



Chief of Defence

Brussels, 3 July 2024

Major General Andrus Merillo
Chief of Defence

Estonian Armed Forces

Dear Andrus

After forty-nine years of service, time has come to stow away my military uniform and bid farewell to the Armed Forces.

I dare to say that, during this period, history showed an incredible turnaround in our common security challenges. After growing up and completing my military instruction in the Cold War era, the shift to crisis response operations was later an almost existential challenge. Nowadays, we are witnessing a renewed emphasis on common defence and deterrence. One thing is for sure: we no longer have the choice of the challenges to address.

Throughout the past decades, the nature and execution of military operations forced us to drastically increase our cooperation. We made steps forward in the exchange of intelligence and interoperability, yet there is still room for improvement too.

If the crises of recent years have shown anything, it is that only through cooperation can we tackle global challenges.

Cooperation within NATO and the EU has always been vital to Belgium. I want to express my most sincere feelings of gratitude to your country, its armed forces and to you for making further steps in military cooperation possible.

Upon my retirement on 4 July, the Belgian Defence Forces will remain in good hands. General Frederik Vansina is the right man on the right place. I am confident he will guide our forces in the right direction, to be prepared for the challenges that we will have to face in the future.

I would like to express my gratitude once again for your friendship and support and wish you the best of luck in all your future endeavours.

Warm regards



Michel Hofman
Admiral
Aide de Camp to the King
Chief of Defence