



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER TRANSFORMATION

**SACT's remarks at the
Change of Command Ceremony
Norfolk, 11 Sep 2018**

As delivered

Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER

Admirals, Generals,

Fellow ACT teammates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today is a special day for Allied Command Transformation and considering the exceptional circumstances, I'm honoured and delighted to be able to speak and share a few thoughts with you.

When you really think of it, the weather impacts our decisions every single day, and perhaps surprisingly, it still is one of the factors that even the most successful planners cannot really foresee with certainty. We have no better proof than today. Like Mark Twain wisely said: "Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get".

I would like to start by specifically acknowledging all the stakeholders who planned to attend if the conditions had been feasible: NATO Secretary General Jens STOLTENBERG, US Secretary of Defence James MATTIS,

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French Minister of Defence Florence PARLY, NATO Ambassadors, Mayor of Norfolk Kenny Alexander, NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose GOTTEMOELLER, the Chiefs of Defence of Norway, Poland and Georgia, the Chairman of the Military Committee Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart PEACH, and members of the Military Committee, Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Mike SCAPARROTTI, and the US Fleet Forces Commander Admiral Christopher GRADY.

We have been honoured by their commitment to attend the Change of Command, and I see it as a sign of their regard for Allied Command Transformation and the work achieved by all ACT staff members present here today.

The complexity of our 21st century strategic security environment is characterized by an unprecedented range of challenges occurring at a rapid rate of change. The Strategic Foresight Analysis describes the environmental and climate change as one of the 20 future trends, and today is a clear demonstration of how it can impact our daily activities. The adaptation to this environment requires new principles. I would like to share some of them with you.

- First, no nation or organization can face alone the challenges of the 21st century. This simple fact makes our Alliance more relevant than ever. Partnerships of all kind are crucial, not an option but a necessity, and I stress the necessity to work with all our partner nations, Centres of Excellence, think tanks, industries and academia, for being here today. Our success will rely on our capacity to build a relevant ecosystem that extends beyond our traditional defence walls.



- Second, the complexity of our environment requires global strategic awareness and the ability to identify and anticipate future trends and their military and security implications for the Alliance.

That is what the Strategic Foresight Analysis and the Framework for Future Alliance Operations are all about. I want to point to their origin. One of my illustrious predecessors, US Secretary of Defense, James MATTIS, was the first to recognize that we must look to the future in a different way, and his 'Multiple Futures Project' already pointed to the hybrid crises we know today.

- Third, responsiveness is vital for dealing with the complexity of our strategic security environment. It featured prominently during the Wales Summit, led to many of the decisions taken in Warsaw, and was reinforced by the Brussels Summit communiqué. Responsiveness must be expressed across all components that support the decision-making process and the Alliance's military posture, from Command and Control, to improved Logistics and Sustainability, a new comprehensive approach to Partnerships, a more reactive and effect based Capability Development, the enhancement of our Human Capital and the permanent search for realistic exercise scenarios; all areas driving ACT's outputs.

- Fourth, whether inside or outside the defence community, the organizations that thrive in a complex and rapidly changing environment are the ones that acknowledge the necessity to simultaneously "operate and adapt. This principle guided the reorganization of both strategic commands, whereby ACO reinforces its role of "Warfighting Command" and ACT focuses on its role of "Warfare Development Command".



This work would not have been possible without the support of the former and current Chairman of the Military Committee, General Petr PAVEL and Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart PEACH, but let me stress the role of SACEUR, General Mike SCAPARROTTI, whose leadership and friendship was crucial in directing the close collaboration of staff members of our two strategic commands.

Working “shoulder to shoulder” made the work of Allied Command Operations and Allied Command Transformation so much more reactive and stronger, with a clear distribution of the roles, responsibilities and authorities between the two strategic commands reinforcing the “Operate and Adapt” principle.

We must extend this close coordination to the Agencies and other NATO bodies, as illustrated by the very recent Terms of Reference for the Capability Management Authorities in the context of the Capability Management Function, co-signed for the first time by SACEUR, the General Managers of NCIA and NSP A and myself.

- Fifth, the rapid pace of technological evolutions can change the nature of future warfare as much as it has changed our lives. Within this “technological race” it is equally important to understand the threats and capture the opportunities that these “disruptive technologies” present. The integration of innovative solutions and their experimentation will continue to drive ACT’s work, and by sharing the many initiatives developed by our Nations we can anticipate the interoperability challenges that will arise in the future. The recent roadmap we have drafted identifies lines of effort for the integration of emerging and disruptive technologies, including data



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science and artificial intelligence, in support of the improvement of decision-making, capability development, lessons learned and enabling SACEUR's Area of Responsibility.

I am grateful for the constant willingness of the Secretary General, the North Atlantic Council Ambassadors, and the members of the Military Committee, to welcome the new, occasionally disruptive, ideas we have presented over these three past years.

I also want to thank the International Staff, and specifically the ASGs, as well as the International Military Staff for their openness and teamwork.

Finally, I want to address my special thanks to all staff members, officers, non-commissioned officers, enlisted personnel and civilians who work in ACT, for the excellence of your work, your relentless dedication and exemplary flexibility – as demonstrated again today. It is this spirit that makes us “improve today, shape tomorrow and bridge the two”, our famous motto that will continue to guide ACT's work.

I am proud to have led such a community of brilliant military and civilian people. I am proud of what we have achieved together. I am proud to have worked in the United States of America, leading Allied Command Transformation, a cornerstone of the transatlantic bond and a strong symbol of our transatlantic friendship, and I would like to address my warmest thanks to the US civilian and military authorities for their constant support.

The ACT staff and their families represent thirty-five allied and partner nations, and all enjoy the warm hospitality of the local Hampton Road



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communities. I specifically want to express my sincere gratitude to two great Norfolk Mayors, Paul FRAIM and Kenny ALEXANDER and their teams. Despite their very busy schedules, they never missed a chance to support the NATO community, contributing to our thriving relationship, here in “NATO’s home in North America”.

I am of course also proud and delighted with the many friendships Agnès and I have made in this country.

I know General André LANATA very well. Throughout his brilliant career he has demonstrated the qualities needed to develop all aspects of Warfare Development.

André and Christine, I wish you both a wonderful stay here in Norfolk, despite the occasional hurricanes, and I am convinced you will enjoy the region and its people as much as Agnès and I did.

Continue to work as “One NATO”, to support the brave men and women deployed in the many theatres of operations. They count on us to have the right capabilities on the right time and to support any future mission.

“One NATO” built on common values as expressed in the preamble of the North Atlantic Treaty: a shared desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments, and a shared belief in the values of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law.

This is our mission, and ACT is part of this “One Team”, in the service of a common destiny and a common purpose for our Nations and our people, to continue to strive for peace and stability in the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area.

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I will miss you all, you are a great team, and I wish you all the best for the future.

Thank you for your attention.