



**SACT's remarks at the  
ACT 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Flag Raising Ceremony  
Norfolk, 13 June 2018**

**As delivered**

**Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER**

Mayor Alexander,  
Admirals, Generals, Air Marshal,  
Distinguished guests,  
My fellow ACT teammates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you to celebrate Allied Command Transformation's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I would like to start by welcoming our guests and express my sincere gratitude to Mayor Alexander, along with the civilian and military authorities that honour us with their presence today.

It is indeed a very special day for ACT and for its people, who represent the finest of our 29 nations and many partners. I would like to congratulate those who were just rewarded with a medal or a commendation, but also thank the entire staff – the entire “ACT team” - for their hard work, their commitment and their tenacity in making our mission a success.



## NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

### SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER TRANSFORMATION

The Washington Treaty of 1949 states in its preamble that the ultimate objective of the Alliance is: *“to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of our peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.”* This is our mission, in the service of our nations and of our people.

For ACT, this mission started 15 years ago, but the roots of our presence here in Norfolk, on American soil, go much further back in time.

Last year, we commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the United States entering World War One in 1917. We also celebrated the centennial of the Norfolk Naval Base, which was established primarily to send and protect troops and supply convoys across the Atlantic.

Later, during the Second World War, the Norfolk Naval Base was called upon again to play a similar role.

So, when NATO was created, at the beginning of the Cold War, it made perfect sense to establish Allied Command Atlantic here, on the Norfolk Naval Base, in 1953, with the same mission: to defend and safeguard the passage across the Atlantic Ocean.

Allied Command Atlantic became Allied Command Transformation in 2003. But the necessity to secure sea lines of communications remains, and a new Joint Force Command will soon be established here, and entrusted with this important mission.

These changes, among others, are part of NATO’s continuous adaptation efforts. The decisions that were taken at last week’s Defence Ministers meeting in Brussels, are the result of eight months of very hard work,



**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER TRANSFORMATION**

accomplished “shoulder to shoulder” with our colleagues in Allied Command Operations in Mons, to develop a structure fit for purpose.

In this adapted structure, ACT’s focus is on Warfare Development. It is a complex task, because today, warfare can mean anything from crisis response to high intensity operations, from projecting stability to preparing for war.

It is also a long-lasting vocation for ACT, as Warfare Development is the actions we take to adapt NATO’s military posture to a rapidly changing security environment to face any challenge and defeat any opponent, now and in the foreseeable future.

In this endeavour, innovation will drive our work.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, the same month we celebrate our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary we launched trial structures to start the adaptation of our headquarters. This adaptation will follow a very detailed process but will require flexibility, persistence, commitment, and above all, real teamwork.

Every one of us has an important role to play, because we must continue to deliver what NATO expects from us while we change our organization.

After 15 years of hard work we have reached a moment in our history when the adaptation allows to comfort ACT in its transformational role at the forefront of innovation for the Alliance.



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But like all military organizations we are once again faced with a significant turnover of personnel over the summer.

Many of us – myself included – will leave our team over the coming weeks or months, too many to name them all. As you are preparing to hand over to your respective successors in the upcoming weeks, it is important to recognize that ACT is composed of highly proficient military and civilian personnel – “our nation’s best strategic thinkers”, and I want to express my deepest thanks to all of you for your relentless dedication and selfless service.

We should all be proud of what we have accomplished as the Alliance goes through a historic shift.

As NATO approaches its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, ACT will continue to light the way ahead for our Alliance, and improve today, shape tomorrow, and bridge the two, as it is reflected on our special 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary coin.

For many years we have been privileged to live in a vibrant local community that has given us the warmest hospitality.

Our 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is the beginning of a new journey that will reinforce NATO’s presence in Norfolk. Many Civilians, Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Enlisted personnel will continue to have the opportunity, in the future, to enjoy this magnificent region and serve in Allied Command



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Transformation to ensure our Alliance has the posture and the tools it needs to fulfil all its tasks.

I am confident that all future ACT's staff members will continue to serve with honour and purpose and will preserve the same spirit that inspired our predecessors, here in "NATO's Home in America".

Long live Allied Command Transformation!