

Change of Command of CSM Mark Wicks

02nd of July 2014

I am very pleased to welcome, **Congressman Robert Scott**, who is well-known for being a strong supporter of the United States troops and also for his commitment to veterans. He will be our guest of honour at our flag raising ceremony today.

I am also very pleased to welcome Lt Gen. (Retired) Mick Kicklighter, Director Vietnam War Commemoration, Office of the Secretary of Defence, and our close friends, Mr. Mal Branch, Captain of the US Navy Retired, immediate former Chairman Board of the Directors of the Norfolk NATO Festival, and Mr Cameron Ingram, representing the Navy League of Hampton Roads.

Your presence today, is not only a sign of your permanent support to ACT, but also a clear testimony to our shared values; there is indeed an enduring bond between the men and women who wear the uniform; those who have gone before them, those who are taking care of active duty military personnel and their family.

This ceremony provides a wonderful opportunity to bid farewell to one of the most prominent members of ACT's family and to a good friend to all of us as well; Command Sergeant Major Mark Wicks. For this very special occasion we have the pleasure of welcoming among many Command Senior enlisted leaders, Sergeant Major Bryan Battaglia, Senior enlisted advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air force James Cody, and Command Chief Master Sergeant Richard Small, NATO Allied Command Operations, Command Senior enlisted leader.

Gentlemen, your attendance is a great tribute to Command Sergeant Major Wick's and ACT's enlisted community.

Thank you all for being with us.

General George Washington once stated that "*Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success and esteem to all*".

Command Sergeant Major Mark Wicks has been outstanding in providing this Command with discipline, success and esteem inside and outside ACT.

Mark, this surely stems from your inherent features of courage, ethos and values, founded on the four principles of the Royal Marines Commando Spirit; courage, determination, unselfishness and cheerfulness in the face of adversity, all supported by your huge experience gained, in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Your experience, your charisma and your genuine interest and care for others have been instrumental in assisting me in all matters pertinent to ACT's Non-Commissioned Officers and also in inspiring and developing more responsible and effective leadership at all levels.

I would stress as well that you have promoted assiduously, the development and training of your peers, seeking to raise the aspirations of ACT's personnel by transforming their sense of purpose and values.

And this is of crucial importance, as the role of Non-Commissioned Officers has significantly evolved in our Armed Forces, towards more responsibilities. They are not only "reliable leaders of small units". They are the backbone of the preparation of personnel; they handle modern and complex equipment, they maintain high standards of performance for personnel and materiel, and they are very valuable advisers to commanders and staff.

Mark, we owe you a lot for having contributed to the real improvement of the professional development of NCOs throughout the Alliance, for having held ACT's flag high, as a senior mentor and International Fellow for the US Keystone Course, and across the whole Alliance at the NATO School Oberammergau and the George Marshall Centre.

We congratulate you for having been made a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire within the Military Division; this award comes at the end of a long and exceptional career in which you have risen to the pinnacle of your Service in dedicating yourself to the enlisted community.

You truly deserve to be described as an "*inspiring leader*" as I can assure you that you have been widely respected for your judgement, for seeing things as they are, and for speaking with the courage of your convictions.

Mark, the Royal Marines, the United Kingdom can be very proud of you, of your unwavering commitment, of your achievement through 32 years of good and loyal service.

Hearing about where you will be retiring, in Exmouth, Devon, and knowing that this place is renowned as a destination to recover health, you may have quite a few visitors dropping by. But my advice to them would be that before paying a visit to a former Great Britain national team member in Dragon boat racing, they should be well trained and fit for purpose!

Mark and Eileen; Allied Command Transformation is very much indebted to you. Be sure that you will always be welcome in ACT, in Norfolk. Thank you, again for all you have accomplished. We all warmly wish you the very best for your next live in the UK; fair winds and following seas!

As SACT's Command Sergeant Major, Mark Wicks placed the bar very high and we are very fortunate to welcome Chief Master Sergeant Jack Johnson, US Air Force to take up this ambitious challenge.

Chief Johnson, Jack is very well prepared to assume his new responsibilities at my side. He has accumulated an impressive experience since he entered the United States Air Force in 1984 as an intelligence superintendent and First Sergeant. He has had a wide range of assignments in the United States, Italy, Japan, Germany and Turkey, prior to serving at the Pentagon, as Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Secretary of the Air Force.

In particular, Chief Johnson was the first Air Force Global Strike Command's Command Chief Master Sergeant, and was also the Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the U.S. Africa Command. Jack, welcome to you and your family to ACT, or I should say, welcome back home to the Hampton Roads Community and good luck!