



Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast

Szczecin - Poland



Speech by Lieutenant General Jürgen-Joachim von Sandrart, Commander Multinational Corps Northeast, delivered in Szczecin, Wały Chrobrego, during MNC NE's 25th anniversary ceremony, September 25, 2024

Dear people of Poland, Czechia and Austria,

Today, my heart goes to the victims of the recent devastating floods, many of whom have lost their life's work, their homes, and in some tragic cases – their lives. You are not alone. Your allies and partners are there for you, because this is what allies do: They stand up for each other.

Comrades and Colleagues, Brothers and Sisters in arms,

There are times in life when you can feel that history is looking at you. Today is one of these days. For 25 years, Multinational Corps Northeast has been living proof of a promise that ties all of us together: An attack on one of us is an attack on all of us. This promise – Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty – is carved in stone and unbreakable.

25 years ago, three nations came together in this beautiful city to lay the foundation for our corps. Back then, who could have foreseen the challenging times we live in now? The truth is: No one saw the current threat back then. MNC NE was founded in a more political, rather than military, spirit.

And yet in hindsight, those who took the decision to establish the Corps showed much greater foresight than anyone would have guessed 25 years ago. Back then, Multinational Corps Northeast was mainly an integration hub to bring old and new NATO Allies together and build cohesion between former enemies.

The men and women who served the first historic tour of duty at MNC NE wanted to shape the future together – because they knew that no one could do it alone. This is very much true today as well.

Lithuania is ready to become the fourth Framework Nation of MNC NE. Dear Minister Kasčiūnas, dear General Vaikšnoras, it is an honour that you have joined us today, showing that Lithuania is ready to shape the fate of the north-eastern flank as we look to the future. Together, we will fight against any aggression that endangers the principles and values our Alliance was built upon.

These are no empty words and, unfortunately, they have a bitter meaning. If our Alliance is attacked, we will be asked to make the ultimate sacrifice for a greater good: a future where our societies enjoy their freedom in a democratic and safe world.

Two Members of MNC NE, Warrant Officer Rafał Celebudzki and Lieutenant Colonel Ove Hansen, paid the ultimate price when our Corps was deployed to Afghanistan as part of ISAF. Their sacrifice is part of our history too. It will not be forgotten.



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The willingness to sacrifice one's life to defend our Alliance lies at the core of every soldier's values. Today, it means that we have to be ready to fight tonight. The threat to NATO is real and will increase for years to come. This is why we need to be even more resolute and better prepared in order to be credible. Because without credibility, deterrence will fail and defence will become necessary.

There is no time to waste. Therefore, MNC NE is ready to fight tonight – and I am glad that our Framework Nations will commit themselves to provide us with everything we need to be able to fight – also tomorrow. Because MNC NE is at the heart of NATO's deterrence and defence effort on the North-eastern flank. If the enemy across our borders decides to test our resoluteness, we will be the first line of defence – and ultimately – we will win!

Two and a half years ago, when Russia unlawfully invaded Ukraine and inflicted cruelty and violence on our partners and friends, it became obvious that our peace and freedom were not guaranteed. Together, we gave the order to defend the north eastern flank. You answered the call and achieved the excellence required to respond to the threat against NATO. We shaped history. I could not be prouder of what we have achieved since this tragic yet historic year of 2022.

People of Szczecin, of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, I say to you: You are part of this endeavour too. You are the reason why NATO exists.

When we defend freedom – it is your freedom.

When we defend security – it is your security.

When we defend democracy – it is about every single one of you!

We live in challenging and sometimes frightening times. The threat is here – and you can feel it. In times like this, we have to stand together as Allies, but we have to stand together as societies too. No one can lean back!

If Article 5 is the backbone of NATO, we, the people, are the backbone of Article 5!

We are in this together – and together – we will win

