

Speech of Major General Petri Hulkko at the Army Commander Change of Command Ceremony on 31 July 2017 at Mikaeli in Mikkeli

General Toivonen, commanding officers of the Finnish Army, staff of Army Command Finland, soldiers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I accept the duties of Commander of the Finnish Army with great gratitude. With a determined hand, Lieutenant General Seppo Toivonen has developed the Finnish Army and its readiness in accordance with the demands of the rapid change in the security environment. The defence reform planned under your leadership has created a good foundation for the operations of the army in peacetime and war, and for their further development. The army is currently going strong and in a good upward development curve. Thank you General Toivonen - Seppo, for the excellent work that you have done. The boots I have to fill are large and demanding. I wish you and Tarja many good years together in the reserve.

The army's result is brought about in the brigade-level units. It is you, esteemed commanders of these units, who together with your troops have created the capability of our army and of which we can now be proud. I want to thank you commanders and your staff for the valuable and high-quality work that you do for the army.

Dear Army Command staff. A good and professional headquarters enable leading the army. You have more than fulfilled the expectations set upon you. Thank you for the work you have done. I know you and you know me, the prerequisites for good cooperation could not be better.

This decade has been one of army development. The next five years will show what position the army will assume when the strategic projects of the other services have begun. All of the army's most important capability projects are already under way. The funding available determines what size troop it can be allocated to. From the point of view of readiness, the capability to maintain and service the modern systems to the required extent, appears to be the most decisive.

Compared to the surrounding security environment, the army's readiness has developed quickly in the right direction. The use of personnel, training and the training system have been adjusted to respond to even more rapid and unexpected situational development. In this development work, the army is at the crest of the wave, and we will not be found floating in quiet waters in the future either. Only through daily and factual readiness is it possible to create sufficient preventive capability for national defence. The corresponding development of the other services and functions of the Defence Forces go hand in hand. With strong inter-authority cooperation, the defence capability is multiplied. Together, we are more than the sum of our individuals.

A significant increase in international activity will not detract from our national defence capability. Military crisis management and bilateral and multilateral international

cooperation will bring significantly more added value to our own defence than it will take away resources. This is part of the credibility and preventive capability of our defence. The army looks towards the developing international cooperation with confidence.

From the army's point of view, we must now also look towards the future beyond strategic projects. What sort of world will we be facing in the 2030s, when the army's capabilities become outdated the next time. Building capabilities takes on average ten years. At the beginning of the 2020s, we should be able to see the alternative solutions towards which we will have to begin to move. Otherwise the army will be at the mercy of the so-called driftwood theory. Development solutions concern in particular the army's sharpest spearhead capabilities, in other words the operational troops. There is significant added potential to be found in the further development of the local defence troops and this should be utilised to the full extent.

Also in the future, national defence will be built upon general conscription. Personally, I see no other alternatives. Together, we must continue to do our utmost, so that as many Finnish men and female volunteers as possible enter military service and honourably complete it. This is not a demand stemming only from military need, it is also of great benefit to our entire society. I see general conscription as an important part of the democratic system and an absolute necessity for defending Finland. The conscripts and female volunteers present here today are a very good example of this.

Dear listeners,

As we all know, there is much work to be done in the field of defence also in the future. Readiness also includes not going overboard. This relates to not only materiel, but also to our own personnel. One of the basic rules of tactics is to always have a reserve. Each and every one of us must also have our own capability reserve. Staff that is exhausted and burned out is of no use if there is a real crisis. The same goes for materiel that has been worn out in training. It is the task of especially each leader, but also of each individual to make sure that human and material resources are used in the right way. We are the army. We, the army's salaried personnel, conscripts and reservists are responsible for national defence here and now, and for building the army of the future.

This year we celebrate 100 years of Finland's independence. This would not be possible without the sacrifices and hard work of our veteran generation. This obligates all of us, and there is a task and a place for each of us in this work.