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**A NEW AND ADAPTED EVALUATION CONCEPT
FOR THE ROMANIAN AIR FORCE**

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Abstract:

The paper provides some important elements dealing with the complex and dynamic area of *evaluation*. Overall, the evaluation process purposes to improve the *combat readiness* and *capability* of units and force components with respect to their capability including *resources and performance*, in order to effectively and efficiently conduct assumed missions and tasks. It is also examine the validity and consistency of systems, procedures and objectives. It allows creating a continuous improvement *learning* cycle, encouraging the units to become the best they can be. The system helps transforming the lessons identified into *lessons learned* through specific tools and monitors their implementation during evaluations. Consequently, units improve their *training* and deliver forces that are better fit for purpose. An important benefit comes from the evaluation scoring and reporting on unit's performances. Validated *deficiencies* will be tracked until closed out, and if necessary, they will be re-assesses during the next evaluation. The evaluation is not focusing on performance during exercises only; it takes into consideration all activities during the entire preparation cycle of the units, in order to verify that forces are ready and prepared to meet current and contingency operational priorities in accordance with required *standards*.

"We verify that you're doing what you think you're doing!"

Carter McNamara, "A Basic Guide to Program Evaluation"

1. Purpose

The paper provides some important elements dealing with the complex and dynamic area of evaluation. This is a time of rapid change in the evaluation's community. The old system is not available anymore and the changes appear as a result of transformation and reform processes.

My desire here was to present a proposal for the future Air Force evaluation system. My proposal summarises the outcomes from six years of experience and work with and within NATO evaluation system and it is issued to stakeholders and members of the evaluation community as an invitation to think openly and creatively about AF evaluation needs and contribute to improvements.

There are four elements that drive the necessity to analyse the AFs' operational readiness evaluation systems and one significant opportunity for this analysis. The first element is the AF transformation process. Since Romanian Armed Forces Training Policy was last promulgated, the AF has suffered perhaps its most significant transformation, a

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process needed to remain relevant in the 21st Century to meet the changing strategy and military requirements of the current security challenging environment. In this context it will be important that we understand how to adapt the AF existing Training and Evaluation Policy in a general line to encompass the challenges getting up from its transformation process, consequently better developing operational realities.

The second element is connected with our Target of Capabilities and the third one is related to the AF commitment to consolidate the combat readiness forces. Currently, the AF evaluation system is limited and focuses on evaluation of NATO declared forces only. As a result of the AF reform, we know that there will be new evaluation requirements to be met for the consolidated forces. We need to find out how to meet these needs.

The fourth element is our Training, Exercises and Evaluation (TEE) system which is a key element in this approach, setting the basis for training standards and providing essential tools to achieve appropriate standards for forces and capabilities, ensuring that all of our TEE activities are systematically linked to an operational objective. It is important to realize why and for what we are preparing forces, so prioritisation and allocation of resources and effort can facilitate a more dedicated programme. In this respect, in his Annual Guidance on ETEE¹, SACEUR has said that *“national forces are highly encouraged to take advantage of the ETEE opportunities and to utilise their national system for the betterment of the Alliance. NATO relies on nations to provide forces of known standards, focused evaluation processes, clear ACO forces standards and well recognised national responsibilities for the achievement of them, therefore remain paramount NATO evaluation programme should be used as guidance for nations when developing their national evaluation programmes”*.

From the last 5 years, NATO has been evaluating most of the AF declared units and capabilities providing us with a wealth of practical experience through a variety of methods in this area of expertise. In my opinion, this experience has been properly captured providing a tremendous opportunity to intelligently and promptly chart the proper course for the future of the AF evaluation system. This is, actually, the aim of my paper, to identify a new and adapted evaluation concept as directed by AF chief of staff, as a way to implement the NATO evaluation system into the AF's activities.

“ROU AF requires a fully implementation of the NATO evaluation system, with the intention of creating a new and adapted evaluating concept for the consolidated national home defence forces”.

As a member of evaluation community, I found the chief of staff concerns to be well founded. Most nations have adopted and appreciate NATO evaluation programme. For many nations, the structured methodologies support force level training programmes. Although the NATO evaluation methodologies are well regarded and used by our AF as important aids in the development of their force capabilities, their effectiveness could be enhanced and increased by smarter way of working. We recognise that our evaluation system is reactive and has a limited area of implementation. We need to change it to a proactive evaluation system and more operationally oriented approach. This will provide more relevant data on capability, readiness and performance, not only of NATO declared forces, but also of national home defence consolidated combat readiness forces.

As recommended by SACEUR, the NATO evaluation program should be used as a guide when developing our national Evaluation System for the combat/operational readiness units. Operational readiness is the organization, manning, and training level of a

¹ SACEUR's Annual Guidance on Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation (SAGE), 2013-2017, dated 08 July 2011

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unit that allows it to be rapidly deployed, integrated, and immediately employed as part of a joint, allied, or coalition force². Combat readiness is the capability of a unit, ship, weapon system, or equipment to perform the combat missions or functions for which it is organized or designed³. Evaluation is a structured process consisting of the thorough examination of capabilities and performances against defined standards and criteria⁴.

2. NATO evaluation system as a best practice

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) developed a military structure to create and maintain the military capabilities to conduct Article-5 (NATO member attacked) and non-Article 5 Crisis Response Operations (CRO). NATO had to create an integrated military structure that established performance, interoperability, equipment standards, standard operating procedures, support, and a framework for common language, terminology, and doctrine. In order to ensure that these diverse forces were trained to operate and fight together, NATO developed training, exercise, and evaluation criteria.

NATO nations “declare” forces as available to NATO force requirements and have a designated readiness category and standards to maintain. NATO directs that the evaluation and assessment of declared units must be made by means of an independent evaluation program. The TACEVAL is that program and is mainly focused at the AF unit’s declared capability. The program contains several generic tools, which evaluate or assess the operational or combat level of a specific unit or a capability. The TACEVAL presents a unit with an integrated operations, logistics, and force protection scenario to demonstrate its declared capability, in a simulated contingency in either a conventional or NBC environment. TACEVAL evaluators are given specific directions on how to properly coordinate and conduct the evaluation. The evaluators conduct an objective, honest evaluation against specific detailed criteria and standards.

TACEVAL uses a logical, simple framework for NATO forces to understand their responsibilities. NATO forces are to focus their preparation on rapid deployment, sustainability, interoperability, standardization, and training with a balance between operations, logistics, and force protection. NATO also encourages declared forces to train together and holds exercises to facilitate this integration and for saving money. TACEVAL conducts a detailed tactical level evaluation and does a very good job of integration at the operational level. The TACEVAL scenarios also enhance operational reach, agility, adaptability, integrated operations, and interoperability.

NATO TACEVAL is a good system that evaluates elements at the operational level of war that will enhance operational scope. It provides a balanced evaluation of operations, logistics, and force protection. We need to develop an operational readiness evaluation system to test and exploit these new concepts to increase operational reach.

NATO TACEVAL has procedures that test and evaluate agility, is the only system that truly evaluates integrated operations and, in my opinion, is the best system to evaluate interoperability. While the other systems are not as good at this as TACEVAL, the increased requirement and attention on interoperability is improving service efforts. The AF needs to develop an operational evaluation system where it can ensure it is interoperable with joint and coalition forces as technology and systems change.

² School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, AY 02-03, *Evaluating Operational Readiness for Fixed-Wing Tactical Aviation Units*, by LtCol Jeffrey L. Hoing, USMC, 11;

³ Department of Defense, JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 77, 311;

⁴ MC, *NATO Education, Training, Exercise and Transformation Policy*, MC 0458/1, dated 27 March 2006.

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3. Vision and core principles

Vision for the Evaluation Concept comes from the AF annual guidance and sees a superior delivered operational capabilities outcomes, by improving effectiveness and efficiency and achieving a smarter way of working. The Evaluation Concept will utilise the existing methodologies, constantly improved where possible. It will be a tool flexible and complex to requirements and challenges of the future AF. It will be focused on delivering better capabilities outcomes rather than just checking standards, in this way ensuring that forces are prepared to meet contemporary operational challenges and encouraging these forces to continually improve. In addition, a better outcome it will be achieved by more efficient and effective use of resources (improving efficiency and effectiveness) – having a clear prioritisation of evaluation effort, matching the allocated resources to AF priorities and providing ability to reduce the evaluation cost. Finally, it will engage smarter ways of working by quality assurance of the whole training system, creating premises for a common evaluation framework.

In relation with this vision I propose a statement for AF evaluation system that will raise its horizon and bring it into line with AF's mission focused objectives:

“To assure that consolidated home defence forces and/or capabilities are ready and prepared to meet current and contingent operational priorities in accordance with national required standards in the operational, procedural, material and technical fields”.

In order to incorporate the best practices of the existing NATO evaluation system, I propose implementing the following core principles⁵:

- Trust but verify. Apply the mutual trust as a mean of reflecting AF unit's responsibilities for preparing their consolidated forces to national standards and only undertaking national led evaluations where risks and priorities are highest and where the benefits of evaluation exceed the cost;

- Risk based prioritisation. Change from an evaluation system based on cyclical approach to an evaluation based on priorities and risks. This will enable AF to make informed choices about best use of scarce resources by balancing costs of evaluation versus priorities and risks of the missions and tasks. Risk is defined as the total number of factors that could have a critical effect on the success or failure of the AF missions/objectives. It is important we all understand why and for what we are preparing forces, so that prioritisation of effort and allocation of resources can facilitate a focused programme. Risk based prioritisation is a dynamic management tool which must be permanently reviewed in order to be relevant. Evaluation should be performed when priority and risks are high. In this way it will deliver a greater value. Evaluation of low priority and low risk must be rarely performed as an exception, if budget allows;

- Continuous improvement. We use to say that evaluation is part of training process, but in fact it is not integrate in it. The artificial organisational barriers create a lack of feedback for the training system. The evaluation is an opportunity to assess current performance, capability and readiness, is a viable solution to improve doctrines and standards, to share best practices and lessons learned and to solve the identified deficiencies. A continuous improvement will enable consolidated structure to become better by applying lessons learned and feedback from evaluations. The concept is proposed to provide an interactive and effective approach in which evaluation looks on the whole

⁵ ACO Evaluation Programmes Review, SHAPE, dated 05 August 2011, page. 2, 10

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training system not just on the end of the product, when in my opinion, is almost too late to change something;

- Quality Assurance and Quality Control. Quality Control contrasts obviously with Quality Assurance approach, the last being a proactive process. As I mentioned before, current type of evaluation is a reactive one, as it scrutinise and detect if forces comply or not with standards/criteria and finally it makes recommendation for corrective actions at the end of the training process. Switching from just Quality Control to a wider Quality Assurance means to check the finished product and permanently focus on the entire training process as well. This solution, which can be successfully applicable to all consolidated forces will prevent non-compliance with standards and will reduce the risk the forces not being combat ready on time. However, Quality Control remains an essential and integral part of the Quality Assurance concept;

- Accreditation of AF evaluation system. Consider and recognise the AF evaluation system as being top class local-solution which might be accepted by other services as a best practice and providing a valuable team of experienced and knowledgeable evaluators, in this manner promoting inter-services burden sharing. Later on, each service will participate to other two service's evaluations with experts having special and narrow expertise and experience required within specific functional areas, relevant to that service. This approach conducts to the next principle by creating the possibility of using multidisciplinary team as a consequence of the need to join resources and to unify effort to conduct joint evaluations in a most efficient and effective manner;

- Common evaluation platform. A common evaluation platform covers common standards across all services. It will enable to develop a multi-service evaluation team for the operational level. The services evaluation methodologies must continue to be used especially on the tactical level. It sounds extremely difficult to create a common evaluation platform for joint level using a single methodology. However, there is room for building more coherence between the services in regard of policy and methodologies. There are substantial parts which might be applied as a common evaluation framework and evaluated regardless of service background, such as administrative elements (policy, legal affairs, and finance), command and control, force protection and some logistic elements. These commonalities might be described as "common service knowledge" and create the possibility and chance of developing a multidisciplinary, multiservice evaluation team which will be most likely oriented on the operational level evaluations. It will create a valuable pool of experienced and knowledgeable evaluators which will act more efficiently and effectively at joint level. It never happened until now, that's way we need sooner a positive experience in order to verify, validate and encourage identification of this principle. In my opinion, a multidisciplinary team and a common evaluation platform could be employed possibly in the General Staff led evaluations, only. Implementation of this principle generates and creates permissive conditions to the last one principle;

- Exploiting Common Information. We must frankly recognise that each service uses its own database, paper records and scenarios, injects etc., to build and perform an evaluation. In addition to this, I should mention the extremely valuable team and database existed at the Nation Defence University Simulation Branch. Also the training, exercises and lessons learned databases must not be neglected. The ability to link all these individual databases enabling exchange and sharing information, would contribute to a significant greater return on the investments and hard work individually performed. The most important fact is that appliance of this principle of Exploiting Common Information would avoid possible wasted effort and sub-optimal expenditure.

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Having looked at how we evaluate, my proposal of a new system based on Alliance's evaluation core principles it will be clearly linked to the rest of the training system while extending the lessons learned process and providing a better feedback instrument. This will be managed more effectively by the new AF A7 entity.

4. The need

In general, evaluation has a specific organisational structure, location, philosophy and application. Specific for AF, evaluation is undertaken by dedicated teams, composed by a core team (key personnel working in a HQ) augmented by trained and qualified evaluators from different operational structures. However, this well organised and dedicated structure has some potential weaknesses and some areas of concern.

First of all, the current evaluation system is cyclical and limited to specific forces. At a time of AF reform when there are demands for more units to be evaluated, but resources are less, we need more detailed consideration of need. We must look for a better efficiency and to increase effectiveness. Such a system it appears unsustainable, that's why we need to adjust it by assessing priorities, adapting the scale of the evaluation system in order to match the affordable budget. How to do this? Through applying the good practice of the NATO evaluation programme.

Second, we must take into consideration priorities established within the Chief of AF Annual Guidance. It is self-evident that, with some exceptions, the vast majority of evaluations do not address consolidated forces, which are now the highest level priorities. Most of these forces are not evaluated and Chief of AF has no independent assurance that they meet standards. What to do? We need to review our priorities, focus on consolidated forces (priority 1) and extend the evaluation cycle for those forces from priority 2 and 3.

Third, the cost-effectiveness needs to be bringing into sharper focus demanding for efficiency. In general, leadership continues to question the cost of participating in exercises and evaluation, being mainly concerned of the cost effectiveness, contemporary relevance and time commitments demanded by the evaluating systems. Training, exercises and evaluation are to be conducted in the most cost effective manner, which meets the AF interest and the operational training objectives. The scale and complexity of an AF evaluation combined with a specific exercise in support of this event (having direct cost, indirect cost, and possible hidden cost) makes difficult to establish the true cost and benefits of an evaluation. In the absence of accurate costs we must focus on opportunities to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of evaluation.

Fourth, the value of evaluations is related to the quality of final evaluation report and how useful is for the leader for making pragmatic decisions. The quality of evaluation report is a consequence of the quality and highly experience of qualified evaluators. On one hand, they must come from operational units where they are currently performing specific job similar to that position they occupy into the evaluation team. On the other hand, they must perform a specific training in order to be certified as qualified evaluators. All of these mean dedication to this job, time and budget for training and maintaining the qualification level by attending an international evaluation every three years.

Fifth, and the last, we need to use evaluation as a feedback of training and exercises process. It must be real part of the training system; it must not act separately and should not come at the end of the process, focusing on the quality "check" and not on the quality of the training product. It is necessary to conduct our evaluations sufficient time in advance in order to get the chance to influence the development of capable and ready forces. In fact, we do this, but at a low level scale and visibility being forced to act in this way by scarce

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of resources. As a consequence, some feedback from training and exercises is provided but not adequately exploited. Moreover, there is little relationship between evaluation process and lessons learned. The focus of AF training must be on the achievement and improvement of effective capabilities. Therefore, the evaluation procedures are designed to identify existing capabilities and shortfalls, identify their causes, determine future priorities for training at all levels and identify necessary changes to doctrine, procedures and force structure to meet the agreed standards and criteria.

5. The benefits of the new evaluation concept

It is important to say that benefits of the new AF evaluation system are direct consequences of using the identified best practices. It increases the evaluation perspective and concentrates on allowing outcomes that fits with AF missions. The evaluation system follows a core of principles and limits the number of assessments in accordance with priorities and risks identified. In this way the benefits exceeded the cost, creating an added value from AF involvement. There is a potential for substantial cost saving from prioritized evaluations rather than cyclical which does not provide a value for money. It allows the AF to create a continuous improvement learning cycle, encouraging the consolidated units to become the best they can be. The system helps transforming the lessons identified into lessons learned through specific tools and monitors their implementation during evaluations. Consequently, units improve their training and deliver forces that are better fit for purpose.

The new AF evaluation system could make an important step in building a common evaluation platform which might be applied at joint level enabling multiservice team to be created. This will allow using a pool of qualified evaluators which potentially decrease the overall evaluation cost. Also, it will permit to share the information and the lessons learned database.

An important benefit comes from evaluation scoring and reporting on unit's performances. Validated deficiencies will be tracked until closed out, and if necessary, they will be re-assesses during the next evaluation. For AF Evaluation Branch data tracking purposes, all findings will be assigned a cause code in the evaluation report in accordance with assigned deficiency level.

6. Conclusion

The New AF Evaluation System might be a significant improvement and an opportunity to make optimum use of resources. Findings in this paper are focused on one single service evaluation system, only. However, some findings might apply to other services as well. Evaluation can be used either for determining and proving own capabilities at a certain level before informing the higher echelon ("bottom up"), or on higher level for validation of subordinated units' readiness ("top down"). Commanders at all levels are responsible for the cost-effective and correct administration of resources provided to sustain exercises, training and evaluation activities. In order to get the requirements within agreed budget ceilings, commanders will frequently be asked to make difficult decisions in terms of priorities of competing training, exercise and evaluation elements.

The evaluation will no longer focus on performance during exercises only, it will take into consideration all activities during the entire preparation cycle of the consolidated units, in order to verify that forces are ready and prepared to meet current and contingency operational priorities in accordance with national required standards.

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This new evaluation system will permit implementation, in a convenient time, of remedial actions throughout the entire preparation cycle of the consolidated units. Evaluation will be an on-going process aiming at improvements throughout the preparation phase.

This paper lays a foundation and its findings might be developed. All evaluation and lessons learned stakeholders are encouraged to contribute their ideas and help adapt and improve evaluation methodologies. Evaluation requests a much severer focus on AF needs and priorities, superior integration into the training process and greater contribution to continuous progress of consolidated forces.

You may see my try as a way to consolidate a local solution – finding. I would wish to expect high influence on my proposal. On one hand I am looking for a proactive support from the entire evaluation community. They will easily understand it as they have permanently got in contact with other NATO qualified evaluators and have shared their experience. On the other hand I am sure there will be a proactive resistance as well, mainly from the operational environment. They would probably consider this concept not sufficient adapted to our national standards and difficult to apply against them. I am ready to work on it and to change this resistance into a desirable support. This approach will make evaluation methodologies relevant and congruent with the current AF reform programme.

This evaluation concept represents an opportunity to make optimum use of good practice already being applied or developed within NATO. More importantly, it wishes to align the evaluation system with the AF reform were limited resources, not only in terms of funding but also in terms of personnel, will be available.

References:

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