



# Reflections on Five Years at the JAPCC

## *Strategic Change, Alliance Adaptation, and the Enduring Relevance of Joint Air and Space Power*

By Lieutenant General Thorsten Poschwatta,  
Executive Director of the Joint Air Power Competence Centre

In the past five years, the world has changed with a speed and intensity few would have predicted. When I assumed my duties as Executive Director of the Joint Air Power Competence Centre, we were still operating in a strategic environment shaped largely by crisis management, expeditionary operations, and an often-optimistic belief in a stable European security order. That assumption no longer holds. Strategic competition has returned to the forefront, deterrence and

defence have reclaimed their central place in Alliance thinking, and the air and space domains have proven, once again and unequivocally, to be decisive from the very first moments of any conflict.

The return of large-scale war to the Euro-Atlantic area has been the defining shock of this period. Alongside it, the rapid proliferation of long-range precision fires and uncrewed systems, the weaponisation of space

and cyberspace, and an accelerating pace of technological change driven by autonomy, artificial intelligence, and data dominance have collectively reshaped the strategic landscape. At the same time, NATO has grown, strengthened its posture, and renewed its collective commitment to credible deterrence and defence. This dynamic, of increasing challenge and renewed resolve, has fundamentally reshaped the context in which the JAPCC operates.

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For the JAPCC, these developments have not merely increased our workload; they have sharpened our relevance. Our mission to provide independent, forward-looking military advice on Joint Air and Space Power has become more essential than ever. Over the past five years, the Centre has evolved from serving primarily as a catalyst for transformation to acting as a bridge between operational urgency and long-term adaptation. Whether through concept development, analytical studies, doctrinal inputs, or our conferences and publications, the JAPCC has consistently sought to anticipate what the Alliance will need next – not what was needed yesterday.

Crucially, this has been a collective effort. The strength of the JAPCC lies in its multinational team of experts, drawn from many nations, services, and backgrounds, united by intellectual curiosity, professional rigour, and a shared commitment to the Alliance. I have been privileged to work alongside officers and civilians who were willing to challenge assumptions, speak uncomfortable truths, and translate complex problems into actionable insights for decision-makers. Their professionalism and dedication have been the true constant throughout a period of profound change.

As I now retire, I do so with confidence in the future of the Centre and gratitude for the people who make it what it is. The JAPCC is well positioned to continue shaping NATO's thinking on Joint Air and Space Power in an era where speed, integration, and resilience will define success. The challenges ahead are daunting, but they are matched by the talent, experience, and commitment within this organisation.

I extend my sincere thanks to our Sponsoring Nations, our partners across NATO commands and nations, and to all who have engaged with and supported the work of the JAPCC over the past five years. It has been both an honour and a privilege to serve in this role. I leave convinced that the JAPCC will remain not only relevant, but indispensable, as the Alliance continues to adapt to an increasingly contested and complex strategic environment. ●



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Lieutenant General Thorsten Poschwatta is the Commander of the German Air Component Command (ACC), Commander of the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) Udem, and Executive Director of the Joint Air Power Competence Centre in Kalkar, Germany. He is a Weapon Systems Officer of the TORNADO fighter bomber aircraft and held command positions at both, Group and Wing levels. Additionally, he served in various national and

international staff positions in air as well as joint staffs, and in the German Ministry of Defence. These appointments included operational assignments in Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina. At flag officer rank, he was the Deputy Chief of Staff Operations at German Air Force HQ Gatow, the Deputy Commander of the Bundeswehr Joint Operations Command Potsdam, followed by an operational deployment as Chief of Staff HQ Resolute Support in Kabul.