



NCI Agency Industry Conference and AFCEA TechNet International

Sharpening NATO's Technological Edge: Adaptive Partnerships and the Innovative Power of Alliance Industry

Ottawa, Canada

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NATO has been able to keep its technological edge over adversaries for 67 years because the innovative capacity of Alliance industry is unparalleled. Today, a broad range of fast-evolving military and non-military security challenges, combined with much faster technology design, have raised the bar on what it takes to maintain resilience against attack: resilience can no longer be static, but rather requires rapid, continuous innovation. At the 2016 Warsaw Summit, Alliance Heads of State and Government reinforced the imperative of supporting innovation through greater collaboration with industry in the Summit Communique, highlighting that “for the Alliance to keep its technological edge, it is of particular importance to support innovation with the aim to identify advanced and emerging technologies, evaluate their applicability in the military domain, and implement them through innovative solutions”.

Today, innovation is more global, more rapid, and more concentrated in the private sector, where more commercial technologies than ever before have military applications. This has led to repeated calls—including at NITEC16 in Estonia—for a shift from government-issued requirements to team-built capabilities, where government and industry teams work together at earlier stages to solve problems and deliver solutions. This approach favours “problem statements” versus “formal requirements.” It also recognizes the importance of accessing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups, which are often at the forefront of technological improvements in C4ISR, but need mechanisms to better connect them to NATO business opportunities.

Bringing together more than 500 high-level defence experts from across NATO, the Allied militaries, industry and academia, NITEC17, organised jointly with AFCEA Europe (the Association for Communications, Electronics, Intelligence and Information Systems Professionals) in Ottawa will be a prime opportunity to build upon the success of NITEC16. While NITEC16 established a clear consensus about the need for partnership and innovation (the “what”), NITEC17 will focus on converting that consensus into action (the “how”).

On Day One of the conference, senior decision makers will discuss key trends in the innovation landscape, how they are re-shaping traditional government-industry collaboration, and the implications for NATO.

Days 2 and 3 will offer a forum to discuss with industry the NCI Agency's business opportunities worth 3 billion EUR in C4ISR, capability priorities in cyber security, air and missile defence as well as advanced software and the latest technological developments in C4ISR. In order to stimulate actionable priorities, simultaneous break-out sessions of smaller groups will consider focused questions—including those that arise from Day One sessions—on the challenges and opportunities of re-fashioning NATO-industry collaboration to speed innovative solutions.

In addition to the AFCEA Technet International exhibition, B2B meetings and the networking opportunities, NITEC17 will continue two well-received initiatives that were launched at NITEC16, the Defence Innovation Challenge and SME Mentoring Programme. Both programs are aimed at accelerating transformational, state-of-the-art technology solutions from small business and academia in support of NATO C4ISR and cyber capabilities.

In parallel, the NCI Agency will launch a Next Generation Innovators programme run in cooperation with industry and academia to stimulate “knowledge for innovation” approach and the types of skills necessary to build next generation information security experts.

