

The Next Phase in Trans-Atlantic Defence

*Presentation to the Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences, on 12th November 2007 by Dr Stuart E. Johnson**

Your Majesty, Mr. President, Mr. Secretary, I am pleased and honored to be asked to speak to the Royal Academy of Military Science this evening.

In preparing my talk, I faced a particular challenge. It is not only that the members of our Academy are well-informed about the field of military science, but also that our group has a very broad spectrum of interests. For example, I have had very thoughtful conversations on advances in military science with our colleague Erik Rossander. At the same time, Bo Huldt has often pressed me to reflect on the broader issues of defense policy with an accent on the very important issue of trans-Atlantic security relations.

So my presentation will be in three parts.

1. A review of the critical area where we in the Atlantic community have achieved remarkable success: developing dominant conventional military power.

2. A discussion of the serious challenge that faces us: how to develop a similar competence in stabilization and counterinsurgency operations.
3. A prediction that the trans-Atlantic security alliance is on the verge of being re-invigorated and that together we will work constructively to meet this relatively new and unfamiliar security challenge that we are facing.

First let me review trends in conventional military power. This is a success story for our trans-Atlantic defense establishment, especially for our community that practices military science.

Together we recognized, and seized, opportunities presented to our militaries by dramatic advances in technology, especially information technology. Our forces have been able to leverage advances in technology to increase greatly the capabilities they bring to the battlespace in conventional military operations.

I could cite numerous examples. Let

* Also inaugural lecture to department IV



*The speaker at the ceremony professor Stuart E. Johnson to the right and the Minister of Defence Sten Tolgfors
Photo: Cecilia Österberg*

me choose one to illustrate the point: the dramatic increase in the efficacy of air-to-ground strike. In World War II, it took between 1 000 and 2 000 sorties to destroy a fixed target, in this case a span across the Rhine River. By the time of the Vietnam conflict, we had developed more stable platforms and munitions along with instruments that could correct the aim point for wind shear. Still, it took between 20 and 50 sorties to destroy a fixed target. By the time of *Operation Iraqi Freedom* in

2003, one B-2 bomber would, on a single sortie, typically strike up to eight targets successfully.

Precision by itself has proved useful, but when we combine it with other technologies that enable efficient *sensing* of the environment, automated *processing* of the information, and rapid *distribution* of the information, then we have a very powerful military tool, one by which modest sized units can bring formidable military effect to bear on the battlespace.

For example, during *Desert Storm* in 1990, the time between se-

lecting a target to strike and the strike itself typically took a day, or more! A decade later, when we attacked the Taliban forces and their Al Qaeda supporters in Afghanistan, our military commanders utilized a new, flexible operating concept that took advantage of military technology and adapted it to the irregular terrain and the irregular nature of the enemy we faced. Small units of ground forces, many though not all, special operations forces, were inserted directly into critical nodes in

areas that we did not control. These troops, operating covertly, designated key targets, passed their GPS co-ordinates directly and instantaneously into the cockpit of an attack aircraft for precision strike. This shortened the cycle time from identification to strike to less than a minute which meant that mobile targets could be, and were, struck.

This and other examples that I could present illustrate the remarkable progress we have made in the West in military science. These advances have given us a strong advantage in fast-paced major combat operations.

At the same time, we cannot say that we have developed the same competence in stabilization and counter-insurgency operations. This is a daunting challenge that we face. It is an area of intense study and experimentation in the militaries and research institutes of the United States and other Western countries.

This challenge has numerous dimensions, and most of them do *not* lend themselves to purely military solutions. That said, there is one operating concept that we can and should carry over from our success in traditional combat: dominant battlespace knowledge.

A key reason, I would argue *the* key reason, we have been so successful in fast-paced major combat operations is that we have developed and maintained a dominant knowledge of the battlespace. Information gathered from satellites, unmanned aerial vehicles, and from special forces and other troops that have infiltrated the enemy ter-

ritory, *in combination with* the ability to distribute this information widely and instantaneously has given us a substantial advantage over the enemy. It has allowed us to take and maintain the initiative in battle keeping the critical element of surprise on our side.

Unfortunately, when we shift to stabilization and counter-insurgency operations, the information advantage shifts to the insurgents. This is particularly true in urban areas. The insurgents know the language, they know the streets and alleyways, and they typically understand the social structure and mores of the neighborhoods. We have a long way to go to solve this challenge. The only way we will make progress is by bringing together the best talent in our trans-Atlantic community, a community that shares common values that includes stability based on freedom and democracy.

This brings me to the final part of my talk: the prospects as I see them from the US side for vigorous trans-Atlantic cooperation in the security field in the coming years. I am optimistic.

One year from now, we will know who will be president of the United States. We will have a good idea of how he (or she!) intends to pursue defense policy in general and trans-Atlantic security relations in particular. But we already have an indication. Conversations that my colleagues and I have had with the staffs of the leading presidential candidates point to an intent to strengthen ties with our traditional allies on the European continent.

We have not heard a single candidate or policy advisor say, “We don’t need allies.” On the contrary, two distinct directions in security policy are being discussed.

1. Work along with our traditional allies to build the capacity of local security forces. Be prepared to strike as necessary, but *in support of*, not *in place of* local forces. Our new African command is already coordinating plans with the UK and with France to enhance the quality of security forces in Africa.
2. Pull back from extended operations in the Islamic world, regroup with traditional allies and partners, especially NATO allies, and return to a strategy

that seeks to contain instability in this region and intervene only when a clear crisis is emerging, and then in concert with allies.

Both these strategies have an important element in common. They contain a strong element of working with *and sharing the burden with* our traditional European allies and partners.

I for one look forward to the prospect of increased collaboration on this important challenge to our collective security. The challenge is great, but it was precisely for serious new challenges like this that the Academy of Military Science was founded.