

NATO CHIEF'S RAPID RESPONSE IN NORFOLK CONFERENCE

By Flora Khoo, Nataly Hurtado, Calli Crowder and Hanisha Besant



French Air Force General Denis Mercier, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, spoke with journalism students at a press conference during NATO's COTC on December 9, 2015.

Photo credit: Stephen Oleksiak.

NORFOLK, Va. – Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), General Denis Mercier chaired NATO's Chiefs of Transformation Conference (COTC) in downtown Norfolk. The invited chiefs of transformation and partner nations of the 66-year old Atlantic Alliance convened at the Waterside Marriot Hotel for the annual event, which was held from Tuesday, December 8 to Thursday, December 10, 2015.

General Mercier spoke to Regent students at a press conference and highlighted that one of the greatest hallmark of NATO is in being able to constantly adapt to changing times while remaining an effective and fit-for-purpose organization. He emphasized how NATO as a defensive Alliance is still relevant

to the vision of transformation and provides credible assurance to member nations.

"This is a way to assure all of the members of the Alliance and partners that will keep the support of the other nations to live in peace and security," said General Mercier.

The Supreme Allied Commander Transformation remains confident that the 10th conference would strengthen the posture of the Alliance in maintaining peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic region. He is positive that their high level of readiness and responsiveness is able to deal with any pressures that may threaten NATO nations.

In response to the changing position of Russia as a key player on the world's political stage, General Mercier said, "We had a strong partnership with Russia, but the problem is with Russia itself because they have broken international rules."

The NATO leader underscored that the nature of Russia's relationship with the Alliance would rest on their shoulders. "This question is in the hands of Russia," he stressed.

NATO is looking ahead to hold its 2016 Warsaw Summit where it will determine the Alliance's strategy. General Mercier explained one of the policy issues that would likely be on the docket.

"We have been tasked with a readiness level section plan from Wales [Summit] and we must deliver this in Warsaw," said General Mercier. "We must win that."

An estimated 2,500 delegates, including heads of state, foreign ministers and defense ministers are expected to attend the Warsaw Summit. The last NATO Summit in 2014 was held at Newport, Wales.

Additionally, the NATO commander revealed that they are actively working on their posture of deterrence in light of the risks from terrorism and global threats.

“We are now working on deterrence and we are working on NATO’s posture, the posture of our forces,” said General Mercier.

NATO is assessing if their deterrent posture is able to deter all kinds of threats and not just deter setbacks to terrorism. This according to General Mercier would be one of the issues expected to be discussed at the Warsaw Summit.

General Mercier added how technological advancements could enhance their role as a defense Alliance. For instance, developing cloud management for a complex command and control structure. The success of such technological innovations could be duplicated for other events or scenarios. General Mercier shared his priorities for combat systems include finding expertise in cloud management, big data, artificial intelligence and 3D printing from the non-traditional defense industries.

The Allied Command Transformation (ACT) plans to organize events next year and the year after to attract bright sparks from these industries and to make them aware of the possibilities of partnerships to develop new technological breakthroughs.

ACT is the only NATO headquarters in the United States and is the leading agent for change.