



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER
TRANSFORMATION**

**SACT's remarks at the Montenegro Accession Flag
Raising Ceremony
Norfolk, 7 June 2017**

Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER



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Dear Lieutenant Colonel Klikovac, representing Montenegro,

Admirals, Generals, Air Marshal,

Distinguished guests,

My fellow ACT teammates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are gathered this morning to celebrate the official accession of Montenegro in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This landmark moment is celebrated in every Allied Headquarters across the Euro-Atlantic space on this very day.

It is an honour and a privilege for me to officially welcome the twenty-ninth member nation of our Alliance among our ranks. It is also the outcome of a lengthy process, a demanding journey for this young, independent nation.

The Alliance has always had an open-door policy, as stated in the Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Every European country willing to join this community of destiny and purpose, and willing to contribute to the security of the Euro-Atlantic space, can be invited to join. This principle has been reaffirmed time and again, and most recently in December 2015, when Montenegro was officially invited to begin accession talks with the Allies.

But joining NATO is not a mere formality, and I commend Montenegro for the very hard work it has undergone to conform to the Alliance's standards, procedures, and to reaffirm its values, shared by all of our nations, and grounded in the principles we cherish: democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. This encompassing effort and commitment to reform is a tribute to the steadfastness and determination of Montenegro, qualities that will be invaluable to overcome the common challenges we will undoubtedly face in the future.



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Our Alliance is built first and foremost on mutual trust and shared values. At a challenging time, in a strategic environment defined by complexity and unpredictability, we must rejoice in welcoming new members willing to tie their destiny to ours.

Now that the flag of Montenegro flies proudly among the twenty eight other flags of NATO nations, let us celebrate what is certainly the end of a journey, but also, more importantly, the beginning of a new chapter for Euro-Atlantic security.

Long live the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and our twenty nine nations!

Thank you.