

## **ORDER OF THE DAY OF THE OUTGOING CHIEF OF HNDGS**

### **GENERAL KONSTANTINOS FLOROS OF JANUARY 16, 2024**

Officers, NCOs, Cadets, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, National Guardsmen, Reservists, and Civilian Personnel of our Armed Forces.

Following a decision taken by the National Security Governmental Council, I conclude today my four-year tenure as Chief of HNDGS and I am leaving active military service, turning my duties over to General Choupis, a longtime dear friend and colleague.

I am particularly happy and touched, because this ceremony takes place at the exact same location where I was awarded my Officer's sword as a young Infantry 2nd Lt of Class 1983. Class 1983 was then the first class of 2nd Lieutenants to graduate from the new Army Academy (Evelpidon) here at Vari: the forever Cradle of Good Prospects of the Nation.

Thus, a unique journey within the Army began, including unique experiences, joys, sorrows, emotional moments, difficulties, hardship and challenges; in general, all these elements that constitute an Officer's professional life.

A wonderful, unique journey. A life experience. During this journey, I enjoyed every moment, trying to become stronger when in adversity and shaping my character through good, mediocre, and bad times; through failures and successes, because that's life! Life has it all!

However, overcoming all this accompanied by competent colleagues, Commanders, supervisors and subordinates, fellow travelers towards a common goal, a common mission, common ideals, same values. All those that I collaborated with during the 4 decades of my career.

Being here today, looking towards the end, I thank them all, from the bottom of my heart. To all those I collaborated with in any way all these years, I owe it all! I wish them well wherever they are!

I feel lucky and blessed, because during this unique journey the State, when the end was near in 2020, held for me as an Officer the highest of Honours. That is, my accession to the highest Office of the Armed Forces. That is, being Chief of the Armed Forces.

That was an acknowledgment, a reward and a gift, as well as a big challenge. When I assumed my duties 4 years ago in 2020, through my first order of the day as Chief, I stated that I shall do my best to be worthy of the honour and to live up to the high expectations arising from being assigned to such a high and critical position, fully understanding the

RESPONSIBILITY and the DUTY towards the Country and the Army.

Today, while leaving the Army, I would like to be adamant about the fact that I did what was humanly possible to achieve this. And I have a clear conscience. The main idea of my first order of the day, for those who remember it, was “the indisputable need to maintain and keep the Armed Forces powerful, efficient, promising, dreaded by the treacherous and if so required, victorious.”.

I had also stressed that the method to achieve the core of our defence doctrine, that is the DETERRENCE, was and still is simple. It can be no other than the “PREPARATION FOR WAR”.

Not because we love WAR, but on the contrary, because we love PEACE! Lasting peace! This is an indisputable and obvious truth: that PEACE is the highest good. The pursuit of lasting PEACE has to be - and I assure you that it is - a lasting and big goal.

However, in order for peace to have value and to support all NATIONS, thus leading them to their fate, has to be decent. Nations such as Greece in particular, whose course within the world dates back in History and has shaped a great part of the Planet and of global civilization.

Therefore, this indisputable - in my opinion - axiom, in such volatile and difficult eras, but also in such troubled “neighbourhoods of the Planet, much like ours, is only ensured via the Military Power. In this case, the POWER of the Greek Arms on Land, Sea and Air.

The military power as a “hard shell”, as a shield, spear and sword, dreaded by the envious and the covetous and attractive for allies, friends and partners. And since it does not suffice to only preach, but rather to walk the talk, this is what I did once I assumed my duties.

This is what we did along with the Chiefs of Services and the Commander of Special Warfare Command, my close HNDGS partners, but also with all the Armed Forces personnel, regardless of origin, rank and category. All for one common goal. Everyone and everything looking towards one common goal, the ONE and only MISSION: the protection and safeguarding of National Independence, territorial Integrity and the Freedom of the Country.

This has always been at the forefront of everything we did over the past 4 years, which were very demanding, difficult, and dangerous years, as one might reasonably claim. A period when a lot of things could have happened and the outcomes could not have been good for our Country; but the presence and actions of the Greek Armed Forces, always in the context of the Guidelines set forth by the Political Leadership and the Prime Minister,

warded them off.

The adversities occurred quickly, unexpectedly, surprisingly. February - March, 2020. The entirety of Greece still remembers what happened at Evros. An unprecedented hybrid threat and to a great extent, a hybrid attempt to violate our land borders, with a massive and uncontrollable attempt of 150.000 illegal immigrants to enter the country in order to bring not just the system, but also the sense of security of the Country, and possibly that of the EU, to a collapse.

It was successfully warded off. Along with the Security Forces, cooperating smoothly, we managed to impose our Will. Because, if you remove the wars, conflicts and all kinds of clashes, what finally remains is opposing and confronting Wills.

We imposed our Country's will, much like we had been ordered to. The entirety of Greece would see, watch and be in distress for the outcome. The entirety of Greece would embrace its Armed Forces for their might, effort, self-denial and struggle to achieve their mission. To do their duty. And the entirety of Greece was happy with their success.

Evros did not fall, and Evros will never fall! Year 2020 went on with heightened vigilance and ongoing development of our forces on land, sea, and air, for months; the culmination of it all was the four-month crisis (almost) in the SE Mediterranean due to the ORUC REIS research vessel and the huge concentration of forces.

The entirety of Greece would watch the Armed Forces anew on TV. Its vessels, aircraft, submarines, land forces at Evros and on the islands, successfully facing the constant challenges, being present and taking action day and night, on land, sea, and air, without leaving any provocation unanswered.

Ongoing exercises, national and international, actions and operations of power and flag promotion under central Command and Control throughout Greece, and also in Cyprus.

We took our partners and allies by surprise, but mainly our opponents, often attempting to do many things for the first time; either on our own or along with others; being nonetheless absolutely certain and determined, as I would tirelessly say all these years, that if and where required, we would do our Duty that has been commissioned to us by the Country, ON OUR OWN. Because:

- we wanted to
- we knew how to do it
- we could do it

Because the Greek Armed Forces have the will and the ability to do it. However, 2020

was not the only difficult year. In the years to follow and up to some months ago, the situation was very difficult, the challenges were numerous and of high intensity; an undeclared war mainly in the air, but also at sea and on the land borderline, with unexpected events looming every minute, day and night.

I will not give a full account on this today. Everyone knows, and the entirety of Greece still remembers. All those are known to those who had planned them, who took a relevant decision and ordered them, as well as those who successfully executed them in the field. As well as the entirety of Hellenism, in all corners of the world.

The Greek men and women wherever they may be. Over the past 4 years, we were called to face, and so we did in a successful manner and for some, with unexpected and enviable success, a series of defence and security challenges for Greece, unprecedented both in intensity and duration.

I am extremely happy and proud for the outcome, the works and actions of the Greek Armed Forces; Both for the works and actions that got their share of publicity and for the unknown actions that were left out of the spotlight.

But above all else, I am extremely proud for the outstanding personnel of the Greek Armed Forces that struggles 24/7, 365 days a year, striving for national independence, territorial integrity and the Freedom of the Greek people.

Besides, as I have repeatedly stated, and now for the last time in uniform, I would like to firmly express my admiration, my deepest respect and my unlimited and huge trust to the Armed Forces for everything that they do. They can do everything and they deserve the best. Well done!

Thus, under these circumstances and with one crisis being followed by another, and furthermore, with the then emerging covid-19, which made things even more difficult and more complex, and with the everyday pressure of events and circumstances, a dominant and a sine qua non issue emerged: the enhancement and improvement of our military capabilities across all levels and in fact, expediently and urgently, following the conditions that had been established within the Army due to the more than a decade-long cuts and the Defence development and operations budgets that ran in deficit. AND due to the recent financial crisis.

In the beginning of the four-year period, based on the known threats and challenges, and the ever-worsening situation in our international environment and with the world events in Ukraine and Israel and the Middle East in general not yet in place, several – I would even say many – goals, main and big, were set and went as follows:

- Development and implementation of a realistic armament program, based on a rational Structure of Forces for all 3 Services of the Armed Forces, and re-organization of the Special Forces.

- Recruitment of new Professional Soldiers due to the extended, more than a decade-long inactivity in this area and the aging and retiring personnel without replacement thereof.

- Strengthening of our military relations with countries of interest in our area.

- Improvement and development of new infrastructure that would enhance our military footprint and capabilities in power and flag promotion in the wider area of the Balkans, but mainly in the Eastern and Central Mediterranean.

- Drafting and submission to the Political Leadership of new salary scales for the Armed Forces personnel.

Everything was meticulously, yet swiftly, studied; they were orderly and accurately prepared, attentively and concisely planned, submitted in time and following processes provided for, they were approved, implemented and are still in progress, implemented to the extent possible.

I am extremely proud and grateful to all those, who worked tirelessly, invested their energy and effort to implement the planning and the orders, in such a short period of time, and with such impressive results.

They should be congratulated upon, because through their work they managed to revitalize our country's Armed Forces for the years to come, because these are tangible changes, which improve the Armed Forces. Well done! This gigantic four-year effort already pays dividends and I am really proud of that. We are proud, because the acceptance of significant assets for our armed forces has already started; assets known by all and I will not spend more time reciting them anew. They are well-known and mentioned and described in detail in the report that was presented before the Minister a few days ago.

Allow me, however, while concluding my reference to the Structure and Re-organization, to refer to the establishment and creation of the Special Warfare Command, and to the relevant showcasing of Special Warfare into a distinct arm and powerful element of the joint power of our Armed Forces, acting at a strategic level.

This development has been a lifetime dream, and I am proud that it has been finally realized after so many years, thus ushering the Special Forces of Greece into a new era. Over the past four-year period, 5.000 Special Forces members took part in 560 operational trainings and exercises and participated in the surveillance of Islets of the Eastern Aegean for more than 14.000 hours. I would like to warmly congratulate the men and women upon

their being involved in the modernization of the special forces of Greece, which was a deep change that had to be done many years ago, but happened only now.

Among those, the now Chief of the HNDGS, the former Commander thereof, whom I congratulate upon his work. As well as the now Chief of the General Staff of National Guard, Lt Gen Tsitsikostas, who was assigned as its first Commander.

With regard to the recruitment of new professional personnel, we submitted a request to the political leadership - and this was approved in 2020 - regarding the recruitment of 15.580 new professional soldiers, which (request) is being implemented in a swift manner.

This number also includes the increase in the number of cadets - officers and NCOs Academies - which during the years of the memoranda had lost 30% of their capacity.

The new assets and the increase in the existing ones require more “minds and hands.” Our academies have almost all covered the losses of the previous decade. The recruitment of Professional Soldiers is still ongoing and will be concluded when the aforementioned number will be attained in 2025.

In the area of Defence Diplomacy at a HNDGS level, and always under the guidance of the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (that had the lead during the biggest part of my tenure, the Minister of Defence currently in office, and I thank him for that, as well as the current Minister of Foreign Affairs] and of course, the orders of the Prime Minister, many things happened, which are also known and repeatedly mentioned, and there is no need for them to be stated anew.

The Armed Forces, as far as within their power and their institutional duties, were at the forefront of the strategic cooperation and coordination with the US, France, Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan, all of our Balkan allies and friendly States, including Serbia, and I believe that they contributed to the overall upgrade of the country in this area.

Considering the sector of social contribution, the role and support of the Armed Forces is known to all, and the Greek society feels positive about them, because they are always beside it when needed, and this is important both for the society and for the Greek people, and of course, for all of us.

For the Armed Forces, because we are an integral part thereof, we have been, we still are and we will always be there to alleviate the pain of our fellow citizens and fellow men when needed. Always.

During the natural disasters, the floods, as those recently occurred in Thessaly, during fires, air evacuations, S&R, and many other smaller or bigger actions to the benefit of society and of our fellow citizens.

As everybody knows, the successful implementation of a huge project during the pandemic was a distinct and integral chapter of the contribution of the Armed Forces to society. No one can forget the smiley faces of our personnel in the vaccination centers; not even those, who were less accessible to the general public: men and women of the Armed Forces, who were responsible for supervising the organization and transfer throughout Greece of millions of highly valuable vaccines; and those who contributed in any way to this huge effort.

Many things happened over the past four years. Big, small, great, less or more significant. Undoubtedly, it was a difficult four-year period, painful, intense, dire, with many critical moments and periods of ongoing intensity and unprecedented challenges and emergencies.

But we made it, and ended up being victorious. Our weapons included hard, exhaustive work, the ongoing presence across Greece, under any conditions, affecting these difficult circumstances and conditions as much as possible to the benefit of Greece. To the benefit of both the country and the Nation.

Thousands of actions, exercises - small and big, national and international, scheduled and ad hoc, on land, sea, air, in the cyberspace, in space, in Greece, abroad, telling to all of our friends, allies and opponents, but mainly to Greek men and women all over the world, that the Greek Armed Forces are powerful, mighty and capable of protecting the Holy and the Sacred that we inherited from those who had been devoted to the Objective before us.

And they are indeed. They are powerful, and this is something that no one should forget. I can assure you of that after 4 years of being their leader. They are and will always be the guardians of integrity of the country, with the gun in their hand. The guardians of the independence of Greece and of its national interests. Its equipped arm and pillar; the one that continues the historic feats and the unique historical journey of this unique and amazing nation. A nation that came so far with a gun in hand indeed.

As of the onset of our modern history in 1821 and to date, the Nation has fought for almost 130 non-stop years for us to have what we enjoy. It would fall and rise up again. It would fall and rise up again. Do not get fooled by the lasting peace of the last 60-70 years. Things have become tougher and will become even tougher.

No one would claim 5 years ago that 2 big wars of global impact would be concurrently waged in our neighbourhood. So, alertness is required at all levels. Alertness and preparation, readiness and effort.

The main element thereof, that is preparation and alertness, is our historical origin. The showcasing of the glorious examples of the past, the diving into our rich history, the understanding that those we admire and feel awe before their feats, those who embellish our squares and museums with their busts and statues, and have offered their names in cities and villages, were simple men like us, who when called upon by history and duty offered themselves to the Country, sacrificing their lives. Thousands, thousands of them.

The answer to the crisis and hardship, apart from the tangible things that have to be done and are in fact being done, as I said, is History itself.

This is why quite recently, the Memorial of the Immortals of the nation citing the 121.692 names of those fallen during the fights of the nation from 1830 to 1974 was inaugurated at Papagos Camp, at the HMOD, the HNDGS HQ and of the General Staffs premises.

The story is a source of power and resilience for our Armed Forces, along with their traditions and memory. It has already been visited by cadets of military academies, students of neighbouring municipalities and as of last weekend, it will be open to the public.

Before concluding, I would like to thank anew the excellent personnel of the Greek armed forces because through its work, time and effort, day and night, patience, persistence, self-denial, professionalism, hard work, sweat, many times its blood, its lasting and ongoing effort, is always found at the forefront offering to Greece the most precious good, that of security against external threats, without the existence of which nothing else can be done. It is an overarching, main and fundamental good.

A huge thank you and my gratitude for everything that you do. Today, I can say with honour and pride, "Mission accomplished".

Not even an inch less, not even a grain of sand lost. And this is thanks to you. I am grateful to you. Keep on making Greece powerful and respected by all. Keep always in mind the words of our poet, Dionysios Solomos, "Enclose Greece in your soul and you will feel it within you yearn for every kind of greatness." I would also like to thank the Directors of Branches, the Independent Directorates and in general the HNDGS staff, all those who worked over these past years tirelessly, meticulously and efficiently to have these many and important works and actions of the Armed Forces, which I briefly stated earlier.

In particular, I would like to mention my Deputy Chiefs, Admiral Drymoussis Ioannis, outgoing Chief of the HNGS, Vice Admiral Leloudas Fragkiskos, as well as the Chiefs of Staff, Lt Gen Godikoulis Ioannis, Fasoulas Georgios, Kellaris Konstantinos, and Kyriakou Georgios.



Outstanding officers to all of whom a big part of these feats achieved over the past 4-year period can be attributed. I would like to warmly thank the Director of my Executive Office for the past 3 years, Vice Admiral Tsarmaklis Loukas and BG for a year, Kiouisis Vasileios. Outstanding officers without whom many things would not have happened. In them, I would also like to thank the personnel of the Executive Office that worked day and night and supported me and helped me over these 4 demanding years.

I would also like to thank my family, my spouse Anna-Maria and my two daughters Peny and Maria for their huge patience throughout my journey in the Army, their unlimited and big love and the strength I would always receive. You have always been there for me. Thank you.

I thank God and Virgin Mary for the protection and blessings over this long journey of my career that brought me here today before you being healthy, complete, proud and grateful for those that life, the Army and my country had in store for me.

Of course, I would like to extend my warm thanks to the Prime Minister and the political leadership of the Ministry of National Defence for their trust and honour.

To the incoming Chief, the worthy Officer and dear friend, and close partner over these years, General Dimitrios Choupis, I wish him good luck, health and courage in the execution of his duties to the benefit of the Greek Arms.

Finally, while leaving this podium, I salute and bow, and pay the appropriate respect to our glorious Colours, always keeping both within my mind and within my soul those fallen for our Faith and our Country during all the Fights for Freedom, Independence, and the long standing of this unique Nation. I remember and deeply honour the professional soldiers, the conscripts, as well as the civilian personnel fallen while on duty in peacetime.

Bowing before the magnitude and the power of the Greek Armed Forces, and bringing the words of Pericles to the Athenians in mind: "We face danger willingly and not with a heavy heart; we face it out of courage rather than out of obedience to some law... And this for us marks a huge gain", I call upon you to exclaim:

**LONG LIVE THE NATION!**

**Long Live its Armed Forces!**