

The NATO Command Structure

NATO's Command Structure (NCS) is the backbone of NATO. It is composed of permanent multinational headquarters at the strategic, operational and component levels of command, distributed geographically and commonly funded. It offers the opportunity to all Allies to participate in, and contribute to, the command and control of all Alliance operations, missions, and activities across all military domains.

At the end of the Cold War, NATO had 22,000 staff across 33 commands. Following the 2010 Lisbon Summit, NATO Allies reformed the NATO Command Structure to create a robust, agile, and efficient command system. These changes focussed on ensuring that NATO forces remained fit for purpose and improved NATO's ability to deploy forces on operations, reflecting the security environment of that time. Today, NATO maintains personnel in 6,800 posts across seven commands.

The reforms also improved the NCS's operability with the **NATO Force Structure (NFS)**. The NFS is a distinct pool of Allied national and multinational forces and headquarters placed at the Alliance's disposal on a permanent or temporary basis.

Responding to Emerging Challenges

Today, NATO faces the greatest security challenges in a generation—including terrorism, cyber and hybrid threats and a more assertive Russia. During the Warsaw Summit in 2016, NATO Allies agreed to review the Command Structure, so that it continues to meet the challenges of a complex and evolving security environment.

In 2017, NATO Defence Ministers agreed on an outline for future work to adapt the Command Structure. Key elements include:

- A new Command for the Atlantic to ensure that sea lines of communication between Europe and North America remain free and secure
- A new Command to improve the movement of troops and equipment within Europe
- Reinforcing logistics elements across the NCS in Europe
- And a new cyber operations centre to strengthen cyber defences and integrate cyber capabilities into NATO planning and operations

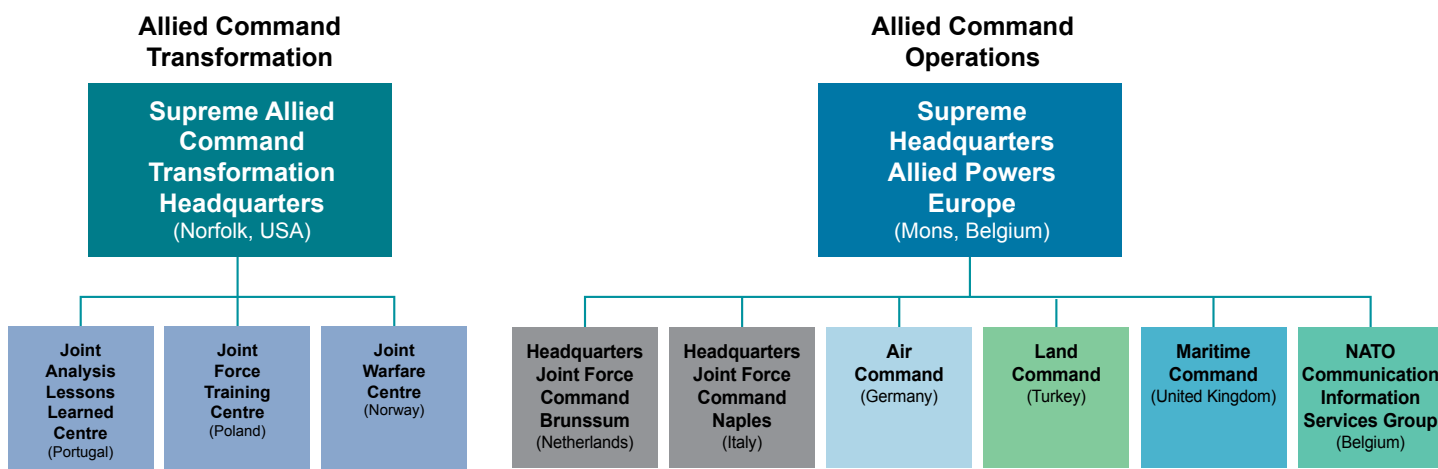
Current organisation of the Command Structure

NATO's Command Structure is under the authority of the Military Committee, NATO's highest military authority composed of the Chiefs of Defence of all twenty-nine member countries. The NCS consists of two strategic commands: **Allied Command Operations (ACO)** and **Allied Command Transformation (ACT)**.

ACO, under the command of the **Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR)**, is responsible for the planning and execution of all NATO military operations, as directed by the North Atlantic Council. ACO consists of a strategic-level headquarters, the **Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE)** located in Mons (Belgium), along with two **Joint Force Commands (JFC)** in Naples (Italy) and Brunssum (the Netherlands), each of which is capable of deploying up to a major joint operation capable headquarters out of area. ACO is further organised into three major tactical-level commands for air, land, and sea operations, each with a dedicated headquarters.

ACT is at the forefront of NATO's military transformation. It is under the command of the **Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT)**, who exercises his responsibilities from headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia (USA). ACT's main responsibilities include education, training and exercises, and promoting interoperability throughout the Alliance. ACT also helps maintain and strengthen the vital transatlantic link between Europe and North America and promotes the equitable sharing of roles, risks and responsibilities among Allies. ACT operates the **Joint Analysis and Lessons Learnt Centre** in Lisbon (Portugal), the **Joint Force Training Centre** in Bydgoszcz (Poland) and the **Joint Warfare Centre** in Stavanger (Norway).

Allied Command Operations (ACO)	
Belgium	
Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE)	Belgium
Joint Force Command (Brunssum)	Netherlands
Joint Force Command (Naples)	Italy
Communications and Information Services Group (CIS GP)	Belgium
Allied Land Command (LANDCOM)	Turkey
Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM)	UK
Allied Air Command (AIRCOM)	Germany
Allied Command Transformation (ACT)	
USA	
Supreme Allied Commander Transformation Headquarters (HQ SACT)	USA
Joint Warfare Centre (JWC)	Norway
Joint Force Training Centre (JFTC)	Poland
Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC)	Portugal



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