



SESSION THREE

# HYBRID WARFARE & FUTURE CONFLICT SCENARIOS: PREPARING FOR THE UNKNOWN

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# MEET THE PANEL



**Maj Gen (Ret.)  
Gordon 'Skip' Davis**

*Former Deputy Assistant Secretary-General for Defense Investment, NATO HQ (Moderator)*



**Maj Gen (Ret.)  
Gary Deakin**

*Former Chief Plans & Policy  
NATO Joint Forces Command*



**Brig Gen (Ret.)  
Greg McGlone**

*Former Director General Armoured Fighting Vehicles  
Australian Defence Force*



**Dr Julien Theron**

*Researcher in Hybrid Threats  
European Commission Joint Research Centre*

## PANEL OUTLINE

Today's geopolitical landscape is characterised by a simmering blend of overt and covert hostilities. Gone are the days of clear battle lines. Instead, state and non-state actors blur boundaries, employing cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, sabotage, criminal and guerrilla tactics hand-in-hand with traditional warfare. This intricate web of hybrid warfare renders many existing defence doctrines obsolete, demanding innovative strategies and a profound understanding of these new warfare dimensions. The panel will unravel this complex tapestry, spotlighting the amalgamated tools of modern conflict and the consequent challenges to established defence paradigms.

Participants will be transported into the heart of modern conflict zones, where boundaries between traditional and non-traditional warfare dissolve. They will gain a comprehensive understanding of the tactics, techniques, and procedures that define hybrid warfare. Equipped with knowledge on emerging threats and the strategies to counteract them, attendees will be better positioned to anticipate and address the multifarious challenges posed by this evolving conflict landscape.



# NAVIGATING THE LANDSCAPE OF HYBRID WARFARE: INSIGHTS FROM DEFENCE EXPERTS

In a recent discussion moderated by Maj Gen (Ret.) Gordon 'Skip' Davis of NATO HQ, a panel of esteemed experts provided valuable perspectives on the evolving dynamics of hybrid warfare and the strategies required to effectively respond to its growing challenges.

Hybrid warfare, while not a new concept, continues to evolve, driven by advancements in technology and the adaptability of actors involved. The global strategic competition and the digital age have amplified the tools and tactics used in hybrid warfare, presenting new challenges in understanding, attributing, and countering these tactics. However, responses to hybrid warfare are often hindered by varying levels of capability and vulnerability among targeted entities, including societies, militaries, and political leadership.

Disinformation and propaganda play significant roles in hybrid warfare, underscoring the enduring value of truth in combatting false narratives. Political and military leaders must strike a balance between protecting critical information and exposing malign propaganda used by adversaries to shape global cognition and eventually undermine societal cohesion.

The panel stressed the importance of innovation, adaptation, and collaboration in addressing hybrid warfare threats. Agility and flexibility are crucial in preparing for and responding to hybrid conflicts, requiring the inclusion of non-military actors with specialized knowledge and skills into a full whole-of-society approach of defence. Moreover, multidomain responses to hybrid threats necessitate collaboration between civilian and military specialists, encompassing cyber and space domains.

Furthermore, the panel highlighted the need for comprehensive training and education to foster an open mindset and prepare military and civilian leaders to navigate the complexities of hybrid warfare. Career experiences that promote collaboration with other nations' armed forces, governments, and the private sector are essential for developing a holistic understanding of hybrid threats. International collaboration is also necessary in terms of collective security, which is one of the keys to prevail against hybrid warfare, from intelligence sharing to interoperable capacities.

Effective responses to hybrid warfare require collaboration across a diverse range of actors, including private sector industries, civil society, academia, media, and various government ministries. Inclusivity fosters a shared understanding and vision, empowering stakeholders to innovate and adapt at the speed of relevance.

Building upon these insights, Maj Gen (Ret.) Gary Deakin, Chief Plans & Policy at NATO Joint Forces Command, emphasised the evolving nature of warfare, where information and narratives play decisive roles. He underscored the importance of truth and coherence in maintaining legitimacy and strategic alignment, urging leaders to empower innovation and inclusivity in response to hybrid threats.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Greg McGlone of the Australian Defence Force highlighted the critical role of technology and alliances in navigating the complexities of hybrid warfare. He emphasised the need for training in innovation and lateral thinking, as well as collaboration in developing special skills and sharing technological advancements among allies and partners.

Dr Julien Theron, from the European Commission Joint Research Centre, underlined the need for foresight and anticipation to identify the future tools used by multiple types, collaborative adversaries. Facing a riskier environment he also emphasised the need for technological innovation, sharp and unbiased cognition, political leadership, strategic resolve, as well as reliable and reactive collective security alliances to prevail against adversaries.

As the landscape of warfare continues to evolve, understanding and adapting to the challenges of hybrid warfare remain paramount. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity, defence institutions can effectively navigate the complexities of current and future modern conflict and uphold strategic advantage in an ever-changing security environment.

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