



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER
TRANSFORMATION**

**SACT's Remarks at
the Norfolk NATO Festival 2019 Flag Raising Ceremony**

**Norfolk, Scope Plaza,
25th April 2019**

As delivered

Général d'armée aérienne André Lanata



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Mr. Kenneth Cooper Alexander, Mayor of the City of Norfolk.

Dear Kenneth,

Congresswoman Elaine Luria. Dear Elaine,

Congressman Robert Scott,

Mr. Simon Scott, Chairman of Norfolk NATO Festival,

Admiral Grady. Dear Christopher,

General Lori Robinson,

Admirals, generals,

Chief of Police Larry Boone,

Outstanding NATO members of the year,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Mayor Alexander, I thank you again for your exceptional support to us from 29 nations, from Europe and North America, who serve in uniform and to our families.



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Thank you also for your cooperation in organizing activities, which make ties between the city of Norfolk and NATO Allied Command Transformation so strong over many years.

I also want to thank the Norfolk NATO Festival Committee, civic leaders, and National Liaison Representatives in ACT for their hard work in the preparation of this year's Norfolk NATO Festival.

This April, Norfolk NATO Festival takes place in a year in which we mark the Alliance's seventieth anniversary. These successful 70 years are proof of NATO's relevance and its commitment to protect our freedom and peace.

Today, we face unprecedented challenges, challenges no one nation can face alone. In such an increasingly unpredictable and volatile world, having friends and allies is essential.



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NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, said in his Address to the United States Congress, in Washington D.C., three weeks ago, that, in this challenging world, "it's good to have friends". It is “good for Europe, and it is good for America”.

This is why we realize, every day, that the need to maintain and further develop our Alliance only increases. We need to prevent any conflict and we need to preserve the peace.

This colourful display of NATO Member Nation flags and uniforms in this military presentation representing all 29 NATO Member Nations is a symbol of our diversity, inclusiveness and, most important of all, our cohesion.

We live this cohesion through our commitment and mutual respect, through our solidarity and our unity.

This military presentation constitutes also the symbolic “bridge” across the Atlantic Ocean, joining North America and Europe in a common destiny, and giving them a common purpose.



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Recognising the flags of our 29 nations illustrates our commitment to defend together the values upon which the Alliance is built: freedom, tolerance, democracy, and rule of law.

In front of these flags today, I could not evoke the commitment of our military without having a thought for those who have sacrificed themselves in all theatres of operations, in the name of solidarity among our countries, in the name of our Alliance.

I would like to thank all the men and women from our nations who contributed to our peace. Particularly those who shed their blood, and risk their health and lives for our freedom, for your freedom and the freedom of your families, for your prosperity.

This year's Festival theme is "A Salute to the Women of NATO". It symbolizes our great appreciation to the role and contribution of women, both in our armed forces and in our military families.

This appreciation should resonate with everyone.

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That is why we made this topic the centrepiece of all of the Festival's activities and events. From the "Innovation thru inclusion" conference, organized some weeks ago here in Norfolk, co-presented by ACT and Norfolk NATO Festival, to the Virginia International Tattoo.

I am particularly honoured today by the presence of congresswoman Elaine Luria and General Lori Robinson. Thank you.

I am also particularly proud that, this year, the ACT Outstanding NATO Civilian of the year, and the ACT Outstanding Junior member of the year, are women. Innovation and inclusion are reality in Allied Command Transformation!

Chief Petty Officer Bernard Dath, Mrs. Anna Hires, and Master-at-Arms First Class Arianne Logan, your presence in the Official Party of today's ceremony is a sign of our recognition to your outstanding service and dedication to Allied Command Transformation and the mission of the Alliance. Well done!



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Today, the NATO service members and their families working at Allied Command Transformation represent thirty-six allied and partner nations and all of us are very proud to call Norfolk home.

We are proud and grateful that the Governor of Virginia, Ralph Northam, recognized 4th April 2019 as *the 70th anniversary of the establishment of NATO in the Commonwealth of Virginia*. In part, that declaration reads, “Norfolk, Virginia is proud to be NATO’s Home in North America”.

We also consider Norfolk our home, thanks to its vibrant arts and culture community, distinguished universities and educational programmes, numerous recreational and shopping opportunities as well as nearby beaches, and the warm hospitality of its population. In Norfolk, we feel at home!

The Norfolk NATO Festival and Parade of Nations is one of the most awaited annual events hosted by the City of Norfolk, but it also gives the NATO family a chance to give back and share our culture and appreciation with the local community.



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I express, again, my sincere gratitude to the Mayor of Norfolk, and with him, to all the local civilian and military authorities, organizations and individuals from the Hampton Roads region.

Thank you, again, to the Norfolk NATO Festival team.

Thank you for your commitment to this year's NATO festival, and thank you for your commitment to the values of the Alliance, and to our bond that links both sides of the Atlantic.

I also extend my gratitude to all women who contributed to the richness of our organization.

And, finally, I would like to thank everybody coming from far away to participate in this year Festival's activities.

This evening, for example, at Virginia International Tattoo, we will welcome performers from the United States, Australia, Canada, Jordan, Romania, the United Kingdom and France, including the French Pacific Islanders rugby team, gathered from New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and Tahiti.

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You are all invited to watch and hear them performing this evening at the Tattoo, and to the rugby match on Sunday, where they will play against the local rugby team “The Norfolk Blues”.

Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you all to enjoy this year’s Norfolk NATO Festival’s events.