



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER
TRANSFORMATION**

SACT's remarks at

The DSACTs Change of Responsibility

Norfolk, 19 July 2019

As delivered

Général d'armée aérienne André Lanata



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- The Honourable **Elaine Luria**, Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Virginia's 2nd district, dear **Elaine**,
- The Honourable **Kenneth Alexander**, Mayor of Norfolk, dear **Kenneth**,
- The Honourable **Robert Dyer**, Mayor of Virginia Beach, dear **Bobby**,
- ADM (Ret) **Harold Gehman Jr.**, Former Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT),
- LtGEN **Hans-Werner Wiermann**, Director General of International Military Staff, dear **Hans-Werner**,
- LtGEN **Robert Hedelund**, Commander of the US Marine Corps Forces Command,
- VADM **Scott Buschman**, Coast Guard Atlantic Area Commander,
- VADM **Bruce Lindsey**, Deputy Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, dear **Bruce**,
- VADM **Andrew Lewis**, Commander 2nd Fleet and Joint Forces Command Norfolk, dear **Andrew**,
- Ms **Kathleen Jabs**, Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland security from Commonwealth of Virginia,



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- Honorary consuls,
- Defence Attachés,
- National Liaison Representatives in ACT,

- Dear Manfred,
- Dear general Ruggiero,
- Generals, Admirals,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- Dear friends,

It is with mixed feelings that we have arrived at one of the major milestones for our command this year, with the handover of the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander's position between two particularly distinguished officers from Germany and Italy.

Today we are saying farewell to a valued member of our team,
Admiral Manfred Nielson.



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Dear **Manfred**, I felt immensely privileged to have been able to “navigate” with you at the head of this Command for the last 11 months.

During this time we shared everything and we worked together on creating the conditions this HQ needs to fulfil its mission as NATO’s Warfare Development Command. Our dedicated and competent staff, along with our 3Js, the three subordinate Centres (JFTC, JWC and JALLC) did a great job to implement my directions and guidance.

ACT is recognized by NATO HQ and nations as a leading agent and a force of progress in the area of capability development. We work to ensure NATO has the right military instrument of power to guarantee a credible and adaptable defence posture today and into the future.

All this contributes to the stability provided by our Alliance and makes NATO an instrument of international peace and security.



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We, in ACT, work to position the Alliance for future success, by strengthening our capacities, and ensuring their permanent adaptation.

You, all of you in ACT, individually, are part of this success. Be aware of that, to be able to explain the value of your hard work to NATO's stakeholders and partners outside of ACT.

It is important that you do that, because your achievements take place far away from the cameras and the eyes of public.

In NATO, it is our role, in ACT, to ensure that we are collectively ready and able to respond to challenges of today and tomorrow. ACT has a vital role in this long term transformational efforts:

- ACT analyses the trends, risks, threats, and technological developments that shape our security environment. By doing that, it ensures awareness, understanding and unity of effort among the members of the Alliance in developing the required capabilities.



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- ACT is responsible for the defence planning of the Alliance. In essence, it is to define the Alliance's military needs necessary to deal with politically approved engagement scenarios. By doing this, ACT integrates 29, soon 30 nations, into a common military development dynamic, which is a factor of collective impetus, interoperability, unity, and, in one word, stability.
- ACT explores new technologies and experiments with innovative solutions. By doing that, it builds the capabilities of tomorrow's Alliance and contributes to its robustness and its deterrent effect.
- ACT conducts new programmes to modernize NATO's command and control capabilities. By doing that, it improves the capabilities of the Alliance and ensures its unity of action, it produces stability.
- ACT defines the standards of training, exchange of information, connections of our equipment. By doing that, it promotes the Alliance's unity of action and creates stability.



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- ACT educates and trains thousands of army, navy and air force men and women each year. This helps to homogenize the Alliance's military culture, develops interoperability and ultimately produces stability.
- Finally, ACT develops new concepts that provide new ways to deal with the emerging challenges for our forces. By doing that, it ensures our preparedness, and contributes to the collective effectiveness of our armed forces and, as a result, to their deterrent effect.

In great part, NATO's success, as a military and political organization, is made possible by the tireless work and commitment of this formidable command, by all its directorates, divisions and branches ... its people.



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I am saying all this because you can all be proud of the work that has been done here every day.

Manfred, I thank you, the Command Group and all ACT's staff for working so hard to implement these efforts.

I thank you for your contribution, and especially the personal touch you brought to every major activity in our HQ. I especially thank you for helping me to find my feet during my first days in ACT.

You passionately invested yourself in every activity we worked on. I always appreciated your tact and your ability to focus on what is essential for NATO's Transformation.

I, and the entire staff of this headquarters, recognize in you a true leader. One able to look to the future, to see what the young men and women who serve in uniform, and the Alliance as a whole, will need to face the challenges of the future.



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Your forward-looking ability was an indispensable and valuable asset for our Command. We are so glad to have had such a capable navigator to help our Command find the fairest winds on our Warfare Development journey.

Manfred, I could speak at length about your many contributions, but would rather go to what I see as your greatest strength: your deep sense and understanding of human relationships and their true value.

You always really understood the importance of human capital and how much human relationships can achieve. You encouraged it with your good cheer, sincerity, and friendliness, and this is what we are going to miss most of all.

I, above all, very much appreciated your loyalty, and your honest and straightforward attitude. I have always been able to count on you, knowing you would always tell me what you thought.



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And, I also want to say that I really admire your character as a real soldier, someone able to suffer for a greater cause. As you proved again and again, and most recently in Newark airport in November last year. No one can doubt your ability to adapt after that 😊

I also want to acknowledge **Annette**, the woman behind this great man. I, therefore, extend our wholehearted thanks to **Annette**, who accompanied **Manfred** during his rich and rewarding career.

And, I also thank **Annette** for her personal involvement and many contributions to the NATO community. **Christine** and I will miss you **Annette**.

Manfred and **Annette**, on behalf of all ACT staff, and our guests present today, we wish you a very, very warm farewell and the best for your future.

I am also looking forward to seeing you again in September, in Berlin, for the Tattoo ceremony in your honour.



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I mentioned already our mixed feelings today and this is because we are also very pleased to welcome **Lieutenant General Paolo Ruggiero**.

General, dear **Paolo**, today's ceremony is the opportunity for me to introduce you to this demanding command.

And without describing in detail your remarkable career, I do want to share with you how fortunate we feel to have you join our Command team.

We hope to capitalize on both your operational experience and your expertise in the force preparation and force sustainment domains. Your previous assignments included command roles with operational units and staff officers' posts in the Army General Staff and the Office of the Chief of Italian Defence Staff.

Moreover, your previous experience with NATO will be highly beneficial for us.



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In 2015, you were deployed to Afghanistan first as Chief of Staff, and then as Deputy Commander for Transition of the NATO "Resolute Support" mission. And, the last three years you served as Deputy Commander of LANDCOM, in Izmir, Turkey.

General **Ruggiero**, your rich experience, your competences and abilities, will be useful in our Warfare Development journey. Because everything we do here in ACT has to serve our operational capabilities.

I am sure that you and your wife **Holly Ann** will find yourself right at home here, with true friendship from the great people of the Hampton Roads area.

And, I want to publicly thank once again all the hard working and dedicated people of Hampton Roads, its political leaders, its universities and civic leaders who make all the events we organize possible, and for giving such a fabulous welcome to all the international military families who call this area home during their tour.



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Here, our families share everything with yours.

I especially want to thank:

- Ms **Elaine Luria**, Member of the U.S. House of Representatives,
- Mr **Kenneth Cooper Alexander**, Mayor of the City of Norfolk, and
- Mr **Robert Dyer**, Mayor of Virginia Beach,

... who do us the honour of accompanying us with their faithful presence.

So, **Paolo**, on behalf of all ACT staff, and our guests present today, we wish you and your wife, **Holly Ann**, a very warm welcome into this new family.

Thank you for your attention.