

Lieutenant General Pasi Välimäki's speech at the Army Commander Change of Command Ceremony on 30 December 2021 in Mikkeli

Mr. General, honourable guests, colleagues, soldiers, ladies and gentlemen,

Mr. General Petri, I welcome the Finnish Army, which have developed significantly in terms of both readiness and performance. The ability of the Finnish Army to respond to rapidly developing military threats and exceptional situations in normal conditions has been improved. Both high-level readiness unit activities and Training 2020 practices have been introduced in the training.

International army cooperation has progressed considerably thanks to your clear guidance and leadership. You have always highlighted the skills and potential of our military and civilian personnel - the Finnish Army is made up of skilled, committed and motivated stem personnel, reservists and conscripts. Today's Finnish Army is a training and readiness organisation known both in Finland and abroad for both high performance and strong national defence.

Staff of the Finnish Army,

In the Army units, the year begins as planned - but it must be possible to regulate operations and activities in a manner that is appropriate to the situation. We must recognise that there are challenging times ahead. The security situation in Europe is not good and stable. We must prepare and also be prepared to face possible repercussions. At the moment, there is no military threat to us. The COVID-19 pandemic does not seem to be relaxing, and the measures taken to gain control of it will affect the arrangements for everyday service both in service and on leave - at least for the time being.

We should look for solutions, specify plans and keep the task clear when we solve the challenges ahead of us. Innovation and leadership are needed at all levels.

Implementation of the Government Defence Report policies will be initiated. The development of conscription on the basis of the report will also begin. Traditionally in Finland, considerable expectations are placed on the countryside and the Finnish Army when we talk about defending Finland. We will continue to meet these expectations together with other branches of defence and departments under the Headquarters. While we in the Finnish Army maintain readiness and train troops for wartime needs, we are planning the Finnish Army of the future under the leadership of the Defence Command as part of the Defence System - we are a key part of comprehensive regional defence.

A central part of comprehensive regional defence is local defence, the reform of which will be initiated. One of the aims is also to increase the local capacity to take comprehensive action against the influencing of broader audiences throughout the country. Practical planning of local defence and the development of the intended troops and performance will be very interesting and rewarding. Local specificities and expertise – local authorities and reservists – are taken into account.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Defence cooperation with our key partners is important. We have a lot of different methods and levels of cooperation, from meetings of the leaders to meetings with the headquarters, to operational planning between Finland and Sweden. All of the above are needed, but the most important and concrete interaction takes place in crisis management operations and exercises. There, the activities become concrete and performance develops. This will improve both the performance of the Finnish Army in emergency conditions and the ability to operate in crisis management operations.

Thank you, Mr. General Petri, for the work and leadership you have done for the Finnish Army. Good luck and good health for the soldier, whatever you decide to do in the future.

Mr. General, together with the Finnish Army' staff, we are doing our best to ensure that the army's performance, readiness and will to defend itself continue to evolve.

The soldiers, let us retire three times the shouting to the Finnish Army - hurray, hurray hurray.