

**General Sverker Göranson, Nordic Air Symposium, 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2011, Luleå**

*Generals, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am delighted to be here today and thanks for the opportunity to address you on the overarching perspectives on the Swedish Armed Forces. Nordic Air Show is an important initiative to demonstrate different elements that reflect the Swedish Armed Forces' operations, as well as our Nordic Cooperation.

Northern Sweden has always been, and will continue to be, an important geo-strategic region. During recent years' geo-strategic reasoning, the Arctic and Barents Sea region has again become more in our focus. This is not least because of the energy reserves that are deemed to be in the Barents Sea region, but also on the effects of climate change and its impact on the Northeast Passage. These are issues that will most probably be on the agenda for a long time to come and in one way or another will have an impact on the Armed Forces.

One area of cooperation with growing potential is the Nordic Defence Cooperation. This is a necessity for smaller countries that want to achieve a greater impact, despite diminishing resources, coupled with increased international interests, in the Baltic and Barents regions. The economic crisis in many countries has led to unchanged or decreased defence spending. National positions must be reviewed to find more rational ways of producing operational capabilities.

Within the framework of the Nordic cooperation NORDEFECO, with Sweden in 2011 as the presiding country, we are studying the areas that may be developed in the longer term which may provide efficiency gains. From a military point of view, I believe it is possible to make these gains, but we also need to get over some hurdles of mainly political nature.

The idea of cooperation in NORDEFECO is relevant for the Nordic collaboration here in the Arctic. The Stoltenberg report also shows that many of the common security policy challenges which the Nordic countries have identified are to be found in the northern area. The challenges are usually not of a purely military nature, but considerably more complex. I am thinking of the potential threat to the fragile environment which the Arctic region is facing.

In order to prevent or deal with a maritime disaster in the Arctic Ocean or the Barents Sea, significant civil-military cooperation will be required, as well as Cross Border Training. This training is an excellent example of how we together can gain efficiency in several dimensions.

The cornerstone for participating in multicultural crisis management is interoperability. Since Sweden joined the NATO Partnership for Peace, one important area of cooperation has been just interoperability, which is one key to our capacity building. The fact that we now have improved situational awareness through Link 16, is thanks to this cooperation. Encrypted data is being transferred between participating forces, in the air, on the land as well as in the sea.

Today's world is changing and globalisation means that society faces ever-new challenges. There are considerably fewer purely military threats today; instead the threats are of a more complicated nature, often with a complex causation, such as IT security threats, economic change, environmental problems, terrorism and pandemics. Examples of rapid and unpredictable developments are the recent events in North Africa. This changing world of course affects the Swedish Armed Forces as well.

The Armed Forces are currently in the midst of an intense phase of this transformation, where we have taken several steps towards the introduction of a new operational organisation by the year 2014. The transformation to an operational defence force is not only driven by international developments but also by the need for efficiency.

The new military organisation will be used on home turf, in the immediate geographical vicinity as well as further away. This places new demands on us because a mission-ready operational organisation for a large spectrum of operational tasks and operational environments implies high standards of availability and usability for both personnel and equipment.

Developments in the world around us in conjunction with the changes in the Armed Forces' assignments, including the economic realities we are facing today, also place new demands on the acquisition of equipment.

Since July of last year, we have an all-volunteer force that consists of officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilians. When the system is fully developed, most of the personnel will be part-time employees, most of those serving in the Army. The Navy and Air Forces will focus primarily on missions within the immediate vicinity of Sweden and are therefore largely staffed by fulltime personnel.

When the reform is fully implemented, which should take place by 2019; we will have an Armed Force in which the units have a very high mission-readiness, especially compared with previous years following the end of the cold war.

So the coming years will be intense and exciting. If we are to succeed in implementing the reforms needed for the transition to an operational defence force based on voluntary service, we need to collaborate with all other stakeholders in society and we also need to launch a broad public debate on defence and security, to communicate with all other interested parts in Swedish society, encompassing both private and public areas of operation.

Here in Luleå and Boden you have excellent opportunities to deepen the already historic good cooperation between the authority and the civilian stakeholders. In this region you have the solid conditions to obtain a win-win situation for both parties.

There are excellent and unique experiences in northern Sweden. Traditionally there has been a lot of trust and collaboration between the public and private sectors in this region. I think, therefore, that the conditions are favourable, which will facilitate local and regional solutions to the challenges we face.

As is well known, the Swedish Armed Forces are participating in a number of international operations. Our current focus areas in 2011 are Afghanistan, Kosovo and Libya. Last year, Sweden also was, during a four month-period, responsible for the EU-led maritime operation outside Somalia.

The rapid development of the Swedish Air Element to Libya is a proof that our readiness concept works. The Swedish Expeditionary Air Wing is also a part of the NBG11, one of the EU's rapid reaction forces, led by Sweden. The use of our Expeditionary Air Wing shows that the BG concept could be used flexible, something Sweden has advocated during its EU Presidency 2009. This Friday, the Swedish parliament gave its approval to prolong our operation in Libya which will mainly be manned by personnel from the Norrbotten Wing Command. It will be fully operational by 10<sup>th</sup> of July and will operate during 90 days.

To summarise, the Armed Forces has a number of major challenges ahead. Efforts are now being done to get the operational organisation for 2014 in place at the same time as we face an ever-changing world – both locally and further away. Cooperation on many levels is essential, especially in the Nordic setting. We also need to collaborate with all other stakeholders in society and we also need to launch a broad public debate on defence and security.

I am convinced that together we will succeed in this task.

*Thank you for your attention.*