

Gen. Scaparrotti's remarks at SOCEUR Change of Command June 8, 2016

Ambassador Elliott, General Thomas, Fellow General and Flag Officers; Senior Enlisted Leaders; Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Welcome and thank you for joining us for today's Change of Command ceremony for the Commander of Special Operations Command Europe as we say farewell to Major General Greg Lengyel and welcome Major General Mark Schwartz.

I first want to recognize the SOCEUR Joint Color Guard and the USAREUR Band-- you look and sound excellent! Please join me in a round of applause to thank them for their hard work and professionalism.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank GEN Tony Thomas and Special Operations Command. Their dedicated efforts ensure the SOCEUR team is trained, resourced and organized to successfully execute any mission they are tasked. We are blessed with a competent and prepared cadre of professionals, thanks, in large part, to SOCOM's efforts. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

SOCEUR was born in Paris 61 years ago, on January 22nd, 1955, as Support Operations Command Europe. Later that year, EUCOM redesignated the command as Support Operations Task Force Europe. In 1967, the command relocated from Paris to Panzer Kaserne, about 5 miles from here, before settling a year later at its current location here on Patch Barracks. Throughout these past 61 years, SOCEUR has supported the full range of military operations throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa, to include combat and special operations, humanitarian assistance, non-combatant evacuations and combined-joint military operations.

The Joint Chiefs confirmed Special Operations Command Europe as a Subordinate Unified Command 30 years ago, in May of 1986. Just one year prior to that, in 1985, its future commander, Greg Lengyel, earned his commission. Greg went through the ROTC program at Texas A&M University and traded Aggie maroon for Zoomie blue. Between College Station and Stuttgart, Greg has led a tremendous career that took him around the world and brought him here to this command.

Greg, your life experiences have made you the right person in the right place at the right time. You like to say that Europe has been forced to make a transition from being a security provider to a security consumer. That is a paradigm shift both for EUCOM as a whole and for SOCEUR in particular as we face renewed Russian aggression, the spread of ISIL and transnational threats from the Levant and North Africa.

Under your direction, the command has transformed to meet these threats. First, during your tenure, NATO validated SOCEUR as the Special Operations Component Command (SOCC) for the NATO Response Force 2016. This followed an intensive period of training and validation, including Exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE in Spain, Italy, and Portugal last October and November. Following that, this past May, the success of Exercise TROJAN FOOTPRINT in Poland and Germany helped to refine and build SOF interoperability.

Second, SOCEUR's persistent engagement and presence in Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE throughout Eastern Europe has helped reassure the NATO alliance and serve as a visible deterrent to Russia following its invasion of Ukraine and illegal annexation of Crimea. The military-to-military engagements, training and assistance to

our Eastern European partners all form a crucial piece of the Partnership Development Program and the European Reassurance Initiative.

Third, you have helped to develop a European model for SOF forces to combat terrorism that has helped synchronize interagency efforts. In doing so, you have earned SOCEUR tremendous support from Ambassadors within Europe. This is in large part due to your ability to communicate and advocate for our mission. In host nations within Southern Europe, SOCEUR elements engage local, state and national governmental and non-governmental organizations. These efforts improve training, increase capability, professionalize forces and enable greater responsiveness to terrorism. In the Mediterranean, you have directed an increased SOF presence to enhance our understanding and capacity to disrupt terrorist related activities—this is a critical effort. And outside of Europe, SOCEUR has provided logistical, refueling, and personnel recovery and intelligence support to AFRICOM and CENTCOM to aid in the fight.

Finally, in terms of crisis response, SOCEUR forces remain EUCOM's first responders. In particular, the Crisis Response Forces (CRF) provide EUCOM with a rapid, flexible option for contingency planning. I rely on the readiness and expertise of SOCEUR for its operational agility. In short, SOCEUR provides Europe and our Nation some of its most dependable forces.

A significant factor in the success of our SOF forces is the support they and their families receive here in Stuttgart. I know that you and your wife Diane have treated the

service members and military community here like an extension of your family. From weekend dinners at the Lengyels' residence to golf outings to spouse meetings, you have made SOCEUR an outstanding place to work. Those closest to you have recounted a number of times that you returned from long trips to the CONUS or elsewhere only to immediately turn around and do something for others, whether it be a command function, a cookout for families, or a local race where you take photographs. This is testimony to the fact that you both have MADE THE TIME to treat others like they were your family.

Diane, I also want to acknowledge your exemplary service to the SOCEUR community. You have dedicated your time and resources to the spouses and families of this command. Your monthly spouse socials, regular family and holiday events, and community-service projects, such as the Pfennig Bazaar to raise money for local charities, all directly strengthened the special bond and resilient network shared by our special operations forces.

You both have done all of this without sacrificing your family. You have made it a priority to attend college graduations, weddings, wrestling matches, wedding anniversaries, etc. Following in their father's footsteps, both of your sons have now graduated from Texas A&M. Your oldest son, Dan, was commissioned as a 2LT in the USMC last year. Your younger son, Matt, just graduated from Texas A&M and is a 2LT in the USAF. I won't be surprised if 30 years from now they too will be on a stage like this commanding their own forces.

So Greg and Diane, thank you for your dedication, hard work, and the sacrifices you have made over the past two years to strengthen this command. I know that you will

make a similar impact at Joint Special Operations Command as you prepare to become its Deputy Commander.

As we say goodbye to the Lengyels, we also welcome Major General Mark Schwartz and his family to the command. Mark is a battle-tested leader with multiple combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. He has, moreover, a distinguished record of leading special operations forces in the CENTCOM and AFRICOM theaters. He is also no stranger to Europe having been assigned to NATO Joint Forces Command, Brunssum. In short, Mark is ideally suited to take command of our SOCEUR forces.

Mark is joined by his wife, Allison, and his daughter, Meghan, today, who I understand will be entering her senior year of high-school coming up. So thank you Allison for supporting Mark, as he assumes this very important position today. Their son, Austin, could not attend but will be a senior next fall at Colorado State University. Allison, Meghan—welcome to this community.

This command has adopted on its crest the charge, “Semper parate,” which is not a statement that you are already prepared but rather an imperative to continue to prepare. I like that—it shows that SOCEUR never takes its readiness for granted. Continue to take that motto seriously as we move forward to face the evolving challenges of the 21st Century.

I commend you all for your efforts and achievements and I look forward to the continued successes of SOCEUR.

Thank you!