

INTERCOMMUNICATION BETWEEN NATO AND SHIPPING INDUSTRY FOR MARITIME SECURITY

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Abstract: The NATO Shipping Centre (NSC) promotes the co-operation between the military naval forces and merchant shipping by contributing to the white portion of the Recognized Maritime Picture (RMP) and apprising merchant ships of potential risks and possibly gives routing advice. When a military operation is designed in a heavy maritime traffic area, the NATO Shipping Centre assists these two parties: military and merchant shipping.

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1. CHARACTERISTICS OF SHIPPING INDUSTRY

First of all, the merchant shipping is a multinational industry and it is fully global. A ship owner in one country competes with ship owners all over the globe. Goods are being moved between countries and continents. Merchant shipping is characterized by fierce competition, not only internally, but also with rail, road and air transport.

To reduce costs, owners register their ships where conditions are most favourable, which means where the taxation level is low, as well as reduced personnel related and general exploitation costs. As a result of severe environmental regulations, countries have imposed on visiting ships; many ship owners disperse their fleet over single-ship companies to reduce financial risks. Ship owners often leave operational management to other companies and personnel management to a third part. Charterers may hire a boat with or without crew and they may even take responsibility for providing employment for the ship. All this contributes to make the shipping world not very transparent [1, 4, 5].

Merchant shipping is conducted at a large scale on the high seas where it is more difficult to impose and enforce restrictions than in territorial waters. Apart from when ships operate in or adjacent to territorial waters, or when they engage in certain types of crime, they remain under full jurisdiction of the flag state. No other nation is allowed to interfere unless authorized to do so by the flag state, for several reasons that may be difficult to obtain. Some international conventions apply, but there still exists a lot of freedom on the high seas. All this makes shipping an industry difficult to control [3, 5].

Merchant shipping carries more than 90% of the world trade. If it is interrupted, it would have severe consequences for the economy. In the good old days everything was very transparent with the flag astern telling almost all important facts of a ship's origin, but today the

picture is totally different. The ship is the same but the owner is using a flag of convenience, management is taken care of by a company in a third country, ship and cargo are insured in another country, the crew may originate from countries other than ship owner or operator come, with officers and masters from different places. Therefore it can be hard for a military commander to tell who is entitled to advice and guidance from NATO in an area of operation (AOO).

Merchant shipping is probably the most international of all industries. This is why NATO puts so much effort in co-operation with the shipping industry. It will also hopefully explain why it was abandoned the old “Naval Control of Shipping - NCS” and it was implemented NCAGS.

2. GUIDANCE FOR SHIPPING

Naval Co-operation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) [4, 5] is a naval organization with trained members to establish and provide advice for safe passage of merchant ships worldwide, during peace time, tension, crisis and even war. NCAGS personnel act as a liaison between military commanders and the civil authorities. NCAGS is NATO's point of contact with maritime community.

Merchant shipping, in the context of NCAGS, is defined as the whole shipping industry [2, 4, 5], owners, operators, ships, pilots, ports and port authorities, international organizations, even shipyards, terminals, ship chandlers and insurance companies. Shipping is a complex industry, and all those mentioned contribute to make the industry function. The key is co-operation between the shipping and the military communities. We need to work more closely if we are to produce the results that the *Defence Capabilities Initiative* demands and common sense dictates [3, 4, 5].

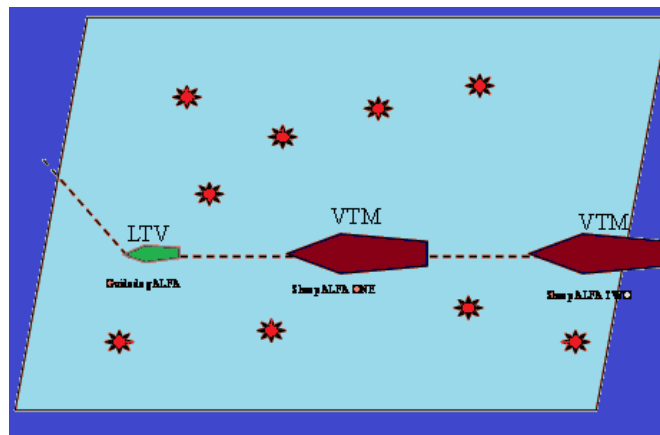


Figure 1. LEAD-THROUGH-OPERATION (naval convoy passing a minefield)

NCAGS can keep vessels in a port, from sailing towards a threatened area or slow merchant movements so they do not arrive prior to when support from a LEADTHROUGH is available (fig. 1). NCAGS can also settle the conflict fishing vessels from mine counter measures (MCM) operations. Within the last few years the NCAGS ORGANIZATION has been busy developing new doctrine that more closely identifies what NCAGS can offer to its tow customers. If it is necessary to know something about MERSHIP, including the MERSHIP community or pass any information to them, the NCAGS ORG is there to support in any way, shape or form. NCAGS have already inform the MERSHIP community of the general situation and are aware of any specific MERSHIP point of contact (POC) and how to communicate with them or their agents [4, 5].

3. BENEFITS OF GUIDANCE

Now, co-operation is a two way street. If there is nothing in it for one part, there is no reason to establish or maintain co-operation, then reduced to just “operation”. For merchant shipping co-operation is:

- a possibility of minimizing insurance costs when participating in co-operation with NATO;
- a single point of access to appropriate information;
- the possibility of minimizing disruption to schedules when passing through areas in which NATO is conducting maritime operations;
- ability to contact NATO authorities as required to update information on danger areas, available threat evaluations, maritime force movements in operations and exercises, accidents, oil spills and even piracy, a subject of increasing interest to commercial mariners;
- the possibility to share information with others participating in the system.

If there is no real threat, we cannot expect much active co-operation from the shipping community [4, 5].

Naval supervision is the highest, and the most interfering level of NCAGS. There are serious legal implications of implementing naval supervision. The maritime commander, when assuming responsibility for

protection of a merchant ship, also assumes responsibility for financial consequences if the ship is damaged or sunk.

The NCAGS organization (consisting of both national and NATO assets) can support and participate in a broad range of military operations both within and beyond the NATO area.

During an operation, the strategic, Joint Force or Maritime Component Commander (MCC) may be given a mission with specific responsibilities concerning shipping within a defined geographic area. The mission will always be based on a legal mandate, and may involve *Rules of engagement*. Merchant ships within the area may or may not be participating ships, and nations may also designate specific ships to receive NATO NCAGS assistance and issue guidance to shipping companies. With the exception of ships under naval supervision, compliance by ships is on a voluntary basis. Similarly, the shipping is under no obligation to be part of the NCAGS system and may except when under naval supervision, decline co-operation at any time. A NATO Commander may not alter the destination of a merchant ship without the approval of the ship's owner, operator or government, except when under naval supervision. He may, however, advice a diversion from the ship's planned route as necessary for safety, operational or tactical reasons [4, 5].

The most important task of NCAGS is to provide co-ordination between merchant shipping and the military commander, thereby ensuring uninterrupted flow of vital goods, and minimizing disturbance by shipping to the naval operations.

In addition, NCAGS provide advice to the MCC on the shipping and, as a bonus, provide input to the “white portion” of the RMP. The advent of new legislation requiring all ships over 500 tons to carry AIS equipment, NCAGS importance to RMP is diminishing. The traditional tools of NCAGS will, however, provide a predictive element of the picture. NCAGS can also provide additional information, like ownership, technical specifications and general layout of interesting contacts.

Case study - an example of how a military commander may establish his NCAGS organization (figure 2).

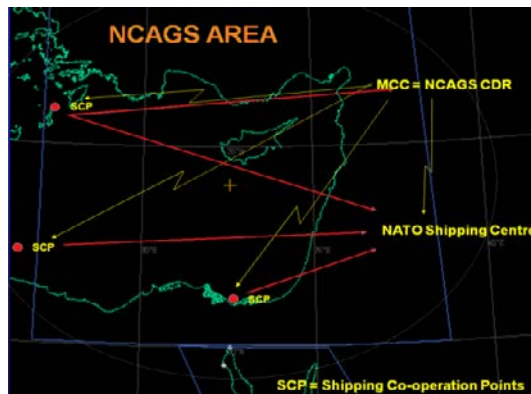


Figure 2. NCAGS area organization

In an operation the MCC is normally also the NCAGS CDR. Depending on the area and the situation as described, the NCAGS ORG may have been activated. In this case the MCC has most likely established Shipping Co-operation Points (SCP), afloat or ashore.

Ideally, the SCP are manned with people with local knowledge and are liaising with port authorities, briefing masters on military activity and supplying ships with NCAGS liaison officers etc. The SCPs are subordinated to the MCC. The MCC also gives directions and guidance to the NATO Shipping Centre (NSC).

The SCPs report to the MCC and NSC. The NSC brings the data together with other data and contributes with the unclassified portion of the white picture as a broadcast by MCCIS to the operational commander and the forces involved.

4. THE GUIDANCE OF SHIPPING IN PEACETIME

An important task for NSC is to gather background information about shipping patterns, infra structure, etc. which enables the centre to give qualified advice at the right time. It means that already in peace time, the personnel try to gather information that may be of use in future crises. At Northwood they try to keep updated on developments in merchant shipping, using internet, shipping magazines and papers. When a NCAGS ORG is established or a crisis evolves, it will normally be too late to start gathering such information. The NCAGS should therefore be able to provide SCP and others a package with relevant information that gives them a head start and enables them to do a job from day one.

The NSC still relies on shipping voluntarily reporting, but as they develop procedures to take advantage of new technology, like AIS, the generation of the white RMP will rely less on voluntary reporting and of course – with recent developments – the NSC has been relocated into the MOC which makes certain sense [4, 5].

The NSC will be the NATO's central operational point of contact for establishing and maintaining links with the merchant shipping industry. The extent of activity will be proportionate to the scale of the crisis. In peacetime the NSC is manned only during normal working hours maintaining databases, Point of Contacts and the website.

At the lower end, the emphasis will always be on the voluntary co-operation and guidance. The higher end of the threat scale may see the activation of more elements of the NCAGS organization and it may culminate with naval supervision of merchant ships, equivalent to the previously known *Full Naval Control of Shipping (NCS)*.

At the lower end the NCAGS organization is not activated (fig. 3). That is the case in Active Endeavour where the NSC has an advisory role to the MCC COMNAVSOUTH, provided by SACLANT the supporting commander. In the upper end of the scale the NCAGS organization is activated in order to meet the needs of the military commander and merchant shipping.

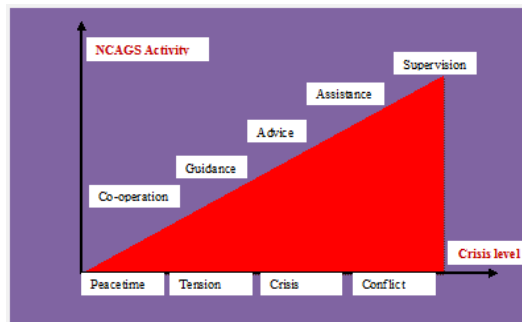


Figure 3. The extent of NSC activity proportionate to the scale of the crisis [4]

NCAGS is not an intelligence collector and they are not providing protection to ships. That is the task of the military commander, but it might be able to give the military

commander advice on these issues. It is also the military commander who issues the shipping policies in force at any given time [4, 5, 6].

5. CONCLUSIONS

The changes in the operational environment, as well as in merchant shipping industry, led to the changes from old term *control* to the new one *co-operation* between the military naval forces and merchant shipping. The establishment of the NATO Shipping Centre promotes the co-operation by contributing to the white portion of the Recognized Maritime Picture and advising shipping of potential risks and possibly giving routing advice.

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