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Ministro da Defesa Nacional

**Intervenção de S.Exa o Ministro da Defesa Nacional por
ocasião da transferência de comando do JCLisbon**

Oeiras, 20 de Julho de 2009

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It is an honour for me to be present and address you, in this ceremony of change of command, which occurs in a symbolical occasion for the Alliance, for the Allied Joint Command Lisbon and, consequently, for Portugal.

In 1966-67, the Alliance formally approved the activation of NATO headquarters in our Country, following France's decision to withdraw from NATO's integrated military structure. More than three decades on, it is of particular relevance overseeing a French General taking the command of this HQ.

Firstly, let me thank Vice Admiral Bruce Clingan, on behalf of the Portuguese Government, for his excellent work, as well as for his committed contribution, ensuring the success of the Joint Command Lisbon's mission, tasks and objectives.

I am particularly grateful for your leadership and engagement in both, preparing and training the Joint Command Lisbon for the certification of the NATO Response Force.

It was a very challenging operational period, considering such a demanding NRF rotation cycle – from the NRF 11 to the 14th –, and I am happy to say it was a successfully accomplished mission.

May I wish you all the best in your future duties – I can assure Portugal will always greet you as a close friend.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a founding member of NATO, Portugal has been deeply engaged in the history and the dynamics of the Atlantic Alliance, since it was established sixty years ago. Our Nation kept always, an open and dynamic approach towards the evolution of the Alliance. This is the very same vision, I believe, should guide us into the future.

We are currently undergoing the process of reviewing NATO's Strategic Concept, to be approved in the next Summit, which will take place in Portugal.

This process aims at the update of NATO's responses to current and future threats, risks and challenges, facing the Alliance. This process also paves the way to consolidating NATO's ambition and objectives.

In this context, the Transformation Process is one of the most important challenges pursued by NATO. The objectives are clear: strengthening the Alliance operational capability, its effectiveness and promoting the efficiency of resources. At this point, NATO's Command Structure is of paramount importance.

Portugal favours, undeniably, a more effective and responsive NATO Command Structure, in order to cope with current and future security challenges, in line with the Alliance level of ambition.

In this regard, I should highlight the agreement on the Peacetime Establishment Review, of the NATO Command Structure, conferring it an increased deployability. Considerable efforts have thus been devoted to this process, and the consensus achieved represents an added value for NATO.

The role and positioning of Joint Command Lisbon – emerging as Joint Force Command – has come out strengthened, matching both the Alliance and Portugal's interests.

This stands, in my view, as a double recognition. Firstly, it recognizes Portugal as an engaged and active host nation. Secondly, it underlies the assumption of the geostrategic value position of the Joint Command Lisbon, with a high level of readiness and able to deploy, and command, allied missions in NATO's area of responsibility.

The performance of the Joint Command Lisbon in the command of previous and ongoing operations– such as Katrina, as well as missions in Pakistan and Africa – demonstrates its flexibility and capacities to raise up to the Alliance new challenges.

Modern asymmetric and transnational threats require, in this day and age, swift responses – which I am convinced Joint Command Lisbon is prepared to accomplish.

Joint Command Lisbon is currently leading NATO efforts in counter-piracy, off the Horn of Africa, in the wake of ongoing NATO contribution to the international community efforts in the area.

At the same time, I should underline the significant support provided by this Command to the African Union, and to specific missions in Sudan (AMIS+UNAMID), and more recently, in Somalia (AMISOM).

These are good examples of the strategic role Joint Command Lisbon can fulfil namely in operations and activity, in areas such as Africa and the Mediterranean, where there is a strategic confluence with Portugal.

Mesdames e Messieurs,

Permettez-moi un dernier mot de félicitations, en adressant Monsieur le Général Philippe Stoltz, au moment juste où il prend en charge le commandement du “Joint Command Lisbon”. Soyez le bienvenu à Lisbonne !

Le Portugal est ravi du retour de la France à la structure militaire de l’OTAN, qui représente, à mon avis, une étape importante pour le renfort de la cohésion européenne dans le contexte transatlantique. Je suis sûr que ceci contribuera, également, à la consolidation du partenariat stratégique entre l’Alliance Atlantique et l’Union Européenne.

Je vous souhaite, Général Stoltz, un poste de succès. Sachez que Vous comptez sur la collaboration et hospitalité du Portugal. Le Gouvernement de la République Portugaise, notamment le Ministère de la Défense Nationale, maintiendra le support et l’assistance nécessaire à ce Quartier- Général, en coordination étroite avec les structures politiques et militaires de l’Alliance.

Monsieur le Général, bien à Vous, Bonne Chance !

Thank you all. Muito obrigado.