SEEDEFCOL - VIRTUAL DEFENCE COLLEGE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE
VISION FROM BULGARIA

The Concept

Security Context

The logic of the stabilization of the South East Europe (SEE) requires a complex approach for achieving lasting peace, stability and security in the region. There is no doubt that the way out of the entire situation is exclusively through political, economic and security cooperation. The promotion of transparency and mutual confidence in defence and security related issues are between the key tracks that lay at the basis of the regional military cooperation and partnership for peace.

Armed forced and defence establishments remain important factors in this process. During the last decade, they faced challenges that deeply effected the basics of the traditional strategic culture: rethinking of the age-old vision about the army as the only guardian of the nation, radical reengineering of all defence system, implementation of European type civil-military relations and democratic oversight, reformulation of the old and new military professional values, modernisation of the existing military art through application of NATO standards and procedures.

The countries from the region that cooperate in the Euro-Atlantic format make significant and systematic efforts to accomplish real progress in the interoperability, implementation of an effective democratic oversight of the military activities and full modernisation of the existing system of military education and training. There is shared understanding that success in the coming years will depend to a great extent on the reform in the way of teaching and training military professionals.

People's knowledge and skills are the target. "Struggle for human resources" is the motto of ongoing defence reforms. "How to build non-traditional military leaders now?" is the core question of tomorrow's democratic Balkans. The education and training are the shortest way to the new military professionalism, interoperability and integration. The transparent cooperation in defence education and research can contribute to the mutual confidence across the region.

Collaboration and encouragement of all SEDM[1]-based initiatives for sustainable military cooperation have been at the forefront of Bulgarian foreign and security policy. That is one of the national priorities within the Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes (called further *Consortium*). It supplements Bulgarian commitment in related areas as The Stability Pact for SEE (*Working Table No. 3*), SEEBRIG and BLACKSEAFOR.

For that purpose, the initiative to establish *Virtual Defence College for Distance Learning in South East Europe (SEEDEFCOL)* was lunched during the Third annual conference of the Consortium in Moscow, Russia, 25-27 June 2001.

Vision

The idea is based on the long-range vision of NATO Partnership for Peace to create a distributed environment in which all nations, including their universities and academies, have an equal opportunity to develop, deliver, and manage learning tools and course content. All of these efforts are designed to harmonize and greatly enhance military and defence related education and training at all levels.

Efforts to develop regional architecture and operational environment of the C4 systems on the basis of *Partnership for Peace Information Management System* (PIMS) in South Eastern Europe will create sufficient foundation to establish SEEDEFCOL.

Additionally, with the development of exchange programs, SEEDEFCOL will facilitate the conduct of collaborative research and development by expert from various countries.

This project will improve the capabilities of the countries in SEE region to contribute substantially to the enhancement of peace and security not only in the Balkans, but also throughout Europe.

Functionally, the virtual College could combine existing expertise in different fields and existing Centres of Excellence in the SEE. The organizational environment could be the *Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes* and also the *Southeast European Defence Ministerial* process and mechanisms. The College will communicate with the NATO *Training and Education Enhanced Program* (TEEP) and will become a substantial component of the *On-line Defence University*. Such kind of integration will accommodate many different nations with many different and specific training, education and research needs. It will provide good conditions for effective transfer of interoperability know-how and will stimulate standardisation in defence education and training for more multinational capabilities. (See *Model for Euro-Atlantic military education and training*)

Aim and Objectives

The College is primary aimed to promote cooperation between defence research and education institutions from the countries of South East Europe and also among *centres of excellence* studying security and defence related issues.

The core objective of the College is to support international efforts in regional and EAPC [2] format to promote defence reforms through enhanced application of information technologies in military education, research and training. In a triple approach, it intends to:

- Provide high quality research and training, tailored to the requirements for interoperability and integration and reduce time and cost of developing and distributing defence and security data, information and analyses and related advanced training modules;

- Utilise common with NATO countries standards in research and training that will provide cost-effectiveness durability and flexibility of the interoperability efforts.

- Encourage widespread cooperation in developing and sharing of research and learning resources across the region (and within PfP boundaries) and contribute to enhancement of mutual confidence and stability through transparency and collaboration.

Activities

SEEDEFCOL activities should be issue-driven. The SEEDEFCOL members and partners will establish a process for accelerating implementation of next generation technologies in the region in order to bridge the gap from research and development to learning and implementation. To this purpose initially, the College could focus on:

- Joint studies in advanced defence resource management;

- Searching for and providing information and access to good practices in defence management, interoperability improvements and civil-military relations;

- Joint production and electronic delivery of materials related to transparency in defence and armed forces;

- Development and exchange of ADL [3] training modules and packages;

- Exchange and joint use of data, information and analyses;

- Joint training and exchange of experts, researchers, trainers and lecturers;

- Teaming of experts and trainers;

- Exchange of training and testing packages related to the nationally approved Partnership Goals;

- Support to the Stability Pact for SEE, Working Table No.3 activities.

SEEDEFCOL activities shall be carried out through various instruments to deliver effectively useful products as follows:

- *Assistance*: The College shall generate programs for education, training and research addressed to the needs of the member countries and also to assist their execution on national and multinational bases.

- *Networking*: In order to perform the role of a "clearing house," the College shall establish and engage in networking of researchers and practitioners that are dealing with ADL-based education and training modules and research data.

- *Documentation*: The College shall establish a powerful documentation IT-based capabilities. In close cooperation with the Consortium WG, George C. Marshall Center and NATO units, it will develop a virtual library for mutual reference use.

- *Consultancy*: The College has to establish relations with distinguished and experienced institutions that could provide consultancy to the member institution in preparing and using ADL-based opportunities.

- *Feedback and Lessons Learned*: The College shall establish a feedback mechanism, which will provide realistic evaluation and lessons learned for all the member institutions.

Functional Environment

Along the model of the Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes, the Conference of the Commandants, the Conference of the PfP Training Centres and Simulation Network, SEEDEFCOL should be *association of the willing* among the defence education, training and research institutions and *centres of excellence* from the EAPC countries from South East Europe. (See *South East European defence college network*)

The principal "political shoulder" of the College could be *The Southeast European Defence Ministerial (SEDM).* It has been created as a forum for consultations and joint planning, firmly bound to the Euroatlantic integration of the region. It shows the will of the participating states to share and act in conformity with common values and principles. Thus, the proper institutionalisation of the cooperation throughout the region is essential for the promotion of stability and security.

The regional environment for the College could be the Pact of Stability for SEE, the Crisis Response Information Network (CRIN) and the South East Europe Simulation Network (SEESIM) that are potentially both contributors to and beneficents from the SEEDEFCOL activities.

The Stability Pact for SEE makes efforts focused on different programs for re-qualification and social adaptation of discharged military personnel, confidence building measures, increasing transparency in military sphere, effective management of the defence resources, mine clearance issues, control of arms trade and prevention of illegal traffic, etc.

A regional Crisis Response Information Network (CRIN) is in process of establishment. It will ensure fast information exchange, operability and possibility to coordinate the activities of each country in the region during disasters and crises.

South East Europe Simulation Network (SEESIM) has been planned to function within the regional context in a way similar to the network demonstrated at the NATO Washington Summit in 1999. It is intended to assist the SEDM countries to establish integrated operational capabilities and reach an average level of interoperability with NATO member states in terms of communications systems.

The strategic environment of the College could be the *NATO Training and Education Enhanced Program (TEEP)*. All six elements of the program are fully applicable to the purposes of the College. TEEP can also benefit from our efforts because national contribution is essential both for SEEDEFCOL and TEEP.

The consortium of twelve NATO Partnership for Peace nations that work with the ADL Co-Laboratory in Alexandria, USA, could also provide "open source" learning and research management system that is consistent with the specific of SEEDEFCOL.

The initial *organizational environment* could be the *Information Technology Working Group* of the Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes.

SEEDEFCOL concept is fully compliant with the idea of **t**he PfP Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes. The College can co-operate with and benefit from all the Working groups. The Consortium partner and member institutions can also contribute to development of an initial concept and related infrastructure. The efforts of the Consortium to develop learning management system software can be provided to the regional countries at no cost. It will enable each of our educational and research bodies to develop and

distribute databases and ADL courses that are interoperable and reusable across the region.

The *three technological pillars* of the College are:

(a) <u>INTERNET</u>, as standard working environment, and <u>PIMS</u> as provider of access;

(b) Advanced computers as research and learning (multi-media) workstations; and

(c) <u>Local Intranet</u> (LAN) upgraded at the level of ATM advanced communications systems with increased bandwidth and quality of delivery.

PIMS is the perfect communications environment for the College. Established practice and infrastructure with the support of PIMS experts could be organized in order to facilitate the collective efforts of SEE countries.

The College also could attract the attention of distinguish defence universities, institutes and also big companies that produce advanced distributed learning modules and packages, information and communications assets and technologies for distance learning.

Initial Organization

The initial organization of the College could include:

- Interim *Director of the College*, selected by the SEDM ministers of defence;

- Hosting institution that will provide SEEDEFCOL *Secretariat* for mission support and administration, *IT manager* with small staff that will manage the documentation and the website of the College;

- *International Advisory Board* chaired by the Director could consists of directors of member and partner institutions, as well as officials from NATO who manage the TEEP Program;

- *International Board of Experts* that will draft the annual and perspective programmes of the College and will manage their execution.

- *Each member institution* will continue in its individuality, but each could also contribute to the College objectives and through them – to the On-line Defence University, Euro-Atlantic Defence University, *Euro-Atlantic Education Programs* and *Euro-Atlantic Education and Training Network*, as they were presented by <u>Ms. Lisa Bronson</u> (Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for European and NATO Affairs, US) during the Third Annual Conference of the Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes in Tallinn, Estonia, in the year 2000.

Expected Results

The immediate benefit of SEEDEFCOL will be:

- to stimulate the reform in military education and research systems introducing advanced methods of interactive communications;
- to provide needed research data and training capabilities on issues that are experienced by every single countries from the region and our partners;
- to implement new curriculum and syllabuses aimed at compliance with the new military doctrines and the accepted Partnership Goals;
- to improve the methods of research and training and the quality of our academic staff;
- to avoid simultaneous efforts on parallel projects and to increase considerably the effectiveness of resource spending;
- to provide immediate access to good practices and solutions related to interoperability;
- to improved the level of comprehension of studies and training;
- to increase the number of institutions and people that can benefit from the joint efforts;
- to use more effectively the resources provided through the Consortium, PIMS and NATO' TEEP Program;
- to increase significantly the return on investments made in our people and institutions by our partners.

In the long term, we can expect SEEDEFCOL to contribute:

- to strengthen existing and future centres of excellence;
- to raise the level of standardisation in military education;
- to increase the overall level of technology of military education and research institutions;
- to contribute to transparency of security initiatives;
- to contribute to the development of our own expertise in different forms of ADL and enlargement of the regional contribution to NATO and global efforts in research and training.
- to contribute to the changing of the military culture and gradual incorporation of democratic practices and culture of strategic thinking and acting.

Funding

Initial funding and financial support for SEEDEFCOL could be provided by the Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes. After discussion at a SEDM meeting, the funding issue could be raised at Working Table No. 3 of the Stability Pact. The issue could be addressed also to NATO TEEP Programme.

Initial material support could be provided through PIMS programmes.

Example of Immediate Input

Bulgaria can substantially contribute to the development of the curriculum of the SEEDEFCOL with its rapidly growing expertise in the fields of defence resources management, civil-military relations, including transparency of defence budgeting and regional security studies.

Nowadays, "G.S. Rakovski" Defence and Staff College is the leading national institution for higher education and qualification of military officers and civilian defence and security experts, as well as for scientific research on security and defence related issues, including interoperability with NATO.

The major tasks of the College are:

- to educate officers from battalion staff of all three services through a Master of Art programme in five specialties: Command and Control of tactical units of the Army, Air Force and Navy, and also Logistics and CIS, giving them a qualification for assignments as battalion commanders and staff officers in brigade and corps HQs;

- to educate and train senior military and civilian officers from the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces on national security, defence policy and planning, military strategy and campaign and operational planning;

- to organise and conduct a variety of post-graduate courses in specialised English and French Languages, training in NATO staff procedures, tactics and techniques and training for international assignments;

- to conduct scientific and applied research in defence related areas and to facilitate the achievement of technical interoperability;

- to provide a forum for open internal and international discussions on national security, defence policy, civil-military relations and democratic control over the armed forces.

New Academic Units

To fulfil its new tasks, new organisations were created in the "Rakovski" Defence College, supported adequately by infrastructure developments. For the purposes of SEEDEFCOL applicable are those units having the status of *centres of excellence*:

- The former General Staff Faculty was transformed into a *National Security and Defence Faculty*. The Faculty is carrying out senior level courses for civilians and military on *National Security and Defence Policy*.

    To support the curriculum a *National Security Information Centre* is producing electronic and printed materials and manages database with facts and analytical material about related issues.

    A newly establish *Centre for Civil-Military Relations Studies* was designed as Centre of excellence on the issues not only for the defence institution but also for the society.

- The *Interoperability Faculty* is tasked to transfer NATO and member countries' "know-how" in interoperability. This unit is the main tool for achieving the accepted Partnership Goals through education and training.

    In the faculty an *English Language Testing Group* is established to develop and implement tests for evaluation the skills in accordance with STANAG 6001 (more than 1300 people were tested until the spring of 2001, about 900 of them passed the tests successfully). This group is recognized as a Centre of excellence in language testing and certification.

    A College' *CAX Training Centre* is in process of creation. It will be fully equipped for training through simulations for PSO purposes and also to be used as remote site for international NATO-led and PfP CAX.

- The *Defence Advanced Research Institute* is designed to provide scientific support to defence reform and integration policy, to contribute for enhancing interoperability in doctrines and technology and for applying outsourcing and "off-the-shelf" opportunities in science and technology research.

    In the Institute an *international unit* is created and recognized as a *Centre of excellence in defence resource studies for the Pact of Stability for CEE*. In this capacity, the mission of the Centre is to contribute to the transparency in defence planning and to produce and share good practices for effective resource allocation.

    The Institute also includes a *Research and Demonstration Centre* for IT systems and equipment that could be of use for the purposes of the SEEDEFCOL.

The Way Ahead

In the next few years we expect revolutionary changes in security and defence related studies and military education and training. Distance learning, together with modelling and simulations, will change the way armed forces are trained. Increasing global competition, rapid technological advances, demographic changes, and the emergence of a service and knowledge-based economy impel military organisations to train and re-train their force in a new paradigm. Only these academies and colleges that deploy and effectively utilize ADL will have a distinct competitive advantage.

SEEDEFCOL could be the fastest way for the countries in SEE to explore this new frontier and to adopt web-based research and learning on a broad scale. The College could be the driver in the research and training in the coming years.

The first step was made during the Consortium' Annual Conference in Moscow, 2001 with the introduction of the idea by *Dr. Velizar Shalamanov,* Deputy Minister of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria. That presentation is available on the Consortium's website.

The next step is planned during the IT Working Group meeting in Sofia, suggested for 10-12 December 2001. The Bulgarian Ministry of Defence invites all academic and research institutions from South East Europe and other EAPC defence education institutions, interested to cooperate, to join the meeting.

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[1]   SEDM – Southeast European Defence Ministerial.

[2]   EAPC – Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.

[3]   ADL – Advanced Distance Learning.