

## "Demystifying NATO: A Guide for Young Minds"

*General Lavigne, NATO Supreme Allied Transformation Commander, delivered a compelling speech during the "NATO Youth Summit" workshop, highlighting the evolving role of NATO and the challenges faced in today's world. He emphasized the importance of teamwork, shared his experiences as a fighter pilot, and discussed the current security environment in Europe. The speech emphasized NATO's mission to provide credible defense and deterrence, working together as allies to combat aggression. General Lavigne also shed light on the responsibilities of Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in anticipating future threats and ensuring military capabilities are prepared. He underscored the need for collaboration with various sectors, including civilian society, industry, and academia. Furthermore, General Lavigne encouraged the younger generation to contribute their talents, critical thinking skills, and technological expertise to make a positive impact. The speech concluded with a call for teamwork: "Let us continue to win as a team".*

"It is a pleasure to stand before you today as we gather for this important event. Before delving into the topic at hand, allow me to share a brief glimpse into who I am. As a father of three, I find myself constantly reminded of the enduring spirit of youth, even if my appearance may suggest otherwise. Engaging in the game of rugby has been a passion of mine, where I have witnessed its dynamic evolution over the years, often moving at a pace faster than my own strides. Through this sport, I have learned invaluable lessons about the power of teamwork, a principle that resonates deeply within the core values of NATO.

This year, I feel particularly youthful as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of ACT (Allied Command Transformation) later this week here in Norfolk, VA. Throughout these enlightening days, you have heard from civilian and military leaders discussing history, data, security, and democracy. As we near the end of these youth summits, I would like to share a few thoughts about NATO and the world we live in today.

I became a fighter pilot in the same year the Berlin Wall fell, and NATO had 16 members. This might be before your time, but there was talk back then about the end of history. However, history, much like your stories, constantly changes, and not always for the better. Today, war has returned to Europe on a scale not seen since World War II, particularly in Ukraine. Young men and women, who you might have met in cafes or during your travels through Europe just a couple of years ago, are now facing a brutal assault. Their families and friends are suffering as hospitals and vital infrastructure are targeted.

So, what does this say about our role? NATO was founded as a defensive alliance and currently consists of 31 to 32 members. Our goal is to provide credible defense and deterrence so that one billion citizens can lead normal lives, freely discussing and addressing issues like we are today. To put it simply, we work together as allies to

deter bullies, no matter who they are. As we say in French, "one for all, all for one."

As part of NATO's military structure, ACT's responsibility is to anticipate future threats, help NATO prepare, and ensure that our military capabilities are up to the task. Our security environment is characterized by an increasing number of threats coming at us faster than ever before. These threats include the use of advanced and autonomous weapons, massive amounts of data inundating the battlefield, and hypersonic missiles. We also face the challenges posed by quantum computing and the impact it will have on vital issues like encryption. In this ever-changing landscape, the future battlefield will encompass traditional land, air, and sea domains, as well as space and cyberspace. It will be joint and will affect every aspect of our lives.

Everywhere and all at once—this is an apt description of the future battlefield. We must prepare ourselves for this reality. We need forces and capabilities that can better understand, react, and synchronize across the traditional and new domains. It is not just a military effort; we must also work with other instruments of power. We need resilient forces and infrastructure. This requires collaboration with Allied Command Operations in Europe, NATO members, and engagement with civilian society, industry, and academia. Our strength lies in bringing together men and women from all allies and partners, recognizing that innovation knows no borders.

As I mentioned earlier, ACT is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Twenty years is an example of how rapidly things can change. When ACT was established in 2003, there was no iPhone, no Uber, or the vast possibilities that large language models offer today.

NATO loves acronyms, and ACT is no exception. Let me share with you what ACT stands for: "A" for attitude, "C" for concept to capabilities, and "T" for talents. Among these, talents are the most

important and challenging. You are all digital natives, and your younger siblings will be the first generation for whom programming will be a career choice. NATO and your countries will need your smarts, your understanding of technology's potential, and your ability to challenge without fear. Your critical thinking skills and the belief that nothing is impossible will make a difference. I'm not here as an authoritative figure telling you what to do; there are many ways you can contribute to making life better for your friends, families, communities, and countries. However, I hope that

some of you will see NATO as one way to achieve that. For me, it means wearing a uniform and flying fast and high, but for others, it could involve working with data, becoming a NATO prompt engineer, or pursuing other avenues of contribution.

Thank you all for your attention. Long live the importance of teamwork! I want to express my gratitude to all those who have made this day possible, both in America and Europe. Let us continue to win as a team.

*General Philip Levine, is the NATO Supreme Allied Transformation Commander*

*Notes taken by Dr. Gustavo Scotti di Uccio*