about the outcomes of tomorrow’s panels, which will bring together Afghan and NATO officials on this very set of issues.

Beyond the Partner countries, the host nations to our operations and the non-NATO organizations, this comprehensive approach to building integrity should also, to the extent possible, encompass industry partners. It is to this simple insight that we owe the very interesting warm-up session that took place yesterday on Defence Acquisition, Procurement and Contracting, and I suspect that is also what brought to this Conference some participants from the defence industry.

The issues of ethics and corporate responsibility, as they are often termed in industry parlance, have taken increasing importance in the way business is conducted, and that is obviously a very welcome development – ethically, of course, but also because it makes much better business sense, especially when applied consistently by all players. We at NATO can be natural partners for industry in that effort and that is why I would advocate that the Building Integrity initiative open itself even more to private sector representatives, be they attendees to the Building Integrity course or partners in the further development of the enhanced tool kit.

Allied Command Transformation has a long-standing relationship with defence industry stakeholders on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and as such, we can assist in raising awareness on integrity-related issues at ACT-sponsored events such as our annual Industry Day. This is a promising area to explore and we stand ready to discuss it with the Building Integrity team.

But of course, awareness needs to be constantly raised in wider circles on the need for transparency and accountability and on the ways to fight corruption. We need a much broader outreach effort that explains what we are doing and calls for ideas on what to do better. We also need a tool that helps us make sense of the various national initiatives that are ongoing in the anti-corruption area, at least those that are the most relevant to the scope of the Building Integrity initiative.

This could be done, for example, through an online anti-corruption knowledge management product that would be initially made available to personnel from all
nations deployed in the field. This portal could contain links to the relevant national resources on building integrity and fighting corruption, as well as to information provided by the Building Integrity implementing partners, notably the NGOs, and questions and answers. It could be a one-stop shop of easily and readily available information, something that is of particular use to personnel deployed in low-bandwidth areas.

ACT has gained some experience in setting up these type of platforms, notably through its Civil-Military Fusion Center/Civil-Military Overview experimentation that was launched in 2008 and has been providing excellent support to military and civilian efforts across the globe. Building on that experience, we could assist in the creation of such a resource, if deemed useful.

It is time for me to conclude and yield the floor to my fellow keynote speakers. I hope that I have given you a sense of the potential that lies in this initiative. According to the latest Building Integrity stocktaking report, “the overall impact of Building Integrity on national structures and mechanisms is too early to assess.” While some may interpret that as a negative statement, I think it is only a reason to pursue and expand our work.

Building integrity rests above all on a mindset. It is therefore, by definition, a long term endeavour, whose results can only be felt over time. But I am convinced that if we want to promote security, stability and peace – and this is, after all, what the NATO Alliance is about –, initiatives such as Building Integrity need to remain at the top of our agenda. I thank you for your attention and wish you a rich, fulfilling and far-reaching conference.