

Case study

NATO

# Alliance gets Ethernet agility

For NATO, information and the ability to share it efficiently and securely is crucial to 21st century operations and political decision-making. A leading edge network delivered by a trusted global service provider is essential for that, but the flexibility offered by Ethernet-based technology was sought.

Over a ten-year period BT three times emerged as successful supplier, following full international competitive bidding, for NATO wide area network connectivity. Now for Malcolm Green, who leads the team responsible for delivering technology in support of NATO operations globally, BT has again proved that it is far more than a safe pair of hands.

“The Ethernet network that BT provides is vital to our everyday operations. It’s also the key to our Connected Forces and Smart Defence initiatives, which will shift the emphasis from operational engagement to operational preparedness.”

Malcolm Green, Head of Network Communications Infrastructure Team (CAT9)  
NATO Communications and Information Agency



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## NATO puts a BT Ethernet Connect global wide area network at the heart of its IT transformation

### Challenge

An alliance of 28 member countries, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) safeguards the freedom and security of its members. Headquartered in Brussels, it is committed to peaceful problem resolution but, if diplomatic efforts fail, it has military capability too. Information and the ability to share it across the coalition play a vital role in 21st century operations and political decision-making. A flexible and highly secure network is essential to support this mission.

Over 10 years ago, NATO decided to outsource the transport layer of its network, and BT has been its principal network service provider ever since. During that time four network migrations between different technologies have all been executed without service disruption. The latest technology refresh would see NATO replacing its existing point-to-point leased line backbone with an Ethernet-based network.

Malcolm Green, Head of Network Communications Infrastructure Team (CAT9) at NATO, says: “Having carefully considered all options we again chose BT, following international competitive bidding, for its comprehensive knowledge of our operations. BT understands the risks, knows how we work, and there is strong mutual trust. Above all, the BT proposal was fully compliant with our needs at the best price.”

### Solution

The BT solution is based on Ethernet Connect, an intelligent network solution designed for large organisations that require exclusive control over their IP architecture and want the freedom to evolve their infrastructure in their own way. Also included is BT Ethernet Connect E-Line for virtual connections providing protected bandwidth for mission critical applications between sites.

The network transition began with a successful four-site as a proof of concept deployment of Ethernet Connect. This was followed by a nine-month rollout to connect 60 sites in 28 countries, completed by BT without service disruption. Bandwidth ranges from 10Mbps to 10Gbps dependent on the requirements of individual sites. BT has end-to-end responsibility for connectivity, including last mile services procured through local service providers that have demonstrated their ability to meet exacting service standards.

The BT service includes sourcing, installation and onsite maintenance services for edge routers as well as proactive network monitoring and performance reporting against a comprehensive and well defined suite of Service Level Agreements. A dedicated BT service relationship manager and a contract manager address NATO operational needs on a daily basis.

“The transition was very well managed,” confirms Malcolm Green. “Sure there were a few delays but that’s understandable given the complexities around security, site access, and the fact that many of our military sites are in hard to reach places. But whatever happened, BT always kept us up to date.”

### Value

The new BT Ethernet Connect global network has provided NATO with a faster, more flexible core infrastructure at around five per cent lower cost. It has also created an IT transformation platform. Malcolm Green explains: “Establishing the new BT network is a vital first step towards NATO IT Modernisation; enabling us to move from a decentralised to a centralised model for significant efficiency benefits.”

The fully converged network supports all NATO command and control and political consultation. It enables interconnection of NATO facilities and functions across the 28 member states and provides communication links for political consultation needs at NATO headquarters and their respective capitals. The network carries the full range of multimedia services including voice, data, and video communications, as well as imagery such as video streaming from NATO reconnaissance operations.

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Malcolm Green adds: “With the new BT network we are moving from operating a network of networks to a more federated approach, sharing existing services to avoid duplication and so deliver cost benefit to NATO.”

By outsourcing transport layer services to BT, NATO has avoided the significant capital expenditure bow waves that would be required every few years if it owned

and operated its own transport network. It also provides NATO with far greater flexibility and agility to respond to changes in requirements, such as the new NATO command structure, as well as user demands. This in addition allows it to, for example, upgrade its network more frequently to keep pace with technology trends. Moreover, using a managed service frees NATO finite resources to focus on network security to satisfy its cyber defence requirements.

“Working with BT provides us with access to a wealth of experience and expertise,” says Malcolm Green. Such experience includes that gained by BT from the design and deployment of its own global IP network, and from many large-scale projects of a similar kind conducted for other public and private sector clients. “We find BT very knowledgeable and customer focused,” concludes Malcolm Green, “and the new network’s performing exactly to our expectations.”

### Core services

- BT Ethernet Connect global
- BT Ethernet Connect E-Line
- BT Service Management



#### Offices worldwide

The services described in this publication are subject to availability and may be modified from time to time. Services and equipment are provided subject to the respective British Telecommunications plc standard conditions of contract. Nothing in this publication forms any part of any contract.

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