

Dr. Júlio Castro

Ministro da Defesa Nacional

**DISCURSO DE SUA EXCELÊNCIA O MINISTRO DA DEFESA NACIONAL
POR OCASIÃO DA MUDANÇA DE COMANDO DO RHQ SOUTHLANT**

10 de Novembro de 2000

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GENERAL KERNAN (SACLANT);
CEMA;
CEME;
VICE CEMFA;
VICE ADMIRAL MOTA E SILVA;
VICE ADMIRAL SILVA SANTOS;
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I'm honoured to have been invited to address the distinguished audience who gathered here to attend this Change of Command Ceremony.

Although only one year has passed since last CINCSOUTHLANT Change of Command Ceremony, many important events in European related issues have occurred, such as the implementation of the new European and Security Defense Policy (ESDP), adopted last December, in Helsinki, where we laid down the headline goal for the European Rapid Reaction Force; and later, in March of this year, during the Portuguese presidency of the EU, a Political and Security Committee, a Military Committee, and the embryo of an European Military Staff have also been decided.

But in a rapidly evolving world, the symbol of Portugal's enduring support to NATO, still remains: the regional headquarters South Atlantic, here in Oeiras, one of the three NATO Regional Commands under SACLANT that Portugal is rightfully proud to host. In fact, this allied presence in Portugal dates back to 1967.

Like all living things, organisations are either able to adjust to new conditions or they will likely perish. Therefore, it is with true satisfaction that I look at this NATO Headquarters today as a clear reflection of an organisation that is dynamic, and that has been able to successfully adapt to a fast-changing security and defence environment, and face the new security challenges, namely:

The co-operation development by partnership for peace program;

The building of European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance;

The enlargement process;

The special relationship with Russia and Ukraine;

And the Mediterranean dialog.

I am certain that the internal restructuring effort within SOUTHLANT to match fast pacing changes at world level, while simultaneously maintaining its maritime bias, has required significant command efforts and staff commitment. So, I want to take this opportunity to commend you all for having accomplished such a tremendous task.

Since the early 90s, NATO has become the cornerstone of a pan-European defence system, extending stability and security eastwards, while developing the capacity to respond effectively to new risks and challenges, like region instability, terrorism ethnic cleansing and misuse of weapons of mass destruction.

The NATO purposes "to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members political and military means" and "to enhance the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area" bring an increased responsibility to all members, in particular, to those facing the Atlantic.

In order to achieve these purposes, the effective conflict prevention, the crises response operations and the promotion of wide-ranging partnership, with other

countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, are fundamental tasks to take into account, regarding the development of the strategic importance of this command.

The combined joint task forces and the new structures of forces and commands are the natural out come resulting from NATO adaptation, with a notorious improvement on multinationality and joint features.

The joint actions are the standard of today's military operations, where flexibility is the key factor to ensure the appropriate ability to deploy multi-national and multi-service forces.

Portugal's geo-strategic location as the European Atlantic frontline serves as a link between the Americas and Europe and between the Mediterranean and Northern Africa. As such, the European space and the transatlantic relation emerge as major references in our national contribution to the establishment of a collective defence and security system.

The inclusion of the national mainland in SACLANT area of responsibility justifies and claims for extra effort in order to fulfil those objectives. This extra effort is reflected on the reequiptment and modernisation programs of Portuguese Military Forces, which will enable the implementation at national level of defence capabilities initiative.

In this way I wish to reiterate the Portuguese government continued engagement in the security measures taken towards a stable and undivided Europe, so as to build a safer law-abiding world.

As we enter the new century, old questions about the nature of the transatlantic relationship are receiving new attention in light of the continuing process of european integration towards the consolidation of the European and the North American pillars of the alliance. In other terms, I would say that this is the political expression of the military concept of "separate but not separable forces".

Portugal, the United States and all the members of the Euro-Atlantic community face real security challenges that can best be solved by acting together. I am confident that, together, we will find solutions for a stronger Europe and transatlantic link - the basis for a more balanced transatlantic security partnership within the framework of the European Union and NATO.

Before concluding I would like to pay tribute to the work carried out by Vice Admiral Mota e Silva. I wish you Admiral Mota e Silva all the success in your new assignment as Deputy Chief of Naval Staff.

To the Commander-in-Chief SOUTHLANT, Vice Admiral Silva Santos, I wish the best success in your new and challenging assignment.

Thank you.