NATO - Russia Cooperative Airspace Initiative

"A breakthrough shared radar picture"

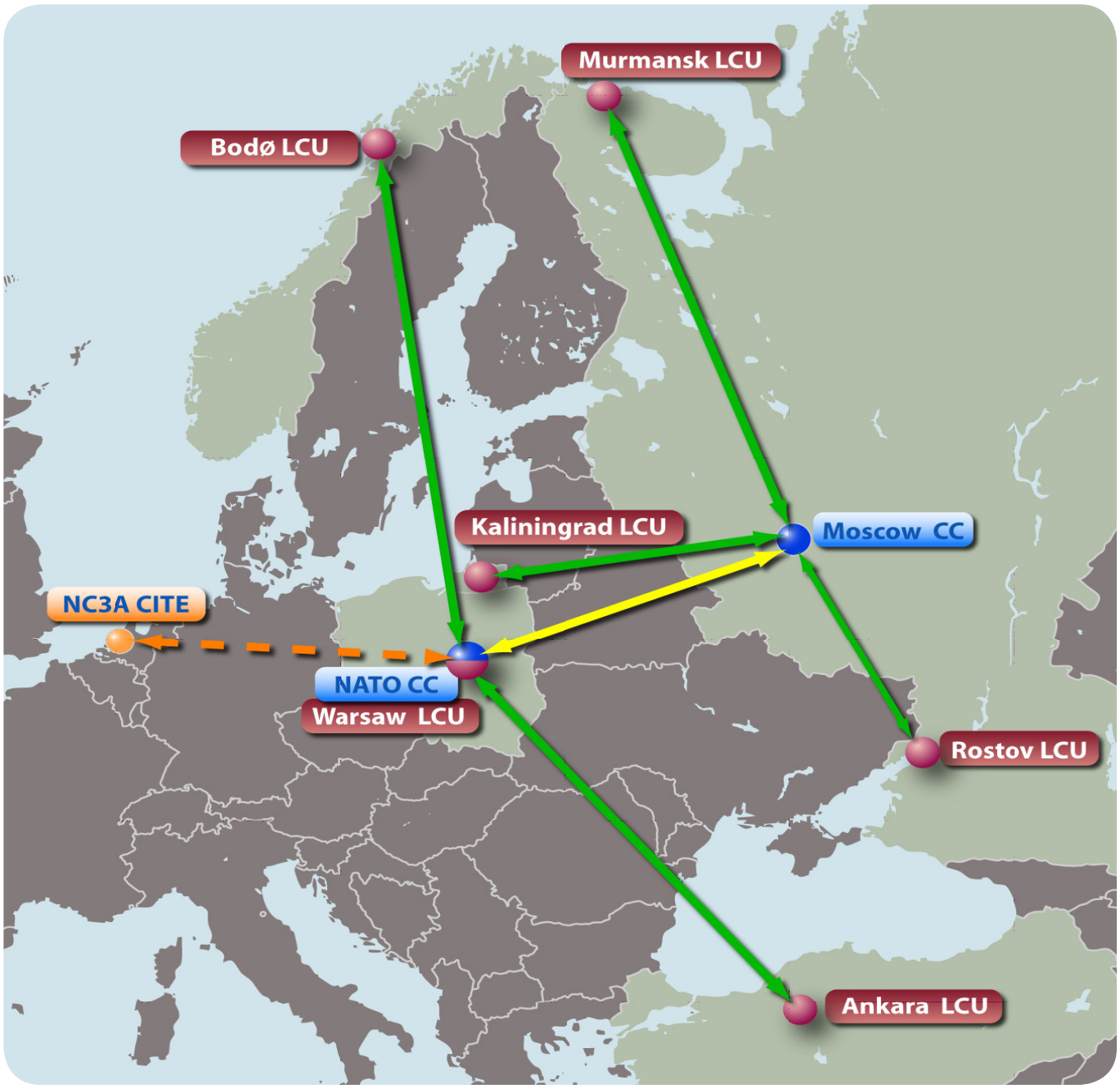
NATO C3 AGENCY

"NATO-Russia cooperation is of strategic importance, as reflected by today's meeting of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) at the level of Heads of State and Government in Lisbon. In light of common security interests, we are determined to build a lasting and inclusive peace, together with Russia, in the Euro-Atlantic Area. We need to share responsibility in facing up to common challenges, jointly identified."- Lisbon Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, 20 November 2010

What is the NATO Russia Council (NRC) Cooperative Airspace Initiative (CAI)?
The CAI is one of the priority areas in the NATO-Russia Council's (NRC) Work Programme.

The CAI focuses on the fight against terrorism and provides the first ever NATO-Russia shared radar picture of air traffic. It is designed for the early notification and coordination of suspicious air activities. If an aircraft starts behaving erratically, the air traffic coordination system offers increased visibility and transparency to rapidly ensure NATO-Russia coordination in the European airspace.

Beyond its practical objectives such as improving air safety and security, the NRC CAI project also significantly contributes to building mutual trust between NATO and Russia. The CAI system will be operational in 2011 and is open for participation by other nations.



CAI Topology

The development of this joint air traffic coordination system is a tangible result of the NATO-Russia Council's work. NRC nations, including Canada, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States, have so far contributed more than Euro 10 million in aggregate to the CAI project.

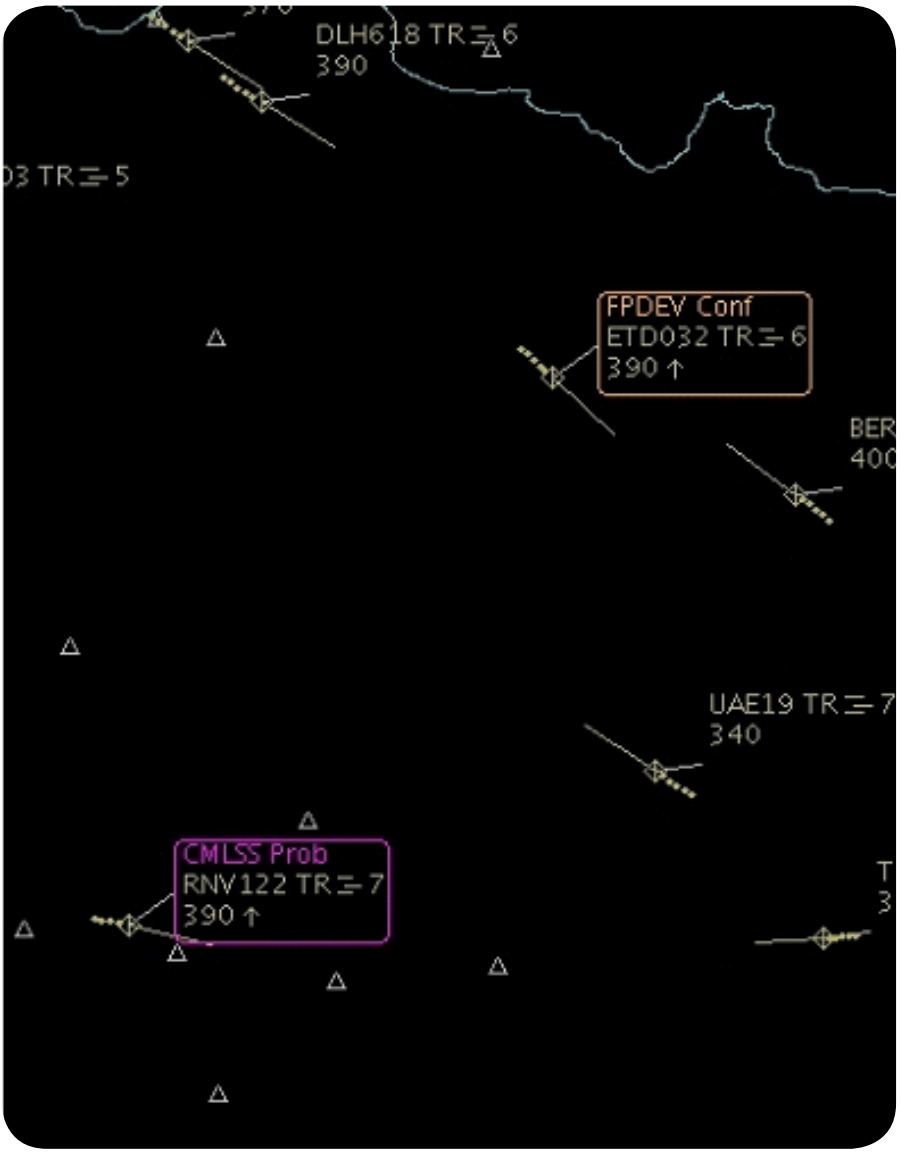
The CAI system has two coordination centres (CCs) – in Warsaw and Moscow – and local coordination units (LCUs) in Kaliningrad, Rostov-on-Don, Murmansk (Russia), Warsaw (Poland), Bodø (Norway), and Ankara (Turkey). In these nations joint exercises are now ongoing.

How was the NRC CAI Project developed?
The NRC CAI programme followed a phased approach: Phase 1 consisted of a feasibility study in which the different options for exchanging air traffic information between NATO and Russia were studied and the most favourable option was chosen. The Phase 2 involved the actual implementation of the CAI Information Exchange System, and was completed in 2009. With that, the CAI achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC). The current Phase 3 consists of a sequence of exercises of increasing complexity, culminating in a joint NATO Russia exercise with live assets, such as fighter aircraft, and an aircraft that will start to behave like it has been hijacked for the purpose of it being used as a weapon.

A video recently created by the NATO HQ public diplomacy division, demonstrating the purpose and usage of the system was posted on You Tube at the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrrXVEVmQIQ

What is NC3A?
The mission of the NATO Consultation, Command and Control Agency (NC3A) is to enable NATO's success through the unbiased provision of comprehensive Consultation, Command, Control, Communications, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities.

NC3A is a NATO agency and shares the legal personality of NATO. Our Charter was approved by the North Atlantic Council, and NC3A operates under a Customer Funding regime. NC3A is part of the NC3O, along with the NATO C3 Board and NATO Communication and Information Systems Services Agency (NCSA).



Screenshot of NATO system display, showing two tracks highlighted in an exercise, one exhibiting flight plan deviation another one loss of communication.

The NC3A exercises a supporting and facilitating role in the establishment and the execution of multinational projects between nations, national and International Organizations and Industries.

What is the NC3A Role in the NRC CAI Project?
The NC3A has led the execution of the Phase 1 feasibility study and the implementation of the NATO part of the system in Phase 2. With significant support from the participating Nations and from EUROCONTROL, the Agency has initiated the specification, design, procurement and has led the joint testing of the system. The software was developed by EUROCONTROL.

In the current NRC CAI Programme phase – the Exercises - NC3A is leading the NATO-Russia Operational Exercises Team (OET), which prepares and conducts the exercises, and creates the scenarios. Five levels of exercise have been defined, in which Level 1 is an entry level and training exercise, and subsequent levels contain more complexity and involve additional players, ending in the Level 5 live exercise. The exercise participants are the national Local Coordination Units and the Moscow and Warsaw Coordination Centres, but also the civil Area Control Centres, national governmental authorities and national and NATO military entities. In 2010 the first two levels of exercise have been completed and the levels 3-5 are planned to be finished by summer 2011.

Moscow Coordination Centre

Once the exercises are successfully completed, the system will be declared fully operational. It is expected that the inauguration of the system Full Operational Capability will be a major event, gathering the NATO Secretary General, senior Officials of the Russian Federation and the NC3A General Manager.

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