



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER
TRANSFORMATION**

SACT's REMARKS to

Farewell Ceremony

NORFOLK, 13 July 2016

V .04

Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER



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Opening remarks

Ambassador,

Generals, Admirals, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear all,

Good morning.

Prior to bidding farewell to ACT Political Advisor Ambassador Karen B. Stewart, Deputy Chief of Staff Joint Force Training Vice Admiral Javier Gonzales-Huix and Deputy Chief of Staff Military Partnership Directorate Major General Ali Cetinkaya , as well as to Assistant Chief of Staff Joint Education, Training and Exercises Brigadier General Dzintars Roga, and to Assistant Chief of Staff Defence Planning Brigadier General Xavier Watteeuw; and to award staff members with NATO Certificates of Commendation and NATO Meritorious Service Medals, I am very glad to have this opportunity to briefly address you all, before the summer break and before some of you will leave ACT for new commitments.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some thoughts on where we stand right now – definitely, as you know, on the crossroads of transformation for NATO.



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Last week the Warsaw Summit was held at a defining moment for the Alliance, a moment where our security and our values face significant challenges.

The new security environment triggered the Alliance, not only to adapt, but also to deliver! NATO has decided to respond decisively to this more dangerous and unpredictable global environment.

The main theme of the Warsaw Summit was the building of a renewed and robust defence and deterrence posture and the projection of stability across NATO's borders. Decisions have been taken to expand our efforts to reinforce our protection against a full range of threats thus consolidate the Alliance's centre of gravity, its cohesion and unity.

A significant number of post Summit tasks will be assigned to us as well as to the two other NATO military authorities, and I'm confident that we will be able to execute these tasks in a timely and coherent way – all these tasks must be interwoven to be part of a longer term adaptation of the Alliance.

A fundamental factor of our responsiveness will rely on the Alliance adopting the right posture, a posture based on conventional, nuclear and missile defence forces, that is credible at both the political and military levels – with a deterrent effect as well as other Military Strategic Effects.



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There is no contradiction between a strong deterrence and political dialogue, and this is where Transformation has a critical role to play. In Warsaw, the posture the Alliance has decided to adopt is comprehensive and expands to hybrid warfare, relations with EU, resilience, cyber, and many other areas that form the basis of our adaptation.

We, ACT, are all about delivering the outcomes of the key elements of this posture (= the right forces with the right readiness), now but more importantly also in the future.

In the past months, we have worked hard on the 6 Focus Areas that will form the lenses through which we need to develop in an interrelated way, the requirements we will need for NATO's future military capabilities.

In the weeks to come we will produce a Food for Thought paper that will start with the trends (SFA) and the key deductions & military implications (FFAO), and, of course, the Warsaw Summit deliverables, to lay out a vision 15 years out on where the Alliance needs to go.

We will use the Campaign Plan we are working on and a new Battle Rhythm to develop an engagement plan and to deliver the necessary outcomes. This will start, in the short term with an action plan that will link our strands of work in a coherent set of key deliverables.

We will go much deeper into this at our next All Hands in September.



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Now, let me thank you all for the huge amount of work and the tremendous effort that you have put into making ACT count – as a team!

However, like in any real team, it is always difficult to see members of the team depart, so I wish all of you that will rotate-out this summer, as well as your families all the best and a safe and smooth transit to your respective destinations!

Remember, you will always be part of the “ACT-family” and will thus continue to be the “ambassadors” for ACT in your future assignments.

Nobody else in NATO does what we do here in ACT, our task is unique, and it is important that you know that your commitment, your adaptation, your initiative and flexibility are appreciated, externally as well as internally. In a few moments, some of you will receive a medal or a commendation letter as a token of this appreciation for the splendid work you did.

As this is the last opportunity before the summer leave, Agnes and I also want to wish you, and all your families, a well-deserved vacation.

I hope you will find time to recharge your batteries with your families and friends during the summer break.



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Thank you once again for the hard work this first half of the year! I look forward to seeing you all again in September for what promises to be a fascinating start for the delivery of our vision!

Farewell remarks to

➔ Deputy Chief of Staff Joint Force Training Vice Admiral Javier
Gonzales-Huix

Admiral, dear Javier,

As I said a few moments ago, it is always difficult to say farewell to a member of a team. You arrived in ACT on 26th May 2013, which will most probably make of you the longest serving Flag Officer in our headquarters.

However, “*El logro no se mide por la duración del esfuerzo sino por su intensidad* “ (we do not only measure accomplishment in duration, but foremost in intensity).

In your case it was a combination of both.

Having served on three previous posts within NATO, this was your fourth assignment, and undoubtedly the one that was the most challenging.

While your predecessor had primarily focussed on designing new processes (Global Programming, Connected Forces Initiative and Exercise Programming) and updated policies for Education, Training and

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Exercises within NATO, you had to make these work and take over responsibilities that had been assigned to ACO for decades. This required determination and tact, and most importantly flexibility and availability.

A robust exercise programme is a clear and visible demonstration of the Alliance's ability to deliver strategic effects in all kinds of environments, but also a demonstration of force that assures NATO maintaining a high state of readiness, interoperable and capable across a full mission spectrum: it serves as the cornerstone of the Alliance's credible deterrence. You were also intensely involved with the RAP – expanding Collective Training and Exercises externally but also internally (within your own Directorate), multiplying NATO sponsored exercises and also increasing modelling and simulation as “best practices” to optimize the desired training objectives and to include new technologies.

To make this happen you did not hesitate to engage actively and permanently with all stakeholders across NATO. You crossed the Atlantic more than seventy times. You multiplied briefings to the MC and to the NAC, which was necessary not only to give visibility but also to demonstrate accountability. Trident Juncture 2015 was undoubtedly a culminating point in your assignment, but you kept the momentum in the support to the e NRF 2016 (for which Spain offers the VJTF Spearhead Battalion).

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As an experienced Naval officer and a Submariner long and regular absences from home were not strange to you. But you had a strong home base here in Norfolk, where you were able to re-group all the family, with your two sons finishing college at ODU and Wesleyan, and with your daughter who is married to an US Airman now assigned in Langley AFB. From here, you will be temporarily posted as a Special Advisor to the Spanish CHOD, awaiting your new assignment.

There's no doubt that you will demonstrate the same qualities you did here in ACT, in any future assignment. Let me thank you, and wish you and your family all the best for the future. Remember that you will also always be part of the ACT family!!

➔ Deputy Chief of Staff Military Partnership Directorate Major
General Ali Cetinkaya

General, dear Ali,

To say farewell to a member of the team who was permanently an ambassador for ACT in ACO is especially difficult, because I know you will have served with two SACTs and two SACEURs. Leading a Bi-SC Directorate is extremely challenging, but your leadership and your tactful determination have made you extremely successful in the accomplishment of your tasks.



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With an impressive operational background as a fighter pilot, (you were Chief of Air Operations at JFC Naples, and flew combat missions over Bosnia and Kosovo) and having served in previous NATO assignments, you had the natural skills to overcome the obstacles and to tackle the challenges that come with the immense task to create and reinforce partnerships.

To safeguard our security at home, we must also project stability beyond our borders. Defence and Related Security Capacity Building was a Wales Summit task that saw the creation of a DCB (Defence Capacity Building) military hub within your directorate, shortly after you arrived in 2014.

At the Summit in Warsaw decisions were taken to expand our efforts to project stability beyond our borders that will be made possible building on the efforts that you have already started with the creation of the military DCB hub.

Strengthening Military Cooperation with the Mediterranean Dialogue, was a recurring task from the MC to increase exercise participation, and your directorate played a key role in coordinating that effort across both SCs.

You also co-chaired two COTC Partner Round Tables, with DSACT, and hosted two Bi-SC Military Partnerships Coordination Workshops—one in Budva, Montenegro (2015) and one in Tbilisi, Georgia (2016).



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There's no doubt about this, you were the spearhead of several major partnership tasks that reflected a significant expansion of NATO's partnership programme, and resulted in a substantial growth in many areas, from individual training and information sharing to partner operational evaluations and exercise participation.

Reflecting this growth, during your assignment, MPD's budget execution rate jumped from 89 per cent to more than 95 per cent, of which close to 70 per cent was spent on ACT-generated partnership activities.

The Individually Tailored Roadmaps Capstone Concept was an MC task to refine and optimize Bi-SC partnership processes, under which MPD took up the task to oversee the first pilot projects.

Simultaneously you increased the number of Partner National Military Representatives within the offices of your directorate.

Let me also use this opportunity to highlight the commitment of your nation, Turkey, to the Alliance. Located at the crossroads between the Eastern and the Southern flanks, Turkey remains an ally that provides a prominent contribution to our transatlantic community.

Therefore Ali, I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your significant contribution and the huge efforts you have made to accomplish



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your tasks as the spearhead of the new dimension of partnerships NATO will implement with a long term vision.

You will always be a member of our ACT family, and I wish you and your family all the best for the future!

➔ Assistant Chief of Staff Joint Education, Training and Exercises,
Brigadier General Dzintars Roga

General, dear Dzintars,

You arrived in ACT about 10 weeks after your DCOS, Vice Admiral Gonzales-Huix. You quickly formed a 2 man's team with DCOS JFT, but moreover you formed a team with your 3 staff branches and quickly got familiar with the rest of the ACT staff.

Throughout your career as an Army officer, you have assumed command positions from platoon leader to brigade commander. You also served in various staff positions, including 2 years at the Regional Headquarters Allied Forces Northern Europe.

Previous to your assignment to ACT, and for a short period following the reorganization of the Latvian Armed Forces, you assumed the acting command of the Latvian Land forces.

Your career was a demonstration of exceptional leadership qualities, combined with the "right stuff" it takes to be an outstanding military

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leader – and those were precisely the skills you employed to make your mission here a success.

You formed a pair with your DCOS, you shared about 30 per cent of the required travel for your directorate, and you assumed the DCOS's responsibilities during his many duty absences. On a more personal note, and I know you can appreciate good humour, a lot of DCOS/ACOS coordination must have taken place at the “smoker's corner” too...

Your Branch Heads and staff will surely remember you as a very pragmatic general officer, who's main concern was always the wellbeing and care for his personnel. You primarily focussed on exercises, their execution on the field, the planning and the aim contributing to better forces, well trained, well equipped and interoperable; and I'm sure that on many occasions you tried to put yourself in the shoes of that company or battalion commander, airman or sailor, asking yourself – did he or she feel satisfied with that training or exercise? Did we do our job right?

I can assure you that you did, and want to thank you for the tremendous work and effort you did to make it happen!

In a short while from now you will leave ACT, but you will not be very far, as you will take up your next assignment as Defence Attaché here in



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Washington DC. I wish you all the best, and you will always be part of the ACT family!

➔ Assistant Chief of Staff Defence Planning, Brigadier General Xavier Watteeuw

General, dear Xavier,

Today we also say farewell to you, and as I speak you're now less than 10 days away from handing over the Defence Planning division to your successor Air Commodore Reefman, who – by the way - already joined the staff a couple of months ago as special advisor to the Chief of Staff.

In December 2013 you flew in to Norfolk straight from Buenos Aires, where you had been posted for three and a half years as Defence Attaché.

Rich with both military and diplomatic skills, multi-lingual and ready for a fresh start, you immediately plunged into Defence Planning at a point where there were more questions than answers on how to handle the enhancement of the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) and at the same time prepare for the key deliverables prior to the end of your tour, coinciding with the 2nd iteration of the new process.

You quickly understood the importance of teamwork and the necessity to share the work with all stakeholders, here in ACT, with ACO in Mons and IMS and IS in Brussels, as well as with the nations through various updates to the Military Committee (MC) and the Defence Planning and



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Policy Committee (DPPC). You roughly flew 300 thousand miles up and down to Europe, and never missed an opportunity to closely coordinate with your DACOS and his staff in Mons, to link up with the SMEs and to deep dive into the products.

While the first part of your tour was mainly focussed on enhancing the NDPP reaching a wide consensus, and socializing the changes with the Defence Planning stakeholders and the nations, the second part was marked by a stretched out start of the new cycle, triggered by the postponed publication of the Political Guidance in 2015, and leading to a high pace run to the timely delivery of the Minimum Capabilities Requirements 2016. However, you rightfully anticipated the parallel work and skilfully managed to deliver high quality products on time, rather than letting the process take over and lose the initiative for ACT input.

After six years abroad you will return to Belgium by the end of this month, and get ready for your next assignment, that should be decided in the next couple of days.

Let me thank you for the tremendous work you did, I'm sure you will somehow remain a "Defence Planner", wherever your next post will take you and remember you will also always remain a member of our ACT family!



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→ ACT Political Advisor Ambassador Karen B. Stewart

Ambassador, dear Karen,

You ably served as the Political Advisor to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (ACT) and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from September 2013 to July 2016 having previously served as U.S. Ambassador to the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Your incomparable ability to communicate cogent, relevant, and insightful critiques for NATO was invaluable to realize Allied Command Transformation goals and objectives for its 1050+ military and civilian personnel from the 28 Allied nations.

In doing so, you embraced the unique opportunity to support a non-American allied commander with political and policy analysis as well as keep the VCJS and Joint Staff apprised of SACT's activities and policies relevant to U.S. interests.

You significantly promoted tailored partnerships to strengthen partner nations' stability in regions under threat from aggressive state and non-state actors, and enhanced ACT's strategic communications representing the command at the Strategic Military Partnership Conference, the NATO Transformation Seminar for the Alliance's Ambassadors and military representatives, the Transatlantic Forum for think tanks as well as serving

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as the lead for over one hundred visits of foreign government delegations to ACT headquarters.

This was instrumental in advancing an innovation framework for the Alliance to maintain interoperability and transparency. You fully supported the NATO innovation strategy to encourage a European program to complement the U.S. Defence Initiative.

On a more personal note I admired your total commitment and your uninterrupted availability to accompany me on my many travels and engagements, even after the departure of your MA and without waiting for a new one to arrive, you carried on with your travels, carrying your luggage all by yourself rushing from one terminal to another without even blinking an eye, as if for you this was the most normal thing to do.

Thank you, you were an outstanding support to me!

Your excellence in performing your duties, epitomizes both your diplomatic and military professionalism as you depart NATO having been confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to the Marshall Islands.