

## **Speech by Lieutenant General Petri Hulkko at the Army Commander Change of Command Ceremony on 30 December 2021 in Mikkeli**

General, honourable guests, colleagues, conscripts, ladies and gentlemen,

The Finnish Army is in a good shape. I have said this on several occasions and in different contexts. This is both a professional soldier's absolute estimation of his own unit, as well as my widely recognised subjective interpretation of the Finnish Army. Credit for this belongs to you, Army personnel, both paid members of staff as well as conscripts. Only together do we form the Army.

My nearly four and a half years as a Commander have perhaps been marked by three key issues: readiness, the international dimension and COVID-19. With regard to readiness, we have developed a cost-effective system that makes full use of our conscription system. Our emergency management system is functional and credible in this security environment that is difficult to predict.

International cooperation has become part of everyday life. This is nothing but positive. We are constantly cooperating with the partner countries closest to us. Joint exercises increase the credibility and preventive ability of our defence. In particular, army cooperation between Finland and Sweden has expanded to cover all areas, from material cooperation and exercises to operational planning. For this, I would like to express my gratitude to my foreign colleagues.

We have learned to live with COVID-19. Aside from the negative effects of the pandemic, this cloud also has a silver lining. COVID-19 has increased crisis awareness and resilience and provided, for instance, new ideas for arranging training. In other words, you have to take the rough with the smooth.

According to the latest defence report, local defence is strongly emphasised. Further development of local defence will now be implemented. Personally, I am very happy about this, as this is close to my heart. Strategic projects, which have recently been decided, will support the Army's performance. Now, the Army has a reason to plan and build the Army of the future. There will be a lot of challenging and interesting work left to do for those of you who remain in the Army.

The results of the Army are achieved in the units. You, Officers Commanding brigade-level units, have achieved the Army combat-efficiency with your units that we can now be proud of. I thank you and your personnel for the high quality work you have done for the Army; it is of great value.

Personnel of the Army Command Finland. A solid and skilled Army Command makes it possible to lead the Army. You have exceeded all expectations. Thank you for the support you have given me, and for the work you have done. Keep it up!

The highlights of my time as a Commander have been encounters with conscripts, both reservists and conscripts in training. It never ceases to amaze me how you, conscripts, are able to master military skills at a rapid rate, or how reservists are able to combine civilian and military expertise.

When you add team spirit, we have everything that is needed. This crystallises the idea of a general conscription.

We must continue to do all that we can to ensure that as many Finnish men and female volunteers as possible start their military service and complete it with honour. This is not only a demand arising from a military need, but it is also in the interests of society as a whole. I see general conscription as an important part of the democratic system and a necessary part of defending Finland. You, conscripts and women volunteers present here today, are a prime example of this.

General,

In addition to good subordinates, it is important to have mutual trust with your supervisor. I thank you for the support you have given me as a supervisor and a friend in leading the Army.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to pass over the Finnish Army in good shape to Lieutenant General Pasi Välimäki. The change of a Commander always brings with it new nuances, which is a good thing. The Army personnel is motivated, professional and committed to their work. It offers the best guarantee that the Commander will succeed in his task. I know that the Army will be in good hands, and I wish you, Pasi, the best of success in your work in leading the Army.